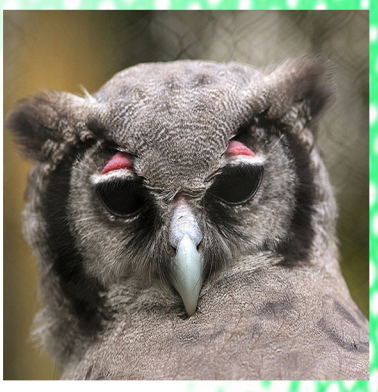
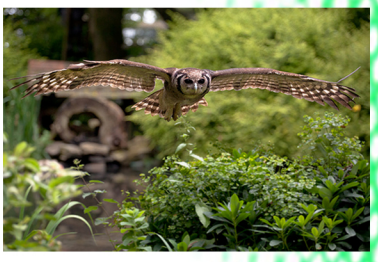
Bubo lacteus

Verreaux's Eagle Owl

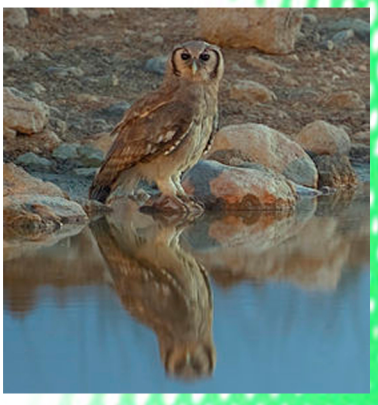


60 -66 cm Tall, 2.5 - 3.2 kg, 140 cm wing span.

The Verreaux's Eagle Owl, Milky Owl or Giant Eagle Owl, is the third heaviest owl and is found through much of Sub-Saharan Africa, though it is absent from the Namib Desert and most of the deep rainforests. The species is found at the highest densities in eastern and southern Africa. They inhabit mainly semi-desert or dry savanna with scattered trees and thorny vegetation. They also range into riverine forest adjacent to savanna and small, semi-open woodland surrounded by open country, though they are less likely in more wooded habitats. They may inhabit many elevations, from sea-level to 3,000 m. The common name commemorates the French naturalist Jules Verreaux.



In appearance, they are distinguished by a whitish oval disk face with a black border and their pink eyelids. Their eyes are orange in color and they have two fluffy ear-tufts. Overall, they are a fairly uniform brownish-gray, with light vermiculations above and white spots on the shoulder. They are paler on the underside.



The male's song is a deep gwok, gwok, gwonk-gwokwokwok gwokwokwok gwonk. The female's call is similar but higher pitched. The alarm calls of both sexes are often a sonorous whok but variable grunting notes and raspy screams also seem to indicate alarm. Both the female and the young engage in high, piercing calls when begging for food at the nest (at which time the male does the food capture).

Conservation status	
Extinct / Threatened / Least Concern	
EX EW CR EN VU NT LC	
Least Concern (IUCN 3.1)[1]	
Scientific classification	
Kingdom:	Animalia
Phylum:	Chordata
Class:	Aves
Order:	Strigiformes
Family:	Strigidae
Genus:	*Bubo*
Species:	***B. lacteus***
Binomial name	
Bubo lacteus	

Full-grown owls feed on a variety of prey items, with medium-sized mammals and large birds being preferred. Commonly recorded mammalian prey has included young monkeys, springhares, hares, genets, hyraxes, mongoose, ground squirrels, fruit bats and various rats and mice. They are one of the very few birds to favor hedgehogs as prey. When hedgehogs are caught, the spiky skin on their backs are peeled and discarded. Other prey can vary considerably, including reptiles, toads, fish and arthropods including insects, millipedes, scorpions and spiders. They have been recorded to fly with mongoose weighing over 1.8 kg (4.0 lb) and have killed and flown with even larger half-grown vervet monkeys. Very large prey items, such as warthog piglets and Denham's Bustards, may be too heavy if they are heavier than the predating owl and, in such cases, will be left at the kill site for both owls in a pair to return to and feed on repeatedly.

They are nocturnal birds and roost in trees, with large, shaded horizontal branches of tall, old trees preferred. Breeding pairs and their offspring frequently roost together and may engage in allopreening (social grooming) during this time.

The Verreaux's Eagle-Owl is a seldom-encountered species, occurring at low densities and needing large territories for hunting and breeding purposes. However, they are widespread and are not currently considered to be threatened at the species level.

Baytree Owl & Wildlife Centre