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### FAST FACTS

**NAME:** Spotted owl  
**SCIENTIFIC NAME:** *Strix occidentalis*

**AVERAGE WEIGHT:** 518 to 760 g  
**AVERAGE WINGSPAN:** 106 cm (males), 109 cm (females)

**LIFESPAN:** Although many owls die young, adults live up to 17 years in the wild.

**DID YOU KNOW?** Spotted owls don't migrate for the winter.

### PHYSIOLOGY

The spotted owl is a bird that lives up to its name. The medium-sized, nocturnal, woodland owl is primarily brown and is covered in white spots. The spotted owl is not always spotted, though. Owlets are born entirely white and only get their spots once they've matured. In addition to their spots, spotted owls also have large brown circles around their big brown eyes. Like most birds, the spotted owl's bill is a yellowish-straw colour. It also has feathered feet and blackish-brown claws that help it catch its prey.

### HABITAT/BEHAVIOUR

The spotted owl makes its home in forests that are usually at least 200 years old. It prefers nesting in old trees because they give lots of shade and have good perches for roosting. Spotted owls generally live in mixed forests and wooded canyons dominated by douglas fir, redwood, pine-oak, western red cedar and ponderosa pine trees. Nests are usually made in natural tree cavities so owls can hide from the sun.

When the spotted owl is not hiding from the daylight, it likes to use its voice. It has several calls. "Whoop wu-hu hoo," is the spotted owl's territorial and mating call. Another popular call is a rapid series of seven to 15 hoots. This call is used when pairs of owls are fighting. The female spotted owl has her own call, made up of three to seven loud fast barks. The female uses this call to protect her territory.

Predators of the spotted owl include the great horned owl, the red-tailed hawk and the raven. Unlike most animals the spotted owl doesn't always defend its young from predators. This is one of the reasons many owls die young.

The spotted owl's diet is strongly related to its breeding success – the bigger the prey, the more successful the breeding. The owl's prey consists of mostly small mammals which include flying squirrels, wood rats, hares and rabbits. It also eats mice and moles in the summer. Owls like to eat their prey whole and it's not uncommon to find bones, skulls, teeth and fur in owl pellets.

### RANGE

The spotted owl is unique to North America. In Canada, the spotted owl only lives in southwestern British Columbia. Due to heavy logging of its natural habitat, the spotted owl is Canada's most endangered bird. It is believed that fewer than 11 pairs remain in B.C.

The spotted owl can be found outside Canada in Washington, Oregon, California, Utah, Colorado and Arizona.