

# Israel's Owls

Oz Horine

Israel is at the junction of three continents: Europe, Asia & Africa. Many birds' migration paths pass straight through Israel twice a year: each spring about half a billion birds migrate through the country northwards to the breeding areas, and each autumn they move to their wintering areas to the south. The continental bridge effect also means that Israel has more birds than expected - about 540 species.



Hume's Tawny Owl

For some of these, Israel is the northern distribution boundary; for others the southern.



Pallid Scops Owl



Long Eared Owl

Owls trip to Israel can be combined with other fascinating birding sights such as the thousands of migratory raptors soaring and gliding, a mix of many other passing-by birds in different habitats, a morning drinking ritual of sandgrouses (several species) as well as other desert birds, seabirds in the Red and Mediterranean Seas, Nightjars (Egyptian, Nubian and Eurasian) and lots more. Some birds are resident but many need specific timing.

Most of Israel's owls can be found throughout the year, although in different months some are easier to be found.

Out of Israel's TEN owl species, the "desert" ones are the most interesting to overseas visitors: Hume's Tawny Owl (*Strix butleri*), Pharaoh Eagle Owl (*Bubo ascalaphus*) and Pallid Scops Owl (*Otus brucei*).

Hume's Tawny Owl & Pharoah Eagle Owl are resident, while PSO is a rare winter visitor. So if you are interested in seeing all three of these unique owls, then December, January or February are the best months for your Israeli Owling tour.

During the late spring and early summer months (May-July), the fledglings of the three other species are vocal, and are easier to locate: Long Eared Owl (*Asio otus*), Eurasian Tawny Owl (*Strix aluco*) and Eurasian Scops Owl (*Otus scops*). Other resident species that can be seen throughout the year, but more easily in the spring months are Eurasian Eagle Owl (*Bubo bubo*), Barn Owl (*Tyto alba*) and Little Owl (*Athene noctua*). Short-eared Owl (*Asio flammeus*) is less common, and most observations are from migration time and winter.



Little Owl

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Eurasian Scops Owl



Eurasian Tawny Owl



Eurasian Eagle Owl