

# The Eastern Screech Owl: Life History, Ecology, and Behavior in the Suburbs and Countryside (W. L. Moody, Jr., Natural History)

Frederick R. Gehlbach

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The eastern screech owl, widespread over the eastern half of North America and noticeably tolerant of human activity, is one of America's most familiar birds. Residing naturally in wooded environs with tree cavities, this owl lives well in suburbia and can be found nesting in mailboxes, porch columns, and purple martin houses. Based on a twenty-five-year study, biologist Frederick R. Gehlbach tells the life story of the eastern screech owl, focusing on case studies of suburban and rural study plots in Central Texas. This is the first thorough study of major life-history, behavioral, and ecological features of the species. Indeed, it is the first concurrent, comparative study of an urban and a rural population of any New World animal. Told in a personal voice, the story of these birds will interest all who have not lost touch with their ancestral world. However, Gehlbach has also included quantitative data and analysis of interest to ecologists, wildlife biologists, and ornithologists. Photographs (including color shots of the gray and rufous phases), figures, and tables provide further detail. Gehlbach's investigations have been those of not only an academic ecologist, but a suburbanite curious about his natural surroundings. The result is a model of research on species population dynamics and adaptation, yielding an emerging picture of what the eastern screech owl needs for successful coexistence with human neighbors.

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