



Washington Department of
FISH & WILDLIFE



Things to know about **Barred owls in Washington**

Without managing barred owl populations and continuing to protect core habitats, **northern spotted owls could become functionally extinct in Washington in the next decade.**

How do barred owls impact northern spotted owls?



- Barred owls are classified by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) as an invasive species in WA, OR, and CA, due to their **highly disruptive effect on native species and ecosystems.**
- Barred owls are native to eastern North America, but human-driven changes to the landscape enabled barred owls to expand westward. Barred owls were first documented in Washington in 1972.
- Researchers have identified barred owl presence in northern spotted owl territories as the current primary threat to spotted owl survival, combined with historic habitat loss.
- Barred owls are larger, more aggressive, and more adaptable than northern spotted owls. They displace spotted owls, disrupt their nesting, and outcompete spotted owls for food.

Next steps in barred owl management

- Barred owl management is one of the last tools remaining to help save northern spotted owls in WA, OR, and CA. **If the threat of barred owls remains, no other management options alone will be able to effectively recover spotted owl populations in these areas.**
- Barred owl management has the potential to impact **less than one percent of the barred owl population in North America**, while helping to **prevent the extinction of northern spotted owls in Washington.**
- USFWS has announced their Record of Decision and final Barred Owl Management Strategy to address the threat of the non-native and invasive barred owl to native northern and California spotted owls.
- As a cooperating agency, WDFW provided technical guidance on the USFWS's Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) regarding policy implications, wildlife science, and management.
- WDFW supports USFWS' final Barred Owl Management Strategy, which includes humane lethal barred owl removal **only in limited areas that are priorities for spotted owls.**



Fisher (WDFW)



Canada lynx (NPS)



Barred owl (WDFW)

How do barred owls impact other wildlife in Washington?

Barred owls are not simply replacing northern spotted owls in the food web. Their generalist diet, wider distribution and higher population densities are disrupting ecosystems that impact many other at-risk and endangered wildlife, including carnivores and their prey.

The endangered Canada lynx and fisher are forced to compete with barred owls for important prey species like snowshoe hares, **undermining recovery efforts.**

Increasing barred owl densities in Washington are likely impacting native species that are evolutionarily naive to its presence, through predation or competition for prey. Some of these species are species of greatest conservation need (SGCN), as seen below.

SGCN documented in barred owl stomachs



Band-tailed pigeon (USFWS)



Pocket gophers (USFWS)



Ring-necked snake (WDFW)



Shrews (WDFW)



Western screech owl (USFS)



Western gray squirrel (WDFW)



Request this information in an alternative format or language at wdfw.wa.gov/accessibility/requests-accommodation, 833-885-1012, TTY (711), or CivilRightsTeam@dfw.wa.gov.