

Barred Owl



Classification

Kingdom: Animalia

Phylum: Chordata

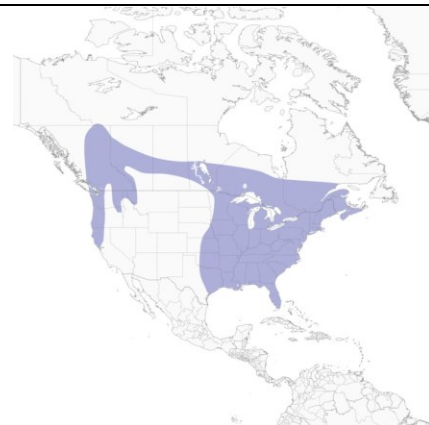
Class: Aves

Order: Strigiformes

Family: Strigidae

Genus: *Strix*

Species: *varia*



Range, Habitat, Conservation Status

- **Range:** Strictly found in North America. Historically found throughout the eastern half of the United States, however they expanded in the twentieth century. Recently expanded their range into the Pacific Northwest where they are displacing and hybridizing with Spotted Owls, which are already threatened due to habitat loss.
- **Habitat:** Mixed forests of large, mature trees, often near water. Preferred habitats range from uplands to streamsides to swamps.
- **Conservation Status:** Least Concern

Physical Characteristics

- **Body Length:** 16.9 to 19.7 inches (43-50 cm)
- **Wingspan:** 39.0 to 43.3 inches (99-110 cm)
- **Weight:** 1.0 to 2.3 pounds (470-1050 g)
- **Lifespan:** On average 10 years in the wild. In human care have lived over 30 years.
- **Identifying Traits:** Largish owl that lacks the characteristic ear tufts of the Great Horned Owl. Dark brown, almost black, eyes and brown and white striped plumage. The underparts are marked with vertical brown bars on a white background while the upper breast has horizontal brown bars. The wings and tail are also barred with brown and white.

Behaviors

- **Feeding:** Small rodents make up the bulk of their diet. They will eat a variety of small animals, including invertebrates, amphibians, reptiles, other birds, mice, voles, chipmunks, squirrels, and rabbits. They may also perch over water or wade into shallow water to catch crayfish and fish. They do most of their hunting at dusk and during the night, but they have

been observed feeding during the day, especially on extra dark and cloudy days.

- **Breeding:** Courtship begins in late winter with males and females bobbing and bowing their heads, raising their wings, and calling to each other while perched close together.
- **Nesting:** Choose nest cavities 20 to 40 feet high in large trees as well as stick platform nests built by other animals (hawks, ravens, crows, and squirrels). They may also utilize human-made nest boxes. Have 1 to 5 eggs per nest that incubate for 28 to 35 days. After 5 to 6 weeks of hatching, they will be ready to fledge or fly from the nest for the first time.
- **Migration:** Not Migratory
- **Call:** Very distinctive call that sounds like "Who cooks for you? Who cooks for you-all?"

Resident Bird(s)

Name: Artemis

- **Age:** Hatched in 2022
- **Sex:** Female
- **Background:** Non-releasable due to limited to no vision in right eye when hatched.*
- **Unique Individual Traits:** At first glance, she may look the same as her roommate Grimm but talk to their keepers and you will hear all about their many physical and personality differences.

Name: Grimm

- **Age:** Hatched in 2015
- **Sex:** Male
- **Background:** Fell from nest, and non-releasable due to unintentional overexposure to humans at an important development stage.**
- **Unique Individual Traits:** At first glance, he may look the same as his roommate Artemis but talk to their keepers and you will hear all about their many physical and personality differences.

Name: Nox

- **Age:** Hatched in 2023
- **Sex:** Female
- **Background:** Non-releasable due to toe amputation.***
- **Unique Individual Traits:** Name picked by CRC volunteers. It is a Latin word that means night.

Name: Ulula (Lu)

- **Age:** Hatched in 2008
- **Sex:** Female

- **Background:** Fractured left wing, non-releasable. Unknown Cause. See during a Meet a Raptor, private program, or special event.
- **Unique Individual Traits:** She dispels the rumor that owls are not intelligent as she has a great memory. She remembers keepers she worked with years ago.

Name: Dahlia

- **Age:** Hatched in 2019
- **Sex:** Female
- **Background:** Attacked by predator as baby, non-releasable due to lack of vision in left eye, which was later surgically removed.* See during a Meet a Raptor, other public programs, or special events.
- **Unique Individual Traits:** From a young age, she has enjoyed sunning herself by closing her eyes and outstretching her wings in a bright sunny spot.

Fun Facts!

- Barred Owls that have crayfish as a large part of their diet tend to develop pink-tinged breast feathers.
- Pleistocene fossils of Barred Owls, which are at least 11,000 years old, have been dug up in Ontario, Canada, Florida, and Tennessee.
- Besides not migrating, these owls don't move a lot in general. One study looked at 158 banded birds and found that none of them moved farther than 6 miles away from their original locations.
- Young Barred Owls are able to climb trees using their bill and talons to grasp the bark, then flapping their wings to help walk their way up the tree trunk.

Importance

- Barred Owls have been utilized by scientists as an indicator species (an organism whose presence, absence or abundance reflects the health of an environment/ecosystem) for managing old forests as they rely on mature forests with large dead trees for nest sites and thus are sensitive to logging expansion.

Sources

- https://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/Barred_Owl/overview
- <https://www.peregrinefund.org/explore-raptors-species/owls/barred-owl>
- <https://www.audubon.org/field-guide/bird/barred-owl>
- <https://nationalzoo.si.edu/animals/barred-owl>



*As owls depend on their hearing to find food, some one-eyed adult owls may be released back into the wild. However, younger owls (hatchlings, nestlings, and fledglings) that are still learning and have not yet developed the skills they need to survive on their own in the wild are non-releasable with limited vision as vision may aid in the learning process.

**Bird did not learn to behave in a species typical manner due to exposure to humans at a young age. This can occur when a well-meaning human attempts to care for a baby bird. By the time this human realized they were not best suited to raise a baby bird and called CRC, the bird had been exposed to humans too long and had not learned the required skills to survive in the wild, which it would have received from the bird's parents.

***This bird required a toe amputation after coming into the Raptor Hospital. The loss of a toe impacts the ability of a raptor to hunt and perch, thus making this bird non-releasable.