

Mortimer

Eastern Screech-Owl
(*Megascops asio*)

Gender: Male

Age: 6 (approximate)



Fun Facts About Screech-Owls:

- Eastern Screech-Owls come in two different color variations: red-phase and gray-phase. Across their range, about 1/3 of all individuals are red, or rufous.
- Pairs are usually monogamous and remain together for life. Some males; however, will mate with two different females. Sometimes, the second female will evict the first female, lay her own eggs in the nest, and incubate both clutches.

Typical Screech-Owl Species Behavior:

- Eastern Screech-Owls are active at night and are more often heard than seen. Even though they are relatively common, many people are familiar with this species only from its trilling or whinnying song. This cavity-roosting owl is attracted to nest boxes or spotted in daylight at the entrance to its home in a tree cavity.
- **Habitat:** Found in woodlands bordered by open fields, as well as wetlands, orchards, towns, suburban parks and gardens.
- **Diet:** Highly varied diet consists of large insects and crayfish, all classes of vertebrates including: birds, fish, amphibians, and small mammals such as flying squirrels, shrews, rabbits, bats, and rodents.
- **Lifespan:** Average in the wild is 14 years. It is estimated that only 30-50% of young survive their first year.

Why is Mortimer in Captivity?

Mortimer was found in December of 2012 as a juvenile screech-owl with visual impairments to his left eye and was taken to a licensed rehabilitator in Vicksburg, MI. The cause of injury to his left eye is unknown. Due to his impaired vision, Mortimer was determined to be non-releasable and needed a new home at an educational facility. He was transferred to the Organization for Bat Conservation on December 17, 2012, and then to the Stage Nature Center in February 2018.

What Makes Mortimer Special?

For an owl that is mostly blind in one eye, Mortimer still knows how to get around! Screech-owls can typically be feisty; however, Mortimer has always been very calm and relaxed when he's perched on a handler's glove. Due to his eye injury, Mortimer's eye is treated with a lubricant. He is surprisingly easy going when his caregivers apply a generous amount of lubricant under his eyelid. We know most people wouldn't be as calm as Mortimer with a finger in their eye.

Mortimer is not a very vocal owl; however, every so often he surprises his handlers when he calls gently as food is being placed in his enclosure. It is as if he is trying to say "Thank You".