

# great horned owl

*Bubo virginianus*

Kingdom: Animalia  
Phylum: Chordata  
Class: Aves  
Order: Strigiformes  
Family: Strigidae

## ILLINOIS STATUS

common, native

## FEATURES

An adult great horned owl is 18 to 25 inches long. Both the male and female are similar in appearance. The body feathers are brown, and the rust-colored belly feathers have black markings. The throat and chest feathers are white. Tufts of feathers or "horns" are present on each side of the head that give rise to the "great horned" common name. The face is flattened and has yellow eyes. The talons are large and hooked for catching prey. The feet are feathered.

## BEHAVIORS

The great horned owl lives in woodlands and thickets. This bird is a nocturnal bird of prey that eats birds, cats, Virginia opossums, skunks, squirrels, woodchucks and nearly anything else it can kill. It may be seen at dusk or dawn sitting at the top of a tall tree or utility pole. Its song is "hoo, hoo-oo, hoo, hoo." This owl is one of the earliest nesting birds and will nest as early as January. The nest may be placed in an old crow, hawk or squirrel nest, in a tree cavity or in a building. Two to three round white eggs are laid.

## ILLINOIS RANGE



adult





juvenile



## **Aquatic Habitats**

bottomland forests

## **Woodland Habitats**

bottomland forests; southern Illinois lowlands; upland deciduous forests

## **Prairie and Edge Habitats**

none