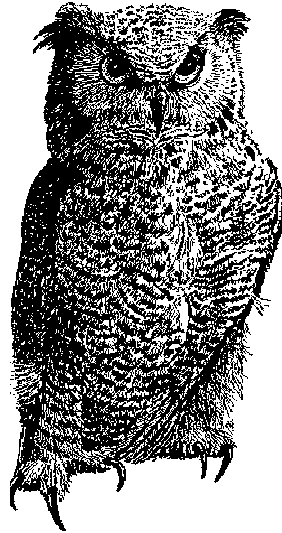


# Great Horned Owl

Scientific Name: *Bubo virginianus*



## Did You Know?

- Owls do not have a good sense of smell. But they do have acute hearing and can hear sounds ten miles away.
- Owls have good eyesight. They see only black and white, but their eyes are as large as a human's and 35 times more sensitive. They can see objects with about five percent the amount of light that a human requires.
- Owls cannot move their eyes up, down, or side to side like humans can, so they have evolved the ability to rotate their heads approximately 270 degrees. They have 14 neck bones. Humans have 7.
- Great Horned Owls are nocturnal.
- Owls bob up and down and puff up to attract their mate.
- Their wing span can be up to 2 meters.
- Due to the shapes of their wings and softly fringed feather edges, Great Horned Owls are able to fly in near silence and take their prey by surprise. The impact of landing on their prey kills the prey.
- The Great Horned Owls' call sound like "Hoo HooHoooooo HooHoo" The sounds can be heard miles away in a still night.
- After the Owl eats its prey, it coughs up little pellets (about the size of your thumb) that are parts of the animal that the Owl could not digest. This is made up of bones, skin, and fur or feathers.
- The life span of a Great Horned Owl is anywhere from fifteen to twenty-five years in captivity.
- They get their name, "the Great Horned Owl", because of the two tufts on their head and that look like horns.

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# General Information on Great Horned Owls

## IDENTIFYING CHARACTERISTICS

The largest of the "tufted" Owls in North America, the Great Horned Owl's face is dominated by the large tufts or "horns," yellow eyes, and white throat patch. Barred on the underside, these Owls can vary in color from reddish-brown to gray to black and white. The large feet are feathered to the ends of the toes. Immature birds resemble the adults.

## RANGE

Great Horned Owls can be found breeding from northern Alaska to the tip of Tierra del Fuego. Canadian birds seem to be somewhat migratory, responding to the population cycles of their prey, and move into the northern United States in winter.

## HABITAT

A very adaptable bird, the Great Horned Owl is found in a variety of habitats. In Georgia, they are usually found breeding in stands of trees or in woodlots bordering open fields in agricultural areas. They can be found in cities as well, utilizing parks, residential areas, and industrial developments.

## NESTING

Across its range, this Owl can be found nesting in a variety of situations, including tree cavities(not in SE US), nest boxes, cliff ledges, and old crow, squirrel or hawk nests. In Georgia, courtship and territory formation begins in winter, usually January and February, with eggs laid by March. Juveniles are dependent on the adults through the summer, and sometimes do not leave their parents' territory until forced to do so in late fall. The eggs are white with small bluish tinted spots. It is about thirty to thirty-five days before the eggs hatch. The young will be taken care of by the parents for forty-five to fifty-five days.

## FEEDING HABITS

Considered by many to be the most voracious of all raptors, the Great Horned Owl feeds on an extremely wide variety of prey. This includes waterfowl, rabbits, squirrels, marsh birds, skunks and rodents.

## CONSERVATION STATUS

Considered to be a benefactor from the habitat changes wrought by European settlers, this bird is very common across its range today. Although federal statutes prohibit shooting or harassing Great Horned Owls, the birds are still persecuted by some for their predation of game birds and poultry.

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