

Rito

Eastern Screech-Owl

(*Megascops asio*)

Gender: Male

Age: Unknown



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 Rito in Captivity?

Rito was found as an adult in 2016 with a permanent soft tissue injury to his left shoulder making survival in the wild impossible. After he was found, he was taken to a licensed rehabilitator in Vicksburg, MI where it was determined he could not be returned to the wild to survive on his own. He was transferred to the Organization for Bat Conservation on February 24, 2017 and then to the Stage Nature Center in February 2018.

What Makes Rito Special?

Rito is short for “Pajarito” which translates to “Little Bird” in Spanish. Rito has not been living among people for very long, so he is still getting used to being around his human friends. Due to his uncertainty of people, he often displays a Screech-Owl’s natural defensive behavior of raising the ear tufts and stretching out the body to look very thin like the trunk of a tree. His handlers are working with Rito to help him feel more comfortable around people. An interesting fact about Rito is that he was first named “Pajarita” when it was thought he was a female! Glad it was straightened out.