

# Eastern Screech Owl



**Scientific Name:**  
*Megascops asio*

**Range:**  
Eastern United states from the Great Lakes to the Gulf of Mexico

**Habitat:**  
Forest and scrub

**Average Size:**  
Length: 7-9 inches (female larger)  
Weight: about 7 ounces

**Lifespan:**  
Up to 20 years in captivity

**Diet:**  
*Wild:* Rodents, birds, reptiles, fish, and insects

**Zoo:** Mice

**Reproduction:**  
*Incubation:* 26 days

*Clutch size:* 3-5 eggs

**Appearance:**  
Eastern Screech Owls have either rusty or dark gray with intricate patterns on the feathers and streaking on the breast. They are a small and stocky owl with a short tail and broad wings, and large ear tufts. The eyes are yellow, as is the bill.

**Predators:**  
Larger Owls, mink and other weasels, raccoons, skunks, snakes, crows and Bluejays

**Population Status:**  
Stable



## About the Animal

Screech Owls are tiny cavity nesters that can be found almost anywhere, from woods to parks, from gardens to orchards, in both cities and remote forests. They are especially fond of water and spend time every evening bathing. They are occasionally found drowned in steep sided water sources. Screech Owls are extremely territorial, and have a fierce disposition that has earned it the nickname of 'feathered wildcat'.

In folklore, the call of this bird foretold death and disaster. People awakened by the ghost-like whinny of the Screech Owl underwent elaborate rituals to ward off disaster.

The Eastern Screech Owl has 2 color phases - red and gray. Although the red phase is genetically dominant, experiments have shown that red owls in northern climates are more likely to perish in bad weather than gray.

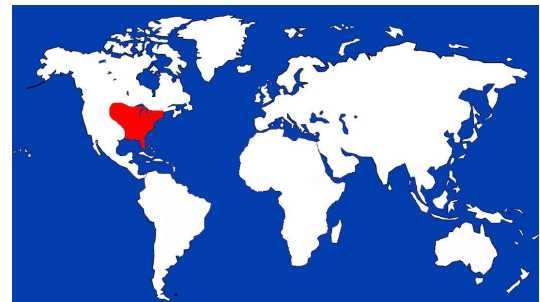
## Mating and Reproduction

Like many birds of prey, Screech Owls have complex courtship rituals that involve much posturing and vocal communication. When a female finally chooses to accept a male, she will move close to him and the pair will begin to preen one another. Screech Owls are monogamous and mate for life.

Pairs build a nest in a hollow tree cavity, usually a natural cavity, but they are not above making use of an abandoned woodpecker or flicker nest. After the owlets hatch, the male does most of the hunting while the female broods the young.

## Amazing Information

When threatened, an Eastern Screech Owl will stretch its body and tighten its feathers in order to look like a branch to avoid detection.



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