

On sunny days, the owls will sit well out on small branches, relying on their plumage for camouflage. They can look much like a clump of dead oak leaves resting in the conifers.

Sometimes they will sit tightly against the trunk of the roost tree. Look for a bird that may appear from slightly to considerably smaller than a screech owl. A bird with compressed feathers may appear almost too small for your expectations, while a bird that is fluffed out may appear larger than expected. Size may vary from that of a tennis ball to that of a softball.

With patience and careful scrutiny, you can usually find the birds within an hour. With practice, you may find them more quickly. A few birds, however, will defy all efforts to find them, making the search

for Saw-whet Owls a challenge to all birders, whether beginner or advanced.

While looking for the owls during winter at Allerton Park, you may also want to enjoy the other resident bird life. Birds

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you may find include Barred and Great Horned Owls, a resident pair of Red-shouldered Hawks and Pileated Woodpeckers. Also, the numerous conifers near Allerton House and the visitor's center provide food

for Pine Siskins, Red and White-winged Crossbills, and Evening Grosbeaks.

If you're lucky, your visit to Allerton Park will reward you with the *piece de resistance*, a tiny northern owl that visits our prairie state in winter. ■

*Editor's Note: Robert Chapel will lead IOS members on a Saw-whet Owl finding excursion on Feb. 13, 1993. For more information and to register, call Sue Friscia, IOS field trip chairman at (708) 371-2124.*

*Robert cautions that you should wear protective clothing, even if the weather is mild. The owls' roosting area contains thorny plants and sharp needles. A pair of coveralls serves nicely as a good suit of armor.*

