

# For Creative Minds

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## Great Horned Owl Fun Facts

They weigh between 2.5 and 4 lbs (1-1.8 kg). Find something that weighs about the same to compare.

Like other owls, they are nocturnal. That means they hunt at night and sleep during the day.

Adults are between 18 and 25 inches or 46 to 63 centimeters.

We think they can live to be about 12 or 13 years old in the wild. Their main predators are other Great Horned Owls.

Great Horned Owls are found in all kinds of habitats: in your backyard, deserts, forests, and even in the Arctic!

Females are a little larger than the males.

A few hours after eating, they throw up pellets of fur, feathers, bones, and other undigested parts of their meals. These pellets help us to understand what owls eat.



The loud *hoo-hoo hooooo hoo-hoo* can be heard for miles during a still night but they will not call while hunting. They don't want to let their prey know where they are.

When flying, their wingspan (measured from the tip of one wing to the tip of the other wing), can be approximately twice their size. Hold out your arms and have someone measure your "armspan." How does it compare to an owl's wingspan?

They are birds of prey. Their food is alive when they catch it. They eat mice, squirrels, rabbits, skunks, crows, herons, other owls, ducks, frogs, some fish, and even some domestic cats. They swallow small prey whole, but will tear larger animals apart using their talons and beaks.



# Great Horned Owl Adaptation Matching Activity

A.



1. Large, yellow eyes help them to see at night.

2. Sharp beaks help them tear larger prey to eat.

3. The front edge of each wing has comb-like bristles to muffle the wing's flapping noise. This helps owls to silently sneak up on prey.

4. Like most birds, owls have four toes. But one of the toes can swivel forward or backwards with three toes in front, one in back or with two facing frontward and backward!

5. Sharp, curved talons (claws) are used to grab prey.

6. The brown, gray colors and designs in the feathers help owls to blend, or to camouflage, themselves into trees.

7. They can't move their eyes but they can turn their heads almost all the way around (270 degrees) to see.

8. Their ears are holes on the side of their heads, right behind their eyes. The ears are off-centered; one is a little higher than the other. The difference in ear height helps the owls to judge the distance of sound. The feather tufts or "horns" are simple decorations to make the birds more fierce looking. .



B.

C.



D.

E.



F.

G.



H.

Answers: 1G, 2F, 3D, 4E, 5A, 6H, 7B, 8C



# Owl Life Cycle Sequencing Activity

If desired, copy or download the cards, cut out, and put in numerical order for the correct sequence of events.

1 In January or February, the male and female will call to each other as part of their "dating" or courtship.

2 An owl pair will take over other birds' nests. They are not picky about where the nest is and will use a nest in trees, on the side of cliffs, or even on buildings.

3 The female usually lays two or three white eggs at a time.

4 Females incubate the eggs for 30 to 35 days (about a month, give or take). They will guard the nest and will either kill or drive off any other animal that tries to get to it.

5 When born, the hatchlings are covered with a white down.

6 When they are about 6 or 7 weeks old, young start to walk around on branches near the nest. They are called branchers, like the owl in the story.

7 Both parents continue to feed their young until the young leave the nest and fly off to find their own home. This happens the fall after they are born.

8 The young owls can fly when they are about 9 or 10 weeks old and are then called fledglings.





# What to Do if You Find an Injured Bird

**E**ven if you find a baby bird on the ground, it may not need your help.

**M**ost of the time, chicks are being watched by their parents and do not need your help.

**U**nless you can see that the bird is hurt, or it has been alone for many hours, leave it where it is. Keep your pets away (by keeping them in the house or on a leash) so that the bird's parents will feed it.

**W**hile it is not true that a mother bird will abandon her baby if she smells a human scent, you should not handle the baby unless you are able to put it back in its nest. Most birds do not have a good sense of smell (except vultures). It is your presence, not your scent, that might keep them from coming back for the baby. It is best to keep human activity at a minimum around the chick or the nest, if possible. If you must pick it up, wear gloves and wash your hands afterwards.

**I**f you believe that the baby has been orphaned or is hurt, please contact your state's Department of Natural Resources or veterinarian to find a licensed rehabilitator near you. Rehabilitators, often called rehabbers, have special permits and training that allow them to take care of animals that are hurt, sick, or orphaned. Rehabbers care for wildlife, sometimes in a home or clinic, but they work to help the animals remain in nature. They release these creatures as soon as they can fend for themselves.

**U**ntil you can get the bird to a rehabber, keep it in a small box, lined with a clean, soft cloth in a quiet, dark area. Do not give the baby anything to eat or drink.

**I**t is illegal to possess or capture owls and migratory birds in any state if you are not licensed to do so.

