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Barred Owl *Strix varia*

Easily identified by its "Who cooks for you, who cooks for you-all" call, the Barred Owl is probably Florida's best-known owl. Unlike other Florida owls, Barred Owls frequently vocalize in the daytime.

Barred Owls are breeding residents of much of North America and Mexico.

Habitat. Barred Owls are found in moist woodlands, prairie hammocks, cypress swamps, bayheads, and along rivers, streams, and creeks. According to Howell (1932), "the birds often leave the woods at dusk and hunt their prey in open fields or even among the houses of small settlements."

The diet of the Barred Owl is amazingly diverse. Invertebrates such as insects, crayfish, ghost crabs, and fiddler crabs are taken. Vertebrate food includes catfish and other fishes, snakes, frogs, moles and shrews, rats and mice, rabbits, and birds, such as poultry, Common Moorhens, Red-winged Blackbirds, and frequently Eastern Screech-Owls, which Howell (1932) called "an unusual taste bordering on cannibalism."

Barred Owls nest in tree cavities or in abandoned hawk or squirrel nests. On rare occasions, a pair will nest on the ground (Stevenson and Anderson 1994). A typical clutch consists of 2 white eggs, but 3 eggs are found in some nests. Incubation lasts 28 to 42 days, and the young fledge at 42 days of age (Ehrlich et al. 1988).

Seasonal Occurrence. The breeding season extends from December to April (Stevenson and Anderson 1994), but only 1 brood is raised per year.

Status. A common resident of river bottoms and swampland, the Florida subspecies of the Barred Owl (*S. v. georgica*) occurs nearly throughout the state. It is absent only from the Everglades, agricultural areas south of Lake Okeechobee, and the Lower Keys, undoubtedly due to an absence of suitable breeding habitat.

Barred Owls readily respond to tape recordings of their calls, allowing "probable" breeding evidence to be obtained. Hears: evidence from local residents provides another easy means of recording the presence of Barred Owls in a quadrangle. However, due to their inaccessible haunts, it was extremely difficult to confirm breeding. Only 20% of the quadrangle records confirm breeding, the lowest percentage of any owl species surveyed.

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Barred Owl

