



SPECIES OF CONSERVATION CONCERN

WILDLIFE ACTION PLAN

"KEEPING TODAY'S WILDLIFE FROM BECOMING TOMORROW'S MEMORY"



FAST FACTS

- Gray-brown with wide barred collar
- Weighs about 1.5 pounds
- Females are larger than males
- Dark barring on upper breast, dark streaking below
- Has a wing span of 4 feet
- Chiefly nocturnal
- Easily flushed, don't tolerate close approach
- Courting begins in February/March
- Nests in tree hollows or an old crow's nest
- Lays 2–5 white eggs in the Spring, incubation takes around 28 days
- Eats mice, frogs and large insects
- Widely distributed in North America ranging throughout much of the Midwest and eastern United States

BARRED OWL (*strix varia*)

A Barred owl's "Who-cooks-for- you, who-cooks-for-you-all?" rhythmic vocal pattern is easy to recognize. They're famous for their maniacal laughter, doglike barks, hissing and hair-raising catlike screams. Barred Owls do not have ear tufts and their head is rounded. Their eyeballs are dark and huge, almost as large as ours. The eyes are placed close together on the front of their face, enabling their vision to overlap, giving them "binocular" vision. Their depth of vision makes prey objects stand out from a camouflaged background. The ear openings of a Barred Owl are larger than those of other birds enabling them to locate their prey by sound alone. Feathers of the Barred Owl are softer and frayed on the edges. This deflects the air smoothly and silently, allowing them to glide through the woods in search of unsuspecting prey during the night. They roost well hidden in trees during the day.



Illinois Raptor Center

HABITAT REQUIREMENTS

In 1904 it was written that Barred owls were abundant in the lower part of Delaware. They have specific habitat needs that require mature forests. The loss of these forests have caused their population to decline. Barred owls prefer low, wet woods and swampy forests that have an open under story so they can fly and attack their prey easily. They prefer to nest in the trunks of dead tree cavities. If holes are unavailable, they may use a deserted crow or squirrel nest. They practice a kind of family planning that is directly related to the quality of their habitat. If the population of the small mammals is low for some reason, they may not nest that year. When they do have a brood, they space out the hatching of the nestlings so that the youngest may be a full 3 weeks behind the oldest. If hard times falls upon the family, the youngest owlet often becomes food for the larger siblings. To locate Barred owls, look for pellets (large, compact balls of undigested fur, feathers, and bones) on the ground beneath roosting areas. To communicate with owls at night, try imitating their calls or kissing the back of your hand (sounds like an injured mouse).

References: Birds of Delaware. Gene K. Hess, Richard L. West, Maurice V. Barnhill III, Lorraine M. Fleming
The Field Guide to Wildlife Habitats of the Eastern United States. Janine M. Benyus