

Great Horned Owl

Resident Species

Grand-duc d'Amérique
Bubo virginianus



Wingspan: 91 cm to 152 cm



The Great Horned Owl is the largest owl in Quebec. It has long ear tufts on its head and a bib of white feathers covers its throat. Its rufous face mask frames two large yellow eyes. Its brown plumage is strongly striped.



The female is larger than the male.



The Great Horned Owl lives in nearly all types of habitats. It is often found in small wooded areas near a clearing or field. We can also spot it in the forest or near running water. It is sometimes possible to see the bird in urban parks.



The Great Horned Owl is an opportunistic feeder; it attacks any prey passing near it. It can feed on insects, birds, and a variety of mammals. It will even go after a porcupine or skunk! As with most birds of prey, the Great Horned Owl has a poorly developed sense of smell; the skunk's musk thus doesn't bother it.



The Great Horned Owl generally lives twenty years or so, but has lived up to 29 years in captivity.



The Great Horned Owl does not build a nest, but rather uses the old nests of buzzards, crows or squirrels. The female lays 2 to 3 eggs. She lays her eggs very early on in the year, before spring and typically around the month of February.



The young make their first flight attempt around the age of 63 to 70 days, but remain dependant upon their parents until they are 5 months old.



The Great Horned Owl is a common species, but she has been long persecuted by man. The owl is known to have a bad reputation among farmers since it will sometimes take poultry and gamebirds. Today, educating the public helps to change mental attitudes and erase prejudices regarding the Great Horned Owl and other birds of prey.



It is not only man who persecutes the Great Horned Owl; the bird is also harassed by the American Crow. The crows will circle the owl in the sky or even chase it. This phenomenon is mostly observed in springtime as the crows are protecting their nests from the predator.