MEET THEM AT PLUMPTON PARK ZOO

BARRED OWL

Strix varia

Teacher & Student Fact Sheet · © **2026 Plumpton Park Zoological Gardens Inc.**
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Fast facts

ANIMAL GROUP	Bird (owl family, Strigidae)
NATIVE REGION	Eastern North America; now west to the Pacific Northwest
HABITAT	Mature woods, forests and wooded swamps, usually near water
DIET	Carnivore: voles, mice, squirrels, birds, frogs, crayfish
LENGTH	16.9 to 19.7 inches
WINGSPAN	39.0 to 43.3 inches
WEIGHT	1.04 to 2.31 lb
LIFESPAN	About 10 years in the wild
STATUS	Least Concern
OUR OWL	Bebo, a rescued male, here since 2009



Photo: Plumpton Park Zoo

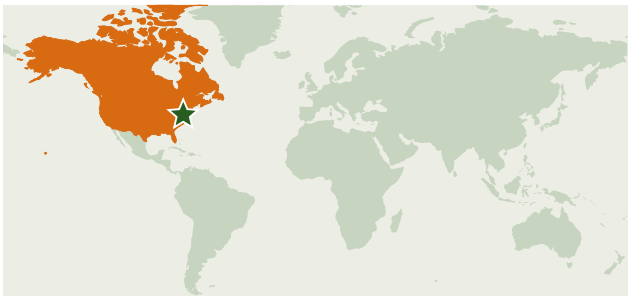
Did you know?

- The barred owl is one of the few owls in the eastern United States with dark brown eyes instead of yellow ones.
- Its call sounds like “Who cooks for you? Who cooks for you-all?”
- A barred owl can turn its head as much as 270 degrees to watch for prey.
- Barred owls do not migrate. Of 158 banded barred owls found again later, none had gone more than 6 miles.
- Bebo was hurt in the wild. His eyesight was not good enough for release, so he has lived at Plumpton Park since 2009.

Words to know

Nocturnal: Most active at night.
Talons: The sharp, curved claws an owl uses to catch prey.
Pellet: A packet of bones, fur and feathers an owl coughs up after eating.
Non-releasable: An animal that cannot survive if returned to the wild.

Where it lives in the wild



Lives in the wild ★ Plumpton Park Zoo, Rising Sun, MD

Think about it

1. How did the barred owl get its name? Look at the markings on its chest and belly.
2. What happens to the bones and fur an owl cannot digest?
3. Why can’t Bebo be released back into the wild?
4. Which owl is the barred owl’s most serious predator?
5. Name three animals a barred owl might eat in Maryland.

Draw it

Draw a barred owl on a branch. Label its round head (no ear tufts), dark eyes, the bars on its chest, the streaks on its belly, and its talons.

STANDARDS · GRADES K–4 **WRITTEN FOR GRADES 3–5**

Maryland and Delaware (NGSS): **4-LS1-1 · 4-LS1-2 · K-LS1-1**
Pennsylvania (STEELS): **3.1.4.A · 3.1.4.B · 3.1.K.A**

Draw here

Learn more: plumptonparkzoo.org/birds/barred-owl/ · **Sources:** Maryland Department of Natural Resources; Partners in Flight; Tri-State Bird Rescue & Research; Plumpton Park Zoo records.
Supports Maryland and Delaware (NGSS) and Pennsylvania (STEELS) standards: 4-LS1-1 (3.1.4.A) · 4-LS1-2 (3.1.4.B) · K-LS1-1 (3.1.K.A)
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FIELD TRIP WORKSHEET · PLUMPTON PARK ZOO

BARRED OWL

Before and after your visit

Page 2 of the Barred owl fact sheet · © 2026 Plumpton Park Zoological Gardens Inc.
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Before you visit · 5 minutes

Name: _____ Date: _____

1. Predict: where in the wild does the barred owl live?
Circle one (or more if it lives on more than one):

Africa | Asia | Australia | Europe | North America | South America

2. Predict: what does it eat?
☐ plants ☐ other animals ☐ both

3. Word hunt: find these words on page 1. Put a check by each one you already know.
☐ Nocturnal ☐ Talons ☐ Pellet ☐ Non-releasable

Pick one word and write what it means in your own words:

_____

_____

4. My question: one thing I want to find out when I see the barred owl.

_____

_____

At the zoo · look closely

Watch for one minute. What is it doing?
☐ resting ☐ eating ☐ moving ☐ watching
☐ with others

Draw or describe one body part that helps it survive, and say how it helps.

Draw here

After your visit · talk it over

1. Check your prediction. Native region: Eastern North America; now west to the Pacific Northwest. Was your guess right?
☐ yes ☐ no ☐ partly

2. Diet check. The fact sheet says: Carnivore: voles, mice, squirrels, birds, frogs, crayfish. What did you learn about how it finds or eats food?

_____

_____

3. Discuss with a partner, then write your best answer.

- What happens to the bones and fur an owl cannot digest?

_____

- Why can't Bebo be released back into the wild?

_____

4. Exit ticket.

One thing I learned: _____

One thing I still wonder: _____

ADJUST IT
Grades K–2: talk and draw instead of writing; read the questions aloud. **Grades 6–8:** add evidence from the fact sheet and the animal page to every answer.