

DECEMBER BIRD OF THE MONTH EASTERN SCREECH OWL (*Megascops asio*)



Size/Shape: A small owl (7-10 inches tall,) the Eastern Screech Owl has feathered ear tufts called plumicorns. These are not related to ears or hearing at all. Like all owls, they have large, round heads, huge forward facing eyes and a sharp, downward-curved bill.

Color: Eastern Screech owls have variations in color. Some appear more brown, while others are more reddish or grey. They have a whitish patterned underside.

Other Features: Females are slightly larger than males. Eastern Screech Owls have large yellow eyes.

Nesting: They nest in tree cavities and add no nesting materials to the cavity. They will also use nest boxes. Eastern Screech Owls lay 2-8 eggs.

Behavior: When threatened, a Screech Owl will stretch its body and tighten its feathers to look like a branch stub and avoid detection. They will take flight if detected.

Diet: Eastern Screech Owls are nocturnal, hunting for their food in the evening and night. They will perch and wait for their prey, diving and grabbing it with their sharp talons. Screech Owls eat small rodents and birds, reptiles and insects.

Habitat: Screech owls can be found in nearly every habitat in the Eastern United States and Canada. They live in urban, suburban and rural areas.

Where to spot: They are inactive and well camouflaged during the day. The best time to try to spot them would be as they start their nightly hunting at dusk.

Voice: They make a whistled trill as well as a descending, quavering whinny. Copy the link below to your browser to listen:
http://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/eastern_screch-owl/sounds

Make your own field guide: Print and color the cover and each month's bird picture. Then staple them (or use a hole punch and ribbon) to make a book with all 12 Reeves-Reed Arboretum Birds of the Month!

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