

# Autumn

Great Horned Owl  
(*Bubo virginianus*)

Gender: Female

Age: Unknown



## Fun Facts About Great Horned Owls:

- Great Horned Owls are one of only a few predators of skunks. Owls do not have a good sense of smell.
- The strong talons of a Great Horned Owl require a force of 28 pounds to open when clenched. They use this deadly grip to sever the spine of large prey.
- Great Horned Owls have a deep hooting voice, which is representative of the sound people typically think of when they think of what an owl sounds like.

## Typical Great Horned Owl Species Behavior:

- Mated pairs of Great Horned Owls are monogamous and defend their territories with strong hooting. These owls respond to threats with hisses, screams, bill-clapping, and will eventually spread their wings and strike with their talons if the threat escalates.
- **Habitat:** Distributed all across North America, this highly-adaptable bird can be found from woodlands to city parks. They roost in trees, snags, thick brush, cavities, ledges, and human-made structures.
- **Diet:** Great Horned Owls have the most diverse diet of all North American raptors. They are fierce predators that can take large prey, including other raptors such as Ospreys, Peregrine Falcons, and other owls. They will also take smaller prey items such as insects, amphibians, small mammals, and crabs.
- **Lifespan:** Up to 13 years in the wild. The oldest Great Horned Owl on record was at least 28 years old when it was found in Ohio in 2005. In captivity birds have been known to live 29 to 38 years.

## Why is Autumn in Captivity?

Autumn suffered an injury to her right wing with a fracture to the clavicle in September of 2002. The cause of her injury is unknown. While in recovery at the Blandford Nature Center in Grand Rapids, MI, it was determined that she was non-releasable due to her injuries and her inability to use her right wing to fly. It is believed that she also suffers from partial paralysis as a result of West Nile virus. She has developed arthritis over the years and is taking a pain medication to help manage her symptoms. Autumn was transferred to the Organization for Bat Conservation on June 3, 2003, and then to the Stage Nature Center in February 2018.

## What Makes Autumn Special?

Despite Autumn's injuries and her age, she perseveres. Even with paralysis of her right wing, progressing arthritis and possible neurological damage from the West Nile Virus, she has outlived her wild counterparts. Autumn came into captivity as an adult and has been in captivity for 16+ years, so she is well beyond the 13 year average life span of wild Great Horned Owls. She can be described as sassy and strong-willed. She has never grown to be particularly fond of humans, and lets them know with hissing and bill-snapping. She knows that her caregivers are a reliable and consistent source of food, so she happily (while hissing) takes food from them.