

Whooo's Out at Night?

by Tracy Vonder Brink

Whose calls do you hear after the sun sets? Who sails through the night on silent wings? Whose big eyes help them see in the dark? More than 200 different kinds of owls, all over the world. That's who!

Owls are nocturnal. They stay up at night and sleep during the day.



Some are small.



The elf owl is about the size of a soda can.

Some are big.



Blakiston's fish owl is almost as tall as a one-year-old child.

But all owls are alike in some ways.
Let's see how!

Whooo's Hiding?

The snowy owl's white feathers match the snow.

Owls sleep during the day. But sleeping out in the open in daylight can be dangerous. Anyone can see you. Owl feathers come in different colors and patterns to make owls harder to see, so they can sleep safely.

Can you spot the screech owl?

I see him.



Whoooo Sees in the Dark?

Owls' eyes have lots of tiny parts, called rod cells, that help them see in the dark.



Owls can only look straight ahead. Their tube eyes don't move like your eyeballs.



Your eyes are shaped like balls. Owl eyes are flat in front and long like a tube.

Your eyes have rod cells too, but owls have many more. Their eyes are also extra big, to let in more light.

Whoooo's Looking?

Owls can't move their eyes, so they move their necks instead. Special bones in their heads and necks make them extra bendy. Being able to look all around helps them find food.

Owls have 14 neck bones. You have only 7.



Owls can turn their heads almost all the way around.



Whoooo Wants Dinner?

Owls have special feathers, so they can fly without making a sound.



Owls' eyes and ears make them great nighttime hunters. Their hearing is so

good they can hear a mouse squeak! They also catch bugs, frogs, snakes, rabbits, and birds.

Their toes end in sharp claws, called talons.



Whoooo Eats Everything?

Owls often swallow their meals whole, including bones, teeth, and fur. A part of their stomachs, called a gizzard, packs these parts together into a pellet. Then owls spit the pellet up. The owl has no room for new food until it spits out the pellet.

Owls spit up the stuff they swallow that isn't food.

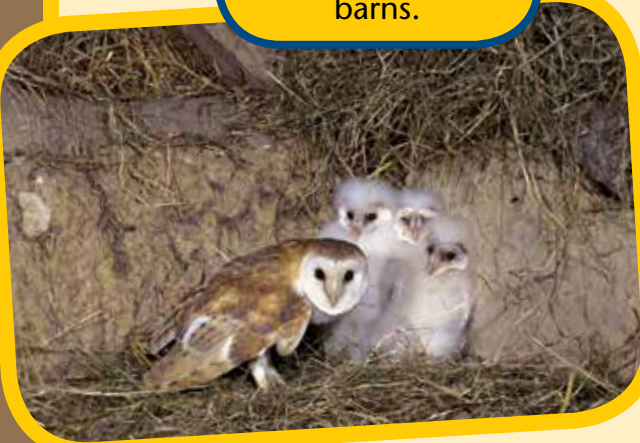


Scientists can look at the spit-out pellets to see what animals the owls hunted.



Whooo's Home?

Barn owls like to live in people's barns.



Burrowing owls live in empty prairie dog dens in the ground.

Owls don't build nests. Instead, they take over empty nests made by other animals. Many owls nest in trees. But look where these owls raise their chicks.



Eagle owls nest on rocky cliffs.

Whooo Do You Like Best?

