



The Owl — Silent Hunter of the Night

Reading Worksheet — Level F | tahricteaches.com

The owl is one of nature's most skilful night hunters. These remarkable **creatures** belong to a group of birds found on every continent except Antarctica, and scientists have identified more than 200 species. From the tiny elf owl, no larger than a sparrow, to the powerful Eurasian eagle-owl with a wingspan of nearly two metres, owls have adapted to almost every **environment** on Earth — forests, deserts, grasslands, and even the frozen Arctic.

What makes an owl such a deadly predator is its ability to **hunt** in near-total darkness without being heard. The edges of an owl's wing **feathers** are soft and comb-like, breaking up the rushing air and muffling the sound of every wingbeat. This gives the owl an almost completely **silent** flight, allowing it to surprise its prey. A mouse on the ground rarely hears the danger until it is far too late.

Owls also possess extraordinary senses. Their huge eyes gather even the faintest light, but because these eyes cannot move within their sockets, an owl must **twist** its neck to look around — and it can rotate its head an astonishing 270 degrees. Even more impressive is its hearing. An owl's ears sit at slightly different heights on its head, and this **sensitive** arrangement lets the bird **detect** the exact position of a sound. In complete darkness, an owl can locate a mouse moving beneath snow or fallen leaves.

When an owl strikes, it spreads its sharp talons wide to **capture** its prey, often swallowing small animals whole. As skilled predators, owls play an important part in keeping the natural world in balance. A single family of barn owls can eat over a thousand rodents in one year, helping farmers protect their crops without using dangerous poisons. In this way, owls act as nature's own pest controllers.

Sadly, many owl species are now in trouble. As forests are cleared and wild spaces **disappear**, owls lose the trees and quiet fields they need to nest and hunt. Poisons meant to kill rats and mice can also build up in the owls that eat them. Protecting owls therefore means protecting the whole **environment** they depend on. When we keep their world healthy, these silent hunters can continue to guard the balance of the night.

A. Vocabulary

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|---------------------|--|
| 1. creature ____ | a. one of the light, soft parts that cover a bird's body |
| 2. environment ____ | b. to turn or bend something into a different position |
| 3. hunt ____ | c. to stop being seen or to cease to exist |

- | | |
|--------------------|--|
| 4. feather ____ | d. to discover or notice the presence of something |
| 5. silent ____ | e. a living thing, especially an animal |
| 6. twist ____ | f. the natural world and surroundings in which living things exist |
| 7. sensitive ____ | g. to chase and catch animals for food |
| 8. detect ____ | h. making no sound at all |
| 9. capture ____ | i. able to notice or respond to very small changes |
| 10. disappear ____ | j. to catch and hold a person or an animal |



B. True or False

1. Owls are found on every continent except Antarctica. ____
2. There are fewer than fifty species of owl in the world. ____
3. The soft edges of an owl's feathers help it fly silently. ____
4. An owl can move its eyes freely inside their sockets. ____
5. An owl can rotate its head up to 270 degrees. ____
6. An owl's ears are placed at exactly the same height on its head. ____
7. A single family of barn owls can eat over a thousand rodents in a year. ____
8. Owls help farmers by controlling rodents naturally. ____
9. Cutting down forests has no effect on owl populations. ____



C. Fill in the Blanks

Word Bank: silent, feather, detect, capture, disappear

1. The soft edges of an owl's _____s muffle the sound of its wings.
2. An owl's near-_____ flight lets it surprise its prey.
3. An owl's sensitive hearing can _____ the exact position of a sound.
4. An owl spreads its sharp talons wide to _____ its prey.
5. As forests are cut down and wild spaces _____, owls lose their homes.

D. Comprehension Questions

1. What feature of an owl's feathers allows it to fly almost silently, and why does this matter for hunting?
2. Why must an owl twist its neck instead of simply moving its eyes?
3. Explain how the position of an owl's ears helps it locate prey in the dark.
4. How do owls benefit farmers and the natural balance of an area?
5. What threats are causing owl numbers to fall, and what does protecting owls require?

E. Discussion Questions

1. Engineers have copied the shape of owl feathers to design quieter aircraft and wind turbines. Why might studying animals help people solve modern problems?
2. Some cultures see the owl as a symbol of wisdom, while others see it as a sign of bad luck. Why do you think the same animal can mean such different things to different people?
3. If you were asked to design a plan to protect owls in your area, what would be your first step, and why?





Answer Key

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A. Vocabulary: 1-e, 2-f, 3-g, 4-a, 5-h, 6-b, 7-i, 8-d, 9-j, 10-c

B. True/False: 1-T, 2-F, 3-T, 4-F, 5-T, 6-F, 7-T, 8-T, 9-F

C. Fill Blanks: 1-feather, 2-silent, 3-detect, 4-capture, 5-disappear

D. Comprehension:

1. The edges of an owl's wing feathers are soft and comb-like, which breaks up the air and muffles the sound of each wingbeat. This near-silent flight lets the owl surprise prey before it can escape.
2. An owl's eyes cannot move within their sockets, so to look in a different direction it must twist its whole neck. An owl can rotate its head up to 270 degrees.
3. An owl's ears sit at slightly different heights on its head, so a sound reaches each ear at a slightly different moment. This sensitive arrangement lets the owl detect the exact position of prey, even in total darkness.
4. Owls are skilled predators that keep nature in balance. A single family of barn owls can eat over a thousand rodents a year, helping farmers protect their crops without poison, so owls act as natural pest controllers.
5. Owls are threatened by habitat loss as forests are cleared and wild fields disappear, and by poisons that build up in the rodents they eat. Protecting owls requires protecting the whole environment they depend on.