

Learning in the Leaves

Identification- Tyto alba – Barn Owls



Photo: Barn Owl in flight (by Paul Shaw)

www.uksafari.com

Distinguishing Features

- Approx 32 to 34cm.
- Barn owls can be easily recognised by their light coloured plumage, which is white on the front, and orange-brown on the back, speckled with some ash grey markings.
- They have a heart shaped disc of feathers around the face.

Interesting Facts

- Barn owls are nocturnal hunters, and when you see one flying at night it appears to be all white. This appearance coupled with its eerie screeching call may account for many ghost stories, as they are sometimes seen hunting for mice in graveyards.
- The Barn Owl has such sensitive hearing it is able to exactly locate a field mouse rustling through straw in a pitch dark barn. It can do this because its ears are located at different positions on the sides of its head. One is at the height of its forehead, and the other is level with its nostril.
- Barn Owls do not build nests themselves. Instead they rely on a variety of nesting sites for laying their eggs, such as tree cavities, rock ledges, and ledges in barns. Barn Owls have also been known to nest in burrows in riverbanks.
- The Romans were very superstitious of barn owls and associated them with death. They believed that if a barn owl landed on the roof of a house, someone inside was going to die!
- [information collated from the UK Safari Website: www.uksafari.com]