



Raptors of San Mateo and Santa Clara Counties

November 02, 2025
Town of Woodside



Rick Morris
of
IntheWildwithRick



Thank you!

- Chair Sue Sweeney Burow
 - Melissa Cardinale
- All members of the Town of Woodside Environment and Open Space Committee
 - Everyone for being here

Rick's Background

- West Menlo Park resident
- Former Tech worker
- Took up bird photography during pandemic
- Photographer first then a Birder then an Owler
- Started organizing and leading Bird Tours in January 2024
- Stanford Professor contacted me for an Owl Tour in April 2024
- Just completed my 140th Evening Owl Tour (along with 25 bird tours)
- Still learning a lot about birds and owls
- Use a Nikon Z8 mirrorless with Nikkor 500mm f5.6 pf lens

Raptors / Birds of Prey

- **Eagles** (Bald and Golden)
- **Owls** (GHO, Barn, Screech, Burrowing, SEO)
- **Hawks** (Red-tailed, Red-shouldered, Cooper's)
 - **Northern Harriers**
 - **Falcons** (Peregrine, Kestrels, Merlins)
 - Kites (White-tailed)
 - Osprey (fish hawk)

Raptor Commonalities

- All raptors have:
 - Rodents as their core prey
 - a hooked beak for tearing flesh
 - strong feet with sharp talons
 - keen eyesight
 - a carnivorous diet (meat and fish)

Who are the
King and Queen of the
Raptors

Great Horned Owl
vs.
Eagle

- Great Horned Owl will most likely win during night time hours
- Eagle will most likely win during daylight hours

Bald Eagle - Sandy Wool Lake



Bald Eagle - Sandy Wool Lake



Bald Eagle - Sandy Wool Lake



Bald Eagle - Quarry Lakes



Bald Eagles - Quarry Lakes



Nictitating Membrane - translucent eyelid to moisten and protect eyes





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Bald Eagles Diet

- Fish (50-80% of diet)
- Birds (10-30% of diet)
 - water fowl (ducks, seagulls)
- **Mammals (15%)**
 - rabbits, hares and squirrels)

Golden Eagle (East San Jose)



Golden Eagle (East San Jose)



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Golden Eagle (East San Jose)



Golden Eagle (Shoreline, Mountain View)



Golden Eagles Diet

- **Mammals (70-90%)**
 - (rabbits and ground squirrels)
- **Birds (10-20%)**
 - Water fowl (ducks, seagulls)
 - Pheasants, waterfowl, corvids, raptors (owls, falcons)
- **Reptiles (<5%)**
 - (snakes, lizards)

Local SF Bay Area Owls

- Great Horned Owls
- American Barn Owls
- Western Screech Owls
- Burrowing Owls

Out of respect for the owls, I will not be providing any location information for the owls.

If you know the location of any of the owls I show, please keep to yourself

Great
Horned Owl
(GHO)

Great Horned Owl Mama in Nest - March 30, 2025



Great Horned Daddy Nearby the Nest - April 11, 2025



Juvenile Great Horned Owls in Nest - April 19, 2025 (10-15 days old)



Juvenile Great Horned Owls in Nest - April 28, 2025 (20-25 days old)



Juvenile Great Horned Owls Ready to Leave Nest - May 3, 2025 (25-30 days old)



Juvenile Great Horned Owls Branching - May 8, 2025 (30-40 days old)



First Fledged Juvenile Great Horned Owl - May 11, 2025 (approx. 5 weeks old)



Second Fledged Juvenile Great Horned Owl - May 11, 2025 (approx. 5 weeks old)



Juvenile Great Horned Owl Siblings - May 19, 2025 (approx. 6 weeks old)



Juvenile Great Horned Owl Mama and Juvenile - May 28, 2025 - (approx. 2 months old)



Juvenile Great Horned Owls - June 18, 2025 (approx. 3 months old)



Juvenile Great Horned Owl In Flight - June 20, 2025 (approx. 3 months old)



Juvenile Great Horned Owls - June 21 2025 (approx. 3 months old)



Juvenile Great Horned Owl Trio - July 11, 2025 (approx. 3.5 months old)



Juvenile Great Horned Owls - July 13, 2025 (approx. 3.5 months old)



Juvenile Great Horned Owl Plumicorns - July 13, 2025 (approx. 3.5 months old)



Juvenile Great Horned Owl - July 20, 2025 (approx. 3.5 months old)



Juvenile Great Horned Owl Trio - August 3, 2025 (approx. 4 months old)



Juvenile Great Horned Owl all grown up (August 30, 2025 (approx. 5 months old))



Great Horned Owls Diet

- **Mostly Mammals (70-90%)**
 - Rodents (mice, voles, rats, squirrels), Rabbits, hares, Opossums.
- **Birds (10-25%)**
 - Songbirds, waterfowl, Other owls, Hawks, falcons, and Crows, ravens.
- **Reptiles and Amphibians (<5%)**
 - snakes, lizards, frogs, toads, and salamanders.
- **Large insects (<5%)**
 - beetles, grasshoppers

American
Barn Owl
(BANO)

Female Barn Owl - April 19, 2025



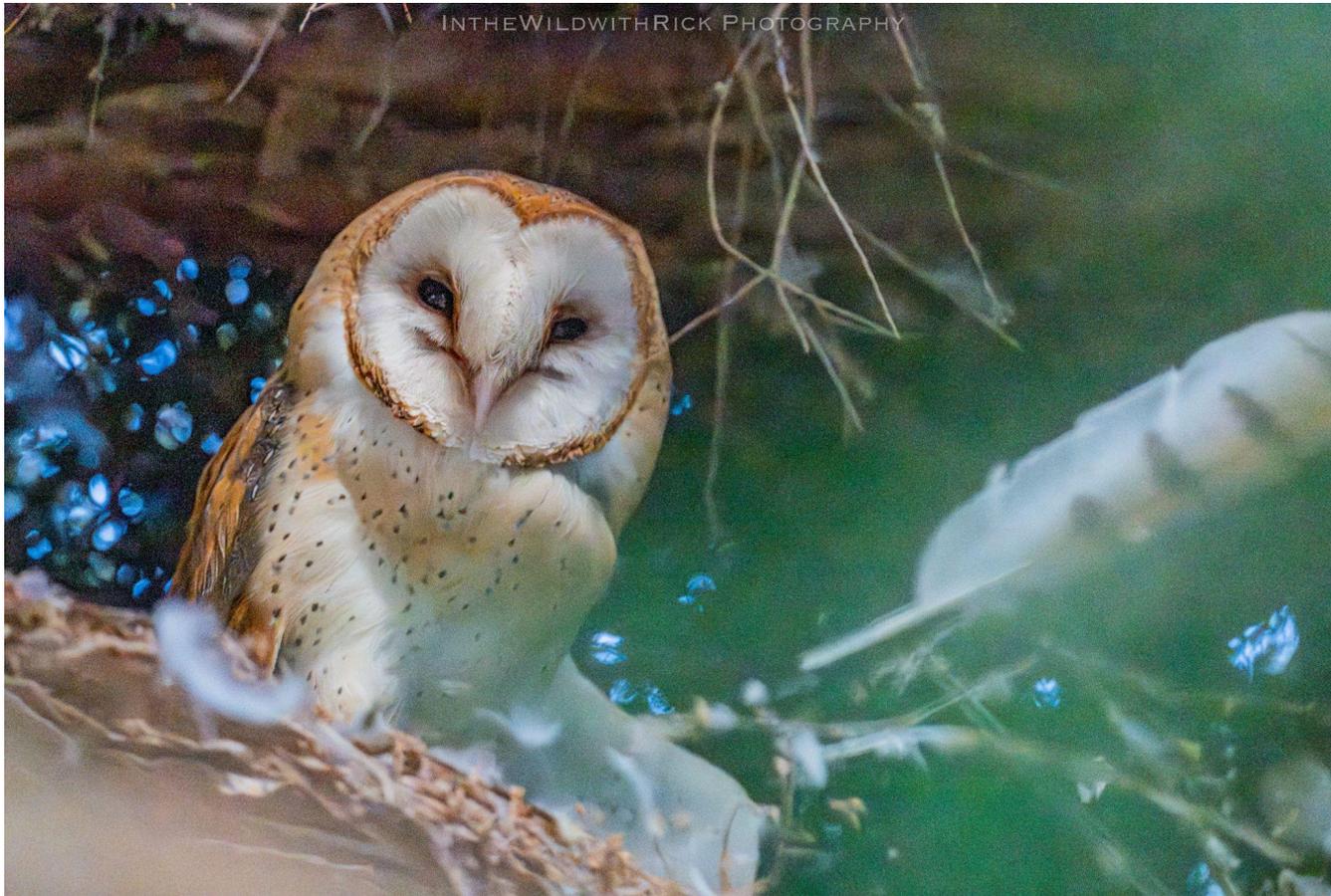
Female Barn Owl - May 18, 2025



Barn Owl Pellet Regurgitation - May 18, 2025



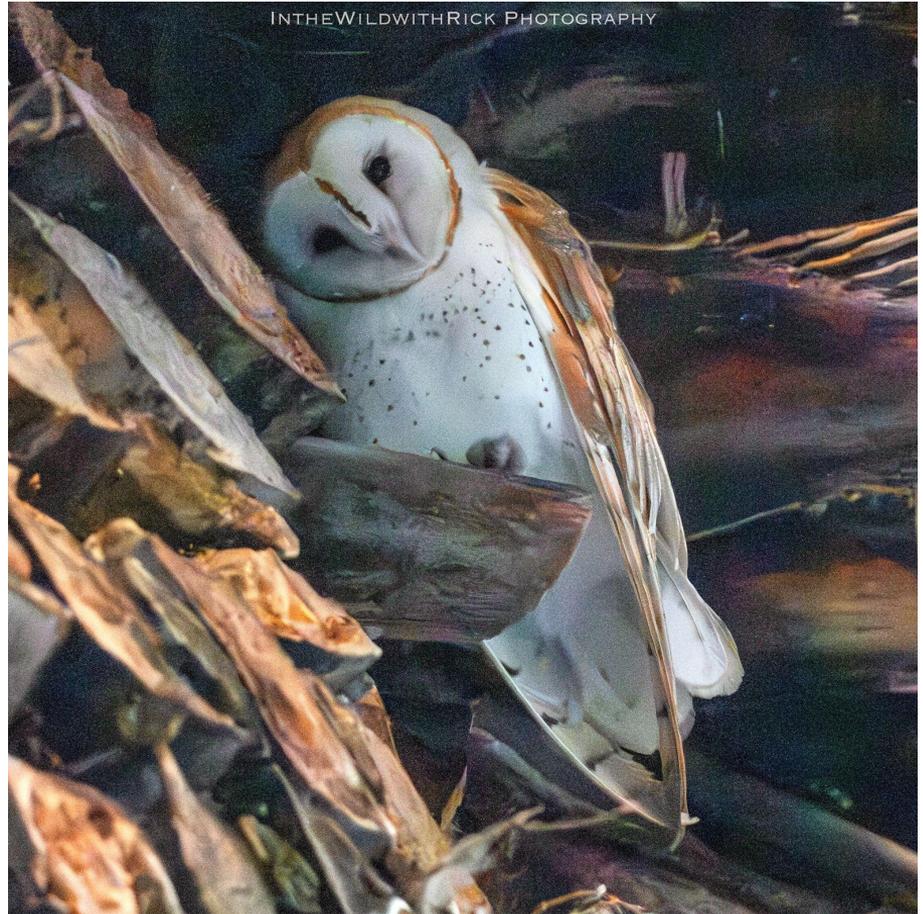
Female Barn Owl - Menlo Park - June 14, 2025



Male Barn Owl - August 8, 2025



Male Barn Owl Roosting - September 6, 2025



Female and Male Juvenile Barn Owls on Hoover Tower - August 15, 2025



Barn Owl Diet

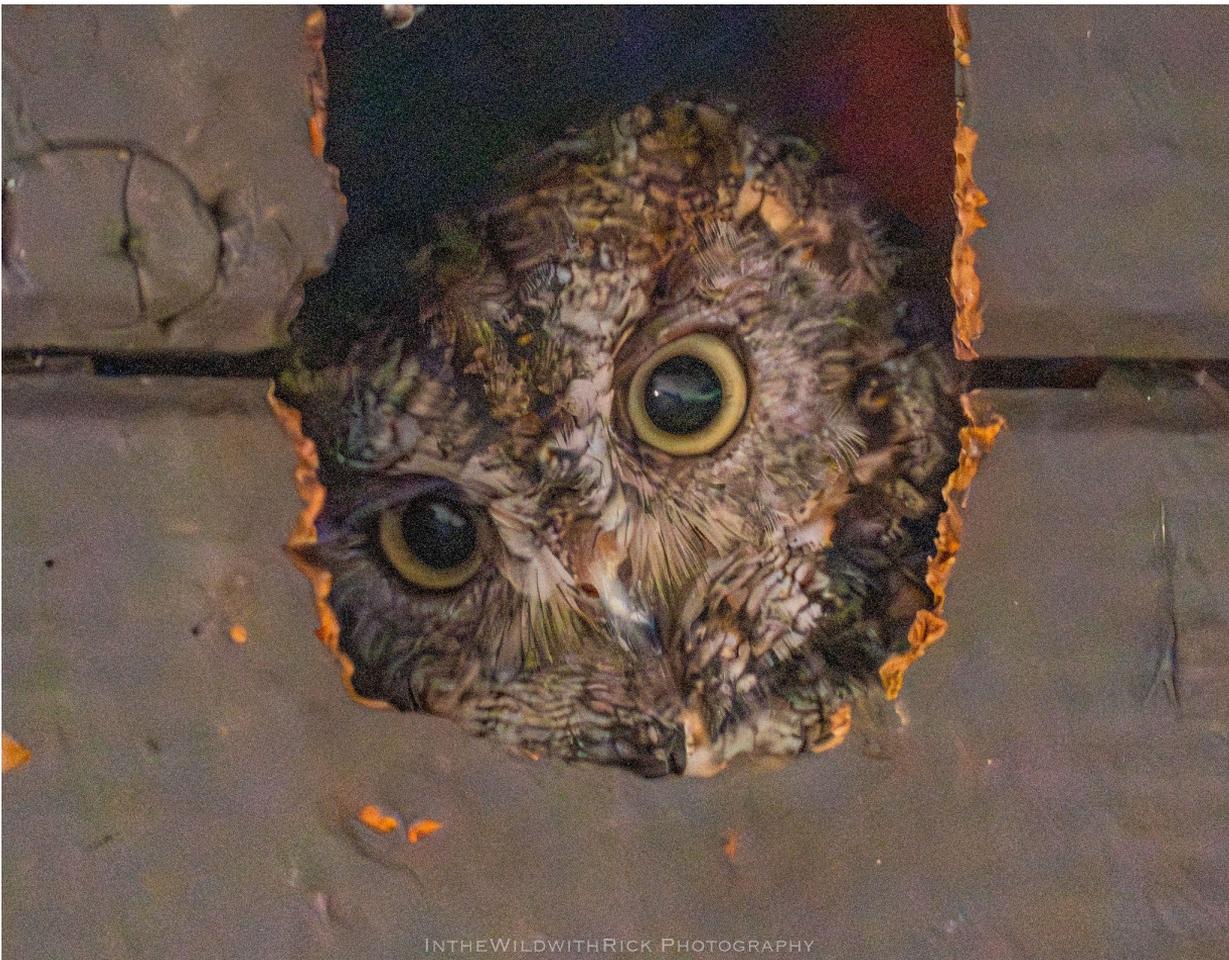
- Mostly rodents (90-95% of diet)
- Feeds heavily on voles
- Also eats mice, small rats, young rabbits
- Eat 3-4 mammals per night
- Swallow their prey whole

Western
Screech
Owl
(WESO)

Western Screech Owl - August 25, 2025



Western Screech Owl - September 14, 2025



Western Screech Owl - Menlo Park, March 30, 2025



Western Screech Owl 2 - March 10, 2025



Western Screech Owl - March 13, 2025



Western Screech Owls Diet

- Insects (40-70% of diet) and Main prey in summer
 - Moths, beetles, crickets, grasshoppers, caterpillars
- Small mammals (20-40% of diet) main prey in winter
 - Deer mice, voles, shrews, pocket gophers
 - Occasionally young rats or small rabbits
- Birds (5-15% of diet and less common):
 - Small songbirds (e.g., sparrows, finches), especially juveniles

Pueo Short Eared Owl, Big Island of Hawaii - July 2025



Pueo Short Eared Owl, Big Island of Hawaii - July 2025



Hawks

- Red-tailed
- Red-Shouldered
 - Cooper's

Red-tailed Hawk - Wavecrest Open Space, Half Moon Bay, CA



Red-tailed Hawk - May 26, 2025



Red-tailed Hawk - June 5, 2025



Red-tailed Hawk - June 21, 2025



Red-tailed Hawk Diet

1. Small-to-medium mammals (70–90% of diet):
 - Voles, Mice, Ground squirrels, gophers, rats, Young rabbits (cottontails, jackrabbits)
2. Birds (5–20%)
 - Mourning doves, European starlings, Meadowlarks. Pheasants (young or injured)
3. Reptiles
 - Snakes (rattlesnakes, gopher snakes, garter snakes), Lizards (horned lizards, whiptails)

Red-shouldered Hawk



Red-shouldered Hawk Nest



Red-shouldered Hawk



Red-shouldered Hawk



Red-shouldered Hawk



Red-shouldered Hawk



Red-shouldered Hawk Diet

- Small mammals (voles, mice, rats) (50–70%)
- Amphibians (Frogs, Salamanders, Toads)
- Reptiles (Snakes, Lizards)
- Birds (less common, sparrows, warblers, Young quail or doves)
- Invertebrates (Crayfish, Large insects (grasshoppers, beetles, caterpillars, Earthworms after rain)

Cooper's Hawk - January 17, 2025



Cooper's Hawk - Adult (red eyes) and Juvenile (yellow eyes)



Cooper's Hawk Diet

- Birds (70–90% of diet):
 - Medium-sized songbirds: American Robins, Northern Flickers, Mourning Doves, European Starlings, House Sparrows
 - Smaller birds: Finches, chickadees, warblers
 - Larger prey: Northern Bobwhite, Rock Pigeons, small chickens (rarely)
 - Often ambushes birds at feeders or in dense cover
- Small mammals (10–25%):
 - squirrels (especially juveniles), mice, voles
- Occasionally bats

Female Northern Harrier



Male Northern Harrier (aka Grey Ghost)



Female Northern Harrier and Passenger



Northern Harrier Diet

- Small mammals (60–85%):
 - Voles (especially meadow voles—*Microtus pennsylvanicus*)
 - Mice, shrews, young cottontail rabbits
 - Key prey in grasslands and marshes
- Birds (10–30%):
 - Small to medium passerines: sparrows, meadowlarks, red-winged blackbirds
 - Ground-nesters: ducklings, shorebird chicks, quail
- Occasional/Oppportunistic Prey:
 - Reptiles: Small snakes, lizards (southern populations)
 - Amphibians: Frogs (near wetlands)
 - Large insects: Grasshoppers, dragonflies (juveniles in summer)

American Kestrel



American Kestrel



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American Kestrel Diet

- Large insects (50–75%, especially summer):
 - Grasshoppers (top prey in grasslands)
 - Beetles, crickets, caterpillars, cicadas
 - Dragonflies (caught in mid-air over water)
- Small mammals (15–40%):
 - Voles (especially meadow voles)
 - Mice, shrews
 - Occasionally young ground squirrels
- Small birds (5–15%):
 - Sparrows, House Sparrows, finches, warblers

White-tailed Kite

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White-tailed Kite



White-tailed Kite Diet

- Small mammals (95–99%):
 - Voles (especially California vole, *Microtus californicus*)
 - House mice, deer mice, harvest mice
 - Occasionally pocket gophers (juveniles) or young ground squirrels
- Rare/Opportunistic Prey:
 - Birds (<2%): Tiny nestlings or injured sparrows (almost never adults)
 - Insects: Large grasshoppers or Jerusalem crickets (mostly fed to nestlings)
 - Reptiles: Small lizards (desert edges, juveniles only)

Any other questions?

Thank you!!!

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