



How to Help

Barred Owls

Barred Owls are found in forested areas across much of the Eastern United States and the Pacific Northwest, where they hunt for small mammals, reptiles, amphibians, and other animals. They can be helped by maintaining forests and woodlands as foraging and roosting habitat, and by providing nest boxes.

What Barred Owls Need

Food: Opportunistic predators, consuming mammals ranging in size from shrews to rabbits, birds, amphibians, reptiles, invertebrates, and even fish. They hunt in wooded areas, observing from a high perch and dropping on prey seen or heard on the ground below. Occupies and defends a breeding and hunting territory of 300-3000 acres, ranging further during non-breeding season.

Nesting: Nests in large tree cavities within year-round hunting territory. Prefers sites with well-developed understory. Nest trees average over 20 feet tall with a diameter greater than 18 inches. May also nest in abandoned open-platform nests built by hawks or crows.

Shelter: Usually roosts during the day high in trees in wooded areas with a closed canopy that provide shade during hot days and shield owls from harassment by crows.

Other: Clearing and fragmentation of large forest patches creates open habitat more suitable for Great Horned Owls, which will prey upon Barred Owls or drive them from their territory. In the Pacific Northwest, Barred Owl boxes should not be placed in areas where they may out-compete less aggressive Spotted Owls.

How You Can Help

- Manage large woodlands and forests as hunting areas by using long timber rotations that maintain large trees and natural forest structures.
- Cooperate with adjacent landowners to create and maintain larger tracts of woodland and forest habitat for owls.
- Avoid use of pesticides that may kill owl prey species and poison owls. Because they feed on fish and amphibians, protect water quality in ponds and streams.
- Retain large snags and trees within large woodlots and forests.
- Install large nest boxes 15-30 feet high in large trees. Boxes should measure 25 x 12 x 12 inches with a 7 inch entrance hole.
- Nest box floors should be covered with a thick layer of wood chips.
- Maintain large trees and areas with closed canopy in woodlands and forests.
- Avoid disturbing owls at their roosting locations.
- Avoid over-clearing of woodland or forest habitats.