



The use of the Beak

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Worksheet 3

All Owls have a short, curved, downward-facing beak that is hooked at the end. It is designed specifically for gripping and tearing prey.

The crushing power of the beak is usually used to kill prey once it is captured.

The upper edge of the lower beak and the lower edge of the upper beak, taper to a sharp edge and overlap in a scissor-like fashion, this enables the Owl to cut through the tissue of its prey.



Side profile of Barn Owl's Skull & Beak

Skull image supplied by Wim Klooster ©



The beak is curved downwards in order to keep the Owl's field of vision clear. The owl's nostrils are positioned towards the base of the beak, the area known as the cere.

The exposed tip of the beak as a hard surface for protection. The lower beak is hinged and does most of the work, although the back of the upper beak (where it joins the skull) has a narrow strip of flexible tissue that acts as a hinge, this allows the beak to swivel slightly upwards.

Cooling down in hot weather: Owls are able to reduce their body temperature in hot weather by "panting" through partially opened beaks, similar to a dog.

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