



Owl Research INSTITUTE

Wildlife conservation through research and education since 1988

Congratulations on your Short-eared Owl adoption! Your generous donation directly funds our work to understand and help protect this magnificent species. Thank you for your support!

Please enjoy the adoption documents that follow. If you would like your adoption certificate personalized, please don't hesitate to let me know at liberty@owlresearchinstitute.org and I will add your name to it right away. :)

ENJOY!



Short-eared Owl
Nyctaleus flammeus





ORI

FACT SHEET

Short-Eared Owl

With sharply declining populations, the Short-eared Owl has become a modern icon for grassland conservation



PHOTOS © KURT LINDSAY

Asio flammeus

Since 1970, Short-eared Owl numbers are estimated to have declined by 65%*

**Partners in Flight*

Short-eared Owls are one of the most widespread owl species in the world and can be found on every continent except Australia and Antarctica. With such a vast range, why are numbers declining so rapidly? The primary cause is believed to be habitat degradation, with secondary factors being climate change, predation by dogs, and today's agricultural practices, including poisoning.

In addition to these manmade challenges, Short-eared Owls nest and roost on the ground, making them vulnerable. As a result, they've developed strategies for protecting their eggs and chicks. Like other ground dwelling birds, feigning an injury, such as a broken wing, is the first line of defense. When a threat is detected, the 'injured' owl moves away from the nest hoping the predator will follow. Additionally, if a female is flushed from her nest, sometimes she will even defecate on her eggs prior to leaving. It is thought that the putrid smell discourages the predator from disturbing the eggs.

The flight of the Short-eared Owl, *Asio flammeus*, is often described as moth-like, especially when foraging over meadows: exceptionally buoyant and powered by rowing wing beats and short glides. When prey is spotted on the ground, the Short-eared Owl appears to stop in mid-air, then briefly hover overhead before diving on its prey. Such maneuverability is due

to its low wing loading, or light body mass relative to wing size. As with most owl species, the Short-eared owl has very large wings in comparison to its body mass.

During courtship, males can be seen performing elaborate sky dances to woo females. These dramatic displays include courtship songs and aerial acrobatics: males ascend into the sky in short circles before diving down and clapping their wings under their body. Females perch on the ground, observing the display and giving call; a ritual that may continue until she is ready to mate. These impressive courtship sky dances can be observed in grasslands of the Northwestern United States and Canada, usually at dusk.

Short-eared Owls have feather tufts atop their heads, yet they are not as pronounced as those of Great Horned or Long-eared Owls and typically lay flat against the head until in a defense pose. Like their closest relative the Long-eared Owls, Short-eared Owls also roost communally in the non-breeding months of fall and winter. While Long-eared Owls gather in groups of 2-20 on branches in dense vegetation, Short-eared Owls typically gather on the ground in grassland habitat. When snow is deep or very wet, however, they may move to branches in the trees. There is ever record of them roosting right alongside Long-eared Owls!

Short-Eared Owl Research



The Short-eared Owl is widely distributed in North America and is associated with open-country habitats such as tundra, grasslands, and rangelands, where it nests and roosts on the ground. Although most of its tundra habitats appear intact, other habitats such as grassland and rangelands have been lost, fragmented, or converted for other use. Consequently, Short-eared Owl populations appear to be in significant decline throughout North America.

The ORI has been studying the Short-eared Owl in various capacities since 1985, and our current research has focused on survey protocols, breeding ecology, and movement in western Montana. We work with private landowners, farmers and

ranchers, and land managers to provide information about the locations and timing of Short-eared Owl nests. This information is used to help mitigate disturbance of management activities during the sensitive incubation and chick-rearing periods.

Additionally, we are the Montana coordinator for Project WAFS – Western Asia flammeus Landscape Study – a three year, eight-state program designed to assess the population status, trends, and threats against the Short-eared Owl. The project engages citizen-scientist volunteers across the west to gather critical survey data, enabling a rigorous assessment of the status of this species. The results will directly influence high-value conservation actions by state and federal agencies.

SHORT-EARED OWLS AT A GLANCE

HEIGHT

Males: 14.6 in
Females: 15 in

WEIGHT

Males: 7.1 - 15.9 oz
Females: 9.9 - 17.6 oz

WINGSPAN, BOTH

41.7 in

POP. ESTIMATE

660,000 US & Canada*

**Partners in Flight*

FEEDS ON

small mammals like voles, shrews, moles, mice; sometimes bats, weasels, or birds



RANGE, LEGEND

- Breeding range
- Year-round range
- Nonbreeding

Cornell Lab of Ornithology

SHORT-EARED OWL FACTS

- Known to clip the wings off avian prey before consuming
- Only 21% of hunts by Short-eared Owls yield food
- Sees better in daylight than most owls
- Northern Harriers often steal food from Short-eared Owls. This is known as “kleptoparasitism”
- Females have been known to “cluck” like a chicken when nesting
- Has 10 subspecies
- Flight described as “moth-like”
- Some are polygamous
- Partially migratory (some migrate to lower elevations)



Certificate of Short-eared Owl Adoption

This certificate acknowledges that you have symbolically adopted a Short-eared Owl. This act of generosity and support will help protect this species and its habitats.

Thank you for your support!

Sincerely,

Denver W. Holt
ORI President & Founder



Owl Research Institute
PO Box 39
Charlo, MT 59824
406-644-3412

owlresearchinstitute.org

Dear Short-eared Owl Supporter,

Thank you for adopting a Short-eared Owl through the Owl Research Institute! Our work with Short-eared owls is funded almost entirely from donations from people like you who care about the uncertain future of these incredible owls.

We are so happy you are joining us in making Short-eared Owl conservation a priority in your life. With declining populations and changing habitat, the need is more real than ever before. Your gift to the Owl Research Institute will help our research, education and conservation efforts around the Short-eared Owl. Our trusted research data will help to influence land management decisions and preserve critical habitat for this population in decline.

Please don't hesitate to be in touch if you have questions about your adoption or our work - which is only possible through the support of dedicated people like you who want to make a difference for generations to come.

Again, thank-you. Working together, we can protect a future for this magnificent species.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Liberty A. DeGrandpre". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Liberty" being the most prominent part.

Liberty A. DeGrandpre
Development Director

Please note that we are a certified 501(c)(3) nonprofit. Our tax identification number is 81-0453479. No goods or services were exchanged in relation to this donation.

Celebrating 30 years!

Short-eared Owl
Asio flammeus





Wildlife conservation through research and education since 1988

Thank you for your support!

Learn more about your Short-eared Owl Adoption at:

<https://www.owlresearchinstitute.org/copy-of-adopt-a-short-eared-owl-1>