

Northern Pygmy Owl (*Glaucidium californicum*)

Habitat and Distribution: Found in open forests of western North America, from British Columbia and southern Alaska south through the Rocky Mountains to California and Arizona.

Size: Wingspan up to 15 inches. Females, 2.6 oz. and males 2.2 oz.

Wild Diet: Birds, small mammals, reptiles, amphibians, insects

Predators: Larger owls, jays, crows, ravens, snakes, weasels

Life Span: 6-7 years

Reproduction: During the breeding season, the male and female call to each other, share food and snuggle. They use old woodpecker cavities for their nests. The eggs are laid between April and June. The female stays with the eggs while the male brings her food and defends the nest. A clutch of 3-7 eggs hatches after about 29 days. The chicks reach 60% of their adult size in just two weeks. They fledge after about 30 days, but continue to be fed and protected by their parents for several more weeks.

Behavior: These owls are most active during the day. When leaving a perch, they swoop down in a short, rapid flight, level off, and then swoop up to their next perch. They tend to land low in a tree, then move upwards from branch to branch within that tree. When threatened, they puff up their feathers to make themselves look larger. These owls are “sit and wait” predators. They dive from a perch and grab their prey by the throat with their talons. They carry their food with their feet, and can carry prey up to three times their own weight. Pygmy owls also store surplus prey in a tree cavity, especially during the winter.

Conservation Connection: CITES Appendix II, meaning that they are not necessarily now threatened with extinction but may become so unless trade is closely controlled. Habitat destruction is their greatest threat.

Interesting Facts: These owls have large, black, false eye spots on the back of their heads. They don't have silent flight feathers, as many other owls do, and hunt by sight rather than by hearing.



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