



# Eastern Screech Owl

(*Otus asio*)

The feisty eastern screech owl is the smallest eared owl in the eastern US. Identifiable by their ear tufts and textured coloration. This coloration serves as an effective camouflage against tree bark. They are found in 2 color phases, the gray (mostly found in the north,) the red, (mostly found in the south).

## *Habitat & Diet*

Screech owls live mainly on a diet of mice, shrews, frogs, reptiles, and large insects, but they are capable of catching prey as large as a small rat. These nocturnal hunters spend their days hidden in tree cavities. The gray phase owl can tolerate the harshest of winters, and do not migrate.

## *Fascinating Facts*

Though this owl is small, it proves quite fearless when defending its young. It is not uncommon to encounter a screech owl diving at a dog, cat, or even a human who ventures too close to the nest. This bird is fond of bathing, and many people are surprised to see a small owl playing in their birdbath at night. The screech owl is a common backyard visitor, and often visits birdfeeders at night, waiting for the mice that come to feast on fallen seed.

## *Status*

The eastern screech owl is very adaptable. It has moved into protected wooded strips of residential areas. The use of suburbs by the owls may balance the habitat loss involving woodlands and creek bottoms. In the 80's this species was of special concern, though its populations are currently stable, this small owl often falls victim to collisions with vehicles.



**Height:** 7-10 inches  
**Weight:** 6-8 ounces  
**Wingspan:** 18-24 inches  
**Habitat:** Forests, woodlots, old fields, wetlands, and suburban areas  
**Range:** Throughout the Eastern United States  
**Life Expectancy:** Up to 13 years  
**Baby:** Owlet  
**Group:** Parliament



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