



## EASTERN SCREECH-OWL NEST BOX

Eastern Screech-Owls are cunning little owls that come in two color morphs, red and gray. Both morphs are found year-round in North Carolina. Healthy populations can be found wherever there are tree cavities, whether in city parks, shaded yards, or deep hardwood forest. Nest box installations may improve population densities where Screech-Owls are uncommon.

Eastern Screech-Owls can be observed around dusk, when it is common for them to peek outside of their nest holes. The vocalizations, which are typically heard after dark, resemble a horse's "whinny" or a drawn-out trill. They are active mostly at night, when they hunt small rodents and insects. In North Carolina, Screech-Owls nest in early spring, and may return to the same nest site annually.

You can help Screech-owls by protecting existing habitat on private property retaining large, mature trees and snags, even if they appear partially dead, provides the necessary natural cavities for nesting and daytime roosting. These trees are far more valuable to a screech owl pair than a newly planted sapling.

Don't use rodenticides in your home to prevent secondary poisoning from dead mice. Reduce or eliminate night lighting as excessive light can interfere with the owls' nocturnal hunting patterns.

### Screech-Owl Nest Box Installation

When installing a Screech-Owl box from New Hope Bird Alliance, choose a site that has mature hardwoods, plenty of shade, and an open understory. The entrance hole should face a direction that receives maximum shade during spring afternoons. Proximity to a shallow water source, such as a creek or birdbath, is a plus.

First apply a stain or water sealant to the outer surface of the box, to protect it from weathering. Place the box on a mature hardwood tree, such as a large oak, between 10 and 18 feet high, using four 3-inch wood screws. Pilot holes are provided for the screws. Place three inches of hardwood mulch or dead, dry leaves in the box, as the owls do not construct their own nests. The nest material will develop a life of its own, which is how Screech-Owls like it. **No cleaning of the nest box is ever necessary . . . in fact, it is discouraged.**

**Use caution when placing these nest boxes!** They are quite heavy, and a sturdy ladder is a must. New Hope Bird Alliance assumes no liability for self-installed nest boxes.