

THE ARBORETUM AT PENN STATE



# EASTERN SCREECH-OWL

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**NAME:** *Megascops asio*

### CONSERVATION STATUS:



**SIZE:** 6–8 inches

**WEIGHT:** 4–6 ounces

**GROUP TERM:** parliament

**NUMBER OF YOUNG:** 2–6

**HABITAT:** varied; habitat generalist

**LIFESPAN:** 10 years

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# EASTERN SCREECH-OWL

## DESCRIPTION

Despite its common name, the Eastern Screech-Owl does not screech, but rather calls with an eerie, drawn-out whinny. The second smallest owl in Pennsylvania, the Eastern Screech-Owl is at home in urban habitats, sometimes nesting in man-made structures such as old buildings, street lamps, water tanks, and large nest boxes. Out of all the Northeastern owls, this bird occupies the greatest range of habitats, but is rarely seen due to its nocturnal lifestyle.

## DIET

Eastern Screech-Owls are opportunists, eating small animals, including birds and many mammals. These owls also eat large numbers of earthworms, insects, and frogs.

## THREATS

The Great Horned Owl is the primary predator of the Eastern Screech-Owl, which is also threatened by snakes, raccoons, and opossums.

## DID YOU KNOW?

- Eastern Screech-Owls can be found in two “phases” or colors: red and gray. Both phases will interbreed, with no particular preference for each mate’s color.
- Both the male and female Eastern Screech-Owl take turns brooding their eggs during incubation.
- This bird has been observed placing small, live snakes into its nest; the snakes eat pestilent insects that threaten the owl’s hatchlings, and the owls provide the snakes a protected habitat in which to live.

“Eastern Screech-Owl.” All About Birds. The Cornell Lab of Ornithology, n.d. Web. 22 June 2017.  
McDonald, S. “Eastern Screech Owl.” *BioKIDS: Critter Catalog*. University of Michigan, 1999. Web. 22 June 2017.

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