

Give a Hoot About Owls



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Did you know there are over 200 different owl species in the world? Some have bright white feathers while others are grey or brown. Some owls have round faces, others have heart shaped faces, some have black or yellow eyes depending on when they hunt, and nearly all of them fly in complete silence!

English:
Owl

French:
Hibou

Ojibwe:
Kookookoo

Owls do have a few things in common. They can fly using their wings, and they lay eggs instead of giving birth to live young. They are largely *carnivores* (they hunt for meat) and they build nests in buildings, in trees, and even sometimes on the ground! The features that make them unique are their forward facing eyes, the ability to turn their heads up to 270 degrees side to side, and they have two forward facing and two backward facing toes.



Activity 1. Eye Spy an Owl

Materials: A piece of rope or string

Depth perception is very important for owls to hunt and catch their prey. Owls are known to have excellent vision which helps them see their prey even if they are camouflaged in the best hiding spots. If an owl was missing one of its eyes, its depth perception would be completely off and they ultimately wouldn't survive.

For this activity, have someone hold a piece of rope in front of your face and try to pinch the rope in front of you. It is to see and grab the rope!

After you have done this, close one eye and then try again. You will find it much more difficult to grab the rope than you did the first time because your depth perception is thrown off. Not being able to see out of one eye would change the way an owl hunts because it wouldn't be able to see its prey and successfully swoop down to catch it.

Activity 2: Did You Hear About Owls?

Materials: Shaker and blindfold

Many owls have *asymmetrical hearing*, which means that one of their ears is actually higher on their head than the other. This, and their special facial discs which guide sound waves into their ears, allows them to hear prey very quickly!

Owls can detect the difference between sounds in their right and left ear by 30 millionths of a second. Some owls will even close their eyes while hunting to focus on the sound of their prey. Most can catch prey in complete darkness!

You'll need at least two friends or family members to test this out! Stand in a circle and have one person become the "owl" wearing the blindfold. Someone else in the circle will make noise with the shaker. Can the "owl" guess who it was?