

Going, Going, Gone

The Great Owl Debate



Imagine you are a Park Ranger. Your job is to preserve the old redwood forests and all the creatures that make their homes there.

One of the animals that you monitor is the **Northern Spotted Owl**. This species of owl prefers life in the thick canopies of old growth forests, and is not usually found in other habitats. People also liked the old forests, but for lumber, and much of this habitat was destroyed. Because of that, the Northern Spotted Owl's numbers were decreasing.

Now these owls are listed as a threatened species and must be protected.

Recently in your park, you have seen many more of another type of owl, the **Barred Owl**. This species of owl used to only be found in eastern United States, but over the last several years has been expanding its range to include parts of Canada, Washington, Oregon, and California. The Barred Owl is bigger and has had more success adapting to new habitats than the Northern Spotted Owl.

Now you notice the number of Northern Spotted Owl is once again decreasing. This time it is not because of logging or cutting down more of the forests. Instead, the Northern Spotted Owls and the Barred Owls seem to be competing for the same resources (prey, nesting areas, cover). What do you do?

This is a real life issue commonly seen for wildlife today. *Invasive species* are animals that are introduced to new areas by people, sometimes on purpose such as for farming, sometimes purely by chance. Invasive species then cause problems with the native species. This scenario is a little different– the Barred Owl was not brought over to western North America nor introduced here by humans. It is a species that has slowly, over time, expanded its home range.

So now for a debate! What do you think is the best plan for managing the protected redwoods and its inhabitants? Do you let nature take its course, even if that means the Northern Spotted Owl could become extinct? Do you try different ways of restricting the expansion of the Barred Owls, but might be harmful to the individual owls?

Use the species profiles on the next page to help you debate the best way to manage this issue.

For more information on Barred and Northern Spotted Owls, visit <http://www.fws.gov/oregonfwo/species/Data/NorthernSpottedOwl/BarredOwl/FAO.asp#Encroach>





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	Northern Spotted Owl	Barred Owl
		
Size	Smaller: about 18 inches long, weigh about 1-1.5 pounds	Larger: 17-21 inches long, weigh about 1.5-2 pounds
Habitat	Mature, old growth forests (redwoods)	Mature forested areas typically near water
Range	Western British Columbia, coastal regions of Washington, Oregon, California	Originally eastern North America, now found in parts of Canada, northwestern United States
Diet/Prey	Primarily small/medium sized rodents (Dusky-footed wood rat), but will also eat invertebrates and reptiles. Hunts only at night.	Wide variety of animals– frogs, mice, lizards, squirrels, smaller birds. Primarily nocturnal, but will occasionally hunt in daytime.
Breeding	Breeding age is typically 2-5 years old. They can have 1 brood each year (although may not nest every year) and lays 1-3 eggs per brood.	Usually breed annually, have 1 brood each year, lays 1-4 eggs per brood. Breeding age generally 2 years, although can be younger
Individual Territories	Wide, varies depending on seasons and locations	Slightly smaller home ranges, but this will vary depending on breeding season and locations
Temperament	May retreat and quiet down when it hears the call of the Barred Owl	More aggressive; will chase away intruders to their territories