

What Would Happen if Spotted Owls Went Extinct?

Spotted owl nesting grounds can be up to 120 years old. These epic creatures have extremely downy feathers to fly silently. Unfortunately, Spotted Owls are an endangered species. They are threatened due to habitat loss and invasive species. If they went extinct, the old forests of North America would be in danger due to overpopulation and overgrazing from small rodents, as well as insects in some areas.

Firstly, Spotted owls are endangered due to loss of their forest habitat. The logging industry has been chopping down acres of forest every year. The old growth forest is an important ecosystem because the trees are dense and many are mature, bursting with biological diversity, unlike many other young forests that have been recently logged. From the article posted on the website " ScienceDirect.com' , the author writes, "Spotted Owls have been losing 6-9 percent of their habitat yearly since the 1950s." Because they have been losing their homes, there is more competition between members of their species, and it is more difficult to find places to nest and hunt. Because there is less room, less prey lives in the area, and some owls become malnourished.

Secondly, invasive species threaten the spotted owl. When there are other species competing with native ones, the native kinds often suffer because they are specialized to only a couple kinds of prey and environments. Also, the forest cannot accommodate too many species, so food will run out quickly. Larger owls, like the Great horned owl and Barred Owl, often clash with Spotted Owls for nesting sites and mangle their chicks. As the author stated on National Wildlife Federation, "Barred Owls out- compete Spotted Owls, and sometimes even mate with them, creating hybrids." Because Barred Owls and Great Horned Owls are prowling in the

forests in the Pacific Northwest, the smaller Spotted Owl often does not have enough resources to survive. Also, when different species hybridize, it affects the genetic purity of the whole population there.

If these rare creatures went extinct, small mammals like tree voles would overgraze and damage property, while invasive owls would decimate the prey in their range. As the author wrote on the website “ The Peregrine Fund” , “ Spotted Owls play an important role in nature by eating just enough prey to keep the population in control. This, in turn, protects the delicate balance in the ecosystem.” If the owls stopped eating the small rodents in the Northeast, they would overpopulate, tunneling into homes in the winter and causing damage to buildings. But when there are not enough mice in areas where invasive owls live in the Pacific Northwest, then the insects rodents eat would be out of control. Termites can cause damage to wood paneling, while locusts damage farms and eat crops.

To conclude, Spotted Owls are endangered due to habitat loss and invasive species, and if they went extinct, then rodents and insects could cause a lot of damage to farms and homes. Spotted owls protect this balance by eating just enough food to make sure the forests of North America thrive.