

## great horned owl *Bubo virginianus*

Kingdom: Animalia

Division/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.

### HABITATS

Aquatic Habitats

bottomland forests

Woodland Habitats

bottomland forests; southern Illinois lowlands; upland deciduous forests

Prairie and Edge Habitats

none

© Illinois Department of Natural Resources. 2017. Biodiversity of Illinois.