

THE WORLD OF OWLS

Lesson developed by: Pat Rossi, Summit County Master Gardener Volunteer

Introduction:

North America has 19 species of owls. According to Jim McCormac, Ohio Division of Wildlife, Ohio has 3 owl species that are common; 5 that are not as common; and 4 that are rare. Owls fascinate us because of their appearance, their unusual sounds, and their keen senses of vision and hearing.

Questions and Answers About Owls:

- Do owls have eyes at the sides of their heads like other birds?
 - While other species of birds have eyes on the sides of their heads, owls have them in the fronts of their heads. Their eyes are binocular (like humans) and tubular shaped (not like humans). Owls can't move their eyes; however, they can move their heads 270 degrees. Eyes can be dark (brown/black), yellow, or yellowish orange.
- Are owls' ears on the tops of their heads?
 - Owls' ears are flat and hidden. Tufts (feathers) on top of their heads are not ears.
- What do owls use their claws for?
 - They use their 4 claws or talons to catch and kill prey for food. Their beaks are used to tear or rip the food apart.
- Do owls migrate?
 - Some owls are resident owls (stay in same area); some migrate due to weather or due to scarcity of food in a particular year.
- What are young owls called?
 - Baby owls are owlets. When they are ready to fly, they are called fledglings.
- Do owls mate for life or seasonally?
 - Some owls mate for life and some do not.



Great Horned Owl

Tony Varela/Macaulay Library at the Cornell Lab of Ornithology (ML51588041)

- What do owls eat?
 - Prey can be insects, mice, voles, shrews, lemmings, birds, rabbits, other owls, and more. The size of prey depends in most cases on the size of the owl.

Owls of Ohio

*Refer to *Owls of Ohio* guidebook at www.odnr.gov for facts and photos of these owls. You can copy and enlarge photos to share with residents.



Eastern Screech Owl, Blink at Quail Hollow State Park,
photo by Jerry Salisbury, Summit County Master Gardener

Three most common owls in Ohio:

Eastern Screech Owl – call has a whinny (horse-like sound); one of the smallest owls in Ohio.

Great Horned Owl – has tufts (feathers) on top of head that look like ears but they are not ears; large owl.

Barred Owl – has dark eyes; likes swampy areas.



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Five owls in Ohio that are not as common:

Barn Owl – has a distinctive heart shaped face; has extremely sharp hearing; can capture prey in almost total darkness.

Northern Saw-whet Owl – one call sounds like a saw being sharpened. It is the smallest owl in Ohio. The smallest owl in North American is the Elf Owl.

Snowy Owl– is white in color and from the Arctic; can be seen around Lake Erie.

Long-eared Owl – has tufts (feathers) on top of head.

Short-eared Owl – has tufts on top of its head but can't see them because they are so small.

HANDPRINT OWL ACTIVITY



Photo: Cindy deRosier/CindydeRosier.com

This activity was found in the National Audubon Society news which got the idea from Cindy deRosier.

<https://audubon.org/news/turn-your-kids-handprint-basically-any-bird> Also check out CindydeRosier.com (My Creative Life) for this activity.

Materials needed: colored construction paper, scissors, glue stick, and then any of the following: nontoxic paint, nontoxic magic markers, crayons, or colored pencils

Trace an adult hand or an adult hand and a child's hand to make the body of an owl on colored construction paper. Place the cut out paper hand(s) upside down on another piece of paper and glue the hands on it.

Trace an adult hand or an adult hand and a child's hand to make the body of an owl on construction paper.

Place the cut out paper hand(s) upside down on another piece of paper and glue the hands on it.

Cut out eyes, beak, feet and glue onto owl(s).

Color, paint, or cut out a branch and a side of tree trunk and a few leaves if you wish. You can fill in more details, e.g. more feathers, tufts on top of head, etc.

LIST OF RESOURCES

Webinar:

Ohio Bird Conservation Initiative, "Lunch With the Birds," Webinar on "Owls of Ohio" by Jim McCormac, Division of Wildlife, Ohio Department of Natural Resources, www.obcinet.org/lunchwiththebirds

Magazine:

Birds and Blooms, "Meet Your Nocturnal Neighbors" by Ken Keffer and "The Secret of Owls" by Kaitlin Stainbrook, October/November 2017.

Books:

Angell, Tony. Owls, University of Washington Press, Seattle and London, Second Printing, 1975.

Frick, Ivi. Animal Attack! Hunting with Great Horned Owls, Gareth Stevens Publishing, NY, NY, 2013.

Lawrence, R.D. Owls-The Silent Fliers, Firefly Books, Buffalo, NY, 1997.

Long, Kim. Owls- A Wildlife Handbook, Johnson Nature Series, Johnson Books, a division of Johnson Publishing Company, Boulder, CO, 1998.

Sparks, John & Soper, Tony. Owls-Their Natural and Unnatural History, Taplinger Publishing Company, New York, 1970. (Illustrated by Robert Gillmor).

Taylor, Marianne. Owls, Comstock Publishing Association, a division of Cornell University Press, Ithaca, NY, 2012.

Contact information:

If you have any questions about this activity, please email mgsummitcounty@gmail.com.

We hope you benefitted from this activity. Please let us know if you utilized this with a quick email to the above address. Please send your name, facility name, number of participants involved in this activity, and your feedback for improvement so we can measure our impact and improve this product. Thank you!

A HOOT FOR THE OWLS
HOW ARE THEY THE SAME OR DIFFERENT?



Great Horned Owl
Koerner, Tom, United States Fish & Wildlife Services



Eastern Screech Owl
Blink at Quail Hollow State Park
Jerry Salisbury, Summit County
Master Gardener



Barred Owl
Sean Fitzgerald/Macaulay Library at the
Cornell Lab of Ornithology (ML47025101)



Barn Owl
Darren Clark/Macaulay Library at the
Cornell Lab of Ornithology (ML46140501)



Snowy Owl
Mark Benavides/Macaulay Library at the Cornell Lab
of Ornithology (ML48494401)

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HOW ARE THEY THE SAME OR DIFFERENT?



Woodsey – Great Horned Owl at Ohio Wildlife Center
Photo by: Peter Emmett
www.emmett-photography.com



Bella -Barred Owl at Ohio Wildlife Center
Photo by: Peter Emmett
www.emmett-photography.com



Northern Saw-Whet Owl
Courtesy of the Missouri Department of Conservation



Barn Owl, Kentucky Department
of Fish & Wildlife Resources,
Kentucky.gov

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HOW ARE THEY THE SAME OR DIFFERENT?

After showing the residents the photos on the previous pages, ask the following questions:

- ❖ How are the Great Horned Owl and the Eastern Screech Owl the same?
- ❖ How are the Eastern Screech Owl and the Northern Saw-whet Owl the same? How are they different?
- ❖ What owl has a heart-shaped face?
- ❖ What owl is from the Arctic? Why do you think it is mostly white?
- ❖ What owls have dark eyes, e.g., brown or black?

A HOOT FOR THE OWLS
HOW ARE THEY THE SAME OR DIFFERENT?