

Owls

Natalie Clarkson

Name _____

*A wise old owl lived in an oak
The more he saw, the less he spoke
The less he spoke, the more he heard.
Why can't we all be like that wise old bird?
-Nursery Rhyme*

Owls are interesting birds of prey. They are nocturnal and hunt small mammals, insects, birds and some fish. Owls are known for their hooked bills, sharp talons (claws), circle of feathers located around their huge eyes, and, of course, superior hearing.

Did you know that owls can be found worldwide? They live on all continents except Antarctica. Would you believe that there are over 150 different types of owls? Did you know that owls are considered wise? Or, at least, that's what folklore tells us. Some people even believe owls to be a sign of good luck!

In this month's Internet Challenge™ you will discover fascinating facts about different types of owls. Are you ready to start?

First, let's begin by visiting [The Owls Pages – Great Horned Owls](#), which introduces the popular hoot owl. Go to <http://www.owlpages.com/owls.php?genus=Bubo&species=virginianus>.

Navigate independently through this page. Look at the photographs, listen to the calls, and read the facts about the great horned owl.

- Great horned owls don't really have horns.
 - True
 - False
- Great horned owls have a large *repertoire* of sounds. Choose the word below that is the best antonym for the word *repertoire*.
 - range
 - supply
 - lack
 - collection
- The great horned owl is also known as the hoot owl. Where does the hoot name come from?
 - True
 - False
- When breeding and nesting, the great horned owls build lavish nests for their eggs.
 - True
 - False
- Explain why captive owls live much longer than the wild owls?

Great start!

Next, let's go to [The Owls Pages – Great Gray Owls](http://www.peregrinefund.org/Explore_Raptors/owls/gretgrey.html). Point your browser to http://www.peregrinefund.org/Explore_Raptors/owls/gretgrey.html. Look at the photographs, listen to the calls, and read the facts about the great gray owl.

6. Describe the behavior of the great gray owl when it is threatened.

7. What sense allows this owl to hunt small rodents under several inches of snow?

8. The great gray owl is one of the largest owls and hunts large prey.
- a. True
- b. False

9. What is the main reason for the Great Gray Owl's mortality in the wild?

10. Where do these owls live?

Super!

Now, let's visit [The Owls Pages – Common Barn Owls](http://www.owlpages.com/owls.php?genus=Tyto&species=alba) by browsing to the page <http://www.owlpages.com/owls.php?genus=Tyto&species=alba>.

Look at the photographs, listen to the calls, and read the facts about the barn owl. Complete the remaining questions.

11. How did the barn owl get its name?

12. What happens to the barn owl when there is a mouse plague or invasion?

13. Name three ways in which this owl is different from the great horned owl and the great gray owl.

a.

b.

c.

14. After learning about the barn owl, what do you think makes them special or unique?

Excellent Responses!

Extension Activity – Complete one or both

- You have probably read the Harry Potter books or seen one or more of the movies. Do you remember Hedwig, Harry's special pet owl? Visit Nature.org and read [The Owls of Harry Potter](http://www.nature.org/initiatives/programs/birds/features/) at <http://www.nature.org/initiatives/programs/birds/features/>. With a partner, read about the owls of Harry, Ron and Draco by navigating through the pages. Then, take some time to learn how the owl population is at risk. What is The Nature Conservancy doing to protect owls? Examine and research the initiatives. Then, create a PowerPoint presentation that informs your peers about owl habitats and how they are threatened by man. Include suggestions how students can play a small role in protecting owls.
- Throughout time, owls have been featured in mythology, folklore, and culture. Return to the Owl Pages and review [Owls in Mythology & Culture](http://www.owlpages.com/articles.php?section=Owl+Mythology&title=Myth+and+Culture): <http://www.owlpages.com/articles.php?section=Owl+Mythology&title=Myth+and+Culture>. As you read, you will quickly realize that owls have signified different things to different cultures. We think about these birds being associated with good luck and wisdom; however, some Native American cultures believed an owl symbolized death. After reviewing the two pages, write a creative short story that includes an owl. The owl must signify something you read at The Owl Pages site. Be sure to brainstorm before writing. Be original and have fun!

Congratulations! You have done a super job completing this month's Internet Challenge™.

Answers to January's Internet Challenge™

1. No, these owls do not have horns.
2. C
3. The hoot part of the name comes from the owl calls.
4. B
5. There are fewer ways to die.
6. The Great Gray Owl will snap its beak, flap its wings, and growl when he feels threatened.
7. The owl uses his acute sense of hearing to hunt the rodents.
8. B
9. The Great Gray Owl's mortality is often due to starvation.
10. The Great Gray Owl lives in cooler regions. They inhabit forested areas of Canada, Rocky Mountains, and northern Minnesota.
11. The Barn Owl got its name from nesting in barn lofts and church steeples.
12. These owls breed rapidly in order to keep the mouse population under control.
13. There are many ways the Barn Owl is different from the other owls highlighted. Physically, the Barn Owl has light-colored feathers. This owl can mate at any time during the year. Also, these birds have a much shorter life span. The Barn Owl lives all over the world in many different habitats.
14. Students' answers will vary.

Extension Activities – students own answers.