

Barn Owl

(*Tyto alba*)



DID YOU KNOW:

Barn owls do not hoot like many other owls.

Instead, they make a raspy, hissing screech. Perhaps because they are white with light tan markings and can be easily seen, they do not have to call out to find each other.

EATING HABITS:

Barn Owls are living mousetraps; a single barn owl may eat as many mice each year as three feral house cats. Yet they only weigh about a pound. Farmers love having barn owls because they eat the voles and mice that might otherwise eat their crops in fields and from their grain storage areas. Barn owls hunt at night; their incredible hearing allows them to hunt in total darkness. A mouse squeaking may attract a barn owl one-fourth of a mile away.

THE YOUNG:

Hollow trees provide good nest areas. Barn owls have adapted to living near people. Church towers and old barns



provide great areas for nesting. The barn owl mother lays her five to seven eggs without constructing a nest. She begins incubation after the first egg is laid, so her babies hatch during several days. The clutch of eggs hatches in 24 to 34 days, resulting in owlets of different ages. The male owl brings food for the mom and young.

HABITAT (HOME):

They are found on every continent. Barn owls can not tolerate extreme cold, so those that nest in the north may migrate south as weather becomes severe. Open fields with scattered trees are essential to barn owls. A barn owl family needs an incredible number of mice, voles and shrews to survive.

DEFENSIVE HABITS:

Sharp talons provide some defense. Barn owls can be attacked by larger owls and hawks. Barn owls have little defense against loss of habitat and shortage of nesting sites.

UNUSUAL FACTS:

- Barn owls are also called monkey-faced owls and white owls.
- Because of their light color, raspy screech and the fact that they often nest in towers, abandoned buildings and even cemeteries, barn owls are sometimes referred to in ghost stories.
- Barn owls are in a different taxonomic group from other owls and are distinguished by their heart-shaped, rather than round, faces.
- Up to 46 different races of the Barn Owl have been described worldwide. The North American form is the largest, weighing more than twice as much as the smallest race from the Galapagos Islands.
- Barn Owl females are somewhat showier than males. She has a more reddish and more heavily spotted chest. The spots may indicate the quality of the female. Heavily spotted females get fewer parasitic flies and may be more resistant to parasites and diseases.