

long-eared owl *Asio otus*

Kingdom: Animalia

Division/Phylum: Chordata

Class: Aves

Order: Strigiformes

Family: Strigidae

ILLINOIS STATUS common, native

FEATURES

The long-eared owl averages 13 to 16 inches in length and is about the same size as the American crow. It is a slim owl with long ear tufts that are fairly close together on the head. The brown feathers are lighter on the belly with lengthwise streaks.

BEHAVIORS

The long-eared owl is an uncommon migrant and winter resident in Illinois. It is an occasional summer resident in the northern two-thirds of the state. Fall migration into Illinois starts in October. Spring migration out of Illinois starts in April. Nesting takes place from March to May usually in an old crow, squirrel or hawk nest in a conifer or deciduous tree. This owl may evict the current resident of the nest and take it over for its own use. Very little or no material is added to the nest. Four to eight round, white eggs are deposited by the female. She alone incubates the eggs for their 21-day incubation period. The long-eared owl may be found in conifer groves, deciduous woodlands, orchards and thickets. It roosts in conifer groves in the day, perching close to the trunk of a large tree, often in groups. When perched, it stretches its body and ear tufts so that they are camouflaged better by the tree trunk. It may sometimes be seen in this manner sitting next to the trunk of a deciduous tree, too. The long-eared owl makes a variety of sounds including meows and hoots. It hunts at night in open fields and forests, eating small mammals and small birds.

HABITATS

Aquatic Habitats

bottomland forests

Woodland Habitats

bottomland forests; coniferous forests; upland deciduous forests

Prairie and Edge Habitats

none

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