

OWL, BARN

RANGE:

Extends from S.W. British Columbia to southern Chile, from east to west coast in the Western Hemisphere. In addition it is found in Europe and Western Russia, Africa, Southern Asia, and Australia.

HABITAT:

Hunts in areas rich in rodents, in trees, abandoned burrows and buildings, farm areas, marshes, temperate forests and grasslands.

SIZE:

Can grow to a length of 15-18 inches with the females usually being a bit larger. They weigh about 1 pound. Their wingspan can reach up to 43 inches. It can be distinguished from other owls by its unique shape, color, and voice. It has long feathered legs with white, buff, yellow, and tawny shadings. Its face is arresting and there are no ear tufts on the head. The eyes and beak are completely encircled by a heart-shaped facial ruff of white, rimmed with tan while slightly curved feathers radiate out from the small, dark eyes.

LIFE EXPENCTANCY:

They can live 5-11 years in the wild.

REPRODUCTION:

Barn owls are able to breed at the age of about 1 year. They are able to breed year-round and will often use a nest site every year. Before settlements barn owls nested in tree cavities and on cliff edges. As the land was settled the owls began using old buildings, and barns. They will nest almost anywhere. The male courts the female by chasing her, bringing her mice, and uttering a series of rapid squeaking noises.

No formal nest is built. The female lays 5 to 7 white, spotless eggs at intervals of about one every 48 hours. Incubation begins after the first egg is laid. Eggs begin to hatch in about 32 to 34 days and the nest will contain young of different sizes and ages. During incubation the male will bring food to the female. Once hatched both the male and female will hunt and bring food to the "owlets". Fledging occurs in about 8-10 weeks.

DIET:

Rodents, small birds, and rabbits are most commonly accepted foods. Insects, bats, frogs, snakes and even fish are also eaten. A barn owl family of 2 adults and 6 young can eat up to 1,000 mice during a single fledging period and almost 25,000 mice in a year. An adult will eat about 1.5 times it's own weight in food each day.

BEHAVIOR:

Voice may sound like a dog barking but usually consists of eight accented hoots, in two groups of four. The "aw" at the close of the hooting is characteristic. Crouching or lying flat on the ground with wings spread horizontally shows defensive attitude. Lowering the head and swinging it to and fro close to the ground express warning.

Barn owls are more nocturnal than other owls. They wait until dark before starting out to hunt, except when the demands of their young may start them hunting at twilight. Normally, before daylight, they retire to some shadowed or enclosed area in an old building, a hollow tree or a hole in a rocky cliff and remain there drowsily inactive all day.

theZOO
LOUISVILLE

PHOTO
COMING
SOON

Order:	Strigiformes
Family:	Tytonidae
Genus:	Tyto
Species:	alba

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POINTS OF INTEREST:

The barn owl has been called the "golden owl" due to its delicately freckled dark specks and the blending of colors in daylight. Other common names are the "white owl" and "monkey-faced owl". The barn owl's excellent hearing allows it to hear a mouse moving from 90 feet away.

STATUS:

The legal status for the U.S. is not endangered. Some states such as Illinois and Wisconsin have put the owl on their state endangered lists.

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