

# Common Name: Barred Owl

Scientific Name: *Strix varia*



IUCN Red list Status: Least concern  
AZA Conservation Program: Not listed

**Class:** Aves  
**Order:** Strigiformes  
**Family:** Strigidae  
**Genus:** Strix

## Habitat:

Barred owls choose large, mature forests made up of both evergreens and deciduous trees and prefer to be near a water source. They roost in cavities of trees during the day and are crepuscular, come out to hunt during the twilight hours.

## Threats in the Wild:

Over logging is a threat to Barred owls, due to their dependence on large, older trees with roosting/nesting cavities.

Road-side littering is a huge threat to all birds of prey. Litter on the side of the road attracts small mammals to busy roads, which then attracts birds of prey including the Barred owl. This makes birds of prey more susceptible to being hit by cars.

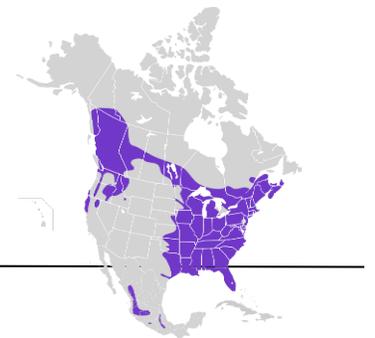
## Physical Characteristics:

Barred owls are large, stocky owls with rounded heads and no plumicorns. They are mottled brown with dark brown/black eyes. They have characteristic vertical “bars” of brown on a white background. The upper chest has horizontal brown “bars”. Wings and tail are covered in brown bars on white background. Can range from brown to grey in color.

From 43-50 cm tall with a wing span of 99-110cm. They can weigh 470 and 1050 grams, females tending to be larger than males.

## Reproduction:

Barred owls reach sexual maturity at around two years of age. Once they meet their mate, they mate for life. Nests can be found in tree cavities, when possible. They have been known to use nests abandoned by other birds and squirrels when they can't find a suitable tree cavity. Females lay a clutch of 1-5 eggs that are incubated from 28-33 days. The young fledge at



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around 6 weeks of age, but remain dependent on their parents until they are around 6 month old. The mother incubates and cares for the young, while the father hunts for her and the babies.

## Longevity:

Barred owls can live up to about 10 years old in the wild (oldest recorded was 18). In captivity, they can live up to 23 years old.

## Diet:

Hunt for small mammals, especially rodents in the wild. Because they tend to live near a water source, they are known to eat fish and crayfish as well.

## Miscellaneous:

Their calls are very recognizable and sounds like “Who cooks for you, Who cooks for you all?”

## Cool Fact:

- Sometimes, the belly feathers of Barred owls can turn a pink color. This is thought to be the result of the owl having a lot of crayfish in its diet.
- Young Barred owls can climb trees by using their bill and talons to grab onto the bark, while flapping their wings. This allows them to walk their way up the tree. This action is called “wing assisted incline running”.
- Barred owls have been found to hybridize with the Spotted owl in the western part of the United States.
- Like other owls, Barred owls have specialized feathers that allow them to be silent hunters.

