

Lausanne, 6 October 2025

Opposition to the Plan to Cull Barred Owls

Dear Senator,

As an internationally recognized owl specialist with over 40 years of experience, I am writing to express my strong opposition to the proposed culling of approximately half a million barred owls. Throughout my career, I have studied two owl species—one adapted to open landscapes, the barn owl, and one adapted to forests, like the barred owl: the tawny owl. My research has led to several key discoveries:

1. Barn owls use their white plumage to startle rodents. Moonlight reflects off their feathers, creating a sudden flash that cause voles to freeze, making them easier to catch.
2. Barn owl siblings vocally negotiate food resources, a rare and fascinating example of cooperative behavior in animals.
3. Melanin-based coloration in barn owls and tawny owls reflects their ability to withstand various stressors. The trait is linked to genes shared by humans, suggesting broader biological implications for understanding how pigmentation relates to stress resilience.

These findings are summarized in my 2020 book published by Cambridge University Press, richly illustrated with paintings and drawings.

Regarding the proposed culling of barred owls, there is little evidence that large-scale wildlife eradication efforts achieve long-term ecological success. Such interventions often fail to produce lasting benefits, while requiring substantial and ongoing resources. In this case, the targeted area is far too vast for effective and sustained implementation. Without natural barriers, barred owls from adjacent regions will quickly recolonize the area, rendering the cull ineffective.

In addition to ecological and logistic shortcomings, the ethical concerns cannot be overlooked. The deliberate killing of hundreds of thousands of owls would likely provoke widespread public outcry and damage the United States' reputation as a global leader in conservation. The negative consequences could echo for decades.

I respectfully urge you to reconsider this plan and instead invest in more constructive, science-based conservation strategies that work with, rather than against, natural systems.

I thank you for your attention to this critical matter.

Sincerely,



Prof. Alexandre Roulin
<https://www.chouette-effraie.ch/en>