

THROUGH AN OWL'S EYES

Large eyes provide keen vision to hunt at night; but an owl's eyes are so big that the eyeball cannot move inside the skull to look up, down or from side to side. Owls have developed flexible necks that permit their head to rotate 270 degrees so they can look behind. Owls twist their head almost upside-down allowing them to look up.



Dr. Dan Sudia

HOW OWLS HEAR

Being “*quiet as a mouse*” does not protect rats and mice from the owl. Owls have exceptional hearing for nocturnal hunting of rodents, the owl's main food. The ears of an owl are located behind the eyes and hidden by flaps of skin and feathers. Some species have head feathers that look like ears but are simply feathers.

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Owls of Florida



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Predator Neighbor Nature's Pest Control

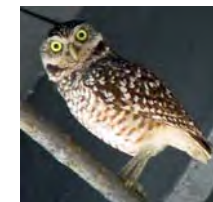


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Florida is a year-round home to five species of spectacular owls. Each species has unique features, assist nature's balance and benefits our environment. Florida owls contribute greatly to the control of the rodent population preventing massive infestations of mice, rats, squirrels. Our smaller owls devour insects. Throughout Florida, owl populations are being enhanced to aid in biological control of rodents. Although some species occasionally eat birds, their favorite food is insects or rodents.

Several owl species are adapting to areas of development where large native trees are preserved. These owls continue pest management tasks while many predacious species, like the fox, have declined. Most owl species have unique features like barbed feathers that muffle the sound of their flight. This allows owls to swoop down silently upon prey.

Another unique feature is pellet regurgitation. Owl pellets contain the undigested bone, fur and teeth of its prey.



45th Space Wing
Natural Resources

BARN OWL *Tyto alba*



Gayle Mercurio

Song: hissing c s s s e h h or shreee
Length: 14 -21” **Wingspan:** 43” – 47”
Range: throughout Florida year round
Habitat: woodland edges, clearings, farms, suburbs
Diet: rodents and insects
Nests: tree cavities, barns, abandoned buildings in dark recesses
Clutch: 3 -11 oval eggs twice yearly
A nocturnal hunter with a white heart-shaped face, dark eyes and long legs. Also called the monkey-faced or hissing owl, they hunt close to their nest and eat many small rodents. It is beneficial for farmers to have an owl in the barn. Although rarely seen owl pellets on the ground lets you know their nest is close by.

EASTERN SCREECH-OWL
Megascops asio



Screech Owl, ©Dan Sudia

Song: Descending whistle
Length: 7”-10” **Wingspan:** 18” – 24”
Range: throughout Florida
Habitat: hardwood, swamp, pineland, groves, urban and suburban areas
Diet: insects, rodents, birds, reptiles
Nests: cavities in trees or owl boxes
Clutch: 2-5 round eggs
Florida’s smallest owl, the Eastern Screech mates for life. The male feeds the female during the 21 to 30 days of egg incubation. Brown,



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red and gray chicks may hatch from one brood, but brown is the most common color.

GREAT HORNED OWL
Bubo virginianus



Great Horned Owl, ©Dan Sudia

Song: Hoo hoo-oo hoo hoo,
Hoo hoo-hoo-hoo hoo-oo hoo-oo
Length: 18-25” **Wingspan:** 36” – 60”
Range: throughout Florida
Habitat: forests, prairies, swamps and marshes
Diets: rodents, rabbits, skunks, owls, opossums, domestic cats, ducks
Nests: broad forks in trees and abandoned raptor nests
Clutch: 1-4 eggs; 1 brood per year
Often heard calling at dusk, this nocturnal hunter, is Florida’s largest owl. It has a boxy body, yellow eyes and ear-like tufts.
This female made her nest on the roof of a public walkway.



Chris Koeppel

BURROWING OWL
Athene cunicularia



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Song: Day: ckk ckk ckk
Night: co hoo
Length: 8” -11” **Wingspan:** 9” – 11”
Range: most of Florida
Habitat: dry grasslands, prairies, urban and agricultural areas
Diet: insects especially dung beetles; small rodents, birds and amphibians
Nests: in burrows 1-3 feet deep; often in small communities of nesting pairs
Clutch: 6 -11 round eggs
Small, ground dwelling bird with flat head, long legs, and white brow. They stand or perch near their burrow during the day and display a bobbing motion when alerted. Nocturnal hunters, they fly low and hover. They will bait dung beetles with bits of scat.

BARRED OWL
Strix varia



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Song: Hoo hoo ho-ho hoo hoo ho
hooowah
Who cooks for you who cooks for you all
Length: 16 - 24” **Wingspan:** 50” – 60”
Range: throughout mainland Florida
Habitat: pine scrubs, swamps, mixed forests, marsh, prairies, sand hills and agricultural areas
Diet: variety of rodents, some birds
Nests: cavities in hardwoods and palms
Clutch: 2 – 3 round eggs
Often seen or heard; the Barred owl is stocky with a round head, broad wings, short tail, brown eyes, bars across the chest and streaked belly. Mostly nocturnal, but cautious of falling prey to the great horned owl.