



November-December 2017

GREAT HORNED OWL

by Lanny and Marilyn Johnson

"Mom!" "Mary!" an excited Billy Jones shouted one day just before sunset. "A humungous bird with horns on its head, just flew into our back yard!"

Searching out the window, Billy's mother spotted Billy's 'humungous' bird perched on top of a power pole with its back to the house. Using a pair of binoculars, she saw the bird's 'horns' and knew what kind of bird they were seeing. "We are looking at a *Great Horned Owl*. Here, Billy and Mary, take a look through these binoculars. What look like horns are actually tufts of feathers called *plumicorns*. Some people think they look like cat ears, so have given the Great Horned Owl nicknames such as '*Cat Owl*', '*Night Tiger*' and '*Flying Bobcat*'. However, the ears are placed down on the side of the owl's head, and are just holes in the skull beneath feathers. The right and left ear often have different shapes, allowing the owl to tell which direction the sound is coming from. Sounds coming from behind the owl are reflected back to the ear by a moveable fold of skin on the front of the ear." ^{1, 2, 3, 4}

"Oh no! It just broke its neck and his eyes are bulging out of its head!" Billy squealed.

Laughing, his sister Mary answered, "Oh, Billy, it just turned its head around backwards! Owls can turn their heads all the way around!"

"Actually Mary, although that is a common belief, owls cannot turn their heads all the way around. Because they cannot move their eyes up and down or to the sides like we can, God has enabled them to swivel their heads about 270 degrees - allowing them to look in any direction." ⁵

"Great Horned Owls mostly hunt and eat during the night and sleep during the day. Their large, bright, yellow eyes and wide pupils are designed so they can see their prey - even in low-light. They have a third, clear eyelid called a nictitating membrane that they can close during the daytime to protect their sensitive eyes from bright light ... acting kind of like sunglasses." ⁶

"Like other owls, the Great Horned Owl has specially designed feathers which allow it to fly very quietly," Mrs. Jones continued. "Air moving over feathers creates noise. However, the fronts of the owl's short, wide, and curved wings are covered with small hooks and bows that break up the air flowing over the wing, producing less noise. The air then flows off the back edge of the wing, which is made up of special feathers that can bend. This quiets the noise even more. Any leftover noise that the owl's prey might hear is soaked up by soft and fluffy feathers on the owl's wings, body and legs. When the owl finds prey, it is able to silently swoop down and grab the prey with its long, sharp talons (toes). Although it has four toes



like most birds, it can turn an outer toe to the back, giving it two toes pointing forward and two pointing backward. This gives it extra gripping power to carry its catch. Great horned owls are very strong and can carry animals several times heavier than themselves. The owl will sometimes swallow its catch whole or rip it to shreds with its curved, pointed beak." ^{7, 8}

"What kind of animals does the Great Horned Owl eat, Mother?" Mary asked.

"They usually go after small mammals such as mice, rats, squirrels, rabbits, raccoons, muskrats, opossums and skunks ..."

"Skunks! That's gross!" interrupted Mary.

"I agree, Mary, yet they are one of the only animals that will actually hunt skunks. They will also eat large insects, frog, snakes, fish, and other birds such as geese, grouse, ducks, and pigeons. In addition, the Great Horned Owl has an amazing digestive system. In the stomach the bones, fur, and other unwanted parts of the meal are rolled into balls called *pellets*. Once this process is complete, the owls simply regurgitate (vomit up) the pellets." ^{9, 10}

"As you can see, children, the owl has lots of incredible design. When you see design you know there must be a Designer, and the Bible tells us who that Designer is ... God."

"Mom, listen! Our owl just asked us a question! It wants to know who made it, 'Whoo-hoo, whoo-hoo?'"

Billy shouted. Unable to contain his excitement he began to shout, "God made you, God made you owl!"

Pretending to plug her ears Mary said to her smiling mother, "I kinda wish God had made Billy a littler quieter like He made the owl!"



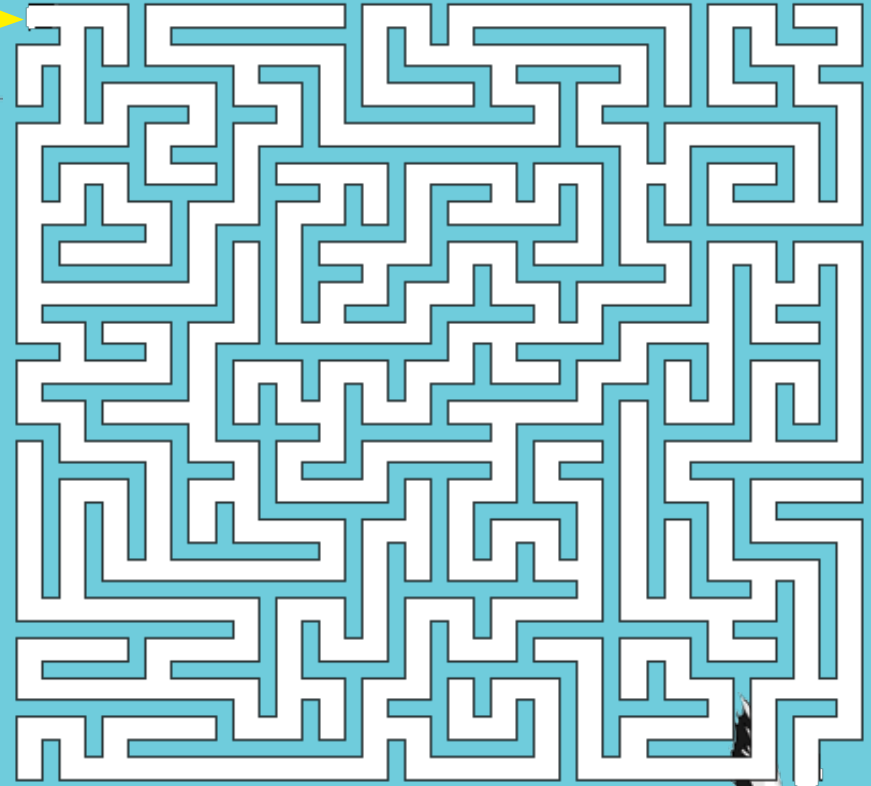
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- 1 <http://kids.nationalgeographic.com/animals/great-horned-owl/#GreatHornedOwl1.jpg>
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- 3 <http://kids.sandiegozoo.org/animals/great-horned-owl>
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- Picture A - https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Resident_Great_Horned_Owl_Red_Hill_Valley.JPG
- Picture B - https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Great_Horned_Owl_in_Oregon.jpg

From all of us at Alpha Omega Institute, wishing all of you a Blessed Christmas!

"And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins." Matthew 1:21

Help the owl find its way through the maze to find the skunk at the bottom.



Created with: <https://mazecreator.com>



FOR ANSWERS GO TO: <http://www.discovercreation.org/kids/NewsletterAnswers.htm>

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S	O	N	L	S	A	J	F	I	B	I	Y	L
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WORDSEARCH

Look for the words from the WORD LIST below. The hidden word might be up, down, sideways or slanted, but not backwards.

Word List

BIBLE BOBCAT CAT DESIGNER FEATHERS GREAT HORNED NICTITATING OWL PELLETS PLUMICORNS SILENTLY SKUNK TALONS TIGER WHOO

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