



Barred Owl Management at the Elliott State Research Forest

FAQ

The following are some frequently asked questions about barred owl management at the Elliott State Research Forest. For more information, please visit the [Elliott State Research Forest web page](#).

Why is DSL removing barred owls from the Elliott?

DSL is removing invasive barred owls from the Elliott to conserve the native [northern spotted owls, which are a threatened species under the Endangered Species Act](#). Barred owls are larger, significantly more abundant, more aggressive, and have a wider prey base than native spotted owls. As a result, they displace northern spotted owls, disrupt their nesting, outcompete them for food, and occasionally attack them. Barred owl management is a required conservation measure of the [Elliott's Habitat Conservation Plan](#).

How many barred owls are expected to be removed?

DSL estimates up to 350 barred owls will be removed per year for the first 3-5 years from established barred owl home ranges and "floater" populations moving into newly unoccupied territories. The number of removals is estimated to drop after the current resident population is depleted. DSL has committed to at least 15 years of barred owl management, as per the [Elliott's Habitat Conservation Plan](#).

How is DSL ensuring that only properly identified barred owls are removed from the Elliott State Research Forest?

Trained wildlife specialist (trained and specifically designated by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service) must be able to accurately identify spotted owls and barred owls using both visual and auditory means, confidently distinguish between the two species, and prove this ability before being authorized to conduct removal operations. In case of any doubt on the identification, the removal attempt is halted, and a new attempt conducted later. DSL is requiring removals be done in pairs, with qualified observers and seasoned removal specialist on-site during the first 16 months of barred owl removals at the Elliott.

How many northern spotted owls are there compared to barred owls in the Elliott?

Results from a 2026 survey determined that there were at least three individual northern spotted owls within the Elliott. More than 800 barred owls were incidentally detected during that same survey period, although some of those may have been repeat detections.

Who will be removing the barred owls?

Removals and data collection will be conducted by wildlife specialists, trained and specifically designated by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to conduct this work.

Can the public participate in the removal of barred owls?

No. Public hunting of barred owls is **NOT** allowed and is federal offense without authorization with a minimum \$15,000 fine and up to two years of jail time.

Will removals occur across the whole forest?

Yes. Removals will occur across the entirety of the Elliott, prioritizing areas where northern spotted owls still exist. Additional removals will focus on historic northern spotted owl sites that were most recently occupied by

spotted owls, focusing on areas of highest quality nesting, roosting and foraging habitat. Removals will follow the prioritization hierarchy outlined in the [U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Barred Owl Management Strategy](#).

How much is this going to cost and who's paying for it?

DSL estimates it will cost approximately \$15,000 a month during the initial 16.5 months of implementing barred owl management. Costs will decrease over the remainder of the 15-year period as less barred owls are removed, averaging approximately \$7,000 per month. Funding is allocated from the budget to implement the Habitat Conservation Plan and conservation efforts of species listed under the [Endangered Species Act](#). \$238,000 is also allocated for research to further help guide removal efforts on the Elliott, track effectiveness, and inform other land managers managing for invasive barred owls.

How is what's happening at the Elliott different than the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Barred Owl Management Strategy?

Barred owl management at the Elliott is its own initiative, separate from the [U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Barred Owl Management Strategy](#) implemented across the Pacific Northwest. The regionwide strategy is voluntary for land management agencies and is tied to the [Northern Spotted Owl Recovery Plan](#). At the Elliott, by contrast, barred owl removal is a **required conservation measure** of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service-approved [Habitat Conservation Plan](#). That plan supports incidental take permits for threatened marbled murrelets and northern spotted owls, covering a range of research and management activities on the forest.