

(Jeff Lemons)



Tytonidae the BARN OWLS

Tytonidae is the first of our two families of owls. In our region, it is comprised of a single species: *Tyto alba*, the Barn Owl. This owl is unlike any of our other native owls. So much so, that scientists have placed it into this entirely separate bird family. Our second owl family is the family Strigidae—often called the “true” or “typical” owls. Species accounts for owls in the family Strigidae are presented following the Barn Owl.

In general, owls are nocturnal carnivores that prey on a wide variety of animals. Owl eyes are well adapted for hunting at night and their ears are extremely sensitive. They have hooked bills for tearing flesh and sharp talons for catching prey. Their flight feathers have special modifications that enable them to fly almost entirely silently. Owls regurgitate “pellets” after feeding. These pellets consist of indigestible bones and fur. Close examination of owl pellets provides an easy method for determining their prey.