

The barred owl can be a permanent resident of the Island but may move slightly south during the winter months, depending on food supply. Generally its range extends from the temperate zone forests of southern Canada to Guatemala. In eastern Canada barred owls prefer coniferous or mixed woods rather than deciduous forests as habitat. Nesting is usually in a hollow of a tree or an old nest of some other species. They are not nest builders. Clutches of two to three eggs are typically laid beginning early in April. Incubation lasts about 28 days, owlet fledging approximately six weeks. Barred owls feed mainly upon small mammals such as mice, squirrels and hare, all of which are abundant on the Island.

Typically owls spend the daylight hours in seclusion, hunting by night. Being a nocturnal predator gives them the opportunity to show off their incredibly specialized visual and auditory adaptations. Experiments have demonstrated they can capture live deer mice in complete darkness by sound alone. But if the prey becomes suddenly silent they can hunt by sight instead, being able to locate prey at a distance of two meters when the illumination is as little as .00000073 foot candles. A humbling thought when one realizes that an owl's sight in darkness is a hundred times better than our own!!!

Similar to all owls, the barred owl has a variety of calls. The best known of its hoots is the sound described as 'who cooks for you, who cooks for you' and is most often heard just prior to and during the nesting season. So this April don't miss the chance of getting out and hooting at, or just quietly listening to some barred owls. If you are superstitious and pregnant though, perhaps you should be a little careful. In France the hooting of an owl indicates that the pregnant listener will shortly produce a girl instead of a boy. So if you are pregnant and have your heart set on a boy perhaps earplugs during the upcoming April nights would be advised....

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OWL POEMS

by Grade 4 pupils at Southern Kings Consolidated School, Peters Road

There is a bird whom people call 'Owl'.
People say he's a wise old fowl.
People say he eats lots of mice -
I say that isn't very nice!
- by Susan Herring

An owl hunts in the night
And not in broad daylight.
Some are small;
But not them all.
- by Lisa Campbell

An owl howls so loud.
I looked up at a cloud
And said, "Owl,
Don't howl so loud."
- by Joanne Glover

