Rare Animals of Louisiana

Short-eared Owl
Asio flammeus

**Rarity Rank:** S2S3N/G5

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<th>State</th>
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**Identification:**
- Medium sized owl without distinct ear tufts
- Body color is buffy or gray with a streaked neck and upper breast
- Underparts are spotted or barred and facial disks are pale buff
- Yellow irises
- Adults are up to 43 cm in length with wingspread of 112 cm

**Habitat:**
- Prairies, marshes, pastures, and open fields
- Often seen on airport grounds
- Nests are made on the ground and therefore are usually in dry areas with plenty of vegetation to hide the incubating female and eggs

**Food habits:**
- Small rodents, insects and small birds
- Will occasionally feed during the day but usually prefer twilight

**Range:**
- Breeding Range: Northern and western United States, Canada and the Greater Antilles, and South America
- Winters in same areas as breeding, but also disperses into Southern United States and Central America

**Reproduction:**
- May use communal winter roosts as local breeding territories
- The ground nests are lined with grass and downy feathers by the female
- Egg is short elliptical shape, has a smooth texture and a cream or white color
- Incubation and brooding accomplished by the female while the male provides protection and food

Photo by Dr. Jacob Faust

Range based on occurrences in Natural Heritage database
Nests are vulnerable to predation because they are on the ground, therefore selective pressure has favored rapid growth and development. Offspring leave the nest after 12-18 days.

**Threats:**
- Loss of habitat due to human encroachment
- Predation on eggs
- Disturbance of nest sites by domestic and feral cats and dogs

**Beneficial Management Practices:**
- Maintain large areas of habitat for the owls as well as prey
- Monitor predation and human disturbance
- Educate communities to raise awareness of the species

**LA River Basins:**
Pontchartrain, Mississippi, Mermentau, Red, Ouachita

**References:**