

Barn owl



I am a barn owl.

I have a heart-shaped face, my wings are long and my under-parts are snowy white.

Can you see my heart-shaped face?

I have long legs and toes, and the ability to spread my talons widely.

My talons are designed to catch prey in long vegetation and hold onto it.



If you see me at night in a car's headlights you may think I am a ghost.

My favourite food is vole, but I will also eat shrews, mice, rats, small birds and insects.

I will often swallow my food whole and then get rid of the bones and fur by producing a pellet which I bring up through my beak.

How would you feel if you ate a chicken, swallowing the bones and feathers, and later had to be sick to get rid of the bones and feathers?

I was hatched in March from a white egg.



I had two brothers and a sister.

How many young owls were there?

My nest was a deep hole in an oak tree.

When I was young, my mother looked after me whilst my father hunted for food.

She fed me by dragging small bits of prey across my beak, and dropping the prey in as soon as I opened my mouth.

When you next eat some food, try dragging it across your lips, open your mouth and gently drop the food in.

I would snuggle up to my brothers and sisters to keep warm.

I think that I sing very well, but you may think that I screech.

Hunting

At night-time I need to rely on my excellent sense of hearing to locate prey.

I can find prey in complete darkness and can distinguish between different sounds.

Close your eyes and listen for different sounds. What can you detect?

When I am out hunting I like to perch on a fence post or in a tree.

When ready I push off from my perch, flap my wings and glide silently towards

my prey. I swoop down and grab the prey in my talons.

Why is it a good idea to be silent when hunting?

If it is a bad year for voles I may die through starvation.

If there is snow on the ground it will be hard for me to locate and catch prey.

Want to know more

Take a look at The Barn Owl Centre website on www.barnowl.co.uk where you can find more pictures and movies about barn owls.



See if you can find the following words:

Barn, owl, ghost, hunt

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| C | Z | I | G | H |
| O | O | B | H | O |
| W | O | A | O | P |
| L | K | R | S | I |
| H | U | N | T | E |

How many points can you get?

| Task | Tick | Points |
|---------------------------------------|------|--------|
| Have you seen a barn owl? | | 10 |
| Did you notice its heart-shaped face? | | 3 |
| Did you notice its white under-parts? | | 3 |
| Total points | | |

Please try to answer these questions:

What shape is a barn owl's face?

How do young barn owls keep warm?

What do they like to eat?

How do they detect prey at night?

What do you think happens to barn owls when the ground is covered with deep snow?