

Western Screech-Owl

(*Otus kennicottii*)

FIELD MARKS: Tufts present, eyes yellow, bill black to gray/green or gray/black. Facial disk gray and surrounded by black border. Ventrally, a heavily marked owl with dark brown horizontal barring and vertical streaking, creating a uniform dark coloration. Dorsally, same as ventrally, but with distinct white spotting on shoulders. **SIZE:** eight to 10 inches. **WEIGHT:** six to eight ounces. **SIMILAR SPECIES:** Eastern screech-owl in Montana has much lighter plumage and has a lighter bill ranging from yellow/white to yellow/green. **HABITAT:** Primarily cottonwood bottoms, but may exist along fringes of coniferous forests where the two

habitats overlap. **VOICE:** Two calls: First call, "Toot, toot, toot toot toot toot....," accelerating in tempo, similar to a bouncing ball. Second call is a trill. **NATURAL HISTORY:** Begins breeding in March. Nests in natural cavities or woodpecker holes. Clutch size three to seven. Incubation approximately 29 days. Young fledge at approximately 30 days. Probably year-round resident. **FOOD HABITS:** Predominantly small mammals and a few birds. **STATUS:** Probably common along cottonwood bottoms in western Montana. Distribution still poorly known. Occurs east of the Continental Divide in the Bozeman area. How far east this species extends onto the plains and its relationship with the eastern screech-owl is an important owl question for Montana.

