

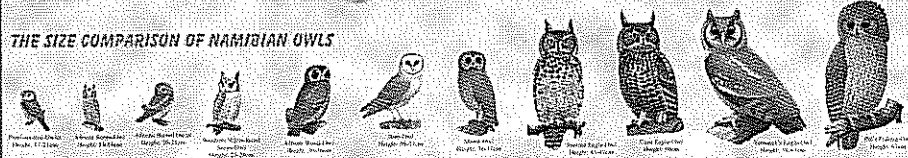
THE OWLS OF NAMIBIA

Identification & General Information

THE OWLS OF NAMIBIA



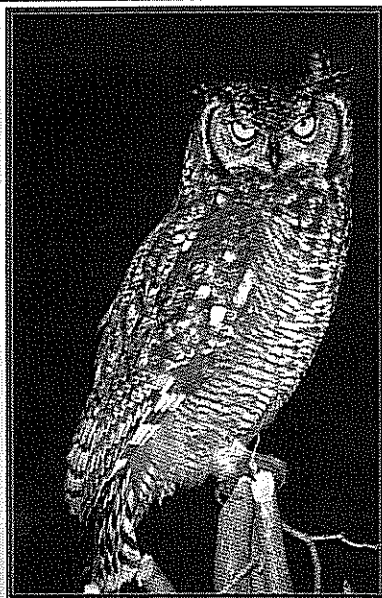
THE SIZE COMPARISON OF NAMIBIAN OWLS



JAUN NAMIBIAB DIN · DIE EULEN VAN NAMIBIA · DIE UILE VAN NAMIBIA · LISI ZA NAMIBIA · MERUBISI YA NAMIBIA
 OMAHWIYU GANAMIBIA · OMAXUVI ANAMIBIA · OVISIWI VYANAMIBIA · VAKARURU VANAMIBIA

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GO GREEN



Owls have fascinated humans throughout recorded history, yet they remain a mystery to most people. They are admired by some cultures, feared by others, and superstitions, myths and untruths surround them. With their excellent camouflage and nocturnal life-styles, their value, as pest controllers in towns and on farms is little appreciated. Like many other wildlife species, owls are affected by developments that destroy their habitats. However, their eating habits and the presence of poison and pesticides in the environment make owls especially vulnerable.

Cooperation is the key to the future survival of owls. This booklet will help you identify the 11 owl species found in Namibia and give you information on their role in the environment and how to protect and attract these useful predators.

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Supported by:



What do owls look like?

The feathers are brown, grey and white with patterns of spots, streaks or bars. Owls have short tails and big heads with a frame of dark feathers around their heart-shaped faces. Their large eyes point forward. Many owl species have ear tufts, which make them look a bit like cats. Feathers mostly hide their sharp talons and hooked beaks. The males and females look alike, but the females are always bigger than the males.



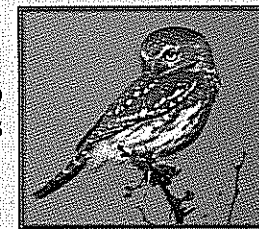
A Spotted Eagle-Owl showing ear tufts and large forward facing eyes



A Verreaux's (Giant) Eagle-Owl showing a hooked beak and a ring of dark feathers around the face

What is their role in nature?

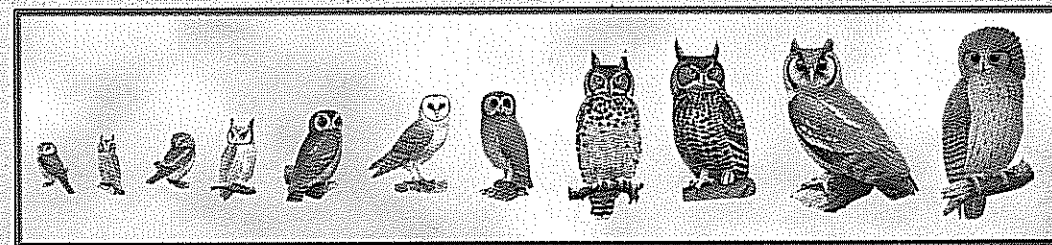
Owls are one of nature's best pest controllers. They are night predators and mostly hunt rats, mice and insects. Some owls also hunt bats, small reptiles and birds. In Namibia only one owl species hunts for fish. Although most owls are nocturnal, some species hunt during day-light, usually in the early dawn and late dusk.



Pearl-spotted Owllets often hunt during day-light

How many species are there?

There are about 9 000 species of birds in the world and less than 150 of these are owl species. In Africa there are 45 owl species, 11 of which are found in Namibia. The smallest Namibian owl species weighs only 60 grams, while the largest weighs over 3 kilograms. The Namibian owls come from two families: 10 species from the family *Strigidae* and only one (the Barn Owl) from the family *Tytonidae*.



A size comparison of all Namibian owl species

Where do owls live?

On every continent (except Antarctica) and on many islands throughout the world, owls use habitats ranging from hot deserts to the freezing arctic tundra, and from savannah grasslands to deep forest. Most owls remain in one area for their lifetime, but like other animals they will move if there is not enough food available, if the habitat is disturbed, or if they find new areas with better food resources.

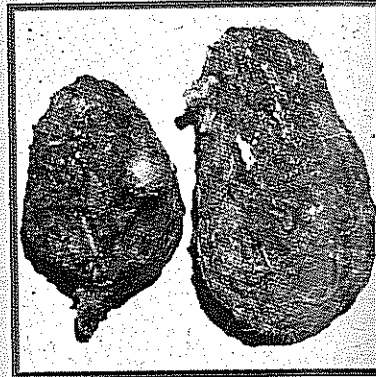
How do we find them?



*Colours for camouflage,
an African Scops-Owl*

Owls have very effective camouflage colours and hide themselves cleverly during the day. One way of finding owls is by looking for their pellets, which often lie on the ground below their day roost. Most owls swallow their prey whole and regurgitate oval-shaped pellets from their mouths about 24 hours after eating.

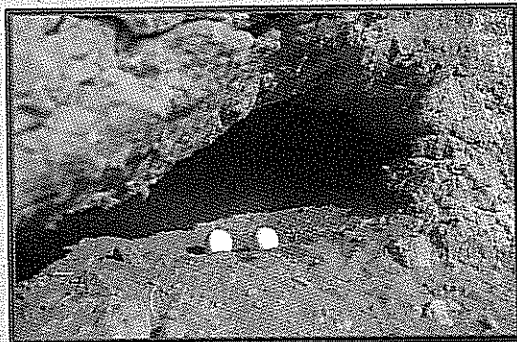
By examining owl pellets one can find which prey animals live in an area. Pellets are formed in the owl's stomach and are made up of the indigestible parts of the owl's food, such as hair, feathers and bones and insect exoskeletons.



Pellets from a Barn Owl

Where are their nests?

Owls are not nest builders. They use the bare ground, caves, or holes in trees; some owls use the nests of other birds. Barn Owls often use the roofs or chimneys of houses for a nest site. Female owls care for the eggs and chicks, and male owls bring the food.



A Spotted Eagle-Owl's nest on the floor of a cave



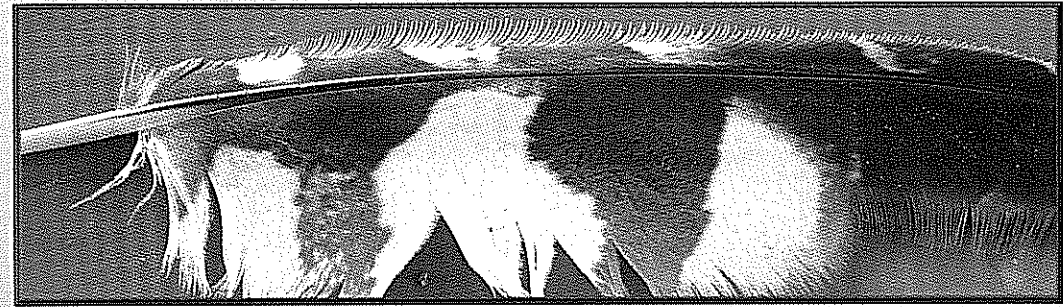
A Verreaux's Eagle-Owl nesting on a weaver's nest

What sounds do owls make?

Owls can be very noisy, especially during their breeding seasons. Their different sounds include hoots, whistles, hisses, clucks and screeches. The calls of many owls can be heard from far off; some of these eerie night calls have probably created the fear for owls held by people of many cultures.

What special features do they have?

The first fossil record of an owl, dated at 60 million years old, shows many of the special features that owls still have, which include very large ear openings, large forward-facing eye sockets and feet that have two toes facing forward and two toes facing backwards. Other special features include most owls' ability to fly silently, the excellent camouflage of their feather colours, and their long, flexible necks that allow them to turn their heads 270° in any direction.



The special design on the front edge of owls' flying feathers helps to silence flight

How do they find their prey?

They find their prey with their ears and eyes. Owls' eyes are very large compared to the size of their heads. Their eyes face forward and are fixed in the sockets so that they must turn their heads to see on either side. The eyes of vertebrates have two types of cells: rods and cones. Owls have many more rods than other vertebrates because these are the cells that are used for night vision. Owls hear very well - just by listening they can find prey hidden under leaves, rocks or snow. Their large ear openings have a special movable-flap that helps to catch sound. The ears' openings on the skull are not evenly placed - one ear is higher than the other. This helps owls to find their prey by listening. Owls use their ability to turn their heads up to 270° to look or listen for the exact position of their prey.



Eye colours: Pearl-spotted Owllet

Marsh Owl

Southern White-faced Scops-Owl

How are owls useful to us?

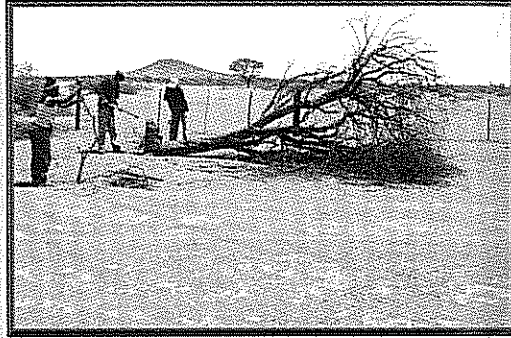
People's homes, agricultural crops, food stores and gardens attract pests such as mice, rats, insects and seed-eating birds. These pests are a nuisance to us because they eat our crops and spread diseases. Owls are useful in that they prey on these pests and therefore help to control them.

How does our changing world threaten them?

Many wild animals are threatened by the changes that people are making to our world. Threats to owls from changes in Namibian ecosystems include; pollution of the environment which can poison or kill owls' food resources, desertification and bush encroachment of overgrazed land, excessive burning of grasslands and woodlands, deforestation from excessive cutting of trees and removal of underground water and invasion by alien species of plants or animals. However, the use of poisonous chemicals, especially pesticides for killing insects and rodents is by far the most serious threat to owls in Namibia, and probably in the world.



Bush fires destroy habitat, nesting sites and food resources



Deforestation, cutting down live or dead trees removes nesting and roosting sites



A Barn Owl with prey

How do poisons kill them?

Poisonous chemicals are used by people to kill insects in their gardens, on golf courses, in orchards, on agricultural crops, and near rivers in malaria areas. Chemicals are sometimes used to kill bats that roost in buildings, or seed-eating birds that eat agricultural crops. Poisons are commonly used to kill rodents, which are the favourite food of many owls. All birds are very sensitive to poison, and owls are often killed through secondary poisoning. This means that animals for which the poison was not intended die because of eating poisoned prey. Poison in a food chain creates a deadly cycle of poisoning.



Poison use should be the last choice when looking for a method to control pests.

Group Ia



VERY TOXIC

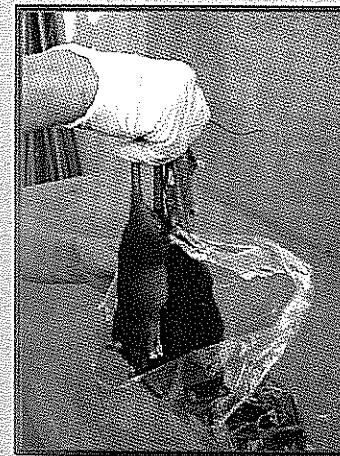


Insecticides are poisons that kill insects. They are also dangerous for people. There is no such thing as a safe poison; even the "organic" poisons are dangerous. Safety for people and environment depends on what, when, where and how a poison is used. Many insecticides are cumulative; they build up in the body and cause damage to internal organs, especially the liver. The safest poisons are those that break down fastest in the environment and are specific to their target. But, insecticides are usually not target specific, they kill any insect that comes into contact with them. All aquatic animals such as fish and frogs and all birds are very sensitive to insecticides.



When an insecticide is used great care must be taken to protect people and the environment

Rodenticides are poisons used to kill mice, rats and other rodents. Rodent populations increase quickly in years of good rainfall when there is plenty of food available. Poisoned rodents may take days to die and become easy prey for owls.



Poisoned rodents are bagged to be safely disposed of

In urban areas and around farmsteads careful housekeeping can control rodent numbers. Keep all rubbish out of the yard. Limit available water; do not let taps drip or have standing water anywhere. Close and seal small openings that can lead into spaces where rodents will breed.

On farmland useful predators such as owls and other birds of prey can be attracted to live and hunt in the area. Barn Owls are attracted to an area by a nest box (see page 9). Nest boxes can be put in or on buildings or in trees. Many rodent specialists including owls hunt from a lookout perch. Tall gum-poles can be put in areas where rodents are active. These perches must be removed if poison is used in the area. Poisoned rodent carcasses must always be safely disposed of.

Populations of pest species increase when there is a lot of food available and too few predators to control them.



**BE RESPONSIBLE - READ THE LABEL
ON POISON PRODUCTS**



A second chance for injured, poisoned or orphaned owls!

The sooner a sick or orphaned owl is treated the greater its chances of recovery.

Injured owls

Owls are often injured on roads because prey animals are easy to see and telephone poles and fence posts are good hunting perches. Owls are sometimes injured by colliding with fences, especially a new fence erected in their hunting area.

Owls lying on the side of a road may only be stunned and many can be rescued.

Poisoned owls

Poisoned prey animals, such as insects, rats, mice and bats are sickly and easy to catch. Owls get ill from secondary poisoning. The bird must be removed from the poison source and professionally treated or it will die.

Poisoned owls can be helped if they are properly treated and cared for.

Orphaned owls

In some species, such as the Spotted Eagle-Owl, the young move away from their nest before they can fly. Parent birds are usually nearby; before rescuing a baby owl be sure that it is really an orphan. Barn Owls only nest near people because households and farmyards attract rodents. Because Barn Owl chicks are noisy, people are alerted to a nest and remove the young owls. Barn Owls should be left to control pests.

In order to grow properly and to learn to hunt for themselves, young owls need specialized care and the correct food.

If you find an injured, poisoned or orphaned owl contact a veterinarian or NARREC to assist with identification, rehydration and transport of the owl to professional help. Use a towel or cloth to catch the bird. Cover the head and get a hold of both legs. Put the owl into a cardboard box with air-holes punched into it. Line the box with newspaper. Remove the towel and close the box securely. The box should be high enough for the bird to stand up and long enough for the bird to lie down. Put the box in a quiet and warm room. Do not try and feed the owl.



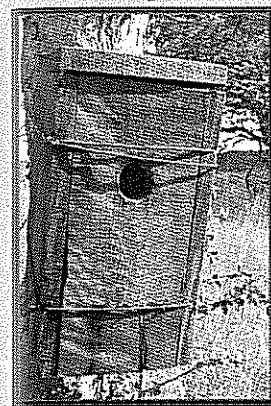
A Verreaux's (Giant) Eagle-Owl treated at NARREC

Checking dead owls

Dead owls should be checked for rings under the legs' feathers. Note the ring number, the geographic position, the date and how the owl was killed. Send the information to NARREC or to any person listed under bird ringing (see contacts on the back cover). Carcasses can be frozen for the biodiversity collection at the National Museum of Namibia. Bird to be examined for cause of death should only be refrigerated and not frozen.

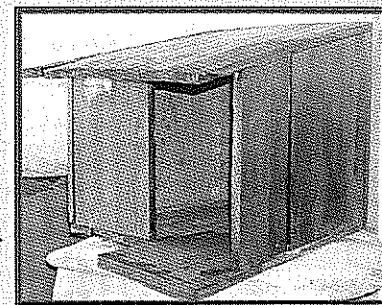
How do I build a nest box?

Consider the size of the owl that you are trying to attract, and what sort of nesting site it would choose. Barn Owls and Pearl-spotted Owlets like a closed space. Boxes



A nest box for Pearl-spotted Owlets

can be built to attract these useful predators into your area. Barn Owl boxes should be 400 mm wide by 500 mm long and 350-400 mm high. Close about half of the entrance side and create an entrance platform. Place the box in a shaded, quiet place. A box for Pearl-spotted Owlets should be less than half the size of a Barn Owl box with a small entrance hole, about 70 mm diameter. The box must be placed high up in a shady tree.



A nest box for Barn Owls



Barn Owl chicks

What can I do to protect the owls?

- ❖ Look for nests before cutting down a tree or shrub.
- ❖ Some young owls leave the nest before they can fly, but they remain near the nest site where the parent birds can look after them. If possible, keep a watch, from a distance, make sure that an adult owl is not in the area before rescuing a baby owl.
- ❖ Have your cat sterilised. Cats hunt for mice, rats, small birds and bats, which are food for owls.
- ❖ If you do not want Barn Owls nesting in your chimney, screen it with wire. Close off any openings into the roof (this also keeps out bats and pigeons).
- ❖ Remove rodents with live or snap traps, rather than using poison.
- ❖ Use electric lights in roof areas to chase away bats. Then close the openings so that bats cannot roost and nest in the roof.
- ❖ Take great care when using any pesticide to kill insects, bats, mice or rats. Pesticides are poisonous and can enter a food chain causing secondary poisoning - a poisoned animal is eaten by a predator and the predator gets ill and dies.
- ❖ If you must use pesticide/insecticide products, use those which have the least chance of causing secondary poisoning. Always carefully read the label on the product. Contact an organization listed on the back cover for advice.
- ❖ Time pest-control operations so that they do not coincide with the breeding period of owls. Remove and bury poisoned, dead prey animals.
- ❖ Build a nest box to attract Barn Owls and other owls into your area.



Spotted Eagle-Owl chicks

Why do superstitions surround the owls?

Stories and superstitions about owls exist in every culture. They connect owls with bad luck and witchcraft, even death. These beliefs probably came about because, unlike mice and rats that scurry around silently at night, owls make themselves heard by the loud noises they make.

Barn Owls often nest near people - their eerie screech and silent flight on wings that span almost 1 metre can easily scare people.

Not all people consider owls a bad omen. In some cultures owls are thought to be ancient, wise, and even helpful. Many children's stories refer to the "wise old owl". In more recent literature, such as in the famous "Harry Potter" stories, owls are clever and help the students by carrying their mail and messages.

Amazing facts about owls

- ✦ The lifespan for a large owl species is about 40 years.
- ✦ A clutch of 16 eggs was laid by a Barn Owl in a year of a rodent plague.
- ✦ During breeding, a Barn Owl with 6 chicks on the nest will kill an average of 30 large mice every night for over 100 days. This is 3 000 rodents in just over 3 months!
- ✦ The hunting ability of the Barn Owl has been tested in a barn in 100% darkness. The bird hunted successfully using only its excellent hearing to find its prey.
- ✦ A Verreaux's (Giant) Eagle-Owl can peel a hedgehog.

Pearl-spotted Owlet

(Perlkauz, Witkoluil)



Height: 17-21cm

Habitat: Found throughout sub-Saharan Africa in bushveld, lightly wooded areas and Acacia savannah. Not in treeless areas, deserts or dense woodlands.

Food: Mainly insects, but also eat rodents, small reptiles, bats and birds. Pellets are made up from the exoskeletons of insects.

Breeding: 2-4 eggs laid during spring in a natural tree hole or in a hole made by other birds, such as Barbets and Woodpeckers.

Incubation of eggs takes 28 days. Nestlings fly from the nest at about 30 days old.

Habits: Mainly nocturnal, but quite often active during the day. Hunt from a perch, dropping down onto their prey. Fly fast with a dipping action. Flight is noisy compared to the silent flight of other owls. If disturbed, they flick their tails and stare at the disturbance.

Voice: Call with a penetrating set of whistles that increases in volume (*twee twee Twee TWEE TWEE*).

Threats: Deforestation and the removal of good nesting trees. Poisonous chemicals used to kill insects, bats and rodents.

Glaucidium perlatum

Conservation status: Locally common

Wing span: 37cm



African Scops-Owl

(Afrikanische Zwergohreule, Skopsuil)



Height: 14-18cm

Habitat: Throughout sub-Saharan Africa; found in woodland, especially dry broad-leaf woodland. Also use acacia savannah habitat.

Food: Insects and other arthropods, especially scorpions. Pellets mostly made up of arthropod remains (exoskeletons) and therefore disintegrate quickly.

Breeding: 2-3 eggs laid in spring and early summer in a natural hole in a tree, or in a hole made by other bird species, such as Woodpeckers.

Incubation of eggs takes about 3-4 weeks. Nestlings leave nest at about 4 weeks old.

Habits: Roost during the day, well camouflaged, against the main trunk of a tree. Sometimes call during the day, especially in early spring. At night, especially moonlit nights, they call a lot. Hunt from a perch by dropping down onto prey. To increase their camouflage when disturbed, they stretch their bodies, lift their ear tufts and close their eyes to a slit-shape.

Voice: A single, insect-like (*prrrrrrup*), made at regular intervals.

Threats: Deforestation through the clearing of wooded areas. Poisonous chemicals used to kill insects.

Otus senegalensis

Conservation status: Locally common

Wing span: 45cm



African Barred Owlet

(Kapkauz, Gebande Uil)



Height: 20-21cm

Wing span: 40cm

Habitat: Mostly found in woodlands but also in savannah that has many trees.

Food: Mostly insects. Pellets mostly made up of exoskeletons of insects due to large quantities of insects in their diet. Pellets disintegrate quickly.

Breeding: 2-3 eggs laid in spring in a natural hole in a tree. **Incubation** of eggs takes about 30 days and the nestlings leave the nest at about 33 days old.

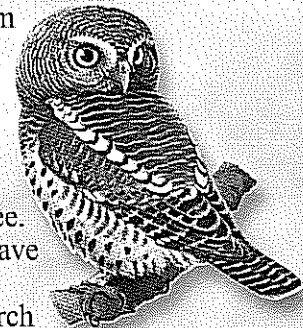
Habits: Sometimes active during the day. Hunt from a perch by dropping onto their prey. Fly fast with a dipping action. Flight is noisy compared to the silent flight of other owls. If disturbed, they flick their tails.

Voice: Call with a repeated high-pitched set of notes (*purr purr purr*) or with a two-syllabled note (*prrr-purr, prrr-purr*).

Threats: Deforestation and removal of good nesting trees. Poisonous chemicals used to kill insects.

Glaucidium capense

Conservation status: Rare



Southern White-faced Scops-Owl

(Weißgesicht-Ohreule, Witwanguil)

Conservation status: Locally common

Otus leucotis



Height: 25-28cm

Wing span: 68cm

Habitat: Use a variety of habitats, including woodland, savannah, arid thornveld and riverine bush.

Food: Prey mainly on rodents up to the size of a squirrel.

Sometimes take birds, insects and spiders.

Breeding: 2-4 eggs laid during late winter and early spring in natural forks of trees, or in the old nests of other bird species, from doves nests to falcon nests. *Incubation* of eggs takes 30 days. Chicks leave the nest before they can fly, about 1 month after hatching. They are still fed by their parents for another 2-3 weeks.

Habits: Nocturnal, found singly or in pairs. Hunt from a perch by dropping down onto prey. Roost during the day in trees. To increase their camouflage when disturbed, they stretch their bodies, lift their ear tufts and close their eyes to a slit-shape.

Voice: Call with a fast hooting followed by a longer note (*ku ku ku ku ku whoo oo*).

Threats: Removal of trees in grassland or woodland areas will destroy their nesting sites. Poisonous chemicals, especially rodent poisons will cause secondary poisoning.

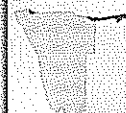


African Wood-Owl

(Woodfordkauz, Bosuil)

Conservation status: Locally common

Strix woodfordii



Height: 30-36cm

Wing span: 79cm

Habitat: The most common owl found in evergreen, coastal and riverine forests of Africa. Also use plantations.

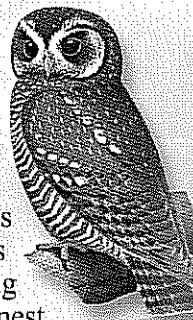
Food: Mainly insects, but sometimes eat rodents, frogs and birds up to the size of a dove.

Breeding: 1-3 eggs are laid from late winter to early spring. Use natural holes in trees that are not too far off the ground. Sometimes nest on the ground. *Incubation* of eggs takes about 31 days. Nestlings leave the nest at about 37 days old, often before they can fly. Young birds looked after by parents for up to 4 months after leaving the nest.

Habits: Nocturnal; roost in thick vegetation during the day and fly out after dark. Search for food from a perch or by flying low over the ground.

Voice: A single howl (*wheow*). Males and females often call to each other in a rhythmic set (*whu hu whu hu hu hu*).

Threats: Deforestation through the clearing of wooded areas. Poisonous chemicals used to kill insects.



Barn Owl

(Schleiereule, Nonnetjie-uil)

Conservation status: Common

Tyto alba



Height: 30-33cm

Wing span: Up to 91cm

Habitat: Found on every continent except Antarctica. Use most habitats, but not forests.

Need open fields to hunt over.

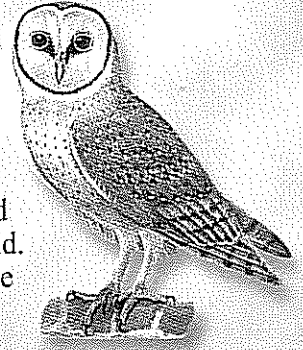
Food: Mainly rodents, also bats, birds, reptiles and insects.

Breeding: 2-6 eggs laid in a sheltered place at an interval of about one day. Breed at any time of year if enough food is available. *Incubation* starts as soon as the first egg is laid. Can have well-developed chicks and unhatched eggs in the nest at the same time. Nestlings leave the nest at 55 days and are fed by parents for a further 4-5 weeks.

Habits: Nocturnal birds that hunt by flying low whilst searching the ground for prey. Pairs remain in an area all year and often use the same nest site year after year. Will move to new areas that have rodent plagues. In cities hunt over urban parks. Roost during the day in dark shelters, i.e. chimneys, roofs, caves, mineshafts and Hamerkop nests.

Voice: An eerie screech. Nestlings make a lot of hissing and clucking sounds.

Threats: Poisoning of rodents in agricultural and urban areas. Nesting birds are very noisy and many people disturb or remove chicks from nests.



Marsh Owl

(Kapohreule, Vlei-uil)

Conservation status: Locally common

Asio capensis



Height: 36-37cm

Wing span: 90cm

Habitat: Live in areas of grassland, savannah vleis and edges of marshes throughout sub-Saharan Africa.

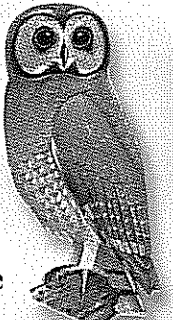
Food: Mainly rodents, but sometimes eat birds, frogs and insects. Pellets can be found on the floor of their daytime roost; sausage-shaped pellets with a paper-mâché texture.

Breeding: Breed in late summer to early winter. 2-4 eggs laid on the ground in a hollow in dense grass that is bent over by the owl to form a shelter. *Incubation* of eggs takes about 28 days. Nestlings leave the nest at around 18 days. It is not known for how long the parents look after the young birds once they have left the nest.

Habits: Begin hunting in late afternoon and hunt into the night. Sometimes hunt in the early morning dawn hours. Hunt by moving across their area in low flight whilst looking and listening for prey.

Voice: A harsh croak, repeated three to four times (*zzrk, zzrk, zzrk*).

Threats: Barbed wire, electrified security fences and cars kill large numbers because of their method of flying low whilst hunting. Poisonous chemicals used for rodents or insects. Habitats threatened by draining of, or damage to, wetlands.



Spotted Eagle-Owl

(Fleckenuhu, Gevlekte Ooruil)



Height: 43-47cm

Wing Span: 113cm

Habitat: Prefer rocky areas but will use all types of habitats except dense forests. Sometimes found in towns and cities.

Food: These large owls mostly eat insects but also rodents, birds, reptiles and bats. Cough up long, sausage-shaped pellets.

Breeding: 2-4 eggs laid in late winter to early spring. Nest sites can be in caves, on rock ledges, in forks or hollows of trees, on window ledges or on the ground. *Incubation* of eggs takes about 32 days. Young are able to fly at about 6 weeks but remain with their parents a further 5 weeks. Chicks often leave the nest site before they can fly but stay nearby.

Habits: Perch at night in an open place, such as on telephone poles or the roofs of houses. During the day roost in trees, on the ground or on rocky outcrops. Usually found singly or in pairs. Hunt from a perch by swooping down on their prey.

Voice: Call is a deep hooting. The female's hoot is a deep (*huhu, huuuu*) and the male's hoot a deep (*huu, huuuu*).

Threats: Often killed by vehicles alongside roads. Where insects are sprayed they die from secondary poisoning. Where domestic dogs roam, young owls are killed because of their habit of moving away from the nest site before they can fly.

Bubo africanus

Conservation status: Common



Cape Eagle-Owl

(Kapuuh, Kaapse Ooruil)



Height: 50cm

Wing Span: 125cm

Habitat: Rocky or mountainous country, with dense bush or woodland nearby. In southern Africa mostly found in the western and southern areas in South Africa.

Food: Preys mostly on small mammals such as rodents, rock hyrax and mongooses; also birds, insects and reptiles. Pellets much larger than those of the Spotted Eagle Owl.

Breeding: 1-3 eggs laid during the winter months. Nest site, usually hidden by vegetation, may be on the ground next to a rocky outcrop, or on a rocky ledge. *Incubation* of eggs takes about 38 days and the young remain in the nest for 5-6 weeks.

Habits: Nocturnal and found singly or in pairs. Hunt at night from a perch by swooping down on their prey. Roost during the day on a rocky cliff face, or in a cave.

Voice: They call with a mellow, deep hooting (*huhu, hooohooo*).

Threats: Their population in Namibia is very small. The most likely threat is the use of poisonous chemicals to kill insects, small mammals or birds; the owls can die from secondary poisoning.

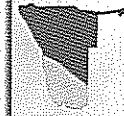
Bubo capensis

Conservation status: Endangered



Verreaux's (Giant) Eagle-Owl

(Milchuhu, Reuse Ooruil)



Height: 58-61cm

Wing Span: 143cm

Habitat: Throughout sub-Saharan Africa they live in open woodland, in savannahs and along tree-lined watercourses.

Food: Insects, frogs, fish and small mammals, especially hedgehogs. Also birds up to the size of Secretary Birds.

Breeding: 1-2 eggs laid during winter in the fork of a tree, or on a disused birds' nests, such as a Hamerkop or Buffalo Weaver. *Incubation* takes about 38 days. Young leave the nest at about 90 days but remain with parents until the next breeding season.

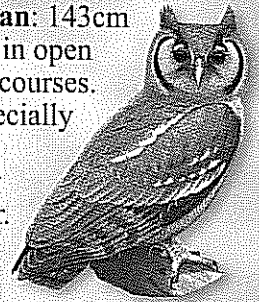
Habits: Nocturnal. Hunt from a perch by dropping down onto their prey. Found either singly or in pairs. Spend day in large, shady trees. If they feel there is a threat to their nest or chicks, they use a "play-dead" display by hanging upside down from a perch to attract the attention of the intruder away from the nest. One way of knowing there is a Giant Eagle-Owl in the area is when you find the spiny skins of hedgehogs, as these are stripped off by the owl before the hedgehog is swallowed.

Voice: Call with a very deep, grunting hoot (*hru hru hru*).

Threats: Cutting down of large trees removes roosting and nesting areas. Poison used for insects and rodents. Vehicles on roads at night.

Bubo lacteus

Conservation status: Rare



Pel's Fishing-Owl

(Bindenfischeule, Visuil)



Height: 63cm

Wing Span: 153cm

Habitat: Woodland and forests alongside large rivers in tropical and lowland subtropical regions.

Food: Mostly small fish, but can catch fish of up to 2kg.

Also eat crabs, frogs, mussels and young crocodiles. Pellets, mostly made up of fish bones and fish scales, disintegrate rapidly.

Breeding: 1-2 eggs laid in summer to autumn when water levels are low and hunting is easier. If two chicks hatch, the younger chick cannot compete with it's older sibling and will starve. Nest sites are in deep forks or holes in riverine trees. *Incubation* takes 33 days, young leave the nest at 70 days old but stay with parents for another 4 months.

Habits: Nocturnal, usually found in pairs or family groups of three birds. Perch during the day in large riverine trees. Flight not as silent as other owls. Hunt from a perch on surface fish in slow-moving sections of a river.

Voice: Call with a deep, resonant hoot (*hooommmhut*), followed by a gruff grunt (*huhuhu*). Young birds make a wailing sound.

Threats: Any chemical pollution of large rivers will kill owls through their diet or affect their breeding through thinning of their eggshells. Off-take of water and deforestation causes destruction of habitat and loss of nest-sites.

Scotopelia peli

Conservation status: Endangered



Contacts

Contact the people and organisations listed below for assistance, information and reports concerning owls in Namibia.

NARREC (Namibia Animal Rehabilitation, Research and Education Centre)
for: injured, orphaned or dead birds and general queries and information

Liz Komen

Tel: (061) 264 409 or (061) 264 256

Cell: (081) 129 0565

E-mail: liz@narrec.schoolnet.na

MET (Ministry of Environment and Tourism)

for: information on birds, environmental policies and permit requirements

Holger Kolberg

Tel: (061) 284 2584

Cell: (081) 129 5163

E-mail: holgerk@mweb.com.na

SAFRING (Southern African Association for Bird Ringing)

for: information on ringing birds and reports on bird rings found

Tel: (+2721) 650 2421

Fax: (+2721) 650 3434

E-mail: safring@adu.uct.ac.za

<http://safring.adu.org.za>

BIRD RINGING

for: information on ringing birds in Namibia and reports on bird rings found

Holger Kolberg

(see **MET**)

Dirk Heinrich

Tel: (061) 232 300

Cell: (081) 127 0254

E-mail: photographer@mweb.com.na

Peter Bridgeford

Tel: (064) 220 443

Cell: (081) 260 7375

E-mail: pmbridge@iway.na

Mark Boorman

Tel: (064) 402 765

E-mail: felix@mweb.com.na

NAMIBIA BIRD CLUB

is a membership organization - learn about Namibia's birds

Tel: (061) 225 727

Cell: (081) 240 3635

E-mail: gudrunm@iway.na

<http://namibiabirdclub.pbwiki.com>


GO GREEN
A Nedbank Namibia Initiative

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Peter Steyn 1982.

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