



Saw-whet Owl

(*Strix aluco*)

The saw-whet owl is the smallest owl in the Eastern US, rarely measuring any taller than 7 inches. It is primarily brown, with a light underbelly and white streaks in its feathers. The saw-whet is easily distinguishable by its small, round head, distinct facial disc, and lack of ear tufts.

Habitat & Diet

Preferring to roost in dense evergreen stands, the saw-whet owl will nest in the abandoned cavities of woodpeckers. This shy and elusive owl feeds mainly on small rodents and insects, but is capable of preying on creatures as large as a dove. In times when prey is plentiful, the saw-whet owl will stash away far more food than it is capable of eating.

Fascinating Facts

This tiny owl earned its name from its unique call, which resembles the sound of a saw being sharpened on a whetting stone. It is also capable of another vocalization, resembling a metallic beep. Campers often mistake this noise for a landing UFO! Though very shy, the saw-whet does not show signs of fear when approached. In fact, it is known for being extraordinarily curious.

Status

Throughout the 19th century, the tawny owl, like many other raptors, was hunted and trapped by the thousands. It suffered as well from the removal of large wooded areas for the creation of farmland. Currently this woodland bird has adapted to man-made environments and is now commonplace in parks and gardens.



Height: up to 7 inches
Weight: 3-4½ ounces
Wingspan: 18-21 inches
Habitat: Evergreen forests
Range: Northwestern US and Southern Canada
Life Expectancy: Up to 18 years
Baby: Owlet
Group: Parliament



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