

Informational Books in the Preschool Classroom
Topic of Study: Owls

Owls by Gail Gibbons
***Owl Babies* by Martin Waddell, illustrated by Patrick Benson**
***Good-Night, Owl* by Pat Hutchins**

Introduction

In this guide children are engaged in activities that primarily support two domains in the *Arkansas Child Development and Early Learning Standards: Birth through 60 months: Emergent Literacy and Science and Technology*. The **Learning Goals** (with **Strands**) that precede each activity relate to specific areas of development and learning that the focus of the activities.

Nine species of owls can be seen in Arkansas, but only four kind live here year-round and can be seen or heard regularly. They are barn owls, barred owls, eastern screech owls and the great horned owl. The four species spotted only occasionally in Arkansas includes the snowy owl, the saw-whet owl, the burrowing owl, and the long-eared owl. Short-eared owls are only seen in Arkansas in the winter.

Two storybooks, *Owl Babies* by Martin Waddell, illustrated by Patrick Benson, and *Good-Night, Owl* by Pat Hutchins, are paired with the informational book titled *Owls* by Gail Gibbons. The informational book, *Owls*, has a number of pictures of the owls seen in Arkansas.

Connection to Adventures in Learning

The curriculum guide can stand alone or be used as a supplement to the following topic of study in **Adventures in Learning**:

- Focus Area: Animals – Topic of Study: Birds.
- It can also be paired with another curriculum guide, Birds, in this Informational Book series.

This curriculum guide can also be used with similar topics of study from any curriculum.

Materials to Collect and Make

- Print the book, *Owls in Arkansas* on cardstock. Laminate the pages or place them in plastic page protectors for durability. Consider using rings to put the book together. (See Attachment: [Owls in Arkansas Book](#))
- Print two sets of the Owl Concentration Game on cardstock. Laminate or cover the cards with clear adhesive for durability. (See Attachment: [Owl Concentration Game](#))

Introducing and Concluding the Topic

Learning Goals:

CD2.4 Holds and manipulates information in memory (*short-term and working memory, long-term memory*)

CD3.2 Engages in symbolic and abstract thinking (*abstract thinking*)

EL3.1 Responds o features of books and print (*print knowledge*)

Introduction: Finding Out What Children Know about Owls

To introduce the topic of “Owls” you need to need to find out what children already know about the topic and what they want to know. This allows you to build on children’s experiences and helps create an interest in the topic. Here’s how to begin.

- Gather the children in a group. Say, “For the next few days we’re going to be learning about owls.”
- Write on chart paper, chalk board or marker board the word “Owls.”
- Invite children to tell you things they know about owls. You may have to ask prompt questions such as “Have you ever seen an owl? Where did you see it?” “Have you ever heard an owl? What did it sound like?”
- Make a list of things children know about owls.
- Show children a picture of an owl and ask them what they would like to know about owls.
- Make a list of things children would like to know about owls.

Teacher Note: *Have three headings on the chart sheet. The first heading will be “What We Know about Owls”, the second heading will be “What We Would Like to Know about Owls and the third heading will be “What We Learned about Owls.”*

What We Know about Owls	What We Would Like to Know about Owls	Things We Learned about Owls

Conclusion: Finding Out What Children Have Learned about Owls

- Gather the children in a group at the conclusion of the topic of study about owls.
- Review with the children the information in the first two columns.
- Invite children to tell you some things they have learned about owls. You may have to ask prompt questions such as “When do most owls sleep?” “What are the names of some of the owls?”
- Add a list of the things children learned about owls in the third column.

Teacher Note: *This method of introducing and concluding the topic is known as KWL. What do children know, what do they want to know, and what did they learn.*

Story Presentation

Learning Goals:

CD2.4 Holds and manipulates information in memory (*short-term and working memory*)

LD1.1 Understands and responds to language (in child's home language) (*vocabulary and language comprehension*)

EL1.1 Shows interest in literacy experiences (*engagement in literacy experiences, variety of interests*)

EL1.2 Engages in read-alouds and conversations about books and stories (*story comprehension*)

EL3.1 Responds to features of books and print (*book knowledge*)

Book: *Owl Babies* by Martin Waddell, illustrated by Patrick Benson

- Be familiar with the book, *Owl Babies*.
- Show the cover, give title, author and illustrator. (Explain that the author is the person who writes the words and the illustrator is the person who draws the pictures.)
- Invite children to look at the three owl babies on the cover and ask them how they think they are feeling and explain why they think the owls are feeling a certain way.
- Say, "Let's read and find out about these three baby owls."
- Read the story so all children can see the pictures in the book.
- Change your voice to reflect the text and the characters. For example, use an "almost crying" voice when Bill says, "I want my mommy." Use a soft and scary voice when you read about it being dark in the woods, a soft voice when you read "Soft and silent, she swooped through the trees..." and an excited voice when the mother returns and they cry "Mommy!"
- Pause at the end of the book and allow for children's honest reactions.
- Follow up the reading by showing the pages and guiding the children to discuss the story.
- Include in the discussion how the baby owls were feeling without their mother. Invite children to discuss any times they have felt like the baby owls.

Additional Learning Goals:

SE2.1 Experiences, expresses, and regulates a range of emotions (*emotion expression*)

SE2.2 Interprets and responds to the feelings of others (*emotion understanding*)

Book: *Good-Night, Owl!* by Pat Hutchins

- Show the cover, give title, author and illustrator. (Explain that the author is the person who writes the words and the illustrator is the person who draws the pictures.)
- Show the title page and invite children to look at the cover and describe what they see.
- Read the story so all children can see the pictures in the book.
- Emphasize the sounds made by each of the birds as you read the story.
- Ask the children why they think there wasn't a sound as you read the next to last page which shows darkness and the moon. Accept all answers.
- Follow up the reading by involving the children in making the sounds of the different animals and birds in the story.
- Read the last page and explain to children that most owls sleep during the daytime and are awake at night.

Learning Goals:

CD2.4 Holds and manipulates information in memory (*short-term and working memory*)

LD1.1 Understands and responds to language (in child's home language) (*vocabulary and language comprehension*)

LD2.1 Uses increasingly complex vocabulary, grammar, and sentence structure (in child's home language) (*expressive vocabulary*)

EL1.1 Shows interest in literacy experiences (*engages in literacy experiences, variety of interests*)

EL1.2 Engages in read-alouds and conversations about books and stories (*story comprehension*)

EL3.1 Responds to features of books and print (*book knowledge*)

MT3.1 Participates in exploratory measurement activities and compares objects (*measurement*)

ST1.1 Engages in the scientific process to collect, analyze, and communicate information (*observations, questions, and predictions*)

ST3.1 Demonstrates knowledge of the characteristics of living things, the earth's environment, and physical objects and materials (*living things*)

Book: *Owls* by Gail Gibbons (Small group of 4 to 6 children)

- Become familiar with the content of this book. Be aware that some of the content may be too mature for preschool children's comprehension. Also, the book is quite lengthy.
- Present the content through a combination of reading the text and exploring the pictures.
- Consider presenting the book during two separate readings because of the amount of information it contains.
- Take the books, *Owl Babies* and *Good-Night, Owl!* and a cloth or metal measuring tape to the reading area.
- Show each book and invite children to recall some things they remember about each. Show pictures to help them recall events in the story.
- Show the cover of *Owl Babies* and state that this story takes place at night. Then show the cover of *Good-Night, Owl!* and state that most of this story takes place during the day when owl is trying to sleep.
- Show the cover of the book, *Owls!* and give the title, author and illustrator. (Explain that the author is the person who writes the words and the illustrator is the person who draws the pictures.)
- Open the book and show children both back covers and invite them to tell you what they see. Ask if they think it is night or day in the pictures and explain their answer.
- Say, "Let's read and find out more about owls."
- Read pages 3, 4 and 5 to the children.
- Invite children to examine the picture on page 5 and explain to the children that this is a great horned owl.
- Introduce the words "raptor" and "claws/talons", giving definitions. Call attention to the printed words and definitions.
- Show pages 6 and 7 to the children and explain that there are many kinds of owls and these are pictures of some of them.
- Read page 7 and show the elf owl and then the great gray owl.
- Use the measuring tape to show 5 inches, the size of the smallest owl, then 33 inches to show the size of the great gray owl.
- Call attention to pictures of the barn owl, the barred owl, the eastern screech owl, and the great horned owl and state that these are the kinds of owls we see most often in Arkansas.
- Call attention to the pictures of the snowy owl, the burrowing owl, the saw-whet owl, and the long-eared owl and state that these four owls are sometimes seen in Arkansas.
- Call attention to the picture of the short-eared owl and state that this owl is only seen in Arkansas in the winter.
- Read the names of additional owls if children seem interested.
- Show the pictures on page 6 and 7 and say to children, "If you could choose one owl you would like to see, which would it be?" Invite each child to select one of the owls and state the name of the owl and explain why they chose that owl.
- Show children the pictures of the eastern screech owl, the barn owl and the barred owl on pages 8 and 9 and remind children that these are three of the owls we see most in Arkansas.

- Invite children to look at the pictures of the owls and discuss how they are different and how they are alike.
- Decide whether to read the remainder of the book during this reading or waiting until the next day and let the children know this.
- Explain to children the book will be placed in the Library Center for them to look at on their own.

Teacher Notes:

- *Plan to read the remainder of the book to the children the next day if you decide this is best for your group.*

Second Reading of *Owls*

- Understand that this second reading is only necessary if you have decided to present the book during two readings. If you decide to read the entire book at one time, continue the first reading at the fifth bullet: Read page 10.....
- Review with the children the pages of the book you have already presented to them.
- Include in the review the new words such as “raptor” and “talons” and show the pictures and the words and say the names of the owls found in Arkansas
- Explain to children that they will learn more about owls as you share the remainder of the book with them.
- Read page 10 and invite children to see if they can twist their necks almost completely around or turn their heads upside down like the owls.
- Read page 10, name the boreal owl, and state that owls are nocturnal which means they hunt at night. Recall with the children that in the book, *Good-Night, Owl!* the owl was trying to sleep during the day and was awake at night.
- Read pages 12 and 13 and allow children to study the pictures.
- Read pages 14 and 15. Recall with the children that in the book, *Owl Babies*, the mother owl was soft and silent as she swooped through the trees to Sarah and Percy and Bill.
- Show the pictures and name the owls on pages 16, 17, 18, and 19.
- Read pages 20 and 21 with the children. Involve them in making the owl sounds on page 20.
- Show pictures of barn owls on page 22 and 23.
- Show pictures and read the text on pages 24 and 25.
- Introduce the words “clutch”, “incubation” and “owlet” to the children, giving a definition of each own.
- Recall that in the book, *Owl Babies*, Sarah, Percy and Bill are baby owls, they are owlets.
- Read pages 26, 27 and 28 with the children, introducing the words “down” and “brood.”
- Show pages 29 and 30 and state that sometimes owls have to be protected from hunters.
- Conclude by reading page 31 and involve children in making the sound of an owl.
- Follow up the reading by inviting children to discuss what they liked best about the book. Ask if there was anything that surprised them.
- Explain that the book will be in the Library Center (or in the Discovery Center) and they can read it on their own or ask you to read the book with them.

Teacher Note:

- *Some of your children may be more interested in this topic than others. When possible, spend time with those interested children, helping them find out more about owls.*

Additional Language and Literacy Activities

Learning Goal:

CD2.4 Holds and manipulates information in memory (*short-term and working memory*)

Activity: Owl Concentration

- Prepare the Owl Concentration Game as described in Materials to Collect and Make section.
- Gather a small group of children to play the game.
- Place the cards face up, show to children, read with the children the name of the owl. Explain that these owls are the ones that we may see in Arkansas.
- Turn the cards over and mix them up.
- Explain to children that they will each have a turn turning over a card, naming the owl, and trying to find the matching card by turning over one other card. Demonstrate if necessary.
- Give each child a turn.
- Create a stack of cards as matches are found.
- Continue playing the game as long as the children remain interested.

Teacher Notes:

- *Remember that the object of the game is for children to develop memory skills and that there are to be no winners or losers.*
- *Allow the children to play the game independently.*

Learning Goals:

LD1.1 Understands and responds to language (in child's home language) (*vocabulary and language comprehension*)

EL1.1 Shows interest in literacy experiences

Activity: Book: *Owls in Arkansas*

- Prepare the book, *Owls in Arkansas*, as described in the Materials to Collect and Make section.
- Gather a large or small group of children and present the book to them, stating the title and showing the pictures to them. Give the name of each owl as you show the pictures.
- Explain to children that the book will be in the Library Center for them to look at on their own.

Learning Goals:

SE3.1 Shows awareness of self as unique individual (*preferences*)

EL3.1 Responds to features of books and print (*print knowledge*)

MT1.1 Demonstrates number sense and an understanding of quantity (*number names and count sequence, comparison of quantity, connection of number, numeral and quantity*)

Activity: Our Favorite Owl Graph (Large Group Activity)

Directions:

- Prepare a graph with columns for these three types of owls: great horned owl, barn owl, and the eastern screech owl. Use a picture of each owl with the name written on it.
- Make name cards for each child in a size that will fit on the graph.
- Go over the chart with the children, explaining that they will decide which owl they like best by placing their name card in the correct column.
- Allow each child a turn to say which owl he/she likes best, tell why, and place his/her name card in the correct column.
- Invite the children to count the number of children who like each owl.

Our Favorite Owl

6			
5			
4		George	
3	Beckett	Hayden	
2	Maria	LaTonya	Taylor
1	Lucy	Peyton	Juan
	 Great Horned Owl	 Barn Owl	 Eastern Screech Owl

- Involve children in writing a summary story as follows.

Our Favorite Owl

Four children like the Barn Owl the best. Three children like the Great Horned Owl the best. Two children like the Eastern Screech Owl the best.

Learning Environment

Library Center

- Add the following books: *Owls*, *Owl Babies*, *Good-Night Owl* and *Owl Moon* to the center.
- Add the teacher-made book, *Owls in Arkansas*, to the center.

Discovery Center

- Place the Owl Concentration Cards in the Discovery Center.
- Observe to see if children play the game and if they name the owls.

Transition Activities

Learning Goal:

CD2.2 Shows flexibility in adjusting thinking and behavior to different contexts (*adjusting behavior to match context*)

Owl Match

- Use pairs of the Owl Concentration cards to transition children. Have the same number of cards as children. If an uneven number of children, have one card for yourself.
- Distribute the cards to the children.
- Ask one child to show his/her card and ask the child with the matching card to join with his/her owl partner and transition to the next activity.
- Continue this activity until all children have transitioned.

Family Connection and Engagement

- Send home a note to families explaining that children have been learning about owls.
- Include in the note the things children learned about owls and suggest that families discuss these things with their child.
- Add to the note the list of books about owls that were presented to the children and suggest that they check the books out of their local library and read with their child.

Additional Books and Resources

Additional Children's Books:

Good Night Owl by Greg Pizzoli

Owl Moon by Jane Yolen, illustrated by John Schoenherr

Additional Resources:

Arkansas Game and Fish Commission website: photos of some of the owls found in Arkansas

Audubon Arkansas: Birds of Arkansas, Information and Sound Clip can be found on the website.