# Learning Guide

# Owls

We hope you enjoyed learning all about owls. Extend your learning with this print-ready Learning Guide!

## What's in this Learning Guide?

**Get Set to Listen**
Answer TRUE or FALSE statements before and after listening to the episode.

**Vocabulary**

**Discussion Questions**
*CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.3-8.1, SL.3-8.3*

**Writing Prompts**
*CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.3-8.1, W.3-8.2, W.3-8.3, W.3-8.4, W.3-8.7, W.3-8.8*

**Owl Diagram: Activity**
*NGSS:3-LS4-2, MS-LS1-4; CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.3–8.1, RI.3–8.7, SL.3–8.2*

**Dissect an Owl Pellet: Resources & Activity**
*NGSS:5-LS2-1; CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.3–8.7, SL.3–8.2*

**Owl Adaptations**
*NGSS:3-LS4-2, MS-LS1-4; CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.3–8.1, RI.3–8.7, SL.3–8.2*

**Write an Owl Poem or Song**
*NGSS:4-LS1-1; CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.3–8.7, W.3–8.8, W.3–8.3, SL.3–8.4; MU:Cr1.1*

**Design an Owl Home: Project**
*NGSS:5-LS2-1, MS-LS2-4, MS-ETS1-1, MS-ETS1-2; CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.3–8.7, W.3–8.7*

**Owl Protection Project**
*NGSS:3-LS4-4, 5-LS2-1, MS-LS2-4, MS-ESS3-3; CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.3–8.7, W.3–8.7, W.3–8.8, SL.3–8.1, SL.3–8.4*

**Additional Resources & Book List**

The Children's Hour
kids public radio

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https://www.childrenshour.org/owls/

# Get Set to Listen

**1. Before listening!**
Read each statement and write TRUE or FALSE based on what you already know.

**2. After listening!**
Based on what the experts said in the episode, write TRUE or FALSE.

| Before Listening | TRUE or FALSE? | After Listening |
|---|---|---|
| | 1. Owls come in different colors, such as brown, black, white, tan, and gray. | |
| | 2. Owls can turn their heads all the way around 360 degrees in one direction. | |
| | 3. Owls live only in forests. | |
| | 4. Owls regurgitate pellets containing bones, fur, and other undigested material. | |
| | 5. There are more than 200 species of owls in the world. | |
| | 6. Most owls build nests with small sticks like many other birds. | |
| | 7. Owls can help control the number of mice and other rodents. | |

**What did you learn?**

_____

_____

_____

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# Get Set to Listen

## Answer key

1. TRUE
2. FALSE. Although owls can see 360 degrees, they can only turn their heads about 270 degrees in one direction.
3. FALSE. Owls live in many different habitats everywhere around the world except Antarctica.
4. TRUE
5. TRUE
6. FALSE. Owls live in a variety of homes, including holes, dead trees, other birds' nests, cacti, and even mistletoe. Most owls reuse another hole or nest rather than build their own.
7. TRUE

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# Listen

Use these Shorts clips in the classroom or anytime you want to learn more about a specific topic we talked about in the full-length Children's Hour Owls episode!

- **Part 1: Owl Facts from 2nd Graders**
  - **(segment 10:04-12:45)**
- **Part 2: Owl Facts from the Owl Research Institute**
  - **(segment 21:06-24:44) + (segment 31:59-35:02)**
- **Part 3: The Successful Evolution of Owls**
  - **(segment 29:11-35:02)**
- **Part 4: Owl Adaptations**
  - **(segment 41:24-46:39)**
- **Part 5: Protecting Owls**
  - **(segment 47:42-51:54)**
- **Part 6: 2nd Graders Talk About the Importance of Owls**
  - **(segment 52:47-55:15)**

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# Vocabulary

## Listening for Words

1. Make a four-column chart and label the columns “I don’t know,” “I’ve seen or heard, but don’t know the meaning,” “I think I know the meaning,” and “I know the meaning.”
2. Write the vocabulary word in the column that describes how well you know the meaning of the word.
3. Listen to **the episode**. Note how the speaker uses the words.

## Matching Words with Definitions

1. Print and cut apart the word and definition cards.
2. Spread out the word cards so you can see them all. One by one, attach a definition card to each word card.

## Writing with New Words

After working with the words and definitions, write a one-page essay or story that uses at least three of the words.

| | |
|---|---|
| **nocturnal** | Active at night and usually resting during the day. |
| **talons** | The sharp claws that birds of prey use to catch and hold food. |

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# Vocabulary

| | |
|---|---|
| **prey** | An animal that is hunted and eaten by another animal. |
| **predator** | An animal that hunts other animals for food. |
| **habitat** | The natural place where an animal lives and finds food, water, and shelter. |
| **ecosystem** | A community of living things interacting with one another and with their nonliving environment. |

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# Vocabulary

| | |
|---|---|
| **owl pellet** | A small bundle of undigested material, such as bones and fur, that an owl brings back up through its mouth. |
| **regurgitate** | To bring food back up from the stomach through the mouth. |
| **adaptation** | A body feature or behavior that helps an organism survive in its environment. |
| **evolution** | The process through which inherited characteristics of populations change over many generations. |

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# Discussion Questions

1. What are two things you learned about owls that you did not know before?
2. How might an owl's life be different from the life of a bird that hunts during the day?
3. Why might baby owls need their parents for several weeks or months?
4. How could the loss of trees affect owls and other animals that live in forests?
5. One student said owls look scary because their faces look angry. Why might people have different opinions about how owls look?
6. Have you ever seen or heard an owl in real life? What did you notice?
7. What would you do if you found an owl feather or pellet outdoors?
8. What animals in your neighborhood might be food for owls?
9. How can learning about an animal change the way you feel about it?

## Group Discussion Strategies

**Think Pair Share:**
1. Individually, student writes down their answer to a question.
2. Students pair up and tell each other their answers.
3. Teacher calls for volunteers to share with the whole class their answer (and/or their partner's answer). Teacher notes key words/phrases on board.

**Round Robin:**
1. Teacher poses one question (written on top of a large page) to students, who are assembled into small groups of 3 or 4.
2. Students take turns brainstorming the answers. The recorder of the group writes down all answers.
3. The leader reads the group's ideas to the entire class. Teacher moderates.

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# Writing Prompts

## Narrative Prompts

1. Imagine you are an owl waking up as the sun sets. Write a story about your night. Where do you go? What do you see? Do you find food or face a challenge?

2. You are a young owl learning to fly for the first time. Tell what happens when you leave your nest. Are you nervous, excited, or surprised?

3. An owl family lives in a tree that is about to be cut down. Tell the story from the owl's point of view as the family tries to find a safe home.

## Informational/Expository Prompts

1. What is an owl pellet, and what might you find inside one? What can scientists learn from studying them?

2. Describe how the loss of trees might affect owls and other animals that live in forests.

3. There are many different species of owls. Choose two species of owls that live in different habitats and describe how each of them has adapted to its particular environment. Why might different species have different habitats, diets, and behaviors?

## Opinion/Persuasive Prompts

1. Should people keep wild owls as pets? Why or why not? State your opinion and support it with reasons.

2. What could your school or community do to make the area safer for owls?

3. Do you think owls are more important because they control rodent populations or because they are part of a healthy ecosystem? Explain your reasoning.

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# Owl Diagram

## Listen

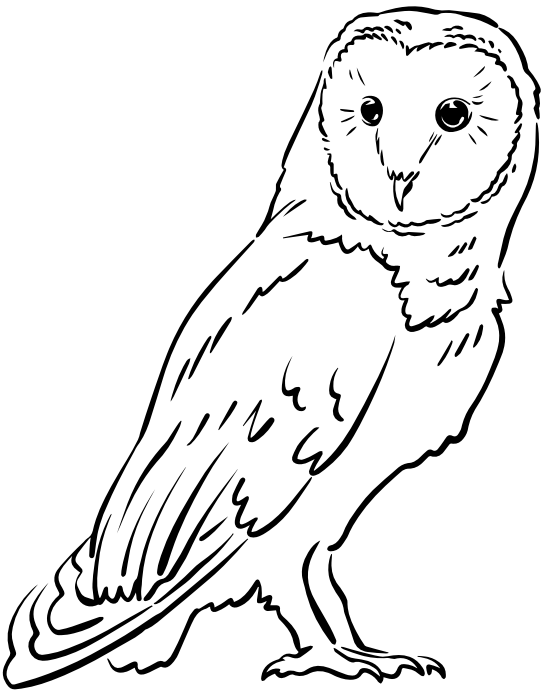
- Part 1: Owl Facts from 2nd Graders (segment 10:04-12:45)
- Part 2: Owl Facts from the Owl Research Institute (segment 21:06-24:44) + (31:59-35:02)

## Watch

Owls for Kids: Socratica Kids

## Diagram

Draw an owl or use the one below to label owl features. Include descriptions of its features and adaptations—such as large eyes, a rotating head, a curved beak, sharp talons, soft feathers, and excellent hearing. You can attach extra pages to create a trifold to allow room for your descriptions.



## Discuss/Write

- *What are two body parts that help owls catch their prey?*

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# Dissect an Owl Pellet

### Listen

- Part 2: Owl Facts from the Owl Research Institute (segment 21:06-24:44) + (31:59-35:02)

### Watch

What Is a Barn Owl Pellet? video

## What Can an Owl Pellet Tell Us?

Predict what might be found in an owl pellet. _____

_____

_____

How do bones and fur provide clues about what an owl ate? _____

_____

_____

## Materials & Resources

Use photographs or an adult-supervised pellet investigation to learn about owls' diets!

### Lesson Plans

- Owl Pellet Bone Chart and Dissection Activity for 3rd-5th Grade (free!)
- Owl Pellet Dissection from Science World

### Diagrams

- Barn Owl Pellets Analysis Fact Sheet and Identification Diagrams

### Books

A Photographic Guide to Small Mammal Bones in Barn Owl Pellets by Susanna J. Ramsey & Derek Crawley



Image source

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# Owl Adaptations

*Learn about some amazing owl adaptations, then answer the questions below.*

## Listen

- Part 3: The Successful Evolution of Owls (segment 29:11-31:58)
- Part 4: Owl Adaptations (segment 41:24-46:39)



## Watch

- Owls for Kids: Learn Fun Facts about these Cool Birds!
- Owls for Kids: Socratica Kids

## Reflect

1. *Why do owls fly quietly when they hunt?* _____

   _____

2. *How do an owl's feathers help it?* _____

   _____

3. *Why do owls turn their heads to look in different directions?* _____

   _____

4. *How do owls use their hearing to find food?* _____

   _____

5. *Why do you think owls have special adaptations for hunting at night?* _____

   _____

6. *How does camouflage help an owl survive?* _____

   _____

7. *Why might an owl's excellent hearing be just as important as its eyesight?* _____

   _____

8. There are many different owl species. Why might different species have different habitats, diets, and behaviors? _____

   _____

## Extend

Select one owl adaptation, such as silent flight, sharp talons, excellent hearing, or camouflage. Use words, diagrams, and/or models to explain how it helps the owl survive and predict what might happen without it.

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# Write an Owl Poem or Song

*Choose an owl species and write your own song or poem about it. Include information about its habitat, diet, adaptations, predators, and conservation needs.*



## Listen

[“Little Burrowing Owl” by Mr. Elephant & De La Torre]

## Research

- [Owl Field Guide for Kids]
- [Meet the Owls of North America]
- [National Geographic Kids: Superb Owls]

My owl species is _____

My owl lives in _____

Where it finds _____

It eats _____

And hunts for food by _____

It has _____

Which helps it _____

Its predators are _____

And they may _____

We can help this owl by _____

_____

_____

## Write

Now it’s time to get creative! Use descriptive adjectives, vivid verbs, rhyming words, and sounds to bring your song or poem to life.

## Extend

Complete the **“Design an Owl Home”** activity in this Learning Guide to make a home for your chosen owl species!

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# Design an Owl Home

## Listen

- Part 2: Owl Facts from the Owl Research Institute (segment 21:06-24:44) + (31:59-35:02)
- Part 5: Protecting Owls
- Part 6: 2nd Graders Talk About the Importance of Owls

## Reflect

- *Why do many owls use existing tree holes or other animals' nests instead of building their own?*
- *How could the loss of trees affect owls and other animals that live in forests?*

## Research & Plan

Research an owl species and build a home for it. *(**Tip:** Use the research resources in the **"Write an Owl Poem"** activity in this Learning Guide.)*

My owl species is _____

Where might your owl live or build its nest? _____

_____

My owl home will include:

- A safe place to nest (rest and raise owlettes)
- Protection from bad weather and predators
- A nearby place to find food

## Draw

On a separate sheet of paper, draw your owl's home and surrounding habitat.

*How does your design keep the owl safe?* _____

_____

## Build

Use recycled materials, cardboard, sticks, leaves, or other craft supplies to build a model of a safe home for your owl.

## Write

*How can people help protect owl habitats?* _____

_____

_____

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# Owl Protection Project

## Listen

- Part 2: Owl Facts from the Owl Research Institute (segment 21:06-24:44) + (31:59-35:02)
- Part 6: 2nd Graders Talk About the Importance of Owls (segment 52:47-55:15)

## Research

- Owls: The Mysterious, Wise, and Graceful Birds of Prey
- Bird-Friendly Communities

## Your Mission

*Owls need safe places to live, hunt, and raise their babies. Your job is to investigate your school or community and brainstorm ways to make it safer for owls.*



## Investigate

*What dangers might owls face near your school or community?*

□ Loss of trees and nesting spaces
□ Cars and roads
□ Pesticides or rodent poison
□ Loss of food and habitat
□ Other: _____

## Brainstorm

*Think of ways to protect trees, provide safe nesting places, and keep owls away from danger.*

**Solution 1:** What can people do to help protect owls? _____

_____

_____

_____

**Solution 2:** What is another way to keep owls safe? _____

_____

_____

_____

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# Owl Protection Project

## Explain Your Plan

How would your solutions help owls survive? _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

## Take Action

Put your plan into action! Choose one idea you could share with your class, family, or other community members.

*How will you share your plan with others? Will you draw a poster or sign? Design a safe owl habitat (see **"Design an Owl Home"** activity in this Learning Guide) to show others? Or make another plan to help protect owls?*

**Draw** your owl protection idea here:



***Small actions, like protecting trees, reducing pesticide use, and respecting wildlife, can make a big difference!***

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# Additional Resources

**Owl Pellet Dissection**
A 1-hour lesson plan from Science World.

**Britannica Kids: Owls**
A kid-friendly article that includes information about where owls live, what they look and act like, and more.

**Owl Field Guide for Kids**
This article gives information about owls, including a spotlight on 5 owl species and a list of even more. Includes activity suggestions.

**Meet the Owls of North America**
Get to know all 19 owl species you can see in the US, and how they differ in this article from the Audubon Society.

**Owls: The Mysterious, Wise, and Graceful Birds of Prey**
Learn all about the different types of owls and how you can help protect them.

**National Geographic Kids: Superb Owls**
This article features some awesome owl species.

**How to Build a Screech Owl Nest Box**
Step-by-step instructions from the Audubon Society.

**Bird-Friendly Communities**
This article and resource collection from the Audubon Society will help you transform your community into a place where birds, including owls, can flourish.

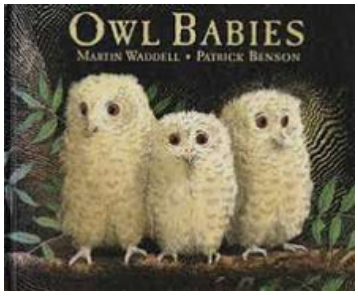
## Videos

**Owls for Kids: Learn Fun Facts about these Cool Birds!**
Owls live in almost every type of habitat and have special adaptations. Learn lots of fun and interesting facts about owls in this Learn Bright video. Downloadable activities are available from their **website**.

**Owls for Kids: Socratica Kids**
Learn about the types of owls and their special adaptations in this 8-minute video.

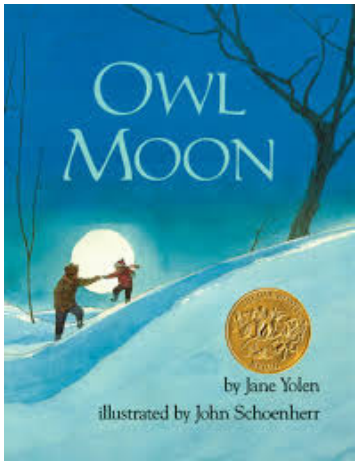
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# Book List



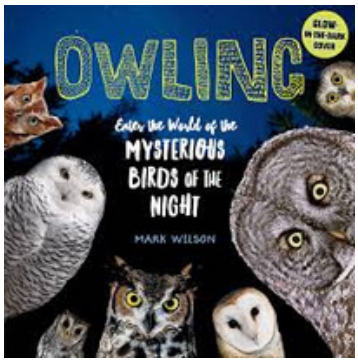

***Owl Babies***
by Martin Waddell, illustrated by Patrick Benson

This lyrical and sweet story about three owlet siblings who wake to find themselves without their mother and the sweet way they care for each other until she returns with breakfast will quickly become a beloved favorite.
ages 1-5



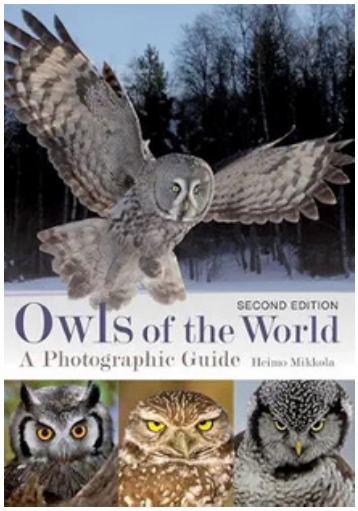

***Owl Moon***
by Jane Yolen, illustrated by John Schoenherr

This timeless, gentle poem about a father taking his daughter out owling one cold, wintry night will make you want to go out on your own adventure.
ages 2-8




***Owling: Enter the World of the Mysterious Birds of the Night***
by Mark Wilson

Explore the mysterious lives of North America's 19 owl species through stunning photos and fascinating facts. Kids will discover how owls hunt, fly silently, communicate, and use their incredible senses, while learning to identify owl calls, feathers, and pellets —and even hoot back!
ages 5-10

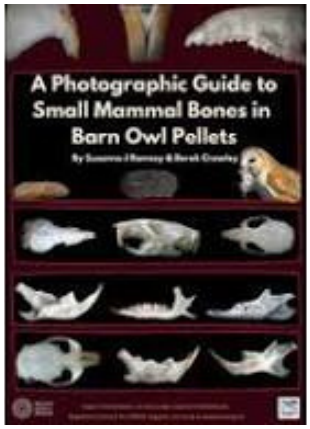



***Owls of the World: A Photographic Guide***
by Heimo Mikkola

The ultimate photographic resource dedicated to the identification of these elusive birds.  It is a comprehensive encyclopedia for reference and reading and includes stunning photos of 268 different species!
all ages

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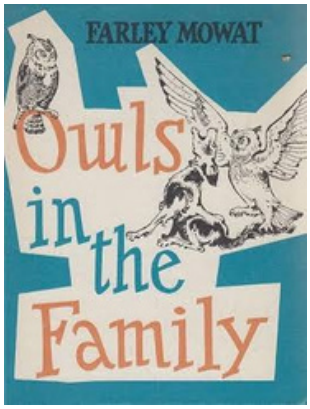
# Book List




***A Photographic Guide to Small Mammal Bones in Barn Owl Pellets***

by Susanna J. Ramsey & Derek Crawley

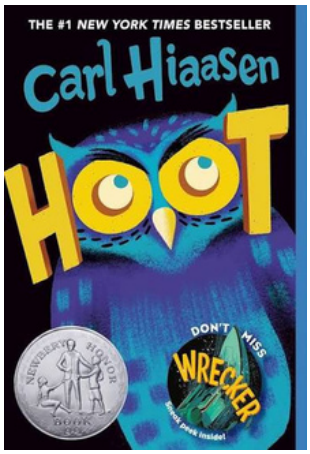
This practical, illustrated guide helps users identify small mammals found in owl pellets and submit records to the Mammal Society to support UK biological recording. Its durable, laminated pages make it ideal for workshops and labs, with clear images to help both amateurs and experts identify remains to species level.
ages 12+, or with adult guidance to aid in owl pellet dissection




***Owls in the Family***

by Farley Mowat

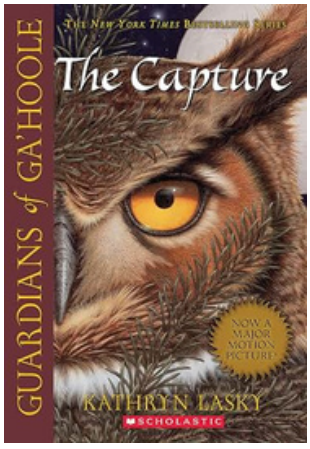
A funny, heartwarming book about a young boy who rescues two great horned owls.  Written in 1961, it has gentle humor that affectionately portrays Canadian prairie life and a deep appreciation for nature and wildlife, although some readers report outdated views about wildlife capture.
ages 6-12




***Hoot***

by Carl Hiaasen

This Newbery Honor winner and #1 New York Times bestseller is a beloved modern classic. Hoot features a new kid and his new bully, alligators, some burrowing owls, a renegade eco-avenger, and several extremely poisonous snakes.
ages 9-12




***Guardians of Ga'Hoole***

by Kathryn Lasky

This 16-book series features classic hero mythology about the fight between good and evil.  The four main characters are all owls, and it is filled with adventure, suspense, and heart.
ages 8-10

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