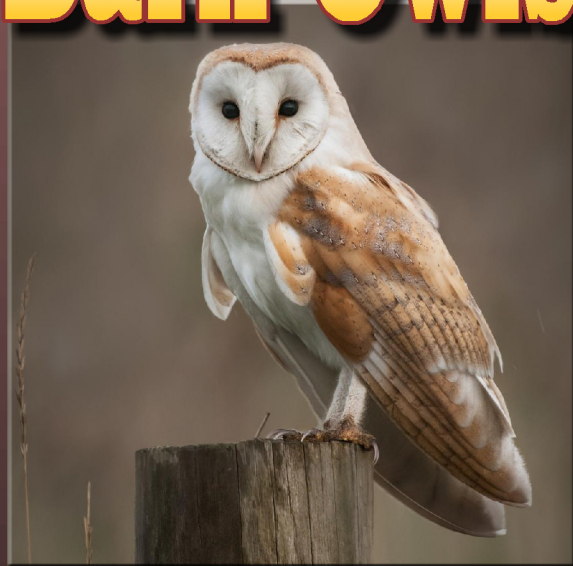


STRIGIFORMES (Owls)

True Owls



Barn Owls



Family STRIGIDAE (True Owls)

Desert Great Horned Owl (*Bubo virginianus pallescens*)

Measurements:

Length: 22" Wing Span: 44"

Average Weight: (m) 2.1 lbs (f) 2.5 lbs

Distinguishing field characteristics:

hefty size; mottled dark brown plumage (desert race paler); distinctively large "ear" tufts; large yellow eyes; dark gray bill

Notes:

relatively common; the dozen or so subspecies are widespread in a variety of habitats throughout NA and parts of CA and SA; diverse diet, preying on anything small enough to catch, but mostly mammals (rabbits, skunks, etc.) and birds; usually solitary, except in breeding season; both genders similar, though female is larger; color of facial disc varies by region

Mojave presence: year-round

Comments:

For the most part, owls are generally nocturnal hunters. During the day they prefer to take shelter in safe locations, like dense trees (left), in order to catch some undisturbed winks. If you didn't already know an owl was there, you'd be hard pressed to find it! Sometimes, however, a daytime patrol presents an unexpected rooftop guest (right).

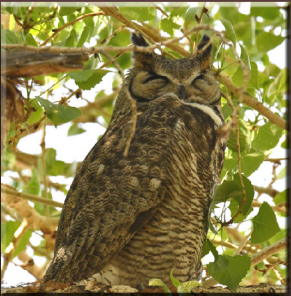
Clark County Wetlands Park in Las Vegas is an important layover for a multitude of migrating birds that serve as dependable food for this pair of owls that regularly nest in the area in early spring. Sometimes they have to deal with feisty neighbors, such as a pestering **Cooper's Hawk**. In typical fashion, momma takes care of important business, like primping herself (left), while hubby entertains the unwelcomed heckler (right)!



Clark Co. Wetlands Park; NV



Clark Co. Wetlands Park; NV



Clark Co. Wetlands Park; NV



Clark Co. Wetlands Park; NV



Bird Viewing Preserve; NV



Dolan Springs, Arizona



Family STRIGIDAE (True Owls)

Short-Eared Owl (*Asio flammeus*)

Measurements:

Length: 15" Wing Span: 38"

Average Weight: 12 oz

Distinguishing field characteristics:

mottled brown above, pale below, with barred tail and wings, streaked breast; large yellow eyes rimmed by dark, roughly triangular patches on pale facial disk; strongly hooked black bill; short tufts of feathers that look like ears, though not always discernable; both genders similar, though female is slightly larger

Notes:

uncommon; 10 subspecies distributed around the world except Antarctica and Australia; hunts mostly at night (though occasionally during the day) for small mammals (voles, mice, etc.) and insects

Mojave presence: rare

Comments:

April, 2116, surprised me with a gift of seeing **Short-Eared Owls** for the first--and still only--time! On a trip to the Kingston Range (about 80 miles from Vegas) to collect some glaucophane, I stopped as usual at an abandoned ranch house in Horse Thief Spring. While scouting around getting pics of flowers and such, I disturbed a group of these medium-sized birds from their cozy morning roost. A male perched by himself (top photos) made for a good photo op, but the female didn't care much for that at all, and promptly flew in to shield him (bottom photos) from the nosy paparazzi! Unfortunately in those days, I didn't possess a good camera for photographing wildlife, so these pics are rather grainy. However, the shots do show the characteristic triangular patches around the eyes, and the small "ears" (often not seen), which are visible on the female (bottom left).

