

Northern Saw-whet Owl

Resident Species

Petite Nyctale
Aegolius acadicus



Wingspan: 43 cm to 51 cm



The Northern Saw-whet Owl is the smallest of the egret-less owls in Quebec. Its plumage is brown spotted with white and its white chest has brown stripes sprinkled throughout. Its face is crossed by a white X in the middle. Its eyes are yellow.



The female is larger than the male.



The Northern Saw-whet Owl frequents dense and humid forests. It is also possible to spot the owl in urban parks.



The diet consists mainly of small rodents and sometimes of insects and birds. The Northern Saw-whet Owl is mainly nocturnal and is difficult to observe due as it is very discreet.



The Northern Saw-whet Owl can live 7 years in the wild and 17 years in captivity.



The nest is built in woodpecker holes or in naturally-occurring tree cavities. She will sometimes use nest boxes provided by man. The female typically lays 5 or 6 eggs.



The young first take to flight around 27 to 36 days of age. They remain dependant upon their parents 4 to 8 weeks more after leaving the nest.



Intensive deforestation threatens the population of Northern Saw-whet Owl by destroying its natural habitat. Moreover, when there is a great accumulation of snow during the wintertime, this small owl has a hard time finding food. Being very light, she does not always manage to force deep enough into the snow to capture the prey which dig deep down to escape. During these hard winters, the mortality rate is very high for the Northern Saw-whet Owl.



The white X on the face of young Northern Saw-whet Owl is very obvious to the observer. This probably helps the parents target where to place the food they have brought to the nest, which is located in a dark tree cavity. Of course, right in the middle of this X is the beak of the hungry chick!