BE MY VALENTINE?
OWLS FIND THEIR MATES EARLY

by James Dake

The woods at night may seem less silent than usual. If you have a forest nearby, you may wake in the night to the sound of cackles, gurgles, strange laughter, and deep hoots. Why? Owls are in courtship.

You may think of spring as the time when birds begin nesting, but owls are some of the earliest birds in the calendar year to begin courtship. While you may hear owls year-round, this time of year can be especially noisy if you have owls nearby. Barred owls start courtship behavior in February and March as they seek out mates by calling back and forth in the forest, before mating and laying eggs. In fact, by February, Great Horned Owls could already be sitting on eggs!

Owls are secondary users of nests. Great Horned Owls may reuse an old nest from a red-tailed hawk, crow, raven, or even squirrel. Barred owls will frequently use cavities in deciduous trees, another great reason to leave those standing dead trees on your property. Nesting this early means owls must be pretty hearty. Some research shows that Great Horned Owls can incubate eggs even when temperatures drop down as low as -27 degrees Fahrenheit.

If you have a chance, spend some time in the woods at night this winter and spring. Listen for the rooster-like "Who cooks for you?" of the Barred Owl or the deep "Ho-hoo…hoo-hoo" of the Great Horned Owl. You can also join us for our naturalist-led **Owl Calling night hike on Friday, March 6 at 7pm**.

Photo of Barred Owl at Grass River Natural Area taken by James Dake

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AND THE WINNERS ARE

CONGRATULATIONS!!

**We are pleased to announce the winners of the
2019 GRNA Photo Contest.**

Judges' Choice
Cedar Waxwing
by Mark Harder

People's Choice
Nesting Sandhill Crane
by Chris DeLange

Honorable Mention
Looking Up
by Hannah Mico

We had 25 photographs submitted by 11 photographers this year. Thank you to our judges for carefully considering all of the submissions. Thank you also to our Facebook viewers who submitted votes for their favorites. You will be seeing more of the photos featured in GRNA publications throughout the year. They are already being showcased in our Riverfest Sponsor Brochure.

You can start taking pictures now for the 2020 contest, which will be announced in the coming months. Winter and spring at Grass River Natural Area are every bit as beautiful as summer and fall!!

FUN FOR ALL
ACTIVITIES and PROGRAMS

THIS JUST ADDED

Pencil and Ink Sketching - Midday at the "Museum"
Saturday, February 29, 2020 - 2:00 - 4:00 PM
$10 per person

We have quite a collection of mammals and birds on display in the Grass River Center - the "museum". Make them come alive using pen and pencil for your sketches. All instruction and materials are provided. Arlene Westhoven, Instructor

IT'S A GRASS RIVER GATHERING

March 19, 5 - 8 pm

221 Garland St, Traverse City

A portion of the evening's proceeds will benefit GRNA programming

THE WORKSHOP BREWING COMPANY

MARCH IS MAPLE MONTH
at the Grass River Center

Saturday, March 14, 11 am - 12:30 pm, Tapping Maple Trees Program

Saturday, March 21, 11 am - 1:00 pm, Maple Celebration
Family program with pancakes and maple syrup

Friday, March 27, 10 am - Noon, Maple Homeschool Program

Click here for a full list of upcoming programs

Grass River Natural Area is a nonprofit organization that has flourished for fifty years because of the generous support of people who value our mission "to manage the Grass River Natural Area, conserve and protect its watershed, and provide opportunities that increase knowledge, appreciation and community-wide stewardship of the natural environment".

If you believe in our mission and want to help us fulfill it for many years to come. Please click on the Donate button below. Your support is greatly appreciated.

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