

THE AMERICAN BIOLOGY TEACHER



About Our Cover

The long-eared owl (*Asio otus*), also referred to as the northern long-eared owl, is an orange, brown, and white owl with bright, large yellow eyes. This owl is not well-known and is a rarely seen and secretive owl that belongs to a group of owls known as typical owls. Long-eared owls are a medium-sized owl about 30–40 cm in length with a wing span of 85–100 cm and a body mass of 170–450 g, with the female being larger and darker-colored than the male. These owls are known for their erect, tri-colored ear tufts of feathers that presumably make them appear larger than they are.

Long-eared owls inhabit mostly dense forests near open grassland or meadow habitats and hunt small mammals such as voles, mice, rats, and gophers as well as birds, bats, lizards, and snakes, mostly at night. These owls swallow their prey whole and then regurgitate indigestible parts in pellets (usually one per day), which can be found under their roosts. Such owl pellets are often prized by biologists and biology teachers because they are a non-invasive way to determine the diet of the owl and are a great teaching tool for laboratory exercises.

The long-eared owl is a resident of North America, Europe, and Asia. Like many birds, the long-eared owl tends to move north to breeding grounds in the summer, then south during winter. These birds nest mostly in trees, but may also nest in cacti or on cliffs and may use abandoned nests of other birds. The female lays 2–10 eggs that she incubates 26–28 days while she is fed by the male. The young owls can begin to make short flights at about 5 weeks of age.

The conservation status of the long-eared owl is not well-known, but declining populations are suspected as a result of habitat loss. The owl pictured here was unexpectedly found and photographed sunning on a broken tree stump on the edge of its breeding range near Quesnel, British Columbia, in late autumn. Roy Rea, a biology instructor at the University of Northern British Columbia, in Prince George, BC, Canada, captured this photo on November 3, 2016, with a Canon 5D Mark 3 and a Canon 300mm/2.8 lens and 2x extender.

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Errata

The ABT editorial office has been notified of two errors in the article entitled “Scientific Methods of Biology, Starting with Charles Darwin,” *ABT*, 78(2) (2016): 109–17. The author has asked that the following corrections be made:

Under the heading “Testing Darwin’s Concept...”

- The first paragraph, second sentence should read: *The concept of “universal common ancestry (UCA) is a central pillar of modern evolutionary theory” (Theobald, 2010, p. 219); however, both the status and the nature of UCA have been questioned by several authors (Yonezawa & Hasegawa, 2010).*
- The second paragraph, second sentence (also quoting Theobald) should read: *Using model selection theory to identify the hypothesis closest to reality, he found that UCA is the most accurate and parsimonious hypothesis—“at least 10²⁸⁶⁰ times more probable” than the competing hypotheses of independent or parallel origins of different taxa in the three domains of life (Eukarya, Bacteria, and Archaea).*

We apologize for any confusion or inconvenience caused by the errors included in the original article.