

Great Horned Owl (*Bubo virginianus*)

Great horned owls are one of the largest owls in California only topped by the Great Grey Owl. They stand 18-23 inches tall with a 5 foot wingspan. The females are larger than the males. They are amazingly camouflaged for cottonwood and oak woodlands. The basic body color is overall gray spotted with brown, with white and black markings. Their eyes are a deep yellow. Their name “horned” owls comes from distinctive ear tufts that are 1 ½ to 2 inches long. They have a remarkably strong grip, second only to eagles. Great horned owls give a cry of 3-8 hoots. They are silent in flight. Because their eyes are positioned in the front of their heads, they have excellent binocular vision even at close range. Their vision at night is 100 times more sensitive than humans and their hearing is equally sensitive. The feathery facial disks help channel sound to their large eardrums. They are capable of turning their heads 270 degrees.

Galileo

Galileo arrived at Critter Creek this year in March. He had fallen from his nest in a pine tree that was over thirty feet in the air. He broke his left wing in two places. We set the wing and taped it to his body hoping it would heal securely. As a baby bird his bones knitted together quickly. Within a few weeks we were able to unwrap the wing to see if the repairs were aligned. One break healed perfectly; unfortunately the other break left him unable to fly but a few feet. In the picture you can see that his left wing droops lower than his right wing. He has quite a personality so we have been working with him to do educational programs.

