



Best Management Practices for Construction and Development Projects

Barn Owl

Tyto alba

Common name • Barn Owl
Scientific name • *Tyto alba*
Federal status • None
State status • None

Purpose and Use

The information in this document is to be used to help avoid and minimize species impacts due to construction practices. It is not intended as a guide to manage habitat for a given species. Please contact the Department of Conservation if habitat management information is needed. Because every project and location differ, following the recommendations in this document does not guarantee impacts will not occur to the species and additional information may be required in certain instances. Following the recommendations in this document does not complete Endangered Species Act consultation that may be necessary for species listed under the federal Endangered Species Act; please contact the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for more information.

Ecology

Barn owls are nearly world-wide in their distribution and present on every continent except Antarctica. They nest throughout appropriate grassland habitats in Missouri except in the Ozarks. They are most common in the Bootheel and in the Osage Plains in west central Missouri. Barn owls prefer warm climates and grasslands. Barn owls rely on open fields for hunting, which they do at night. They prey mainly on small microtine rodents and rats. Barn owls live two to four years on average, and they usually breed once or twice per year. Normally, breeding begins in March, and females lay four to seven eggs, which hatch starting in May. Barn owls use both natural and man-made nesting sites, including tree cavities, barns, silos, abandoned and occupied buildings and chimneys. Barn owls may be preyed upon by raccoons or great horned owls.

Reasons for Decline

As agriculture opened up the eastern forests of the United States in the 1800s, the range of the barn owl expanded. However, as plowing and urbanization of grasslands continued, populations declined, especially in the Midwest. In addition, large numbers of barn owls are killed every year by vehicle collisions in high concentration areas, mostly in other states.

Specific Recommendations

- Barn owls benefit from restricting human use of foraging habitat and maintenance of cropland and grasslands, as do other grassland species. Native grasslands should be maintained whenever possible.
- Any open areas such as pastures, cropland, native grass plantings and marshes should be maintained.
- Use of insecticides and rodenticides in nesting areas should be minimized: Barn owls can act as a natural, biological control of unwanted rodents.
- If available nesting structures must be removed, barn owl nest boxes should be placed in other areas to provide alternative nesting sites.

General Recommendations

If your project involves the use of Federal Highway Administration transportation funds, these recommendations may not fulfill all contract requirements. Please contact the Missouri Department of Transportation at 573-526-4778 or the [Missouri Department of Transportation Environmental Studies webpage](#) for additional information on recommendations.

Information Contacts

For further information regarding regulations for development in rivers and streams, contact:

For species information:

[Missouri Department of Conservation](#)
Science Branch
P.O. Box 180
Jefferson City, MO 65102-0180
Telephone: 573-751-4115

For species information and Endangered Species Act Coordination:

[U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service](#)
Ecological Services
101 Park Deville Drive, Suite A
Columbia, MO 65203-0007
Telephone: 573-234-2132

For Clean Water Act Coordination:

[Missouri Department of Natural Resources](#)
Water Protection Program
P.O. Box 176
Jefferson City, MO 65102-0176
Telephone: 573-751-1300, 800-361-4827

[U.S. Army Corps of Engineers](#)

Regulatory Branch
700 Federal Building
Kansas City, MO 64106-2896
Telephone: 816-389-3990

[U.S. Environmental Protection Agency](#)

EPA Region 7 Water Division
11201 Renner Boulevard
Lenexa, KS 66219
Telephone: 913-551-7977

Disclaimer

These Best Management Practices were prepared by the Missouri Department of Conservation with assistance from state and federal agencies, contractors, and others to provide guidance to those who wish to voluntarily act to protect wildlife and habitat. Compliance with these Best Management Practices is not required by the Missouri wildlife and forestry law nor by any regulation of the Missouri Conservation Commission. Federal laws such as the Clean Water Act and the Endangered Species Act, and state or Local laws need to be considered for construction and development projects and require permits and/or consultation with the appropriate agency. Following the recommendations provided in this document will help reduce and avoid project impacts to the species, but impacts may still occur. Please contact the appropriate agency for further coordination and to complete compliance requirements.