



Barn Owl

(Tyto alba pratincola)

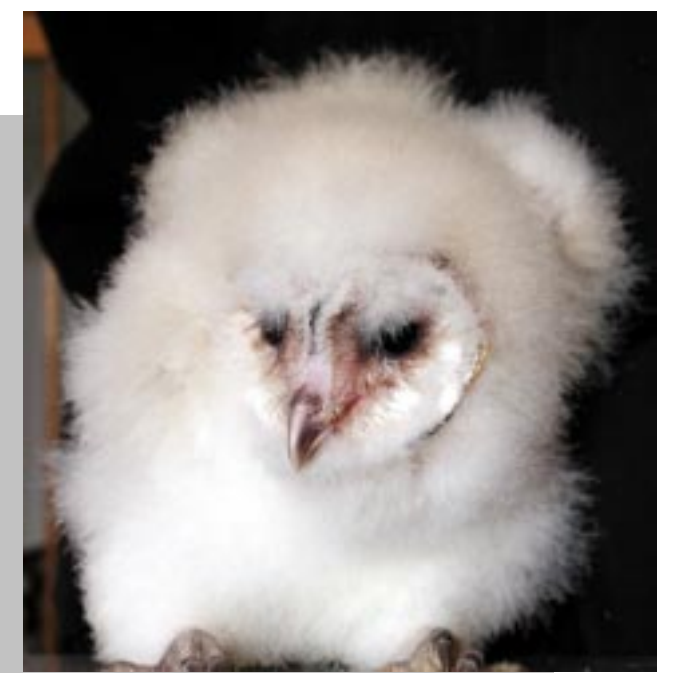
The barn owl is easy to identify with its distinctive white, heart shaped face, and almost completely white under parts. The head and back of this owl are golden in color, with small gray flecks on the feathers. It has been nicknamed the “ghost owl”, as it is commonly said to look like a phantom.

Habitat & Diet

The barn owl has adapted well to living in close proximity with humans. It frequently roosts and nests in old barns, where many rodents can be found. An extremely effective mouser, the barn owl can catch as many mice in one night as 10 cats.

Fascinating Facts

Because barn owls tend to live in damp areas, a fungus grows on their feathers, giving them a phosphorescent glow at night. This, in addition to the bird’s eerie call, give us reason to believe that the barn owl is responsible for the origination of many ghost stories. Barn owls have the best hearing of any owl and can hunt using only sound.



Height: 14-20 inches
Weight: 12-21 ounces
Wingspan: 40-45 inches
Habitat: Woodlands, farmlands, and occasional suburbs
Range: Continental US and Mexico--uncommon in the east
Life Expectancy: Up to 30 years
Baby: Owlet
Group: Parliament

Status

In 1995 there were less than a dozen barn owls in WNY. Their populations had declined due to excessive use of DDT, and changes in agricultural methods. The conversion from traditional barns to commercial metal storage facilities reduced the nesting space. Once nearly extinct in WNY, through the help of Hawk Creek, this bird is currently being reintroduced to its former range . As of 2002, 115 barn owls have been reintroduced back to the wild.

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