

Short-Eared Owl

(*Asio flammeus*)

FIELD MARKS: Tufts very small and inconspicuous, generally not seen except when female is in camouflage position at nest. Should be considered a round-headed owl for identification. Eyes yellow, bill black. Facial disk circular, grayish white with black orbits. Juvenile owls retain more black on disk until fall. Ventrally, buffy brown with vertical streaks, paler on belly. Dorsally, mottled buffy/brown. In flight, dark "wrist" on underwing is a key field mark, coupled with mothlike flight. **SIZE:** 13 to 17 inches. **WEIGHT:** 11 to 14 ounces. **SIMILAR SPECIES:** Long-eared owl has smaller "wrist" patch, buffy underwings, and darker belly. Although long-eared owls hunt similarly to short-eared owls, they are rarely seen hunting during the

day. Burrowing owl is much smaller and has a yellow to whitish bill. **HABITAT:** Open grasslands, plains, and agricultural areas with suitable vegetation and food. **VOICE:** "Hooh, hooh, hooh..." given approximately 15 times during courtship flight. Courtship song is also accompanied by an audible wing-clap and dive between calls. **NATURAL HISTORY:** Begins nesting in late February to March. Nests on the ground in a small depression, often with grasses placed around the depression; nest resembles a small bowl. Clutch size four to 10. Incubation approximately 26 days. Young fledge at 30 to 40 days. Migratory; however, some individuals may not migrate. **FOOD HABITS:** A vole or field mouse specialist—almost the entire diet made up of these small rodents. **STATUS:** Common throughout the state in suitable habitat.

