



Short-eared Owl

Asio flammeus

The Short-eared Owl can be seen late in the day, flying over open grass fields or wetlands in search of a meal. It has small “ear” tufts and is quite the aerial acrobat. It can hover over its prey before pouncing.

Lives: In the Willamette Valley and East of the Cascades.

Fun Fact: Short-eared owls nest on the ground under grass or shrubs.



Boreal Owl

Aegolius funereus

In Oregon, these small shy brown owls with square faces live in remote, old mountain forests often above 5,000 feet. They hunt at night from a perch in a tree.

Lives: Rare in Northeast Oregon.

Fun Fact: The Boreal owl is named for the winged Greek god of the north wind, Boreas.



Northern Saw-whet Owl

Aegolius acadicus

This small forest owl is brown or reddish in color, has white spots and excellent hearing. It roosts (perches) in dense trees and uses cavities made by woodpeckers to nest.

Lives: Throughout Oregon except the southeast.

Fun Fact: Owls have large eyes so they can see in dim light. While they can't move their eyes up, down or sideways, they can rotate their heads 270 degrees!

Barred Owl: A Range Expander



Strix varia

Historically, the Barred Owl lived only in the eastern U.S., but its range has expanded into the west. It is a large owl with brown and white feathers and stripes on its chest and throat. It is believed to be a serious competitor to native spotted owls.

Lives: In western and northeast Oregon.

Fun Fact: This owl's call sounds like, “Who cooks for you? Who cooks for you all?”

What kids can do to help owls

1. Listen to owl calls on the Internet and learn to identify their sounds. Listen for them at night—spring and fall are good times.
2. Never pick up owlets (young owls). They can spend days to several weeks on the ground while learning to fly. Their parents care for them until they can fly.
3. Some owls will lay eggs and raise their young in nest boxes. Do some research and see what owls live in your area and which might use a nest box or owl platform.
4. Read about owls in the news and think about why they are in the news.
5. Do a research report on one of Oregon's owls to learn about their habitats and threats to their survival.

Owls in need of conservation

The flammulated, short-eared, northern spotted, western burrowing and great gray owls are Oregon Conservation Strategy species of conservation concern. The northern spotted owl is listed as threatened under both the federal and state Endangered Species acts. Visit the Conservation Section of ODFW's website to learn more.

Photos: Barn owl, Wikipedia; Flammulated owl, Kathy Munsel, ODFW; Western screech-owl, Willis Peterson, National Park Service; Great horned owl, Kathy Munsel, ODFW; Snowy owl, pe_ha45, Wikipedia; Northern pygmy, USFWS; Burrowing owl, Cathy Nowak, ODFW; Northern Spotted owl, Kris Hennings, USFS; Great gray owl, Nadine Hergenrider, USFS; Long-eared owl, Mindaugas Urbonas, Wikipedia; Short-eared owl, Nick Myatt, ODFW; Boreal owl, MDF, Wikipedia; Saw-whet owl, Kameron Perenovich; Barred owl, MDF, Wikipedia.



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Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife Facts for Kids

There are 14 species of owls in Oregon. Five of them are listed in the Oregon Conservation Strategy as species in need of conservation help. Most owls are nocturnal, hunting for insects, fish, frogs, birds, mice and other small mammals in the night. It's fun to listen

to owls hooting, screeching and calling after dark or early in the morning.

Interestingly, owls do not build nests; instead they use tree cavities, nests

created by other species, naturally occurring structures or man-made nest platforms.

the OREGON
CONSERVATION
STRATEGY

Oregon's Whooooo-rific Owls



Barn Owl

Tyto alba

Barn Owls have heart-shaped faces, dark eyes and white to tan feathers with small spots. They often make nests in barns and hay stacks. Some people help barn owls by building nest boxes. They have excellent hearing and can find their prey in total darkness.

Lives: West of the Cascade Mountains. East of the Cascades, it prefers agricultural areas.

Fun Fact: Lacking teeth, owls eat their prey whole, coughing up balls of fur and bones called pellets, which can be found under trees. Students dissect pellets to see if they can identify what an owl had for dinner.



Flammulated Owl

Psiloscops flammeolus

The petite Flammulated Owl is brown or reddish with dark eyes and small "ears." It weighs less than two and a half ounces and lives in mountainous conifer forests, nesting in tree cavities

made by woodpeckers. Crickets, moths and beetles make up its diet. In winter, it migrates to Mexico and Central America.

Lives: East of the Cascade Mountains.

Fun Fact: An owl's "ears" are the tufts of feathers above its eyes.



Western Screech-Owl

Megascops kennicottii

Western Screech Owls are camouflaged—their gray or brown streaked feathers blend into a tree's bark. They have yellow eyes and are common in woodlands and forests.

Lives: Throughout Oregon.

Fun Fact: These owls will nest in suburbs and cities in large trees, nest boxes and other structures.



Great Horned Owl

Bubo virginianus

The Great Horned Owl is large and powerful with yellow eyes and strong talons (claws) that help it prey on mammals and birds larger than itself. It gets its name from the

tufts of feathers above its eyes that look like horns. It is a year-round resident and is often heard calling at night.

Lives: Throughout Oregon.

Fun Fact: Owls have lightweight bodies, soft fluffy feathers and a wing structure that allows them to fly silently.



Snowy Owl

Bubo scandiacus

Snowy Owls, the largest owls in North America by weight, live in the arctic and are only irregular visitors to Oregon. Every few years, a number of them are seen here in the winter. These visits may be due to periodic crashes in the population of their primary prey, lemmings. They hunt primarily in the daytime.

Lives: In the arctic.

Fun Fact: Drawings of snowy owls have been found in prehistoric caves.



Northern Pygmy Owl

Glaucidium gnoma

This is Oregon's smallest owl—about the size of a sparrow. It lives in forests, has yellow eyes and brown to gray feathers with white spots. Two black spots on the back of its head are shaped like eyes, confusing predators.

Lives: Throughout the state except the southeast.

Fun Fact: These owls are primarily diurnal (active during the day) and are fierce hunters able to catch songbirds at feeders.



Western

Burrowing Owl

Athene cunicularia

This small, long-legged owl is the only North American owl that nests underground. It uses abandoned dens dug by

squirrels, prairie dogs and badgers in grasslands and sagebrush. In winter, it migrates as far as Central America.

Lives: The Columbia River Basin and southeast Oregon.

Fun Fact: This owl is active day and night and usually nests in small groups.



Northern

Spotted Owl

Strix occidentalis

This medium-sized, brown owl has brown eyes and white spots on its head and chest. It lives in older forests with a variety of trees, snags and

downed logs of different sizes, and good canopy closure. It does not migrate in winter. In 1990, the spotted owl in Oregon was listed as threatened under the Federal Endangered Species Act.

Lives: Western Oregon and on the east slope of Cascades.

Fun Fact: This owl can live up to 15 years in the wild.

Great Gray Owl

Strix nebulosa

Great Gray Owls have large heads and yellow eyes and are uncommon in Oregon. They live in older forests and are year-round residents. They nest on broken tree tops or man-made platforms, but prefer using nests made by other raptors.



Lives: Northeast Oregon and the central to south Cascades and Siskiyou mountains.

Fun Fact: These owls will plunge through the snow to catch small mammals; their amazing hearing lets them pinpoint their prey's location.



Long-eared Owl

Asio otus

Long-eared Owls are named for the "ears" or feather tufts above their eyes. They nest in dense trees but hunt in the open. In October, some migrate to southern climates. They are uncommon in Oregon.

Lives: East of the Cascades.

Fun Fact: These owls hunt "on the wing" by using their acute hearing to detect prey.