



Owl Watching & Photography

The Park Commission focuses its attention and resources on the creation of native landscapes and restored habitat for our New Jersey ecological communities. Birds are among the animals that have benefited most from our restoration efforts. Consequently, many of our parks are regularly populated by birders and bird photographers.

However, birding and bird photography can become problematic as individuals and groups pursue sensitive birds without regard to their well-being. In the past, owls in Mercer Meadows have been harassed and their habitat disturbed by people that disregard the wellbeing of wildlife and ignore Park Commission regulations.

The harassment suffered by the owls wintering at Mercer Meadows is a detriment to their survival. Approaching owls causes stress, and flushing them from their roosts forces them to expend energy that they need to survive the winter, when food is hardest to come by.

All forms of recreating **MUST** remain on a designated trail. If you are unsure which trails are designated, trail maps for County Parkland are available on the Park Commission website, at most County Park parking lots and in the Hunt House. No member of the public is permitted to leave the trail system.

Park Rangers actively patrol Mercer Meadows for birders and photographers that break Park Rules and Regulations established to protect our wildlife. To the majority of park users who have refrained from disturbing these sensitive species, we appreciate your consideration to our threatened wildlife and compliance with Park Commission regulations.

Park patrons who witness harassment of wildlife or a break of park rules and wish to help have two options;

- inform people who are off-trail that their actions threaten the survival of these sensitive owls and that Park Rangers are patrolling and ticketing for such activity.
- report the activity to the Park Rangers immediately by calling:

(609) 989-6111

Please Observe the following Park Commission Rules and Regulations:

1. All persons shall not leave designated trails and paths without expressed written permission from the Mercer County Park Commission.
2. No person shall harass, injure, or kill any animal, or disturb its habitat within a County Park or Recreation Area.

Tickets of up to \$1,000 may be written to individuals or groups that disobey these rules and offenders must appear in court.

