

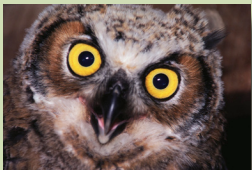
Creature Feature **Great Horned Owl**



Great Horned Owls can be found from the tundra to the tropics, but if you listen and look, you're just as likely to encounter one as you travel the wooded areas around Midland. They are one of the world's many 'hoot owls' with a deep hoo-h' HOO--hoo-hoo that can resonate through the woods. Females are larger than males, and although wingspans range from 39 inches to 57 inches, they only weigh between 2 and 5 pounds.

These impressive birds are kings of the night taking large and small prey. They are one of the only predators of skunks. Other species of owls even avoid the territories of Great Horned Owls lest they become dinner. During the day, however, American Crows will travel long distances and spend hours mobbing and harassing a resting owl. All of this attention may be due to the fact that Great Horned Owls are a significant predator of adult crows and their offspring.

When it is time for Great Horned Owls to raise young of their own, they do not build their own nest, but rather search out a previously constructed structure. They will use other birds' nests, abandoned buildings, broken snags or tree hollows, and even man-made nesting bowls such as the one installed across the rivers from the Visitor Center.



Once a nest site is chosen, the female will lay 1-4 eggs, usually in February. About 33 days later, the helpless young hatch. They are covered in white down so the camouflaged female remains on the nest covering them with her body. Both the female and young rely on the male to bring adequate food to the nest. As the young grow and molt their white feathers and are better able to regulate their body temperatures, the female is able to leave the nest periodically. The young leave the nest, but continue to beg from parents and hang around their siblings for several months. In time they will establish territories and raise young of their own.

Nature Notes



Eastern Screech Owls can also be found in the woods around Midland. They are tolerant of wooded urban and suburban areas as long as they can find a natural or man-made nest cavity.

For the last several years, Barred Owls have been heard regularly in the woods around Arbury Trail and in the Beech Maple Forest near the Sugarhouse. Their 'Who cooks for you? Who cooks for you all?' is distinctive and is not easily mistaken for other species. Listen for these calls as you walk - they will begin courtship calling soon.



The Northern Saw-whet Owl is our smallest and most mysterious owl. Strictly nocturnal, this owl is rarely seen. It hunts primarily mice and voles and is probably nomadic, choosing to live where prey densities are high and nesting cavities are available.

Visit the Visitor Center Office for program information.

This inSTALLation is available online at www.chippewanaturecenter.org under the Naturalist Section.