

School-to-Nature

Great Horned Owl (Also called Hoot Owl or Tiger Owl)

Great Horned Owls are plentiful in Caledonia, and are native to all of North America. Sometimes at night you will hear them calling with the familiar hoo-huh-hoo hoo sound.

One thing to know about the Great Horned Owl is that the feathers at the top of the head are not horns and they are not ears; they are feather tufts. Owl ears are on the sides of the head, one ear lower than the other, for echolocation of prey up to a thousand yards away. Their eyes are very large and don't move; the vertebrae in an owl's neck allow the head to turn 270 degrees, a great range of vision.

These owls are large, 17-25 inches tall, with a wingspan up to 5 feet. They weigh over 3 pounds and can fly and dive with silent skill as mostly night hunters, seeking small animals such as rabbits, rats, mice, and voles, plus other birds, reptiles, amphibians, and even skunks. It can't digest fur, feathers or bones. These are thrown up in the form of a pellet, similar to a cat throwing up a hair ball.

These Owls nest in January-February, incubating 1 to 5 eggs for about a month. By the time the baby owls are ready to leave the nest, most other birds and animals are just starting to have their young. These are the animals the mother owl will teach her young to hunt. Great Horned Owls are talented survivors, living an average of 13 years.

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KIDWINGS EXPLORES

GREAT HORNED OWL

Kidwings Explores North American Owls (*Bubo virginianus*)

Wingspan: 39-57 inches.

Large eyes with pupils that open widely in the dark with retinas that have many rod cells for excellent night vision.

The Great Horned Owl can be found in any environment between the tropics and the arctic. It is the largest and most aggressive species of owl in North America with the most wide ranging diet profile, which includes upwards of 500 different species.

They are the most long-living owl in North America. The oldest owl was 29 years old but the average lifespan in the wild is 13 years old.

They typically use old nests of larger birds, but also may utilize barns, caves, and tree cavities.

Adults weigh between two and five pounds.

Diet is primarily small mammals (88%). Notable prey sources include skunks, small alligators, geese, fish, and porcupines.

Typically lay 2 eggs and as many as 4, ranging in size between 1.8 to 2.2 inches.

Adults are 18-20 inches tall with females being 10-20% larger than males.

Mottled gray feathers make for excellent camouflage.

Eyes don't move in sockets - head swivels 270 degrees.

Great Horned Owl Range
■ Year-round

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