

ENTERTAINMENT DECEMBER 22, 2016 6:00 PM

# The Bookmonger: Bannick is back with great owl photography

BY BARBRA LLOYD MCMICHAEL

*Courtesy to The Bellingham Herald*

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## Owl by Paul Bannick

I've seen some "best coffee table book" lists for 2017, and I'd like to chime in with a nomination of my own: "Owl: A Year in the Lives of North American Owls," by Paul Bannick. My feeling is, if you're going to give a gift that has demanded considerable resources for its production, it ought to offer meaningful substance as well as style. This book delivers.

A few years ago, Bannick was responsible for another book, "The Owl and the Woodpecker," which was not only a photographic compendium of all 41 of the owl and woodpecker species that can be found in North America, but also a discussion of the ways in which their lives intertwine.

Bannick, whose desk job involves directing the major gifts program for Conservation Northwest, is clearly interested in the way the lives of birds and humans interface, too. And his boots-on-the-ground work, taking photographs out in the field, has led to "Owl," which not only features the 19 species of owls that can be found in Canada and the United States, but also talks about the habitat requirements of these birds to live and reproduce successfully.

"Owl" contains over 200 color photographs of the birds courting, hunting, tending their nests, and just photogenically hanging out in the wild. Thanks to Bannick's association with owl researchers, and his own perseverance, his access to owls has resulted in some truly breathtaking images, from the Arctic to the desert Southwest.

While Bannick covers all of the 19 species, as mentioned above, he focuses on four species that occupy four very different habitats: the Northern Pygmy-Owl (mountain forest), Burrowing Owl (grasslands/steppe), Great Gray Owl (boreal), and Snowy Owl (Arctic). This allows him to tell some pretty fascinating in-depth stories about their daily routines, while also demonstrating owls' universal requirements for territories rich in prey, as well as their frequent reliance upon other creatures for nesting opportunities. Depending on the particular species, owls may seek the burrows or cavities or platforms originally created by badgers or woodpeckers or tortoises or ravens (the list goes on and on) in which to establish their own nest.

In addition to the thought-provoking natural history this book provides, it also serves as a call for habitat preservation and conservation practices by landowners.

And at the end of "Owl," Bannick provides a pictorial field guide to North American owl species, with information on distribution, vocalization, and their current conservation status.

This book is one of several that Seattle-based publisher Braided River has developed in its effort to create support for critical conservation efforts. If you aren't already aware of their publishing output, you might be interested in visiting their website at [braidedriver.org/projects](http://braidedriver.org/projects) – they work in concert with wildlife photographers and conservation organizations to create the books that can be part of larger campaigns that might involve everything from festivals to lectures, multimedia presentations or museum exhibits in order to inspire conversation and action around the importance of preserving wild places.

*The Bookmonger is Barbara Lloyd McMichael, who writes this weekly column focusing on the books, authors and publishers of the Pacific Northwest. Contact her at [bkmonger@nwlink.com](mailto:bkmonger@nwlink.com)*



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