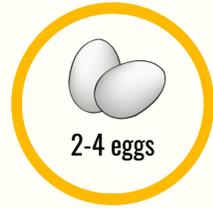
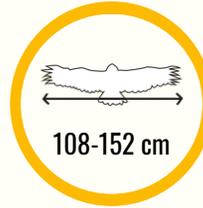




Great Horned Owl

Grand-duc d'Amérique, *Bubo virginianus*



IDENTIFICATION

It has long earlike tufts on its head and a bib of white feathers covers its throat. Its russet facial disk frames two large yellow eyes. Its brown plumage, marbled with buff and white, is reminiscent of the color of tree bark.



ECOLOGY

Nutrition

It is opportunistic, attacking any potential prey passing close by. It can feed on insects, birds and all kinds of mammals. They'll even prey on porcupines and skunks! Like most birds of prey, it doesn't have a good sense of smell, so it isn't bothered by the smell of skunks.

Breeding

It doesn't build nests, but uses the old nests of buzzards, crows or squirrels. It is one of the first to nest in Quebec in February. The young take flight for the first time at 10 weeks old but remain dependent on their parents until they are 5 months old.

DISTRIBUTION

It nests in both urban and rural areas in almost all wooded and semi-wooded regions of America, with the exception of the Caribbean islands. It prefers open forests or farmland with woodlands nearby. It is a resident bird: it does not migrate. Its toe-feathered legs enable it to tolerate the cold of winter.

STATUS AND POPULATION

The species is considered secure.¹ However, its population has declined moderately since 1970. Although it is protected and hunting is illegal like all birds of prey, it was often the target of hunters in the past. It sometimes enters hen houses to eat farmers' poultry. Increased agricultural activity and the reduced availability of small mammals may be linked to the reduction in its population in certain regions.

¹ Wild species of Canada report, 2015

