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Northern Harrier

During winter, just at sunrise, the Northern Harrier flies up out of its night roost in thick prairie grasses to hunt rodents. This raptor (bird that hunts and eats other animals) visits Oklahoma in winters to hunt rodents and small birds. During the winter these hawks will form communal night roost sites much as the Short-eared Owl forms communal daytime roost sites. In fact, as the Northern Harrier settles into its night roost after hunting the “day shift”, the Short-eared Owl flies up to hunt the “night shift”. This hawk is easy to identify by its white rump patch as it dips and glides over the prairie. The gray-blue back with black wing-tips distinguishes a male Northern Harrier from the brown female or immature Harrier. Look for this hawk on all the loops of the Great Plains Trail.