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# Eastern Screech Owl

*Megascops asio*

**Class:** Aves

**Order:** Strigiformes

**Family:** Strigidae

## Characteristics:

Eastern screech owls are small, ranging 16 to 25 cm (6.30in to 9.84in) in length. Females are generally larger than males, which is common in owls. Eastern screech owls are dichromatic (either grey or reddish with dark streaks on the body), meaning they exhibit two distinct colors which helps them to blend into the trees. They have bold streaking on their breasts, yellow beaks and eyes, relatively large feet with feathered toes, and large "ear" tufts on either side of their head. The feather tufts are not the owl's ears, but aid in camouflage and communication with other owls ([Biokids](#)).

## Behavior:

Eastern screech owls are nocturnal and are far more often heard than seen. As a cavity-roosting owl, they are often attracted to nest boxes ([All About Birds](#)). Eastern screech-owls are not migratory, and a pair may keep the same nest in winter and summer. Females reuse successful nest sites. They are solitary except during mating season and in winter when mates will share a nest. Males defend territories in which they maintain several nesting sites.

## Reproduction:

Most form pair bonds for life with individuals of the same age, although some males mate with more than one mate. Females lay eggs over a period of days to more than a week and do not begin full-time incubation until the last egg is laid. Eggs laid first also develop and hatch first. With larger broods newly hatched owlets may be up to 8 days behind their nestmates. From 2 to 7 white eggs, are laid in a large nest cavity. They are incubated for 26 (eggs laid last) to 34 days (earlier eggs), with an average of 30 days of incubation ([Biokids](#)).

## Diet:

Wild: moths, katydids, crayfish, earthworms, amphibians, reptiles, bats, small birds, mice.

Zoo: Small pinky mice, chicks, special diet.

## Conservation:

[ICUN Redlist](#) conservation status is least concern. Although, the population appears to be decreasing at a rate of approximately 30%.

**FYI:** They exhibit regional differences. For example, the "McCall's" Eastern Screech-Owl (*Asio otus mccallii*) inhabits south-central Texas and parts of northern Mexico. It may prove to be a separate species, as it is always gray and has a distinct call ([All About Birds](#))



## **Range & Habitat:**

Eastern screech-owls have the broadest ecological niche of any North American owl. They are found in virtually all kinds of habitats below about 1500 meters elevation.

They are most often found in wooded areas. They are cavity nesters and use natural cavities or those created by other animals.



**Lifespan:** up to 10-13+ years in captivity, 8-10 years in the wild.

**Special Adaptations:** Owls have a comb-like feather edge that allows for [silent flight](#). These are on the leading edge of the wing and are called "flutings" or "fimbriae."

## **IUCN Conservation Status:**

Least Concern

