

Species Sheets: Barred Owl

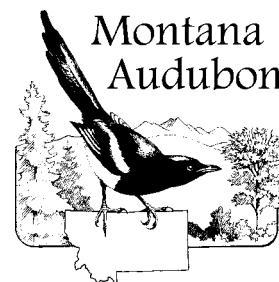


photo by Milo Burcham ©

Common name: Barred Owl

Latin Name: *Strix varia*

Field Marks: Length 21 inches
Wing span 42 inches



Rather large owl with rounded head and yellow beak. The “bars” of dark brown extend across the head and upper body, with vertical streaks below. Facial disk whitish-gray with dark rings circling dark eyes. Back is an uneven pattern of brown, black and cream, so bird blends in while roosting. A North American owl more common in the eastern U.S. Closely related to Spotted Owl, which doesn’t occur in Montana. Occasionally hybridizes where live together.

Habitat:

Mature stands of forest, coniferous and mixed trees, river bottoms. Dense woods with some clearings.

Behavior:

Feeds on rodents at night, even flying squirrels. Also birds, reptiles, amphibians, fish. Usually prey that can be swallowed whole. Hunts from perches to pounce, but may hover over likely spot while seeking prey.

Vocalization:

Very distinctive nine-syllable hoot in two phrases that sounds like “who cooks for you, who cooks for you ALL” with the last part a gut-wrenching call.

Also a series of deep hoots with the “you ALL” at the end. Very vocal, with shrieks, barks, trills and squeaks. Young very noisy with begging calls after leaving nest.

Nest and eggs:

Nest in large natural cavity or hollow of broken-off tree. Often in abandoned nest of crow or hawk. Eggs number 2-5. Probably long-lasting pair bond.

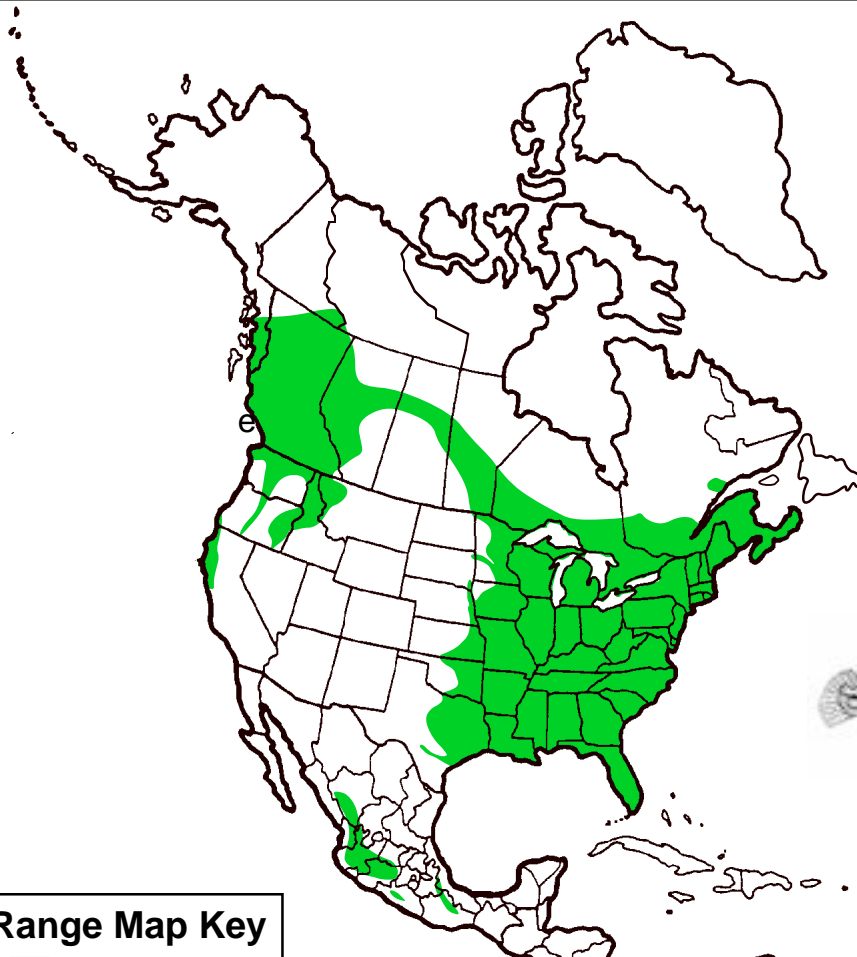
Movement:

Resident birds year-round with only youngsters leaving parent territories.

Interesting Fact:

Barred Owls have only been present in the western United States in any numbers as recently as the 1960’s. They expanded their range west across British Columbia, Canada and then moved in to Washington, Oregon, California, and Idaho as late the 1980’s. They have moved across the Canadian woodlands north and perhaps are jumping the shelterbelt tree regions of Montana’s plains to arrive in western woodlands.

Range Map: Barred Owl



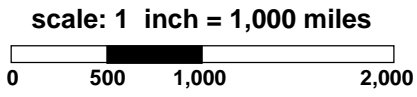
Barred Owl, Copyright © Milo Burcham



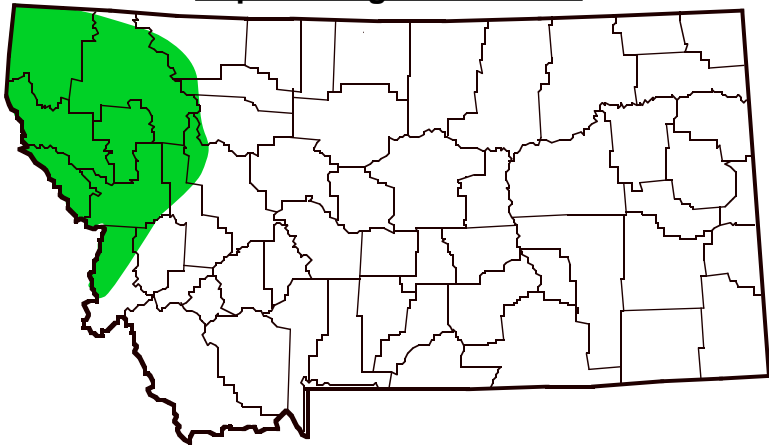
These maps are designed to show the general limits of occurrence. Within those limits, each species will likely be found only in appropriate habitat.

Range Map Key

- Summer
- Year-round
- Winter



Raptor Range in Montana



Montana range maps are based on the Montana Bird Distribution data.