

Species Sheets: Western Screech-Owl



photo by Kate Davis ©

Common name: Western Screech-Owl

Latin Name: *Otus kennicottii*

Field Marks: Length 8 1/2 inches
Wing span 20 inches



Robin-sized owl that is locally common in Western Montana. Gray above and below with perfect camouflage, or cryptic coloration of streaks and spots that hides them when perched next to the trunk of a tree. Ear tufts raised when roosting or alarmed, but tufts may lay back. Yellow eyes and gray bill. Very similar to Eastern Screech-Owl, which has red color morph. Eastern species occurs east of continental divide, especially along Missouri and Yellowstone rivers in Montana.

Habitat:

Woodland and forest edges, semi-open country, city parks.

Behavior:

Feed on small rodents and birds. Also insects in warmer months - crickets, beetles, and moths that are largely active at night like Screech-Owls. Pounce on prey from different perches. Roost in day next to bark of tree.

Vocalization:

Really don't "Screech" at all. Series of low-pitched whistles speeding up like a bouncing ball

coming to a standstill. Short trill followed by longer trill. Mated pair may sing a duet together, male calling then female, back and forth and often overlapping.

Nest and eggs:

Tree-cavity nesters, woodpecker holes especially flickers, very rarely in magpie nests. Eggs 3-7, young hatch at 26 days, fledge at a month. Fed by parents for 5-6 weeks. May roost in cavity over the winter.

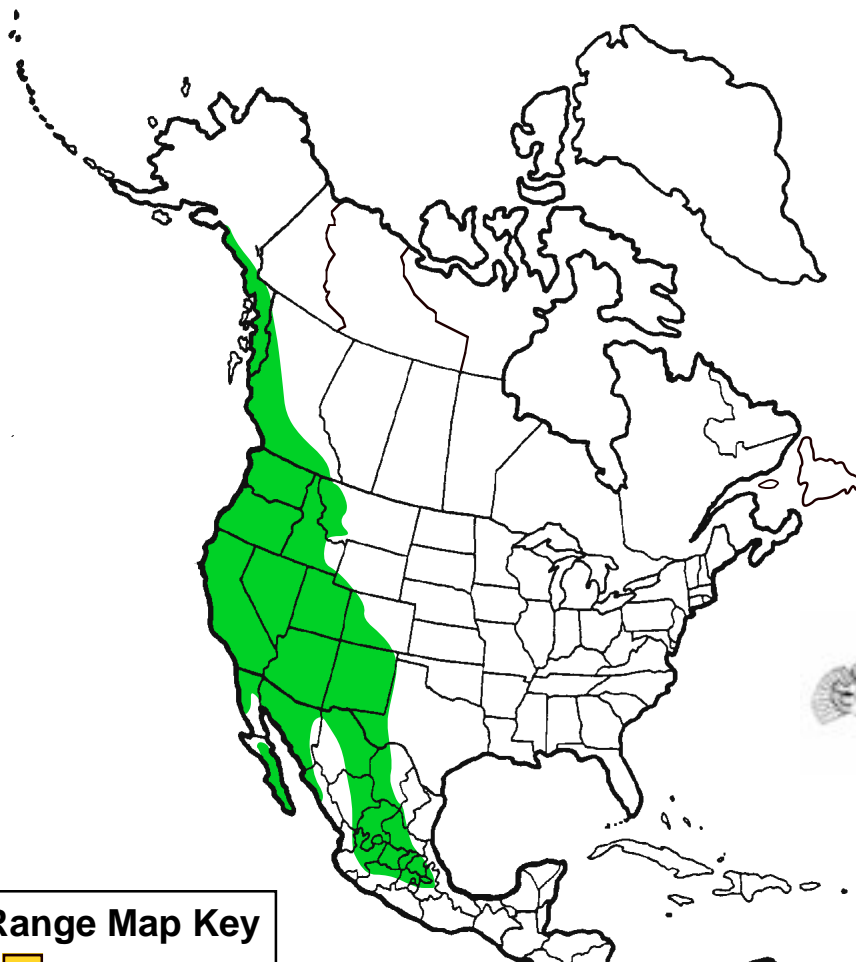
Movement:

Probably don't move other than young dispersing in fall. Non-migratory.

Interesting Fact:

Eastern and Western Screech-Owls were considered the same species up until 1980's. Differences in vocalizations, size, and genetics have proved that the two forms are actually different species that rarely interbreed.

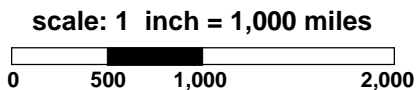
Range Map: Western Screech-Owl



Western Screech-Owl. Copyright © Kate Davis

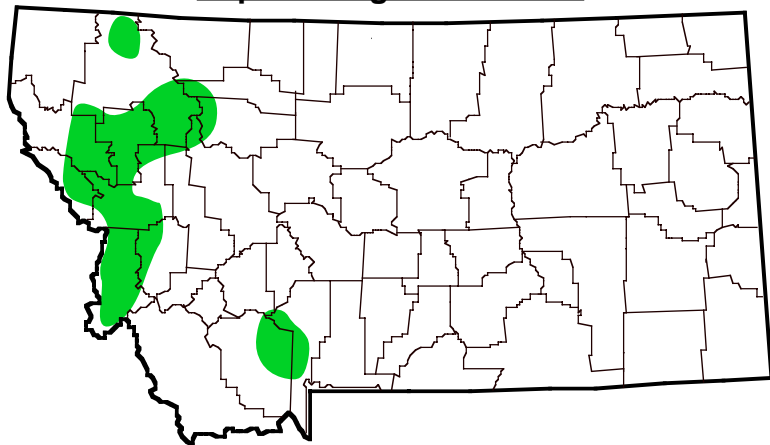
Range Map Key

- Summer
- Year-round
- Winter



These maps are designed to show the general limits of occurrence. Within those limits, each species will likely be found only in appropriate habitat.

Raptor Range in Montana



Montana range maps are based on the Montana Bird Distribution data.