Western Screech-Owl (*Otus kennicottii*)

Field Marks:

- length: 7-10 in, wingspan: 20 in.
- ear tufts held upright or against the head
- mottled gray plumage in southern deserts or mottled gray-brown in Northwest
- bright lemon-yellow eyes
- feet and toes feathered in northern populations, bristled in southern deserts

Breeding Range:

Screech-Owls generally breed in the western half of the United States from New Mexico west to the coast. They are found as far north as Alaska.

Wintering Range:

Screech-Owls are non-migratory, and winter in the same area as the breeding range.

Habitat Preferences:

They are typically associated with high density deciduous forests. Screech-Owls prefer forests with high cottonwood densities due to the abundance of natural cavities. The proximity to human populations does not seem to be a factor in territory selection.

Nesting:

Screech-Owls nest in tree cavities and nest boxes in deciduous forests. Pairs often reuse a cavity for many years if it remains suitable. They are monogamous for the life of the pair. Clutch size varies from 2-7 eggs, with an average of 4 eggs. Incubation lasts approximately 33 days, and eggs hatch over a span of 2-4 days. Young fledge between 29-35 days, and are not cared for after fledging except during extreme weather.

Feeding:

Screech-Owls typically begin hunting at sunset, although adults may hunt during the day when young are in the nest. They typically employ a "sit-and-wait" technique, and respond to the sight and sounds of prey animals. Screech-Owls take a variety of small mammals, birds, arthropods, fish, and insects. Owls nesting in riparian woodlands eat a large percentage of fish and crustaceans.

Conservation Status:

Although Screech Owl populations are currently stable, they are protected under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act. They are tolerant of nest disturbance, although habitat loss near riparian woodlands contribute to reduced population sizes. The introduction of artificial nest boxes can counteract habitat loss in many areas. Some populations suffer from pesticide contamination due to the insectivorous nature of their diet.