

Short-eared Owl

Asio flammeus

Bird · Mostly a winter visitor · Oct–Mar



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A medium-large owl of open country, sandy-brown and heavily streaked, with piercing yellow eyes set in black patches and very short ear tufts that are usually invisible. Short-eared owls hunt the Solway merse, rough grazing and moorland edge, and are one of the few owls regularly seen in broad daylight. Numbers wintering here vary a great deal from year to year.

BEHAVIOUR

They hunt by quartering slowly into the wind a few metres above the ground on long, stiff, rather moth-like wings, dropping abruptly onto voles. Because their numbers track the vole cycle, a good vole year can bring several owls to one marsh and a poor one almost none. They nest and roost on the ground, and in winter several may share a favoured roost site in rough grass.

WHEN TO SEE IT

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QUICK FACTS

FAMILY	Owls (Strigidae)
SIZE	34-43 cm · wingspan up to 1.1 m
UK STATUS	Amber-listed

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