



SPECTACLED OWL

Strigiformes
Family: Strigidae
Genus: *Pulsatrix*
Species: *perspicillata*



Range: Mexico, Central America, Northern two-thirds of South America

Habitat: Dense tropical rainforest with mature, large trees, including forest edges. Also found in dry forest, treed savannah habitat, plantations and open areas with scattered trees. They prefer to live near water.

Niche: Mainly nocturnal, carnivorous, arboreal

Wild diet: small mammals, birds, insects, bats, amphibians, reptiles and crustaceans

Zoo diet:

Life Span: (Wild) 25 years
(Captivity)

Sexual dimorphism: Female is larger than the male

Location in SF Zoo: Children's Zoo

APPEARANCE & PHYSICAL ADAPTATIONS:

Spectacled Owls are large tropical owls that have dark heads and backs and buff-colored fronts with a dark brown belt across the chest. They have no ear-tufts. Spectacled owls have an unmistakable face pattern. Light circles around their yellow eyes give them the appearance of wearing glasses or spectacles; this accounts for their name. They have a creamy yellow bill.

The juvenile is even more distinctive than the adult, being completely white apart from a chocolate brown facial disc and are often called "white owls" by local populations. They may take several years from hatching to attain full adult plumage.

Weight: M 1 – 1.5 lb
F 1.5 – 2 lb

Length: 17 – 18 in

Wingspan: 2.5 – 3 ft

STATUS & CONSERVATION

Spectacled owls are thought to be fairly common and not globally threatened. Extensive deforestation may be effecting this species in some areas.

COMMUNICATION AND OTHER BEHAVIOR

The spectacled owl has a variety of distinct calls in the wild. They make a long repeated tapping sound of about seven low-pitched, short, rattling hoots that become faster and weaker towards the end. It sounds like hoo-hoo-hoo-hoo-hoo-hoo-hoo. Another call used during flight is a short “whistle” that sounds like wer, which is often repeated about every 10 seconds. When the spectacled owl is alarmed, it may produce three or four descending low hoots that sound something like a growl. Juveniles produce more of a raspy call, “kweew.” The spectacled owl appears to be especially vocal on moonlit nights.

Spectacled owls are generally nocturnal, with activity beginning after dusk and continuing to dawn. They will hunt from their perch on a high branch, and then drops swiftly on any prey it has spotted.

COURTSHIP AND YOUNG

Spectacled owls are cavity nesters, seeking out holes in trees to nest. Nesting season is in the dry and early wet season. Clutch size is normally two white eggs, with incubation lasting about 36 days. Approximately six to eight weeks after they hatch, fledglings are ready to take their first flight. Usually only one chick survives to fledge. The chicks will stay with their parents for up to a year after fledging.

Incubation: 33 – 37 days	Sexual Maturity:
# of eggs: 2 - 3	Fledging: 40 – 50 days

MISCELLANEOUS

Although the retina of their eyes is densely packed with rod cells that help them see in dim light, owls can also see well in daylight. Owls can adjust their pupils to limit the light entering their eyes and striking their sensitive retina.

Sources:

Handbook of Birds of the World Vol 5 © 1999 Lynx Edicions, p 206.

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