

Barred Owl

Strix varia

General Information:

-The “hoot owl” of southern swamps, this puffy-headed owl can also be found in woodlands. It lacks ear tufts, is stoutly built, and is heavily streaked, spotted, and variegated brown, buff, and white. This is one of the only large owls with dark eyes in North America.

Song:

-Usually 8 or more drawn-out notes that sound like “*Who cooks for you? Who cooks for you-all?*”

Behavior:

-Mostly nocturnal and crepuscular but often active in daylight. Prefers deep woods: Inhabits conifer, riparian, and swampy habitats. Feeds on a wide variety of animals, including small mammals, birds, frogs, salamanders, lizards, snakes, fish, large insects, crabs, and crayfish.

Breeding:

-Monogamous and thought to pair for life.

Nesting:

-Incubation of 28-33 days by the female. The 1 brood per year of semi-altricial young is fed by both sexes and stay in the nest for 42 days.

Population:

-Very common to common and widespread. Swamp habitat population in the South has diminished. Range increasing now in the Northwest, where it hybridizes with the Spotted Owl. It is wonderful to hear this owl hooting on a cold and clear winter night!

Conservation:

-Don't shoot hawks or owls!

Shoreline Restoration Issues:

- If you would like to create an environment friendly to the Barred Owl on your shoreland property you are going to have to make sure that it has somewhere to nest and that it has plenty to eat. If you would like information on how to make a nesting platform, contact me or search the Internet. The main thing to concentrate on for food for the Barred Owl is to make sure that there are plenty of trees with a thick under-story of shrubs on your property. I suggest American and Beaked Hazelnut, Witch Hazel, Winterberry, Snowberry, Pussy Willow, Staghorn Sumac, Hawthorn, Ninebark, and Wild Rose along with Swamp White Oak, Red Oak, Silver Maple, River Birch, and Paper Birch. Yellow Birch, American Elm, Red Pine, and Eastern White Pine. The Barred Owl is an awesome bird!

