

Owls at Ivy Creek- A Little Naturalist Activity

created for use by the Ivy Creek Foundation

Did you ever wonder what is in the wooden box up in a tree as you walk on the Red Trail? You can find it on the trail as you walk down to a bridge over the creek. This is an owl nesting box. Sometimes a family of Barred Owls live in the box, or in the big hole in the tree right next to it. While owls are the most active at night when they hunt for food, you can sometimes catch a peek at them during the day as they perch in a tree.



Owl nesting box

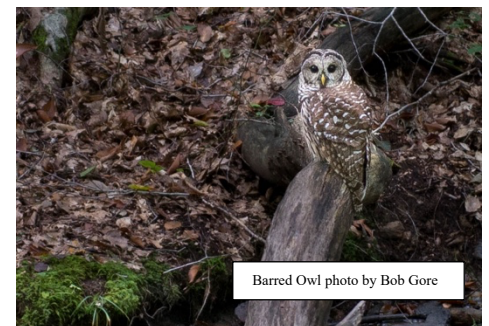
There are several kinds of owls that live at Ivy Creek Natural Area including Barn Owls, Eastern Screech Owls, and Great-horned Owls. Owls are large birds. An adult Barred Owl is about 20 inches in height, and the Great-horned Owl can be 25 inches. They are usually brown or gray in color. Barred Owls have brown bars on a white background.



Barred Owl photo by Catherine Boston

Owls have large heads and eyes. They turn their heads to look around because their eyes do not move. Owls have excellent vision and hearing. Their feathers are soft so owls make almost no noise when they fly. They swallow chunks of food and then spit out fur and bones. You can sometimes find these owl leftovers that are called pellets underneath a nest. Owls eat rodents, frogs, crayfish, and birds.

Owls make interesting calls. The Barred Owl sounds something like “Who cooks for you?” A Great-horned Owl sounds like “You awake, me too.” Owls can make screeches, barking sounds, and hoots. It is great fun to listen for owls at night as they call to each other.



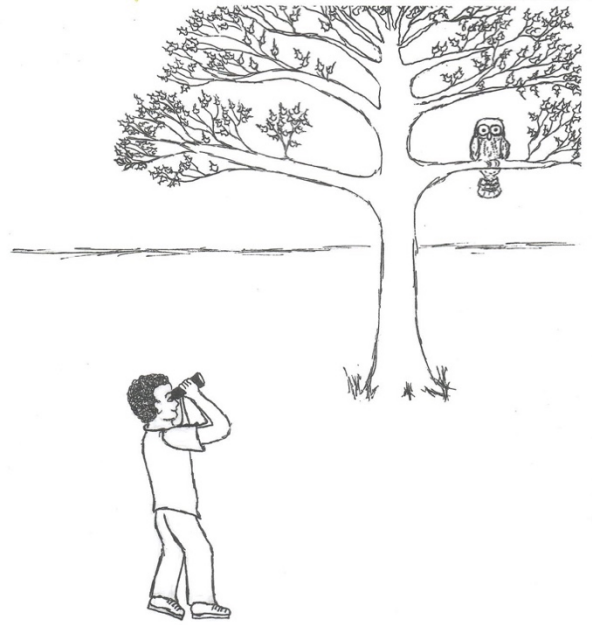
Barred Owl photo by Bob Gore

On the next page is a story of a boy who wanted to see an owl hunt for its food.

Night Owl

By Carolyn Long, Illustrations by Virginia Masterson

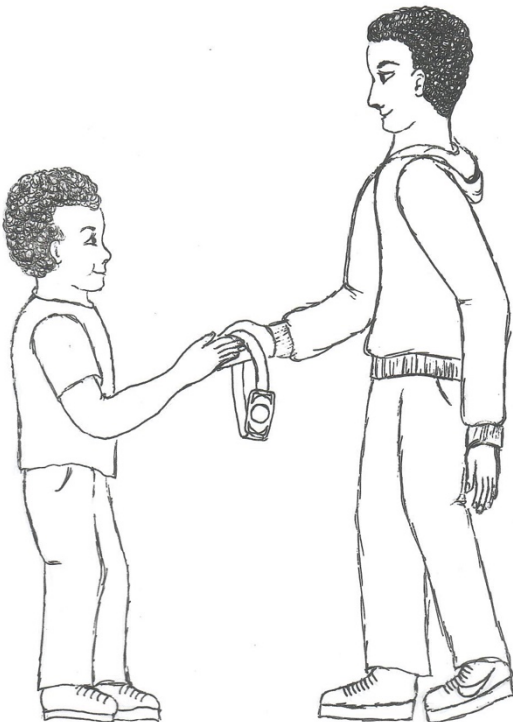
Reggie loves all kinds of birds. He is learning how to use the family binoculars to look at them. Reggie watches birds build nests and feed their babies and fly to the tops of trees. His favorite bird is an owl he sees perching in a tree and looking sleepy. It's the biggest bird he has ever seen. Reggie has always wanted to see the owl fly through the woods and hunt for its food. The problem is that owls hunt at night. Reggie doesn't go into the woods when it is dark.



One day, Reggie's older brother gives him a headlamp. "See Reggie, you can wear this on your head. A bright light shines wherever you look". Reggie tries on the headlamp. He gets excited. This is a way to watch owls.

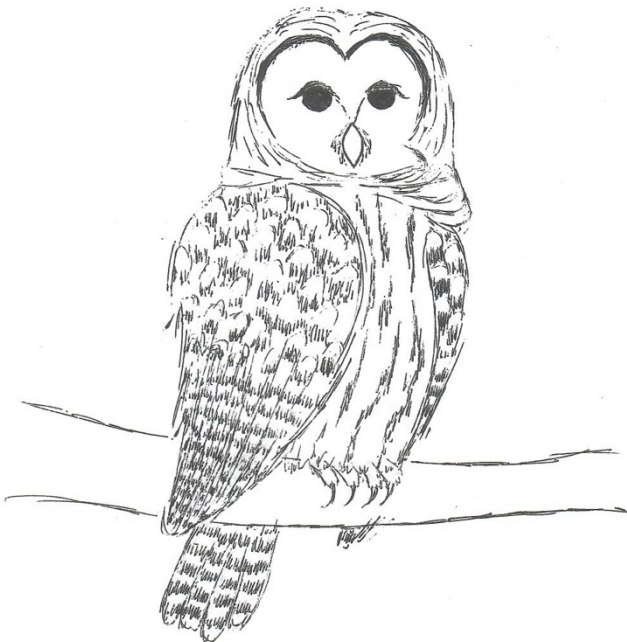
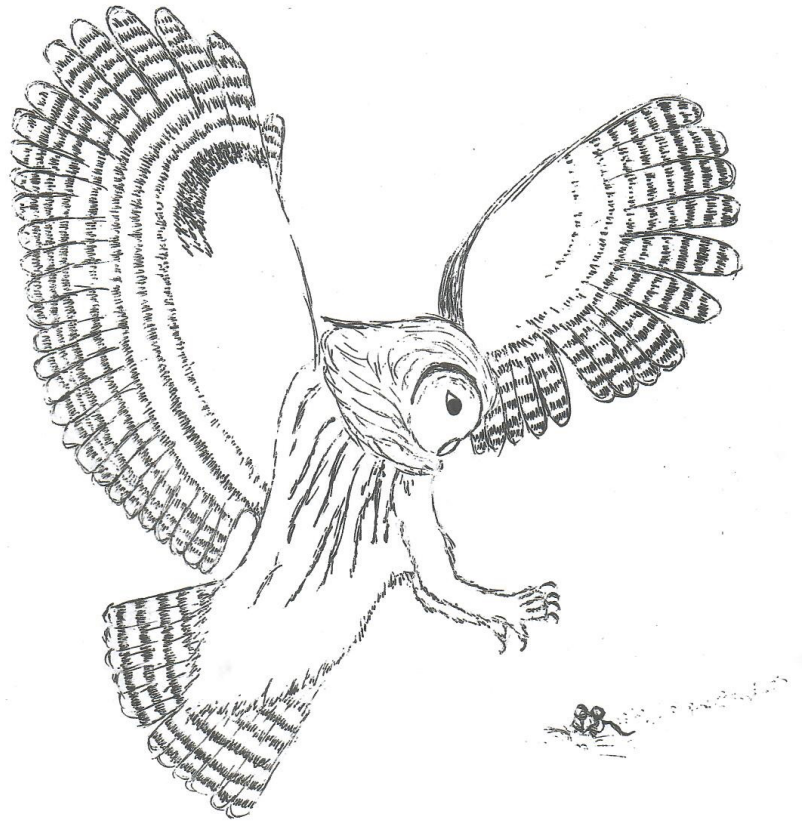
That night, Reggie asks his brother to go with him into the woods to watch an owl.

"Sure, Reggie. That sounds like fun". Reggie takes his brother to a huge oak tree where he often sees the owl perch. They sit very still and quiet as they wait.



Reggie hears a tiny noise in the brush and turns to look. Suddenly, an owl swoops down into the beam of his headlamp and catches a small mouse. Just as quickly, the owl flies up and away through the trees without making a sound.

“That was fantastic,” says Reggie. His brother agrees. They look in the direction the owl flew but don't see it again. Soon they head home.



That night, Reggie dreams he can fly silently through the trees like an owl. He smiles.

Owl Activities:

It is fun to act like an owl. Pretend to fly by spreading your arms out and gliding around in circles. Then pretend to swoop down to catch something on the ground.



Make an owl hand puppet by using a brown paper sandwich bag. Glue two paper muffin cup liners or two paper circles to the folded end of the bag to make owl eyes. Draw a beak, wings, and feet on the bag.

Make an owl snack. Use a graham cracker or rice cake. Spread on peanut butter. Add 2 banana slices or marshmallows for eyes with blueberries or raisins in the center. Enjoy.

Books to Read:

Good-Night Owl by Pat Hutchins

Owl Moon by Jane Yolen

Little Owl's Night by Divya Srinivasan

White Owl, Barn Owl by Nicola Davies

Owl Babies by Martin Waddell

Owls by Gail Gibbons

