



giving
nature
a home

Name:

Short-eared owl



History

Some people used to kill short-eared owls, but even though this became illegal in 1954, numbers of these birds have still fallen. This is because many of the marshes and moorlands where they live have disappeared.

Their population also varies according to the amount of prey that is available, especially voles. In bad vole years, the short-eared owl is the least common of all the owl species breeding in the UK.

General info

Scientific name: *Asio flammeus*

Size: Up to 38cm in length with a wingspan of 1m (the average armspan of a 9-year-old child is 1.3m).

Weight: Up to 330g.

Where they live: Most short-eared owls breed in northern England and Scotland, with a few in Northern Ireland. They are easier to see in winter, when they spread more widely and are sometimes joined by birds from Scandinavia.

How long they live: The oldest known wild bird lived to the age of about six and a half years.

What they eat: Small mammals, especially voles.

Conservation status: The short-eared owl is on the Amber List because we have some concerns about this bird.

What is special about this bird?

Short-eared owls use their excellent hearing and flying skills to hunt voles. Although they look like ears, the tufts on top of their head are actually just feathers – their ears are hidden at the sides of their head.

Fascinating fact

Most owls are active only at night (they are nocturnal), but short-eared owls are seen during the day.