

An owl's sharp sense of hearing makes it an extraordinary hunter!

A barn owl perches in a tree. It tilts its head and listens for sounds in the night. The bird's keen ears hear a faint squeak below. Silently, the owl soars into the air. Then it dives, snatching up a mouse with its talons. Dinner is served!

From beak to feet, owls are built to hunt. Their talons are strong and sharp to hold prey tight. Soft barbs line the edges of their feathers. These help muffle the sound of air rushing over the owls' wings, allowing them to silently swoop in for

sneak attacks. But one of their best hunting tools is their sharp sense of hearing. This helps owls zero in on their prey.

Keen Ears

Most owls are **nocturnal**—they hunt at night. So excellent hearing is important for finding their prey in the dark.

Many owls have one ear that's a bit higher than the other. Each ear picks up sounds differently. When an owl hears a sound, it listens closely. Is the sound louder in its right ear or

left ear? Which ear detects the sound first?

Another feature that gives these birds' hearing a boost: bowl-shaped rings of feathers on their faces. The curved shape gathers sounds, making them louder. Then it directs the sounds to the owl's ears. An owl can adjust its hearing by moving the feathers around its face to let more sound enter one ear than the other. This can help the owl pinpoint the location of its prey—even if it's hidden.

Silent Stalker



This hungry barn owl is about to scoop up a small rodent for its meal.