

## **Long Eared Owl (*Megascops kennicottii*)**

### **Field Marks:**

- Medium-sized, slender, with long ear tufts.
- Dark birds with orange around faces
- Intricate black and brown patterning on feathers.
- Ear tufts are black with orange fringes
- Two vertical white lines between the eyes
- Yellow eyes

### **Breeding Range:**

Found year-round from Northern Canada to Mexico.

### **Wintering Range:**

Southern US to Mexico.

### **Habitat Preferences:**

Long-eared Owls prefer a combination of grassland or other open space for foraging, and dense tall shrubs or trees for nesting and roosting. In winter they prefer stands of pine or other windbreakers for protection.

### **Nesting:**

Long-eared Owls do not build nests themselves. Instead, they use stick nests built in trees by other species – Black-billed Magpies, American Crows, Common Ravens, and various hawks. Nest cups average about 2.5 inches deep and 8.5 inches in diameter. In Arizona, these owls sometimes nest in crooks of saguaro cactus.

### **Feeding:**

Long-eared Owls eat mostly small mammals, including voles, many kinds of mice, kangaroo rats, shrews, pocket gophers, and young rats or rabbits. They hunt over open ground or below the canopy in sparsely forested areas. They also sometimes eat small birds and rarely but at times eat moles, bats, weasels, chipmunks, ground and tree squirrels, snakes, and lizards. Hunt on the wing coursing back and forth low above the ground and can hover over prey. Asymmetrical hearing.

### **Conservation Status:**

Long-eared Owls are common but their numbers go up and down every year. They are secretive which makes it hard to determine accurate population trends. It is possible that some populations are in decline especially in sensitive habitats. These owls need both grasslands and wooded areas to thrive and they are vulnerable to the loss of riparian woodlands and isolated tree groves.