



# WILDLIFE NOTES

## Western screech owl

*Otus kennicottii*

The western screech owl is a small raptor, about eight to 10 inches long. The screech owl has more prominent "horns" than the flammulated owls seen in New Mexico.

By day, this owl is usually hidden in tree hollows, but you may see it on the ground or on a stone beneath a spreading tree. The adults have an ashy gray plumage which serves as camouflage. There are black streaks on the feather shafts. The underparts have black cross lines. The tail is short, the wings are long, and the eyes are yellow.

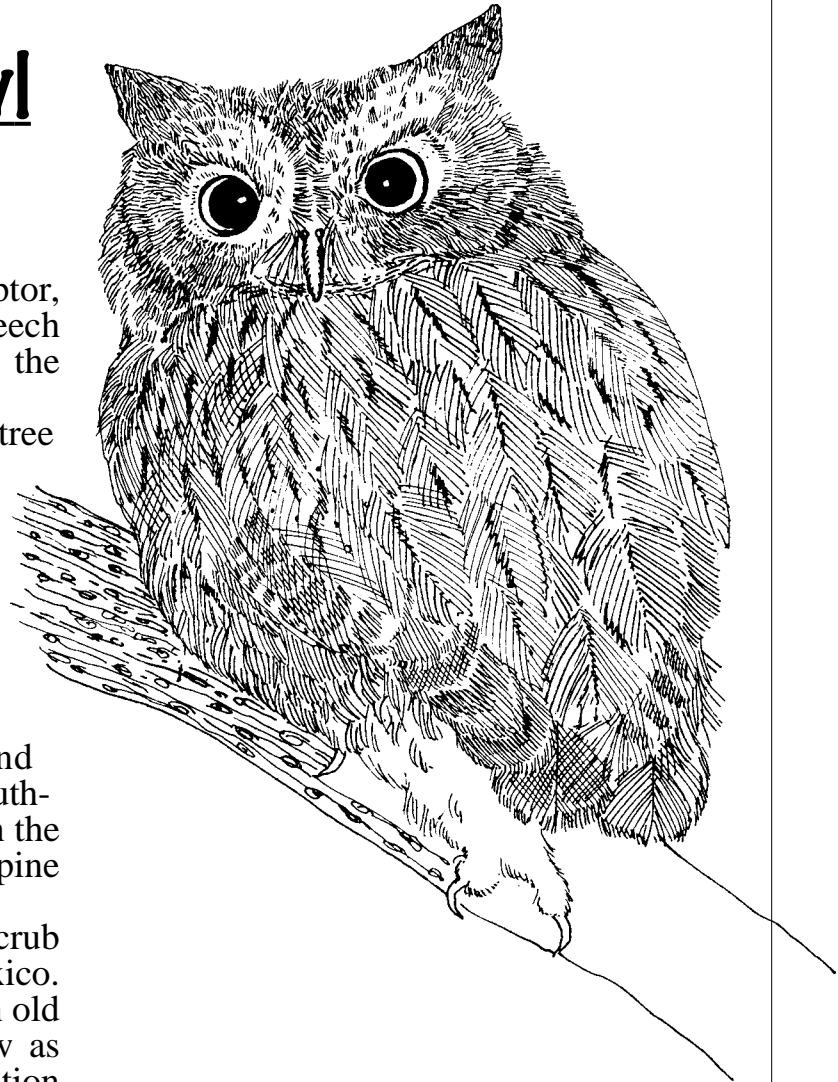
The western screech owl is found throughout much of the state, from low southern elevations to as high as 8,000 feet in the north. They are most common in oak-pine zones, at about 7,000 feet.

This owl seems to prefer hollows in scrub live oak for nesting in southern New Mexico. Along watercourses it resorts to holes in old cottonwoods and may be found as low as 3,000 feet. An old woodpecker excavation may be used at times. Nesting usually begins in mid-March. Ivory-white eggs are normally laid in April in clutches of four or five.

Listen for a call that is a series of hollow whistles, delivered on an even scale, the notes speeding up until they run into each other.

Outside of New Mexico, this species ranges from extreme southern Alaska through the western United States to central Mexico.

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