

Paul Lewis Art Installation – Animal Descriptions

Wooden Owl Creatures with horns x2

Snowy Owl

The regal Snowy Owl is one of the few birds that can get even non-birders to come out for a look. This largest (by weight) North American owl shows up irregularly in winter to hunt in windswept fields or dunes, a pale shape with catlike yellow eyes. They spend summers far north of the Arctic Circle hunting lemmings, ptarmigan, and other prey in 24-hour daylight. In years of lemming population booms they can raise double or triple the usual number of young.

Pileated Woodpecker

The Pileated Woodpecker is one of the biggest, most striking forest birds on the continent. It's nearly the size of a crow, black with bold white stripes down the neck and a flaming-red crest. Look (and listen) for Pileated Woodpeckers whacking at dead trees and fallen logs in search of their main prey, carpenter ants, leaving unique rectangular holes in the wood. The nest holes these birds make offer crucial shelter to many species including swifts, owls, ducks, bats, and pine martens.

Western Screech-Owl

A short series of high toots accelerating through the night announces the presence of a Western Screech-Owl. These compact owls—not much taller than a standard pair of binoculars—hunt in woods and deserts of western North America, where their wide-ranging diet includes everything from worms and crayfish to rats and bats. Found in urban parks and residential areas as well as wilder places, Western Screech-Owls nest in tree cavities, and will readily take to backyard nest boxes.

Great Gray Owl

The Great Gray Owl is a dapper owl dressed in a gray suit with a bow tie across its neck and a surprised look on its face. In the stillness of a cold mountain meadow the elusive giant quietly floats on broad wings across meadows and openings in evergreen forests. They are mostly owls of the boreal forest with small populations in western mountains, but in some years they move farther south in search of food, giving some a unique opportunity to see this majestic owl.

Great Horned Owl

With its long, earlike tufts, intimidating yellow-eyed stare, and deep hooting voice, the Great Horned Owl is the quintessential owl of storybooks. This powerful predator can take down birds and mammals even larger than itself, but it also dines on daintier fare such as tiny scorpions, mice, and frogs. It's one of the most common owls in North America, equally at home in deserts, wetlands, forests, grasslands, backyards, cities, and almost any other semi-open habitat between the Arctic and the tropics.

Common Crow

Crows are familiar over much of the continent: large, intelligent, all-black birds with hoarse, cawing voices. They are common sights in treetops, fields, and roadsides, and in habitats ranging from open woods and empty beaches to town centers. They usually feed on the ground and eat almost anything—typically earthworms, insects and other small animals, seeds, and fruit; also garbage, carrion, and chicks they rob from nests. Their flight style is unique, a patient, methodical flapping that is rarely broken up with glides.

Northern Flicker

Northern Flickers are large, brown woodpeckers with a gentle expression and handsome black-scalloped plumage. On walks, don't be surprised if you scare one up from the ground. It's not where you'd expect to find a woodpecker, but flickers eat mainly ants and beetles, digging for them with their unusual, slightly curved bill. When they fly you'll see a flash of color in the wings – yellow if you're in the East, red if you're in the West – and a bright white flash on the rump.

Northern Pygmy-Owl

The Northern Pygmy-Owl may be tiny, but it's a ferocious hunter with a taste for songbirds. These owls are mostly dark brown and white, with long tails, smoothly rounded heads, and piercing yellow eyes. They hunt during the day by sitting quietly and surprising their prey. As a defensive measure, songbirds often gather to mob sitting owls until they fly away. Mobbing songbirds can help you find these unobtrusive owls, as can listening for their call, a high-pitched series of toots.

Downy Woodpecker x2

The active little Downy Woodpecker is a familiar sight at backyard feeders and in parks and woodlots, where it joins flocks of chickadees and nuthatches, barely outsizing them. An often acrobatic forager, this black-and-white woodpecker is at home on tiny branches or balancing on slender plant galls, sycamore seed balls, and suet feeders. Downies and their larger lookalike, the Hairy Woodpecker, are one of the first identification challenges that beginning bird watchers master.

Belted Kingfisher

With its top-heavy physique, energetic flight, and piercing rattle, the Belted Kingfisher seems to have an air of self-importance as it patrols up and down rivers and shorelines. It nests in burrows along earthen banks and feeds almost entirely on aquatic prey, diving to catch fish and crayfish with its heavy, straight bill. These ragged-crested birds are a powdery blue-gray; males have one blue band across the white breast, while females have a blue and a chestnut band.