

## Eastern Whip-poor-will (*Antrostomus vociferus*)

**Description:** Eastern Whip-poor-wills are easy to hear but hard to see. Their brindled plumage blends perfectly with the gray-brown leaf litter of the open forests where they breed and roost. At dawn and dusk, and on moonlit nights, they sally out from perches to sweep up insects in their cavernous mouths. The Eastern Whip-poor-will is well camouflaged in mottled brown and gray, making them tough to find while they sleep during the day. In flight, wingtips are broadly rounded, unlike the pointed wings of nighthawks. There is no white in the wings. Corners of tail are white (male) or buff (female). Song is “whip-poor-will” repeated over and over.



*Eastern Whip-poor-will photo by Tony Castro*

**Trend:** Declining - Conservation Tipping Point Yellow Alert

**Habitat:** Look for Eastern Whip-poor-wills in eastern forests with open understories. They can be found in both purely deciduous and mixed deciduous-pine forests, often in areas with sandy soil. A patchwork of open forest and open areas (powerlines) is often good habitat.

**Ways You can help with Conservation:** Eastern whip-poor-wills are declining due to habitat loss; night light pollution; declining insect prey populations; and predation by cats, raccoons, snakes, and other predators.

*Do not use pesticides or pest control services, especially mosquito-spraying.* Similar to other aerial insectivores, decreasing populations of insects, especially moths, is impacting these birds. More than half their diet consists of moths, though they are known to eat beetles, ants, and wasps as well.

*Plant native plants to support insect populations.* Consider supporting these birds by planting a moth garden using larval host plants for local moth species. For more information on helping birds and creating better habitat [visit our web page](#).

*Keep cats indoors and kindly encourage others to do so.* Whip-poor-wills nest directly on the ground, in shady woods, but often near the edge of a clearing, on open soil covered with dead leaves. They do not build nests and eggs are laid on flat ground. This makes their young vulnerable to feral cats and raccoons – You can help by advocating to keep cats indoors. See our [information on how to improve habitat for birds](#).

Join our [Breeding Bird Surveys](#) and counts to help identify areas where Whip-poor-wills occur so we can target areas for preservation.