

Information below is adapted from the Maine NRCS 'Structures for Wildlife Specification'.

DESCRIPTION

The barred owl is distinguishable by its large round head, horizontal brown and white barring across its throat, and vertical streaking on its chest. Since owls are most active at night, they are more easily identified by their calls. The barred owl has a distinct hoot “who cooks for you, who cooks for you all.”

HABITAT

Barred owls are associated primarily with floodplains, river bottoms, field and lake margins, and almost any woodland area. They nest mainly in tree cavities, but will also use abandoned hawk and squirrel nests. They also readily nest in man-made structures. The owl’s diet consists primarily of small rodents, frogs, snakes and insects. Although owls are federally protected under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act, development is affecting their habitat. You can help by constructing a nest box.



NEST BOXES

The nest box should be constructed of 3/4 inch plywood. It should be 23 inches high with floor dimensions of 12 ¼ x 12 ¼ inches. The entrance hole should be 12 inches from the floor and have dimensions of 7 x 7 inches. Place about 3 inches of wood chips in the nest box. Place the box 20 - 30 feet above ground on a tree trunk in a wooded area. Make sure the entrance is not obscured or obstructed by branches. Barred owls are territorial, and require about 125 acres. Boxes should be spaced at least 1/2 mile apart.

If a predator guard can be installed effectively to protect an individual tree (consider branches of nearby trees as travel-ways) it may protect the nest against raccoons and snakes. Note that predator guards on trees are generally less effective than those on a post. Place one or two metal flashing (aluminum) sheets around the tree at breast height. The flashing should cover 36” of the tree bole and should be installed around 4-5 feet from the ground. If two or more sheets are used, install the bottom sheet first and then install the upper sheet and overlap the lower sheet. Make sure debris is cleaned out and new wood chips are added each year prior to January when nesting activity begins.

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Construction of a Barred Owl Nest Box

The nest box plan below was adapted from '[Woodcrafting for Wildlife Plans](#)' website, provided by the Pennsylvania Game Commission.

Barred Owl Nest Box

