



# Great Horned Owl

Bubo virginianus



## Mario

I arrived at the Racine Zoo April 21st, 2017.

You can find me at **Raptor Roost**. I was born in the wild; however, I became injured and was taken to a wildlife rehabilitation center. Due to the severity of my injuries, they deemed me unreleasable; which is why I now call Racine Zoo my home.

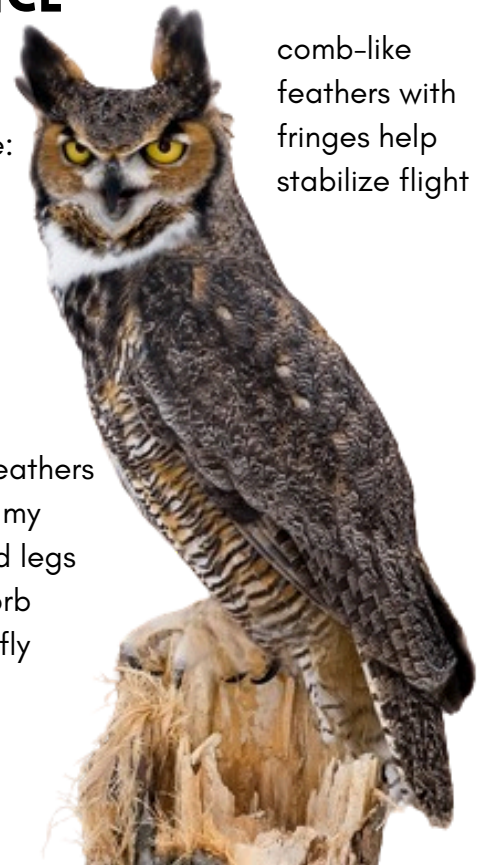
I am a **cautious** and **observant** owl who is on the lookout if I am not resting on one of my perches. I like to hop to one branch to another to get different views.

## OWLS AT A GLANCE

- Great horned owls have **binocular vision**, which allows excellent frontal vision.
- Owls use **14 vertebrae in their neck** to move their heads **270 degrees** to look in different directions.
- The **'horns'** are known as **ear tufts**, although they don't have anything to do with hearing; they help camouflage the owl among the trees.
- They have **zygodactyl feet** where two toes face forward and two face backwards.
- Their grip strength can reach between **200-500 psi**, enough to sever the spine of the prey.
- In the wild, they eat birds, small mammals, amphibians, reptiles, fish, insects. They are fed mice and chicks at the zoo.



Male & Female:  
2 ft in length.  
2-4 lbs.  
wingspan: 5 ft



comb-like feathers with fringes help stabilize flight

Velvety feathers found on my wings and legs that absorb sound to fly silently

Avg. life expectancy in native habitats: 13 years  
Avg. life expectancy in human care: 35 years

## WHERE ARE GREAT HORNED OWL HABITATS LOCATED?



Great horned owls are native to a large geographic range that covers most of North America and extends south into Central and South America. They are most commonly found in habitats such as woodlands, grasslands, deserts, swamps, marshes, mangroves, and both rural and urban human settlements. They make nests in abandoned bird and squirrel nests or tree cavities.

# Owl Behaviors

## DAY DREAMER

I am naturally nocturnal, so I tend to be active at night and sleepy during the day.

I am most likely sleeping on my perch. I appreciate if you can keep it quiet for me.



## EATING

Owls eat prey whole and later regurgitate, pellets of indigestible material including, fur, teeth, and bones.

If you look for my pellets, you might see my last meal



## CALL

"hoo-hoo hoooo hoo-hoo," can be heard from miles away. It is mainly used for territorial and mating calls. They also screech loudly when attacking prey.

I am tell you that you are in my personal space and it belongs to me



## PREENING

Owls use their beaks to straighten and clean their feathers. They will spread oil from their uropygial gland onto their feathers.

I preen my feathers to keep my feathers nice and healthy. It also helps me grow new ones.

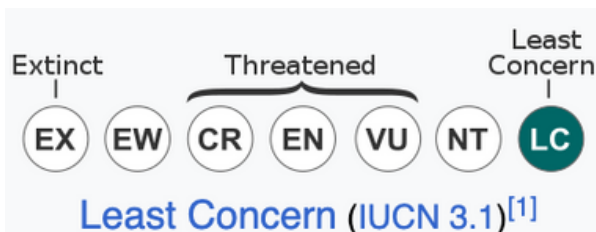


- They are solitary and do not migrate; They maintain a territory with an average home range of 1.5 square miles.
- Great horned owls are monogamous; they mate with the same individual for many years.
- These owls use the abandoned nests of hawks, eagles, herons, and squirrels; tree dens and cavities may be used. When tree nest sites are lacking, they use old buildings, cliffs, and even the bare ground.
- Their sense of hearing is so acute that they can detect a mouse stepping on a twig from a distance of 75 feet!

# Owl Conservation

Predators like Great Horned Owl are very important to their habitat. Predators disperse rich nutrients and influence the structure of ecosystems by regulating the food chain.

Great Horned Owls are currently listed as **least concern** because of how widespread and adaptable they are. However, birds of prey are affected by secondary poisoning if they eat animals that consume pesticides such as mice and rats.



## How can we help?

We can use alternative deterrents like peppermint spray, live traps, and light and sound to prevent rodents into our spaces. Regularly check your vent and crawl space.

To prevent birds from striking your windows, put color stickers, string, or decals on windows or fencing. This lets the bird know that there is a physical object and break up reflections.