

northern saw-whet owl *Aegolius acadicus*

Kingdom: Animalia

Division/Phylum: Chordata

Class: Aves

Order: Strigiformes

Family: Strigidae

ILLINOIS STATUS common, native

FEATURES

The northern saw-whet owl averages seven to eight and one-half inches in length. It does not have ear tufts. Its belly feathers have large, brown streaks, and the upper body feathers are gray-brown. The bill is dark.

BEHAVIORS

The northern saw-whet owl is an uncommon to rare migrant and winter resident in the southern two-thirds of Illinois. It is a very rare summer resident in the northern one-half of the state. Migration into Illinois begins in October. Spring migration out of the state begins in late February. Nesting occurs in spring. The nest is placed in an abandoned woodpecker cavity in a dead tree and may be from 14 to 60 feet above the ground. The nest is lined with feathers. Four to seven white eggs are laid. Most incubation is done by the female over a 21- to 28-day period. This owl is active at night. It roosts during the day in cedar trees, pine trees and vines, usually sitting low in the vegetation. It may be found in deciduous and coniferous forests. Its call is a whistled “too, too, too” in a long series that may repeat several hundred times. The saw-whet owl eats deer mice, house mice, voles and small birds.

HABITATS

Aquatic Habitats

bottomland forests

Woodland Habitats

bottomland forests; coniferous forests; southern Illinois lowlands; upland deciduous forests

Prairie and Edge Habitats

edge

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