

Barred Owl

(Strix varia)



DID YOU KNOW:

The rich baritone hooting you may hear in the woods that sounds like 'who cooks for you, who cooks for you-all' is the barred owl. They get their name from the dark barred pattern on the feathers.

EATING HABITS:

Barred owls are well-adapted for hunting small mammals, reptiles and birds; they will even eat fish! Their sharp talons and beak are perfect for grabbing, killing and tearing the meat. They seek prey from a perch or while flying low through the forest. They are most active at night, but will also hunt early in the morning and at dusk. The male hunts for food and brings it to the nest when the female is with the young.

THE YOUNG:

The adult pair choose a large hollow in a tree to make their nest. Sometimes they may even use an old abandoned hawk or squirrel nest. The pair call to each other often when preparing to raise their family. The female lays two to four eggs that hatch in about 30 days. The babies look like big puffballs while they are covered with down. The feathers soon begin to grow in, and they are able to fly in about six weeks.

HABITAT (HOME):

Barred owls can be found from the East Coast to the Rocky Mountains, from Canada to the Gulf Coast. Woodlands that are near rivers and other wetlands are prime barred owl habitat. Locally you can hear or see barred owls where the Missouri and the Blue Rivers run through wooded areas.



DEFENSIVE HABITS:

Barred owls are more than 20 inches tall, so adults are not preyed upon by many others. Sharp talons, flight and a sharp beak are all excellent for defense. However, the babies can be food for other birds of prey. Mom always stays close by until her babies can fly.

UNUSUAL FACTS:

- Excellent eyesight and hearing give owls a great advantage when they hunt for food.
- And they fly silently. The leading edge of the primary feathers on the wings extend out like eyelashes. These delicately feathered edges slice through the air without creating sound, allowing the owl to sneak up on its prey.
- Unlike most other owls, barred owls fish! They swoop down at the edge of lakes and grab a fish with their talons.