



northern saw-whet owl

Aegolius acadicus

Kingdom: Animalia
Division/Phylum: Chordata
Class: Aves
Order: Strigiformes
Family: Strigidae

FEATURES

The northern saw-whet owl averages seven to eight and one-half inches in length. It does not have ear tufts. Its belly has large, brown streaks, and the upper parts 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

- bottomland forests
- coniferous forest
- southern Illinois lowlands
- upland deciduous forest

ILLINOIS STATUS

- common
- endangered
- threatened
- native
- exotic

ILLINOIS RANGE

Permanent resident:
Summer resident: northern 1/2
Migrant: southern 2/3
Winter resident: southern 2/3

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Illinois Department of Natural Resources. 1999.
Biodiversity of Illinois, Volume 2: Woodland Habitats CD-ROM.