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SCHOLASTIC

SuperScience

EARTH
Protecting History—on the Moon

PHYSICAL
Science Sub Makeover

LIFE
On the PROWL
Discover what makes owls such amazing hunters

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life science

An owl's unique features make it a supreme hunting machine

SILENT STALKERS

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EXPERT EARS
Owls have one ear that is larger and higher than the other. Each ear picks up sounds differently. The owl's brain compares these differences to zero in on prey.

SUPERSIZE EYES
Owls have some of the largest eyes relative to their body size of any animal. Their big peepers are about 100 times more sensitive in the dark than human eyes.

WORDS TO SCROW
talons—sharp claws of a bird that hard for food
prey—an animal hunted by other animals for food
nocturnal—active at night
predator—an animal that hunts other animals for food
vertebrae—bones that make up the spine
nocturnal—active at night
blood away from the head

STEALTHY WINGS
Owls can essentially sneak up on their supper, thanks to soft barbs along the edges of their feathers. They help muffle the sound of air rushing over their wings.

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WHO'S SHOO?
There are more than 200 species of owl, from burrowing owls that fit in your hand to 3.6-meter (12-foot)-tall great gray owls.

BURROWING OWL: Unlike most owls, these don't hunt at night. They live underground in holes called burrows.

GREAT GRAY OWL: This is the largest owl species. Its wings can span more than 1.5 m (5 ft)!

GREAT HORNBED OWL: It has two tufts of feathers on its head that look like horns. The tufts are just for show.

SCREECH OWL: Did you know that only a few owls hoot? Screech owls make piercing calls instead.

Doing the Twist
Owls can tilt their heads nearly upside down and turn them 270 degrees around. Their flexible necks have 14 vertebrae. That's twice as many neck.

Many birds have eyes on either side of their heads. But an owl's eyes face forward. Like a person's, images from each eye combine to form a 3-D picture, similar to how we see. That helps owls better judge a prey's size, distance, and speed. An owl's eyes take up most of its skull. Because they are so large, they can gather lots of light. That helps true owls see better when hunting at night. An owl's eyes are also fixed in their sockets. It can't roll them like we can. Instead, an owl keeps prey in its sights by swiveling its head.

After years of study, scientists still find owls amazing. And they're not the only ones. Owls have always intrigued people. They're the subjects of ancient myths, children's books, and movies. There's something magical about them that sits lifelong passions, says Johnson.

—Judith Lange-Cohen

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FAMOUS OWL!

If you've read the Harry Potter books or seen the movies, you might recognize this owl. It's Harry's pet—a snowy owl named Hedwig. In the magical world Harry lives in, Hedwig delivers mail and stays with Harry at Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry. But in real life, snowy owls live in the Arctic. Their white feathers help them blend in with their snowy surroundings.

This year marks the 10th anniversary of the publication of the first Harry Potter book, *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone*. To celebrate, the book is getting a new look. And guess who's featured with Harry on the cover? It's Hedwig!

Harry Potter