

Great Horned Owl

(*Bubo virginianus*)

FIELD MARKS: A large owl, hard to mistake. Tufts appear to sit wide on the head. Eyes yellow, bill black, throat white. Facial disk variable in color, but usually dark rust to brown. Ventrally, heavy dark brown horizontal barring from the chest to the lower abdomen. Dorsally, the same colors exist as ventrally; however, there is more mottling. Because of its wide distribution and adaptability to any habitat, plumage color varies greatly, depending on location. **SIZE:** 20 to 25 inches. **WEIGHT:** 46 to 61 ounces (three to four pounds). **SIMILAR SPECIES:** Long-eared owls are smaller and slimmer, with tufts set closer to the middle of head. The throat

is dark. **HABITAT:** Occurs from river bottoms to timberline throughout the state. **VOICE:** A booming, "Who, whoo whoo whooo, whooo-whooo..." loud and unmistakable. **NATURAL HISTORY:** Begins nesting in February. Nests in stick nests made by other birds, broken-topped snags, hollow trees, and cliff cavities. Clutch size two to four. Incubation 30 to 35 days. Young fledge at approximately 45 to 55 days. Resident year-round; however, birds living in the northern part of the species' range may migrate south. **FOOD HABITS:** Capable of eating small to medium-sized mammals and birds. Probably takes an occasional goose or turkey. Snowshoe hares and skunks are generally the largest mammals taken. **STATUS:** Common in Montana, and the owl most often observed by the public.

