

# Short-eared Owl

Migratory Species

Hibou des marais

*Asio flammeus*



Wingspan: 97 cm to 112 cm



Small and barely visible egrets characterize the Short-eared Owl. Its plumage is colored primarily in shades of creamy white and chamois. Its plumage is striped throughout. Its facial disk is bordered with white. We recognize this small owl in the fields by its hovering flight, which reminds us of that of a butterfly. This peculiar flight pattern assists the bird in spotting its prey.



The male and female are similar.



The Short-eared Owl lives in open and humid spaces such as marshes (this gives it its name in French). It will also frequent fields and tundra.



The Short-eared Owl feeds primarily on voles, but also on other rodents and the occasional bird. Curiously, this owl is mostly diurnal, meaning that it hunts during the daytime.



Short-eared Owl can live an average of 12 to 13 years in the wild.



The nest is a simple depression dug into the soil in an open space, such as a field or marsh. The female lays 4 to 7 eggs.



The young make their first flight around 24 to 27 days of age. They remain dependant upon their parents a few weeks more thereafter.



The Short-eared Owl population is presently in decline, probably due to the loss of humid areas for the advancement of agriculture and industrial development.



Many young Short-eared Owl chicks are picked up and brought home by farmers working in their fields. This act, often done with good intentions, contributes to the decline in population size. Lacking knowledge of the physiological needs of the chicks, people often feed them with grocery store meat, which leads to irreversible deformations and often the death of the chick. In addition, feeding a bird of prey by hand condemns it to captivity for life, as the chick will imprint on the human feeding it. Imprinting is a phenomenon whereby the chick associates itself with a specific species. Thus, the hand-fed chick can never be released in nature as it will recognize and not breed with its own kind but will rather seek out human contact. Chicks should always be left where they are found where their bird parents can care for them.