



Weekender

Weekender

August 19, 2010

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New Cross Walks

Barbara Robinson General Manager requested of the county that crosswalks be installed at two locations on I street, that the Land and Buildings Committee had identified as high traffic areas. The county has agreed and will move ahead on this project, with completion projected for October. Thanks to Mike Collins and the Commissioners of Pacific County for recognizing the need for these Cross Walks.

The two areas are pictured below.



Be sure and visit our web site
at
<http://www.surfsideonline.org/>

OWLS

Most owls are nocturnal predators, with hooked bills and needle sharp talons (claws). They have wide wings, lightweight bodies, and feathers specially designed to allow them to silently swoop down on prey. Depending on the species, adult owls hoot, screech, or whistle.

More than a dozen species of owls live in Washington (Table 1). The **great horned owl** (*Bubo virginianus*, Fig. 1) is the most widely distributed owl in both Washington and North America, occupying dense forests, open woodlands, clearcuts, deserts, and urban environments, including golf courses, cemeteries, and parks with adjacent woodlots.

This chapter focuses on the great horned owl because it is the species that is most often seen and heard. However, except where noted, information about this species applies to all other owls, including the increasing common **barred owl** (*Strix varia*, Fig. 4).

Facts about Washington's Owls

Food and Feeding Habits

- Great horned owls primarily eat small mammals such as rabbits, skunks, and rodents. They also eat a variety of birds, including quail, ducks, and smaller owl species.
- To a lesser extent, great horned owls eat reptiles, amphibians, fish, and insects.
- Owls have keen hearing and keen vision in low light, both adaptations for hunting at night. Since their eyes don't move in their sockets, they rotate their heads on their flexible necks.
- Great horned owls use a sit and-wait approach, watching from a perch and swooping down on passing prey to seize it with their talons (Fig. 2).



Figure 1. Large-headed neck less silhouette and large ear tufts or 'horns' of the Great Horned Owl are hard to miss.

(Photo by Russell Link)



Figure 2. Great horned owls swoop down on passing prey and seize it with their talons.

OWLS CONTINUED

Reproduction

- Great horned owls are early nesters. Pair formation can occur from mid-January to mid-March, depending on the north-south range and elevation.
- The male owl chooses a nest site and attempts to attract a female by frequent hooting.
- The female incubates one to four eggs for 30 to 36 days. The male provides her food and guards the nest.
- The young remain in the nest for about six weeks, and then climb out onto nearby branches. They begin taking short flights at seven weeks, and can fly well at nine to ten weeks.
- Both parents feed and tend the young for several months, often as late as September .

Nests and Nesting Sites

- Great horned owl nests are located high up in trees—generally in the crotch of a branch next to the trunk. Where suitable nest trees don't exist, owls will use rock ledges, power-line towers, haylofts, and nest boxes.
- Great horned owls make little if any effort to construct nests or even to repair suitable existing ones. Rather, they customarily usurp the previous year's nest made by a red-tailed hawk, crow, magpie, great blue heron, or tree squirrel.

An owl seldom uses the same nest more than once, because trampling by the young usually reduces any nest to a disintegrating mass of sticks.

Mortality and Longevity

- Adult great horned owls may be killed or seriously injured when attacking prey. It is, for instance, common to find these owls riddled with porcupine quills or reeking of skunk scent.
- About 50 percent of the young that leave the nest die within their first year from starvation, vehicle collisions, and various other causes.
- The oldest banded great horned owl recovered in the wild was 13 years old. Captive birds can live almost 30 years.



Figure 3. The barn owl has a heart-shaped face and dark eyes. (Photo by Barn Owl Centre, www.barnowl.co.uk)

OWLS CONTINUED

Table 1. Common Owls of Washington

Some owls are uncommon or unlikely to be seen on your property due to their habitat preferences. These include the great gray owl (mountains), burrowing owl (shrub-steppe areas), and the threatened spotted owl (old-growth forests). The following owl species are seen or heard around wooded rural properties, agricultural areas, and large urban parks.

The **great horned owl** (*Bubo virginianus*, Figs. 1, 2) is easily identified by its large ear tufts or “horns.” It’s also called the cat owl because the tufts look like cat ears.

The great horned owl stands 20 inches tall and has a 48-inch wingspan. It is dark brown with black spots above; the underparts are pale brown with heavy, dark brown bars. Some subspecies are paler. All have large yellow eyes. Great horned owls can turn their heads 270 degrees either way when facing forward, but they can’t turn their heads 360 degrees.

The **barred owl** (*Strix varia*, Fig. 4) is similar in size to the great horned owl, but has dark eyes, a thicker appearing neck, and no ear-tufts. The barring pattern on the neck and breast is crosswise and lengthwise on the belly. The barred owl is primarily a bird of eastern and northern U.S. forests and is a recent arrival to Washington.

The barred owl is distinguished from the **spotted owl** (*Strix occidentalis*, Fig. 5) by its streaked belly (spotted owls have a combination of spots and bars). Barred and spotted owls are closely related and occasionally mate where their ranges overlap.

The **barn owl** (*Tyto alba*, Fig. 3), with its white, heart-shaped face, no ear-tufts, dark eyes, and golden-buff plumage with ghostly light underparts, is distinctive and unique. It has a 39-inch wingspan, and its long legs give it a height of up to 20 inches. The barn owl has a preference for rats and other rodents and earned its name by readily nesting in barns, silos, and sheds.

The **Western screech owl** (*Otus kennicottii*) is a small owl, with a height of 10 inches and a 20-inch wingspan. Adults are dark brown or gray with small ear-tufts. A year-round resident throughout Washington, it nests in tree cavities, including old woodpecker holes, but will also use nest boxes. Screech owls favor areas near water, and eat rodents, small birds, and large insects, as well as the occasional fish, crayfish, or amphibian.

The **Northern saw-whet owl** (*Aegolius acadicus*) is 8 inches tall with an 18-inch wingspan. It has dark brown plumage, brown and white vertical breast streaks, and no ear-tufts. This seemingly tame, fearless little owl moves from higher elevations to valleys in winter. Like the screech owl, it nests in tree cavities and will use a nest box. It prefers dense coniferous and broad-leaved forests next to water. It eats small mammals, including shrews and mice, and will also catch small birds and bats.

The **Northern Pygmy-owl** (*Glaucidium gnoma*) is our smallest owl, at 7 inches tall, including its long tail. Because of its size, long tail, proportionally small head, and daytime hunting behavior, the Pygmy-owl is often misidentified or overlooked as just another brown bird in the brush. Watch for it near your winter feeder, where this fearless hunter may attempt to take small birds or mammals. It has sharply streaked undersides, but the most telling marks are the black patches on the back of its head that mimic eyes to deceive predators.

OWLS CONTINUED

Viewing Owls

Visual encounters with owls are relatively rare, because they spend most of the day perched high in trees, inside tree cavities, or in nest boxes. Due to its size, the Northern pygmy-owl almost always goes undetected. The screech owl camouflages itself by stretching tall, holding its wings close to its back, and appearing to be a dead stub on a tree branch.

You are more likely to hear an owl than to see it. If you remain quiet, you can sometimes spot a calling owl with your flashlight. Make every effort not to disturb an owl during its late winter to spring nesting season, a critical time in its yearly cycle.

Owls can also be viewed when crows, jays, magpies, or other birds discover them in their territory. The birds will defend their domain by diving and calling repeatedly at the perched or flying owl, an activity called “mobbing.” Look and listen for this behavior and see if you can locate the “invader.”

A good way to learn more about owls that live around you is to go on an owl walk with members of your local Audubon Society. Field trips, sharing ideas and sightings with others, and having access to local bird experts are some excellent ways to gain more knowledge.

A field guide to birds is helpful to identify owl species.



Figure 4. The barred owl is a medium large owl with brown eyes and no ear-tufts.

(Photo by David Arbour.)



Figure 5. The spotted owl is a medium-sized owl with brown eyes and no ear-tufts. It is gray brown in color, with light spotting on the back and breast. They are slightly smaller than the closely related and similar-appearing barred owl.

Roost Sites

Owls roost in places that offer maximum concealment during daylight hours, choosing trees with dense foliage. Conifers are favored when present; in deciduous forests, owls will use trees that hold clusters of dead leaves over winter.

During the day, scan tall trees for the silhouette of an owl. Also, look for the whitewash of droppings on branches and rocks, and owl pellets on the ground. At dusk or at night, look or listen for an owl roosting in the area.

OWLS CONTINUED

Pellets and Droppings

Typically, owls ingest entire animals—including feathers, fur, teeth, and bones. The undigested material is bundled into compact pellets and later regurgitated (Fig. 6). Pellets are usually found under or near the owl's favorite roost.

What's in an Owl Pellet?

An owl pellet is a clod of fur or feathers and bone—the indigestible remains of the animals an owl has eaten. Because it swallows small prey whole and is able to digest only the fleshy parts, the owl regurgitates the remaining solid material as a compact pellet or casting. Where owls feed on insects, each regurgitated pellet contains the indigestible parts of the exoskeletons of numerous individual insects.

Although birds of many species regurgitate pellets, pellets from large owl species are especially suited for study because they are big enough to be examined without a microscope, and they contain the entire skeletons of small animals the owl has eaten. (Pellets of other raptors, such as eagles and hawks, are less useful since these birds tear much of the flesh from their victims, and do not swallow bones.) Because owl pellets accumulate in predictable locations, they are readily available for collection and examination.

Pellets last a long time in dry climates and in the protection of barns or other buildings. If they are soaked in warm water, carefully dissected, and examined under magnification, the identity of prey they contain can often be determined from the bones, teeth, and other remains.

The remains hidden inside a pellet usually represent the entire skeleton of every animal the owl has eaten during a night of foraging. There are almost always remains of two or more animals in each pellet.

Enjoy, and remember to wash your hands when done.

Pellets range from ½ inch to 4 inches long, depending on the owl's size and its diet. Pellets, shiny and black when new, turn gray with age.

Owl droppings are semi-liquid and primarily white; a whitewash can sometimes be seen under a nest or roost site.



Figure 6. Typically, owls ingest entire animals—including feathers, fur, teeth, and bones.

OWLS CONTINUED

Nest Sites

Look for the stick nests, originally built by large birds or squirrels, which great horned owls use. In deciduous trees these nests are easy to see in the winter, as the trees remain bare into the nesting season.

Calls

Owl calls are given at different times of day and year, depending on the species, and are associated with territorial behavior, courtship, or begging by the young. The following are the common calls given by each owl species:

Great horned owl: a series of four or five deep, resonant hoots given in various rhythms by different individuals: hoo-hoo-hoo; hoo-hoo (“who’s a-wake, me too”). Calls are heard most in the early evening or predawn hours. The male gives them in all seasons, but commonly in fall and winter as he advertises and defends his territory. The call may be answered in an unhurried way by another owl.

Occasionally two or more owls can be heard hooting, seeming to respond to one another.

This is probably territorial hooting between males, since females are silent except for the few weeks of courtship. Juvenile great horned owls beg with a high, scratchy reeek well into the summer. The call is similar, but usually shorter and less rasping, than the barn owl’s call.

Barred owl: a clear-voiced series: hoo-hoo-hoo, hoo, hoo-hoo-hoo-hoo-a-aw. Given in words: “who-cooks-for-you, who-cooks-for-you-a-all,” ending with a descending note.

Western screech owl: a slow but accelerating series of short mellow whistles, pwep pwep pwep pwep pwepwepwepepepep, that is slightly lower at the end. Also a two-part trill, with the second part longer. Other calls infrequently heard include a soft bark and a short chuckle.

Northern saw-whet owl: low, whistled toots (about two per second): toit toit toit... or poo poo poo. Also a wheezy, rising, catlike screech: shweeee.

Northern Pygmy-owl: a soft, hollow toot (one note every two seconds). Also a high rattle or rapid trill: tsisisisisisi.

Barn owl: a long hissing or raspy scream, cssssshhH which sounds similar to a canvas being ripped. The call is similar to, but usually longer and more raspy, than the call for food made by juvenile great horned owls.

Attracting Owls

Things you can do to encourage owls to live or visit your property include:

- Retain multi-acre patches of coniferous and/or deciduous trees.
- Protect quiet, secluded areas near rivers, creeks, and lakes and away from human activity.
- Retain large dead or dying trees—over 20 feet tall—as potential perches.
- Protect or plant hedgerows and thickets to attract small mammals that owls eat.
- Leave large grasslands alone or mow them only infrequently to provide habitat for small mammals that owls eat.
- Manage mice and rat problems without poison baits, which can potentially kill owls.

Install owl nest boxes for barn owls, Western screech owls, Northern Pygmy-owls, and Northern sawwhet owls. (See [WDFW website](#) for resources.)

Install perch poles (see “Maintaining Hawk

OWLS CONTINUED

Preventing Conflicts

Because of their wide-ranging diet that includes rabbits, squirrels, chipmunks, and songbirds, great horned owls elicit mixed emotions in people, even wildlife-lovers.

To prevent conflicts or remedy problems:

Enclose Domestic Animals

Free-roaming chickens, ducks, turkeys, pigeons, small domestic rabbits, and similar animals are susceptible to owl predation. Although rare, there have been reports of great horned owls preying on unattended puppies and small cats. Birds are particularly vulnerable because they are usually conspicuous and concentrate in areas that lack brush or trees to hide in.

By far the best defense is to house domestic birds in a durable, fenced enclosure that will allow the birds to safely eat and loaf outside during the day. Such a structure can be constructed with a wooden framework that is entirely covered with 1-inch poultry wire or similar netting. This outdoor run can be permanent and attached to a coop or other building, or be a portable and moved periodically.

Where a complete and permanent enclosure isn't practical or desirable, escape cover should be provided. Birds have natural defenses at the sight of an owl and will quickly squeeze under a nearby building, old car, shrub, or other area. Escape cover can be made of planks, plywood, or chicken wire placed over logs, rocks, or bricks. It should be at least 7 x 7 feet wide and long and the cover should be 12 inches off the ground.

Please understand that you cannot expect to fully protect free-range birds from owls and an occasional loss of a bird is to be expected.

Change Your Routine

Owls will quickly learn the routines on a property if they are successful at catching prey on site. If a problem occurs, people flying pigeons or allowing other birds to feed unattended should vary the routine. Use this technique anytime an owl is spotted nearby.

Install Scare Devices

A variety of devices can frighten a problematic owl. Increasing human activity in the area will keep most owls at a distance. Yelling and clapping hands, firing a gun loaded with blanks (it is illegal to shoot any owl), and banging cans together are all effective when an owl is seen nearby. A "clapper" can be constructed by putting a hinge on the ends of two, 24-inch 2 x 4s and smacking them together (Fig. 7). Any hesitation on the owl's part will cut its odds of catching a targeted bird.

The "hawk globe" is basically a round mirror designed to scare an attacking hawk, or owl. If it is placed in the flight path the owl uses, an attacking bird will see its reflection and retreat, giving domestic birds a second chance. Because owls hunt on their own, they may avoid returning to a place where they perceive competition from another owl.

Scare devices reduce losses rather than eliminate them. Those who use these devices must be willing to tolerate occasional losses. If predatory birds are hungry, they quickly get used to, and ignore, frightening devices.

Dive-bombing Owls

Most aggressive behavior from owls (barred owls and great horned owls are the most often reported) is motivated by defense of their territory or young, or their search for handouts.

In winter owls establish territories, build nests, and rear young. During this period, adult birds may engage in belligerent behavior, such as attacking creatures many times their size. In this case, the owls are simply trying to protect their homes, their mates, or their young.

When possible, stay away from nesting areas with aggressive birds until the young are flying (three to four weeks after eggs hatch) and the parents are no longer so protective. If you must walk past a nest, wave your arms slowly overhead to keep the birds at a distance. Other protective actions include wearing a hat or helmet, or carrying an umbrella.



Figure 7. Construct a loud clapper by hinging together two, 24-inch 2 x 4s and smacking them together. (Drawing by Jenifer Rees.)

**TENTATIVE AGENDA
Regular Board Meeting
August 21, 2010 – 9:00 a.m.
Surfside Homeowners Association**

Note: The Board Room will open at 8:00 am to allow time for Board members to review and discuss agenda items and materials among themselves as needed prior to the start of the meeting.

Call to Order - Regular Board Meeting (Flood)

Safety in the Workplace (Flood)

Adopt the August 21, 2010 Regular Meeting Agenda (Flood)*

Approval of Minutes of the June 19, 2010 Regular Board Meeting and the July 10, 2010 Special Board Meeting (Flood)*

Board Discussion 2010 Covenant Amendments—**Covenant Section 2.9 – RV Use***

Floor Comments (20 Minutes)

Old Business

Annual Membership Meeting Follow Up/Discussion

New Business

Amendment to Operations Manual/Operating Procedure #101—Section 7* (Declaration of Quorum)

Approval of Resolution adopting the Pacific County Hazard Mitigation Plan*

Board Policy – Water Lines & Septic System Separations*

Trustee Committee Assignments/Committee Chair Appointments (Flood)

Communications

Incoming Correspondence

Outgoing Correspondence

Meetings & Contacts

Staff & Committee Reports

Receipt of Committee Reports*

Comments (10 minutes)

Recess to Closed Session on Personnel, Legal, & Real Estate or Contract Issues or Employee Matters (If necessary)

Reconvene to Open Session for Action Items (If necessary)

Floor Topics for the Good of the Order

Adjourn*

*** Requires Board Action**

CONCERT AT THE CABANA

The Surfside Homeowners Association is pleased to announce that our own Judy Eron will be performing with her group 'Double J and The Boys' at the Twin Lakes Cabana on Saturday, August 21, at 2:00 p.m. What a great sound they create, as y'all know if you've heard them play their various gigs on the Peninsula this summer!

All are invited to attend; admission is free, but we will be collecting new or gently-used socks & sweatpants for Ocean Park Elementary School.

Plan to be there, and plan to bring a cushion or camp chair... seating is at a premium in the park



FREE FREE FREE FREE

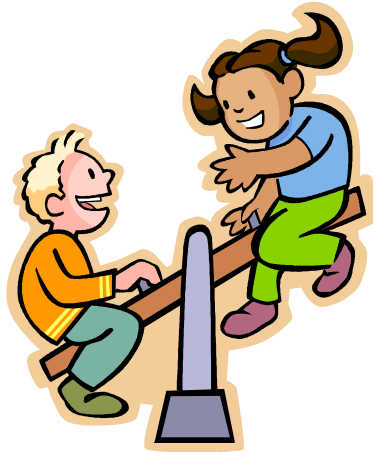
There is free firewood at 315 and H! Bring your chainsaw and truck or trailer and help yourself to winter warmth!



REQUEST FOR DONATIONS FOR STUDENTS AT OCEAN PARK ELEMENTARY

The Community Relations Committee is sponsoring an Outreach Program for the students at Ocean Park Elementary. We are asking Surfsiders to donate new or gently-used clean sweats, socks and/or underclothes for students to change into after playing outdoors on the wet playground. Anything in a size range of Kindergarten through 6th Grade will be welcomed! A bin will be available for your donations at the Surfside Office. You may also drop off your donations at the compactor site. Thank you for your generosity (the teachers & children thank you, too!).

Sheila W.



August 2010

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
15	16	17 Architectural Meeting 9:00 A.M.	18	19	20	21 Board Meeting 9:00 A.M. Cabana Concert 2:00 P.M.,
22	23	24 Architectural Meeting 9:00 A.M.	25	26 Nancy Cheney 	27	28
29	30	31 Architectural Meeting 9:00 A.M.	SEPTEMBER			
			1	2 Lands and Buildings Committee Meeting 1:00 P.M.	3	4
5	6 Labor Day Office Closed 	7 Architectural Meeting 9:00 A.M. Community Relations Committee Meeting 1:00P.M.	8 Budget Committee Meeting 9:00 AM	9	10	11