

# Barred Owl

*Strix varia*

**Class:** *Aves*

**Order:** *Strigiformes*

**Family:** *Strigidae*

**Characteristics:** Barred owls have a very distinct appearance when compared to most other owls. They have a large, round head without ear tufts. Their big, dark brown eyes are highlighted by their pale brown facial disc. They get their name from the brown stripes, or bars, on the white chest. And they have a brown and white mottled back and wings ([Biokids](#)). They range from 17-20 inches tall and have a wingspan of 39-43 inches. At a weight of 16-37 ounces, or 1-2.5 pounds, they are larger than a barn owl but smaller than the great horned owl. Barred owls have long, sharp talons and a very sharp beak for catching and tearing apart prey ([All About Birds](#)).

**Behavior:** Barred owls are mainly nocturnal creatures. They do almost all of their hunting during the night. They use their great senses of vision and hearing to locate prey in the dark. Barred owls are solitary for most of the year. They will live in family groups during the breeding season until the young leave the nest. Barred owls do not migrate, and rarely leave their small home range. These owls communicate with each other through their well-know "who cooks for you, who cooks for you all" [hooting call](#) ([National Geographic](#)).

**Reproduction:** This species will nest in a large, natural, hollow in a tree, broken-off snag, or on old nest of hawk, crow, or squirrel. They rarely nest on the ground. The female will lay 2-3 white eggs and incubate the eggs for 28-33 days. The male will hunt and bring back food to the female and young. The young will begin to [leave the nest](#) and start flying around 6 weeks of age ([Audubon](#)).

## **Diet:**

Wild: mostly small mammals, reptiles, amphibians, and even some aquatic crayfish and crabs ([Audubon](#)).

Zoo: Mice, rats, and chicks

**Conservation:** According to [IUCN Redlist](#), barred owls are of least concern. In parts of their range, the population is increasing. The range size is extremely large and the population is expanding. The only known threat is deforestation, especially in swampy southern areas of the range.

**FYI:** Barred owls can be found in the northern parts of Idaho. Barred owls are preyed on by raccoons and weasels as eggs and nestlings. Adults are sometimes killed by great horned owls, northern goshawks, hit by cars, and captured in traps set for mammals. ([Biokids](#))



## **Range & Habitat:**

Barred owls prefer dense and thick woodlands near water. They are more common in the eastern U.S. but can also be found in Canada, northern Mexico, and the Northwest U.S.



**Lifespan:** up to 20-30 years in captivity, 18 years in the wild.

**Special Adaptations:** Owls have a comb-like feather edge that allows for [silent flight](#). These are on the leading edge of the wing and are called "flutings" or "fimbriae."

## **IUCN Conservation Status:**

Least Concern

