They say that fairies don’t exist. That they are relegated to the mind’s fantasy about that celestial being. The fairy has been told through numerous tales, historically as a warning to not fall for its devious charms and traps, but more contemporarily has been portrayed as a helpful companion, feminine in most aspects, and cutesy. Mankind has fantasized about fairies for centuries, but that’s exactly it: it is nothing more or less than a fantasy.

But what if fairies did exist; your heart races as you hear the words perhaps. Well, in the far-flung northern edges of Hokkaido, Japan, in a wintry white land closer to Russia than Tokyo, there lies what the people call over there the “snow fairy.” It’s proper name is “Shima Enaga,” and it is a snowball shape little bird, that zips in the air like metal bearings attracted to metal. It features a black tail, but so tiny the Shima Enaga’s general size, and swift its flying is, that you would be hard press to notice a black looking twig sticking out of a snowball that is the Shima Enaga.

This cute looking winged furball will surprise you with its chirping, for rather than sounding high pitch and song-like, it resembles more like someone choking on a fishbone. It has a croaky cry, which surprises many people when they first encounter the so-called “snow fairy.” Regardless, it is Hokkaido’s most famous bird, and people from all over Japan come to Hokkaido to get a glimpse of it.

Hedwig, everyone’s favorite snowy owl, and Harry’s companion since he was in his first year at Hogwarts, was a fan-favorite among the Potter fans. However, what is less known is that this bird is actually endangered, with its numbers declining due to deforestation and climate change. As tundra biomes and other snowy environments begin to warm-up, and thus changing habitat, the snowy owl has to migrate further north to find an ever-decreasing prey for it to subsist upon.

The snowy owls can be found in the northern areas of North America and Europe. It has long been revered by the natives who encountered it. Tales of it confiding a spiritual god of winter, or it being a prodigious messenger of the gods are numerous across the lands. Unfortunately, this special owl, is struggling at the onslaught of environment and climate change. Shall we go through the heartbreak again of Hedwig’s demise except on a larger and world-wide scale, or protect this ancient and plain cute owl. It’s up to us to make the difference.