

Owls

Owls are a type of bird known as birds of prey. There are more than two hundred different species of owls living throughout the world. The only places where you will not find owls are Antarctica, Greenland and some remote islands.

Owls usually keep to themselves. They are active mostly at night. They are called birds of prey because they hunt small mammals, insects and other birds. There are also a few species of owls that fish. Owls are great hunters in part because they can hear extremely well. They have a circle of feathers around their eye sockets known as facial discs. The feathers help to funnel sound to an owl's ears. In fact, an owl can hear the sound of a twig snapping 75 feet away. Owls can also fly without making any sound to warn their prey that they are approaching. They can fly silently because of special feathers with soft edges that keep them from making a whooshing sound when they fly. Owls also have dull coloring that helps them blend into their surroundings.

Some owls are very small. In fact, the smallest owl is just over five inches long and weighs only a little more than an ounce! There are much larger owls as well. The largest owls are called eagle owls. They are more than two feet long and weigh up to ten pounds. When eagle owls spread their wings, their wings span a distance of more than six feet!

Owls can see a long distance, but they have trouble seeing what is right in front of them. They can see well in dim light. Unlike other birds, owls are front-facing. Their eyes face forward like a person's eyes instead of being on either side of their head. Owls cannot move their eyes to see around. Instead, they must move their entire head to see to the left or to the right. Owls can also move their heads to see behind them.

Owls make a number of different sounds to communicate with each other. The most well-known owl sound – *whoooo* – is a sound made by the great horned owl, one of the most popular species of owls in pictures, zoos and stories. Other species of owls make different sounds.

Owls Questions

1. Owls are
 - a. mammals.
 - b. hunters.
 - c. found only in the northern hemisphere.
 - d. All of the above

2. Owls are active
 - a. mostly at night.
 - b. mostly during the daylight.
 - c. all the time
 - d. only for about two hours a day.

3. Owls are excellent hunters in part because of
 - a. their sense of smell.
 - b. their excellent hearing.
 - c. their communication skills.
 - d. All of the above

Name two other characteristics that help owls hunt.

4.

5.

6. Owls can hear a twig snap
 - a. only if it is very close.
 - b. 75 feet away.
 - c. more than 200 feet away.
 - d. only at night when the forest is quiet.

Name _____



Date _____

Owls Answers

1. b
2. a
3. b
4. They can fly without making any sound.
5. They have dull feathers that blend into their surroundings.
6. b
7. c
8. It is just over five inches long and weighs a little more than an ounce.
9. It is more than two feet long and weighs up to ten pounds.
10. C