

# Get to Know: Owls of Ohio

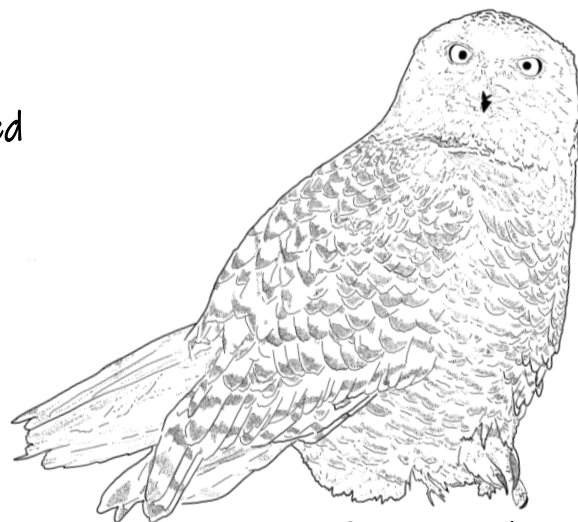
Up to eight owl species can be regularly found in Ohio throughout the year. Of them, the three most common are the eastern screech, great horned, and barred owls.



Great Horned Owl



Barred Owl



Snowy Owl



Eastern Screech-Owl



Short-eared Owl



Long-eared Owl



Barn Owl



Northern Saw-whet Owl

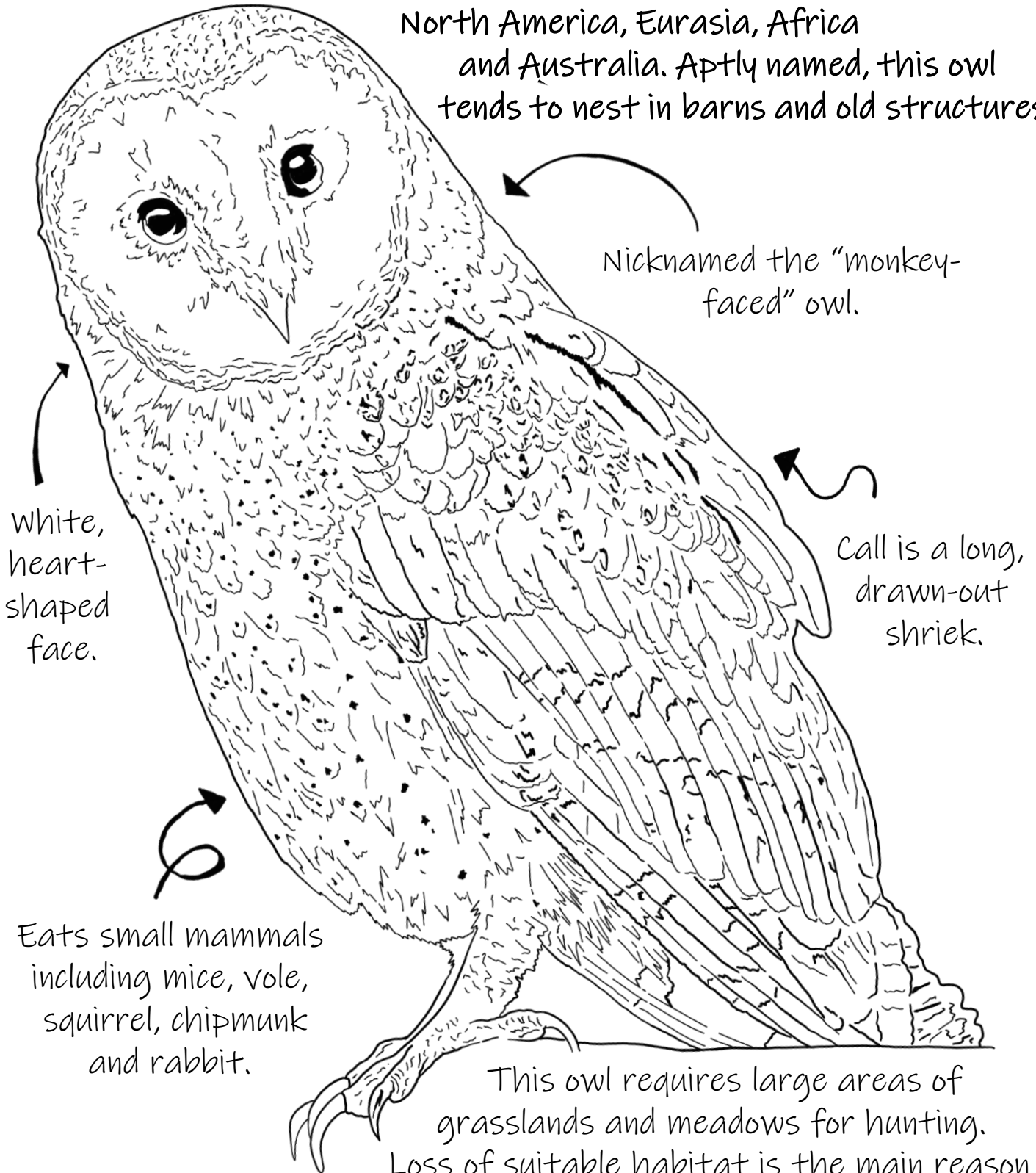
**For more visit:**  
[FairfieldCountyParks.org](http://FairfieldCountyParks.org)





# Barn Owl *Tyto alba*

The barn owl has the broadest range of any owl species, and can be found worldwide! They occur in North America, Eurasia, Africa and Australia. Aptly named, this owl tends to nest in barns and old structures.



White, heart-shaped face.

Nicknamed the "monkey-faced" owl.

Call is a long, drawn-out shriek.

Eats small mammals including mice, vole, squirrel, chipmunk and rabbit.

This owl requires large areas of grasslands and meadows for hunting. Loss of suitable habitat is the main reason for their decline in Ohio.



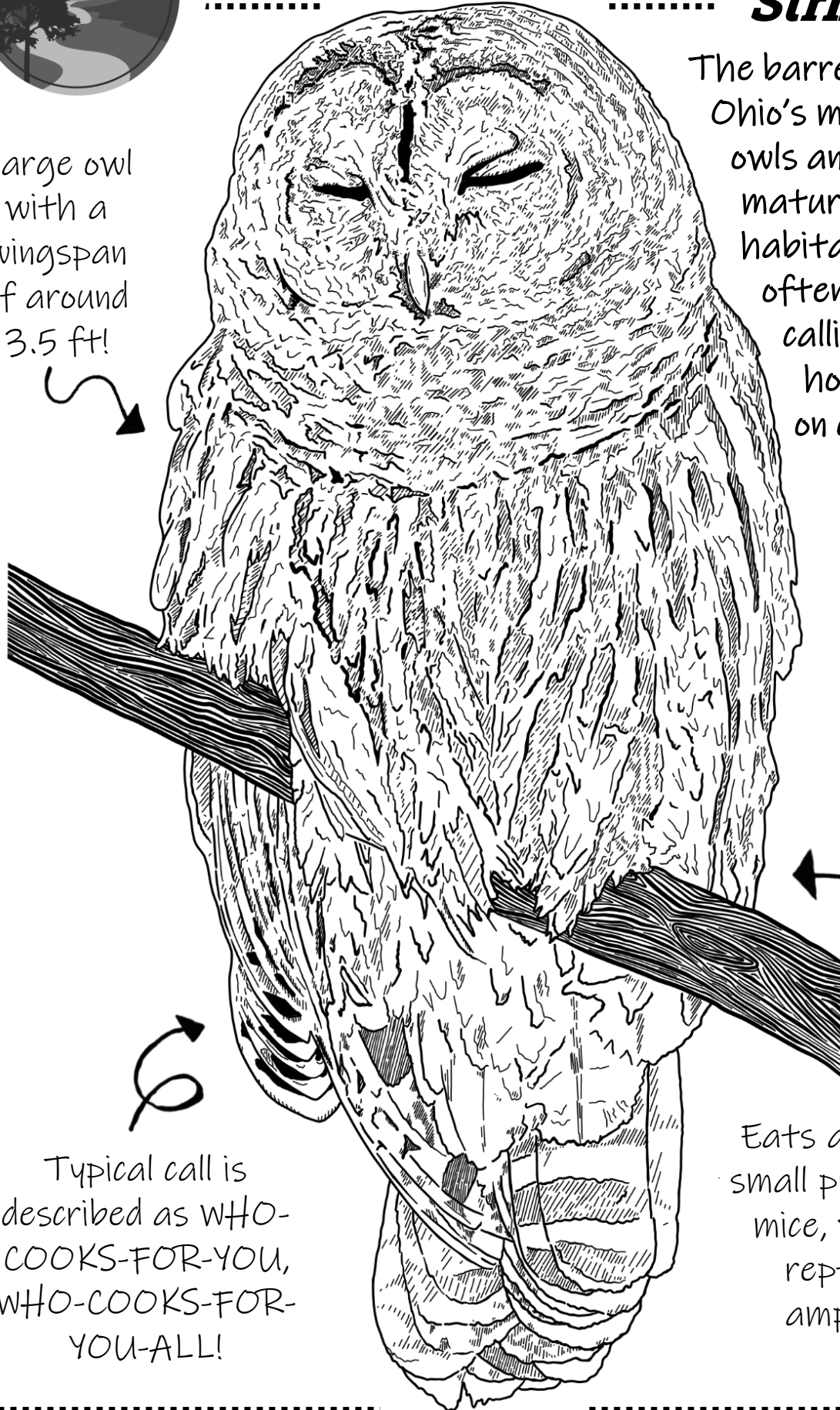
# Barred Owl

*Strix varia*

Large owl  
with a  
wingspan  
of around  
3.5 ft!



The barred is one of Ohio's most common owls and prefers mature forest habitats. They can often be heard calling in daylight hours, especially on cloudy days.



Typical call is  
described as WHO-  
COOKS-FOR-YOU,  
WHO-COOKS-FOR-  
YOU-ALL!

Eats a variety of  
small prey including  
mice, vole, birds,  
reptiles and  
amphibians.



# Eastern Screech-owl

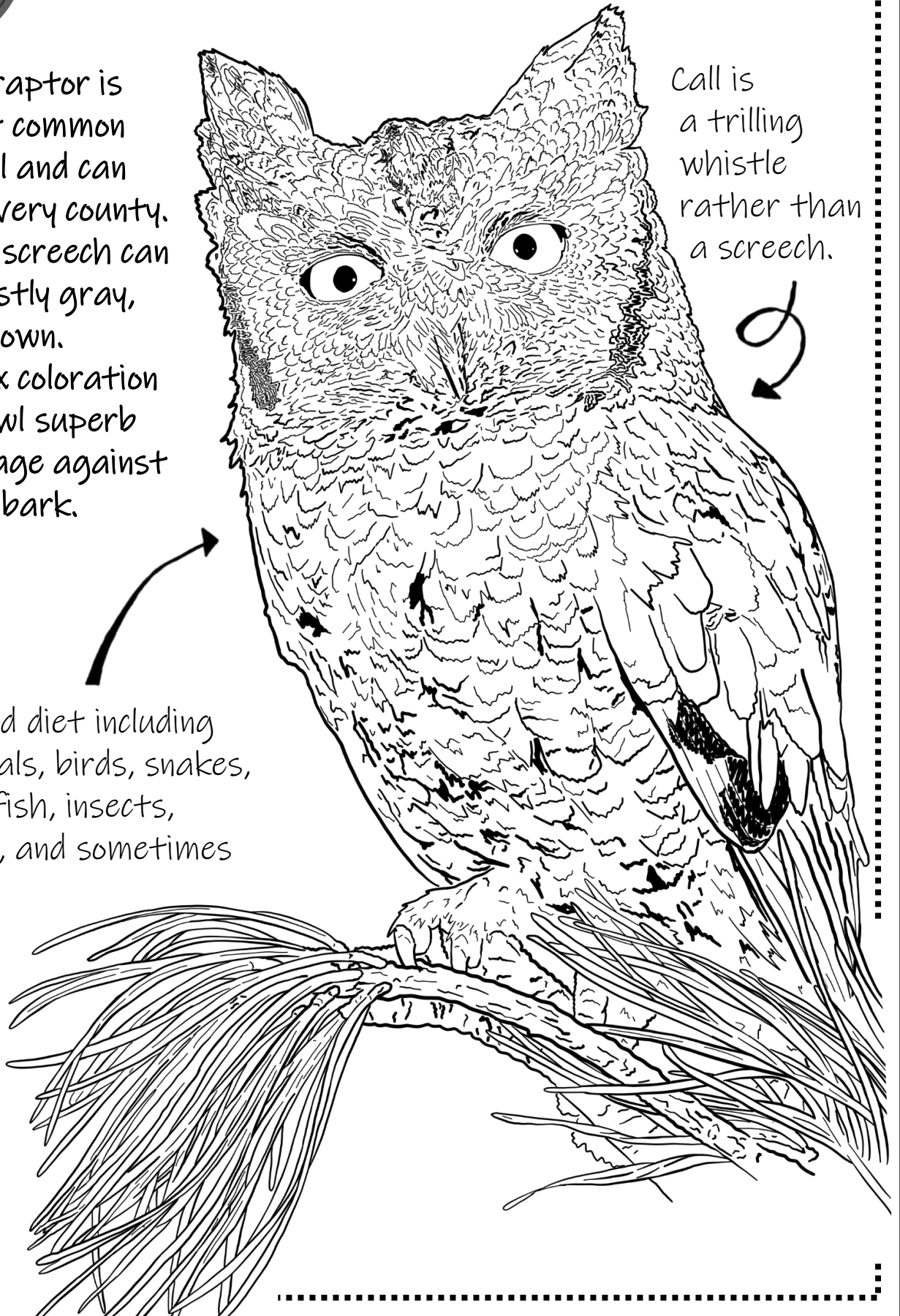
*Megascops asio*

This tiny raptor is Ohio's most common species of owl and can be found in every county. The eastern screech can either be mostly gray, or reddish-brown.

The complex coloration gives the owl superb camouflage against tree bark.

Eats a varied diet including small mammals, birds, snakes, lizards, crayfish, insects, salamanders, and sometimes even fish!

Call is a trilling whistle rather than a screech.





# Great Horned Owl

## *Bubo virginianus*

One of Ohio's most common owls, the great horned is also widespread over much of North America. They occur in every county in Ohio and prefer mixed forest and meadow habitats.

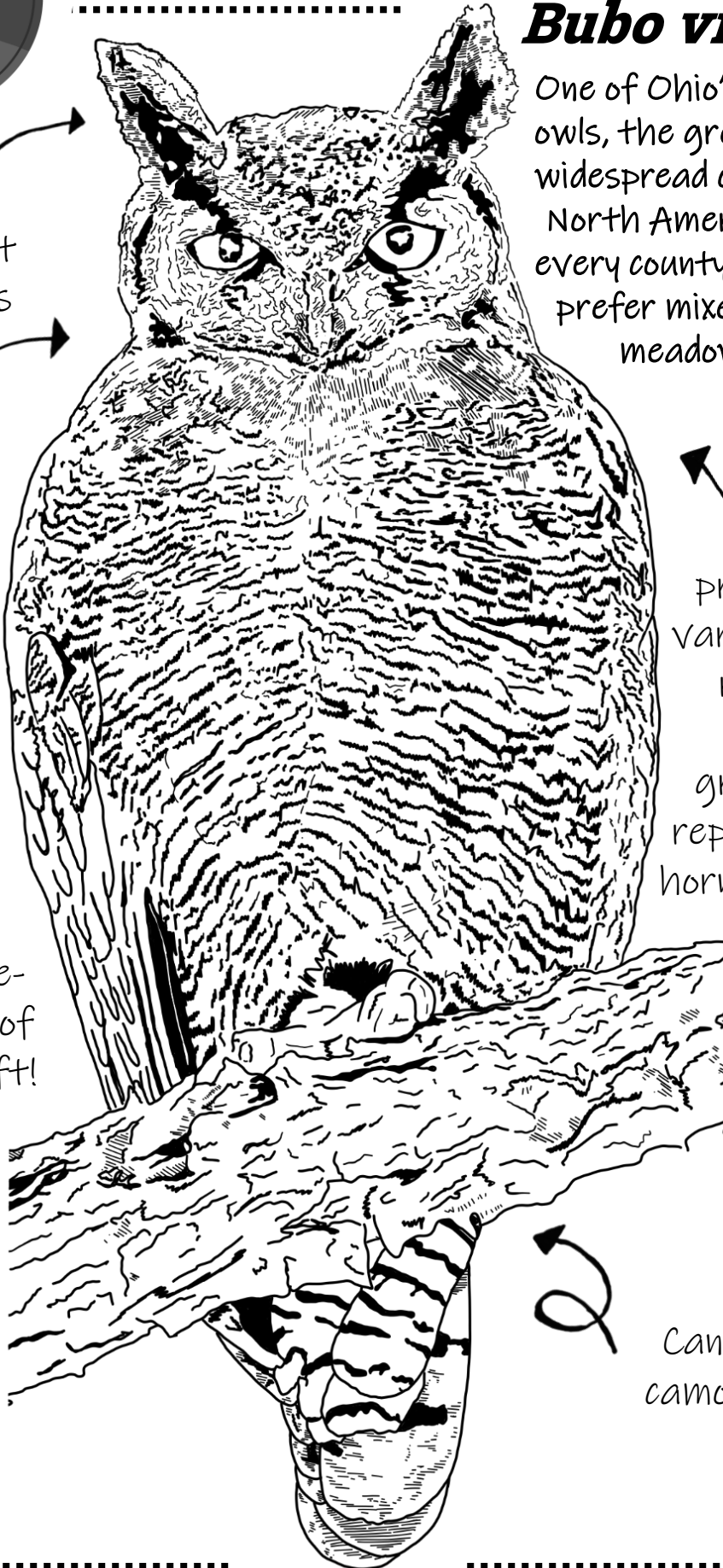
Prominent ear tufts

WHOOOO-  
HOOOO-  
HOOO!

Very large-  
Wingspan of  
around 4 ft!

A powerful predator with a varied diet including rabbit, rodents, muskrat, groundhog and reptiles. The great horned is one of the few predators that regularly preys on skunk!

Can be well camouflaged.





# Long-eared Owl

*Asio otus*

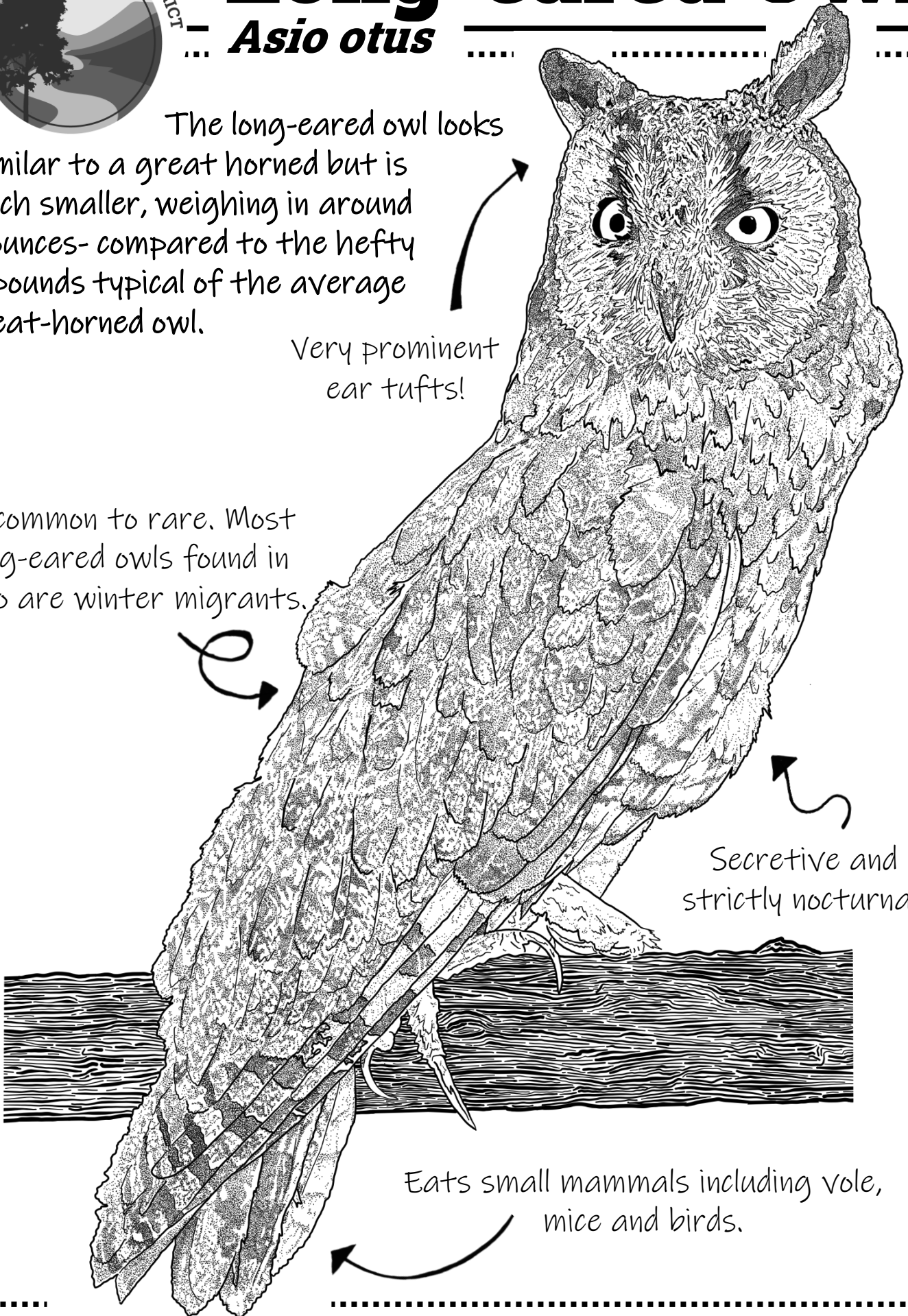
The long-eared owl looks similar to a great horned but is much smaller, weighing in around 9 ounces- compared to the hefty 3 pounds typical of the average great-horned owl.

Very prominent ear tufts!

Uncommon to rare. Most long-eared owls found in Ohio are winter migrants.

Secretive and strictly nocturnal.

Eats small mammals including vole, mice and birds.





# Northern Saw-whet Owl

*Aegolius acadicus*

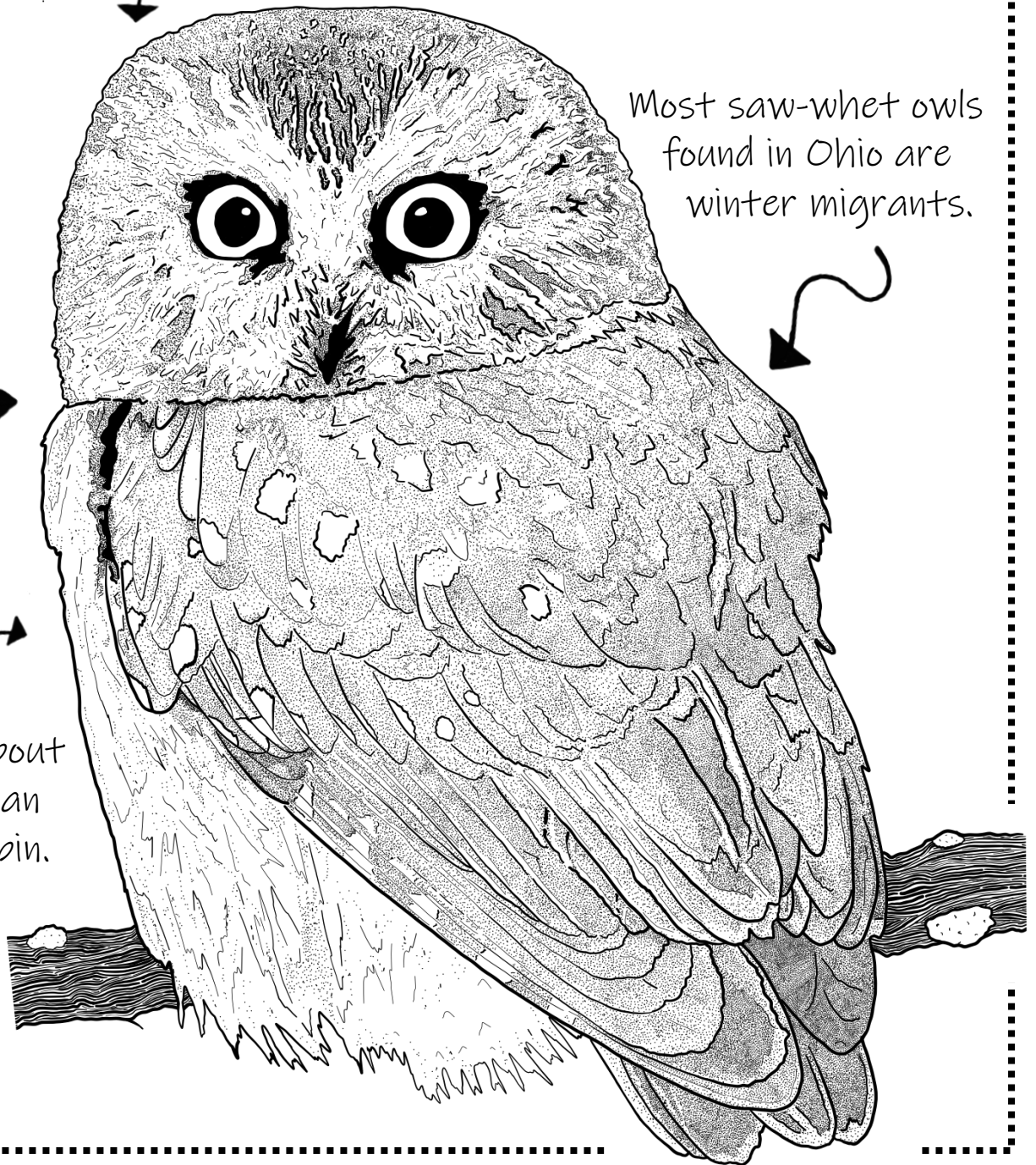
The northern saw-whet is the smallest owl in Ohio, and prefers to roost in conifer forests that have plenty of tangles and thickets. This can make them one of the toughest owls to find in the state.

Tends to perch relatively low to the ground, around 5-15 feet.

Eats small mammals including rodents and shrew.

Most saw-whet owls found in Ohio are winter migrants.

A tiny owl, about the size of an American robin.





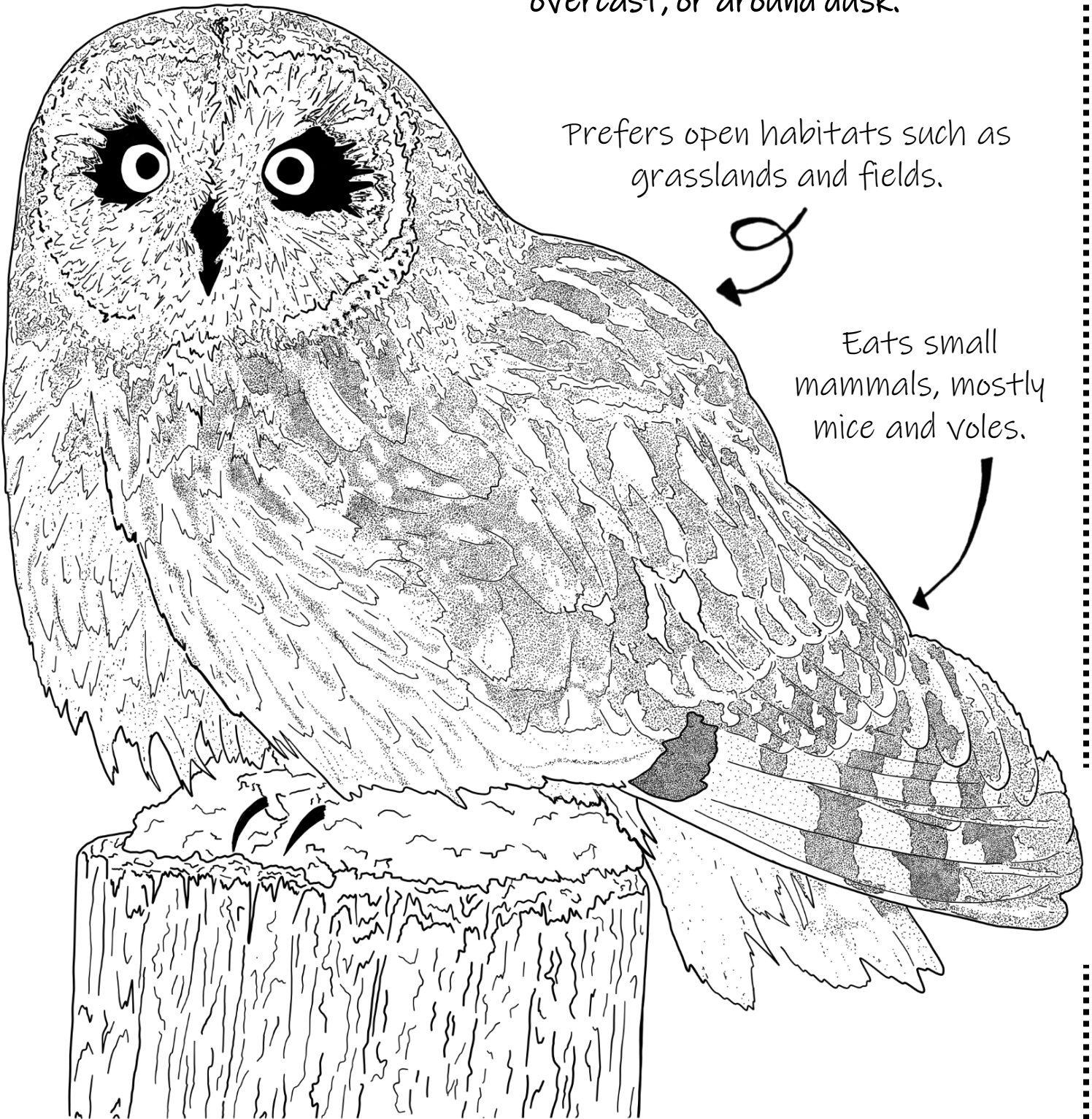
# Short-eared Owl

## *Asio flammeus*

The short-eared owl is found in Ohio as a winter resident. This raptor can be observed easier than many other owl species as they often hunt in daylight- typically when the weather is overcast, or around dusk.

Prefers open habitats such as grasslands and fields.

Eats small mammals, mostly mice and voles.







# Snowy Owl

## *Bubo scandiacus*

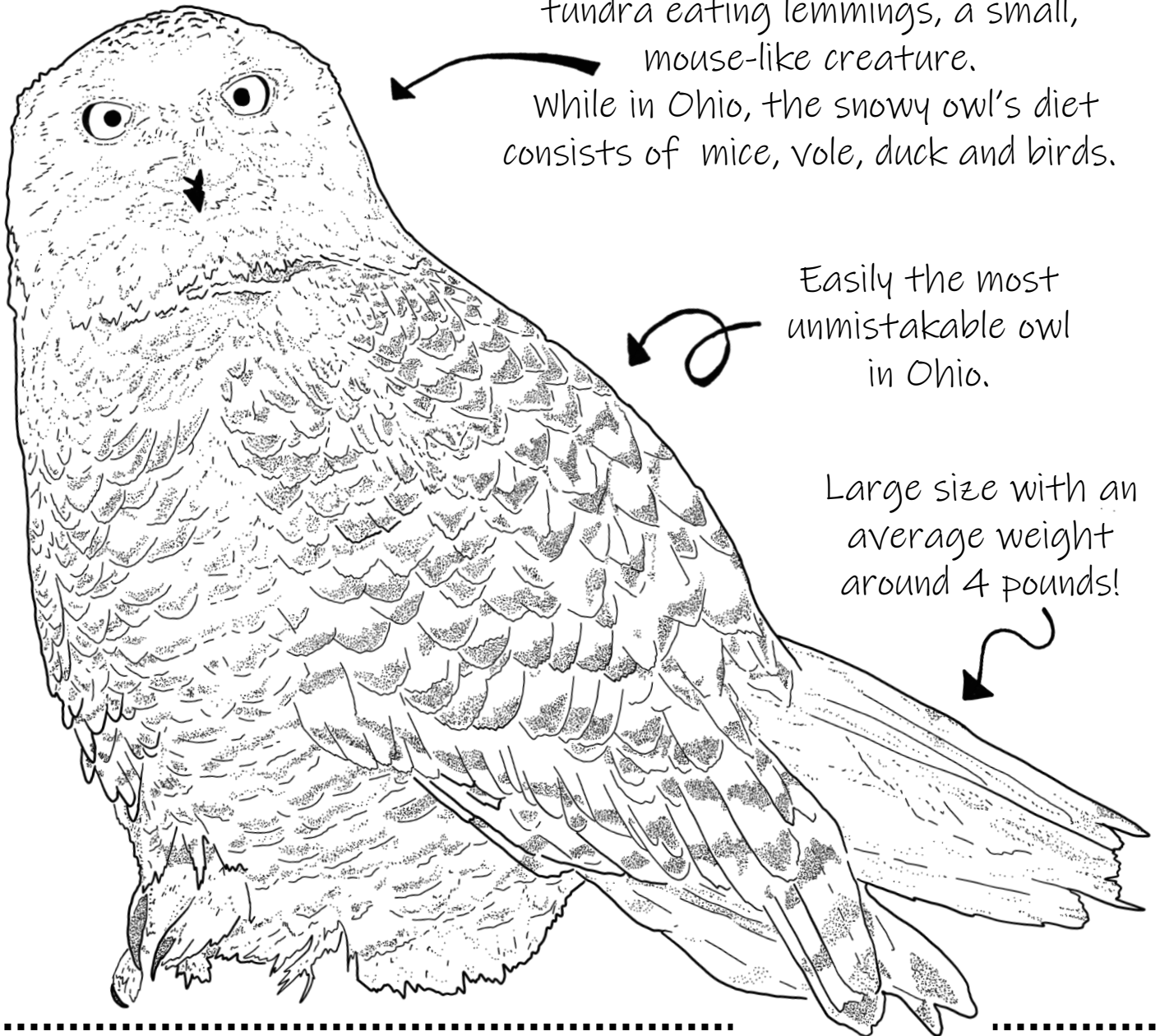
Ohio's number of visiting snowy owls changes each winter depending on the lemming population in the far north. Their unusual habit to hunt during the day combined with a striking appearance often makes these raptors local celebrities. Although they may seem friendly, you should never attempt to approach a snowy or any other owl- always keep a respectful distance!

Spends most of the year on the arctic tundra eating lemmings, a small, mouse-like creature.

While in Ohio, the snowy owl's diet consists of mice, vole, duck and birds.

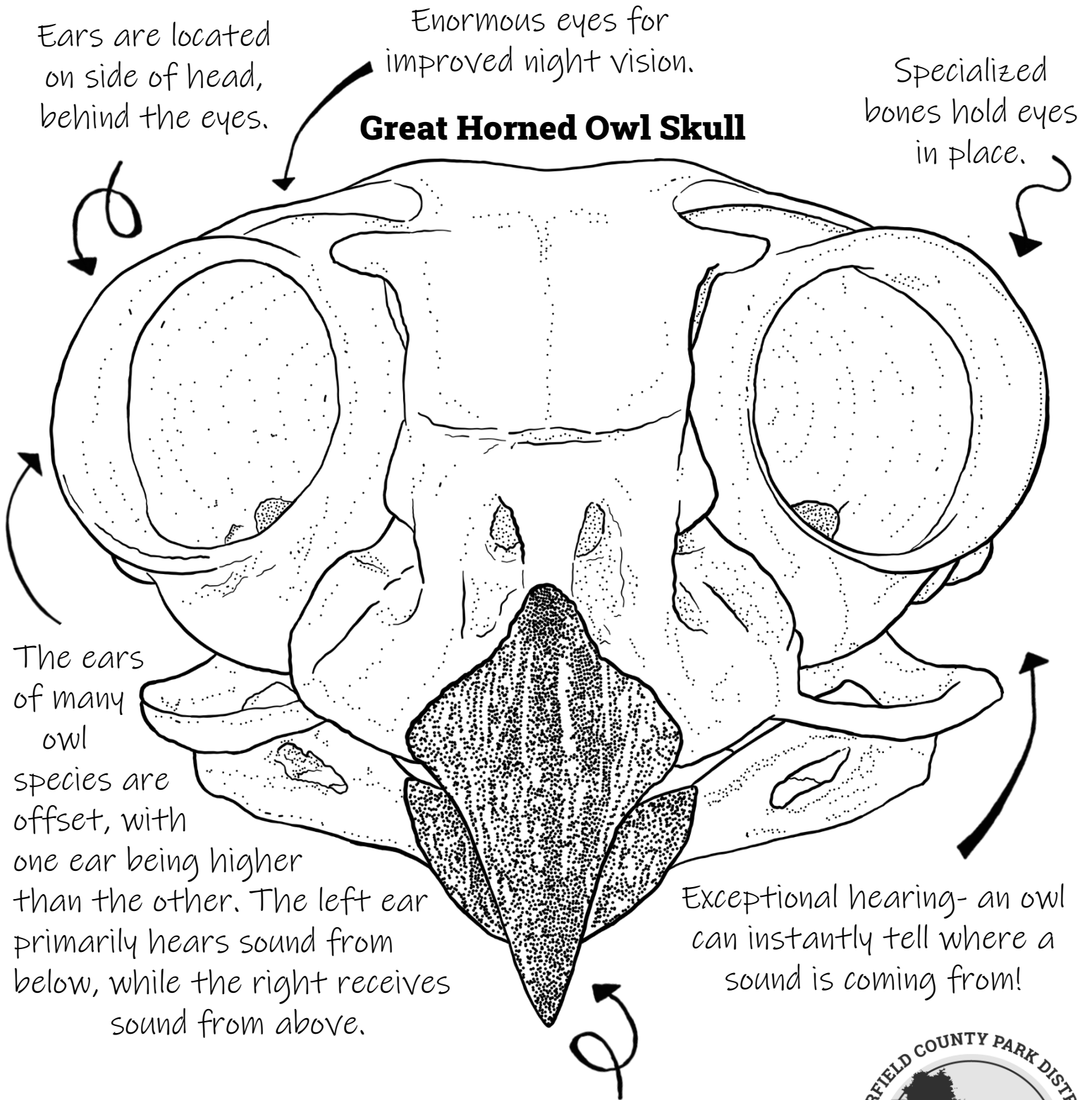
Easily the most unmistakable owl in Ohio.

Large size with an average weight around 4 pounds!



# Owl Adaptations: Eyes and Ears

Owls have excellent senses which allow them to hunt and navigate in the dark.



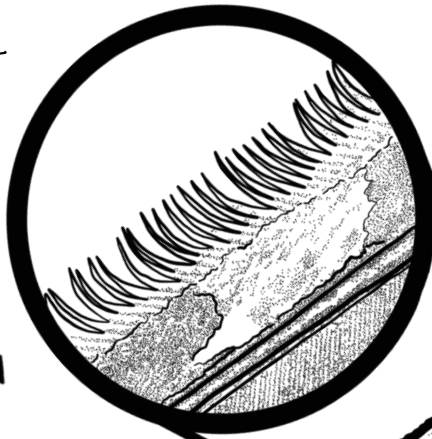
It is a myth an owl can turn its head in a full circle. In fact, they can only turn up to 270 degrees left or right.



# Owl Adaptations: Silent Flight

Owls are silent killers, capable of flying just feet away without detection. How do they do it- and why?

Soft fringe with a comb-like appearance helps to break up the air that would typically cause a swooshing sound while flying.



Flying silently allows an owl to stealthily sneak up on its prey.

Owls have large wings which allow them to flap slowly and glide noiselessly.

Velvety feathers on the wings and legs help to absorb sound.

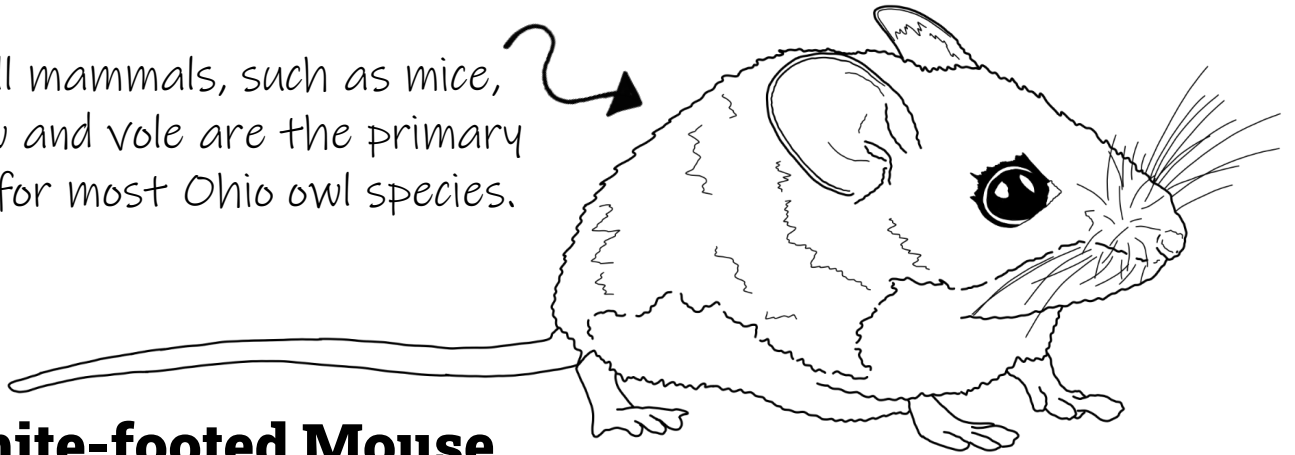
**Great Horned Owl  
Wing Feather**



# Owl Adaptations: Digestion

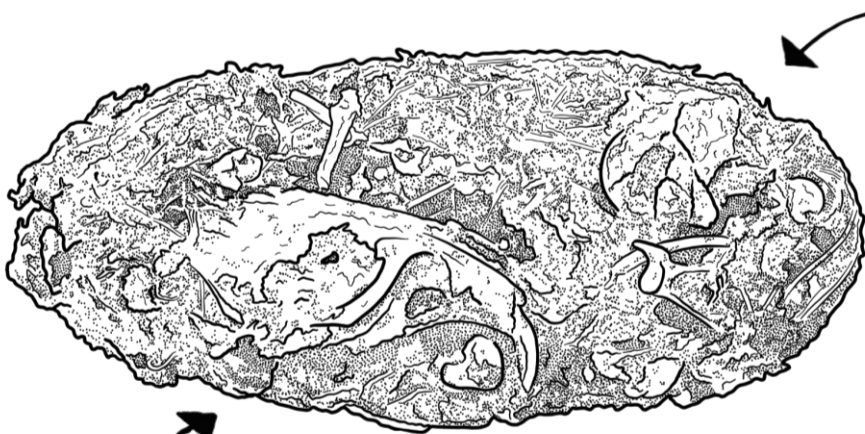
Unlike humans, owls cannot chew their food. Instead, small prey is swallowed whole, while larger prey is pulled into small pieces before being consumed. The problem with this method is that all the indigestible parts, such as fur and bones, are also eaten.

Small mammals, such as mice, shrew and vole are the primary prey for most Ohio owl species.



**White-footed Mouse**

A few hours after a meal, an owl will regurgitate through its mouth what is known as an "owl pellet." This pellet contains all the indigestible materials the owl consumed.



**Owl Pellet**

Researchers use these pellets to study an owl's diet.

This owl recently feasted on a rodent.

Pellets mostly contain fur and bones.

