



# Northern Saw-whet Owl

- The smallest of the eastern owls at about seven inches tall, the northern saw-whet owl has a cat-like face, an oversized head and bright yellow eyes. Females are normally larger than males.
- They roost in dense evergreens, forests or thickets where their feathers provide camouflage. When threatened, the saw-whet owl can elongate its body to look like a tree branch or bump, sometimes bringing one wing around to the front of its body.
- Their call is a series of toots or whistles. During breeding season, the call may last for several hours without a break. If the owl is scared, it will emit a sharp call that sounds like the whetting or sharpening of a saw.
- These owls are strictly nocturnal, hunting at dusk and dropping from perches onto prey on the ground. A saw-whet owl may kill several mice in quick succession and hide excess food in safe places. A male may offer his catch to a female during breeding season.
- Saw-whet owls are one of the most common owls across northern North America but because they are active almost exclusively at night, they are rarely seen.
- Some national wildlife refuges offer “owl prowls.”

Tom Benson/Creative Commons

