

Short-eared Owl

Asio flammeus

STATUS	Special Concern 	Vulnerable 
Special Concern 	Not Listed 	Not Listed 



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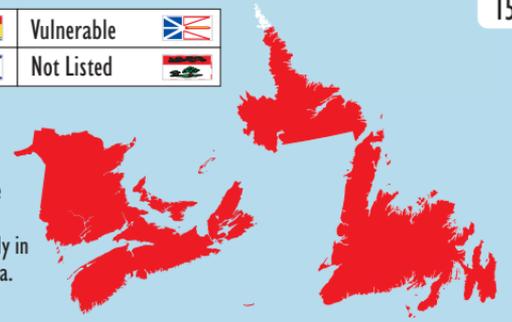
Species Description

The Short-eared Owl is medium-sized (34-43 cm), with yellowish-brown streaks on the breast and back. It has a large round head with small ear tufts, a grey (or buffy-grey) facial disk and yellow eyes circled in black. In flight, a characteristic dark patch is apparent on the underside of the wing near the wrist (85-103 cm wingspan).



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About 110 pairs have been observed in grassy areas in Atlantic Canada, often near the coast. Winters in the southern North America, and occasionally in coastal areas of Atlantic Canada.



Habitat

Hunts and roosts in the summer in open grassy habitats such as grasslands, open wetlands, coastal dunes, and abandoned pastures. In the Maritime provinces, it is primarily observed breeding near coastal wetlands. In southern Atlantic Canada, it occasionally overwinters in coastal areas where small rodents are abundant.



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Short-eared Owls are typically observed in open grassy habitats in the summer and in dense hedges in the winter.

Interesting Points

- Calls no place “home”- moves from location to location in search of food.
- Their “short-ears” are actually feather tufts! Their actual ears are hidden beneath their feathers on the side of their head.
- Nest on the ground (unlike many other owl species)- young owlets learn how to walk and run before they learn how to fly.
- Mainly active at dusk and dawn.

Similar Species

Northern Harrier (Marsh Hawk):

Larger (46-50 cm); occur in the same habitat with similar flight pattern; males have a white patch above the tail and a sharp, down-turned beak. Females are brown.



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Long-eared Owl:

Similar size (35-40 cm); can be confused in winter in roost habitats; in the summer found in field edges and spruce-fir forests; darker plumage that is more heavily streaked.



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Threats to Survival

- Habitat loss and fragmentation (wetland drainage, urban development, intensive farming practices).
- Habitat alteration from the conversion of agricultural grasslands (hay, alfalfa) to alternative crops (sod, short grass), and the removal of hedgerows.
- Nests are vulnerable to predators and machinery.



How You Can Help

Encourage farmers to harvest crops after the owls nesting season (after July 1st) to avoid destroying nests and harming young. Farmers can use harvesting devices that cut the hay higher above the ground. This action benefits other birds such as Bobolinks.



Contacts, Information & Sighting Reports

Contact: NS DNR (902) 679-6091, NB DNR (506) 453-3826, PEI FFW (902) 368-6450, or NL Wildlife Division (709) 637-2026

Info: www.speciestatrisk.gc.ca, Maritimes Breeding Bird Atlas: www.mba-aom.ca

Sighting Reports: eBird.org