



## Nature Nuggets: Night Owls and Buggy Bats

**Audience:** 3-7 year olds and parents/guardians.

**Materials needed:**

- Owl puppet or stuffed toy
- Bat puppet or stuffed toy
- Photos of owls and bats
- Clothes pin
- Owl wing
- Owl talon or photo
- Owl pellet
- Toy mouse
- Copies of night scene pictures
- Owl, bat, and star stickers

**Theme:** Bats and Owls are awake at night and they have special body parts that help them find food and survive.

**Introduction:**

There are many animals that are awake at night instead of during the day. We're going to talk about two creatures that wake up at night and fly through the skies—one is a bird and the other one looks like a bird, but it's not! Can you guess what they are? (show puppets). Both bats and owls have some very special body parts that help them find food and be awake in the night time. Let's visit Night Owl and Buggy Bat to find out more about these flying night-time friends.

**Puppet Show:**

*Owl (looking at audience):* Who, who, who are you? Did you come to visit me today at (Bobcat Ridge/Fossil Creek)? I really shouldn't even be out right now. Daytime is for sleeping!

*Bat:* What's all this commotion? You woke me from a sound sleep!

*Owl:* Well it's not often that we get a great group of visitors who want to know all about me. I think I need to let them know how great owls are!

*Bat:* Here we go again.....

*Owl:* But owls ARE great. In fact, I'm a great horned owl. THAT should tell you something!

*Bat:* Well I'm a Townsend's BIG eared bat, so what do you think about that?

*Owl:* So what's so great about your big ears?

*Bat:* Well, at least they ARE ears. Those tufts sticking up from your head aren't even ears at all. They're just feathers!

*Owl:* That's because I have SECRET ears. They're hidden next to my eyes and they help me hear very well, I'll have you know. Without them, I couldn't catch those little mice running in the grass at night. I hear their little feet, and their little squeaks...

*Bat:* OK, I get the picture. But I bet you can't hear the high pitched noises I hear! Bats have something special called echolocation. I send out a little invisible sound beam from my mouth or nose. It hits a flying insect and bounces back to my BIG ears and tells me what type of bug it is, how fast it's flying and what direction it's going.

*Owl:* I guess that's pretty cool, but I don't need echolocation because I have other great tools to use.

*Bat:* Of **course** you do....

*Owl:* For instance, my eyes are so big that I can see VERY well at night. How well can YOU see?

*Bat:* Oh, bats can see just fine. We just prefer to use our ADVANCED system of echolocation. Some people think bats are blind but that's not true. We just prefer to use our cool bat technology!

*Owl:* Well, you might make fun of my ears, but they work pretty well. You can't see my ears because they're hidden on my face, but I can hear and catch a little mouse in TOTAL DARKNESS!

*Bat:* I guess that's handy when you're trying to sneak up on that lowly, little mouse.

*Owl:* I'm actually a really good sneaker-upper! My wings are so quiet that I can fly right up to you and you'll never hear me coming!

*Bat:* Maybe we should go for a little game of hike and seek!

*Owl:* You're on, Big Ears.

Bat: OK, Mr. Sneaky.

*Owl and Bat:* It's time for a night on the town!

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Review the skills of bats and owls that they learned from the puppet show. (i.e. where are the owl's ears? Can the bat see at night?)

Show photos of bats and owls.

Suggest: Let's see if we can be like owls and bats.

### **First, let's be a Great Horned Owl**

Have kids stand up and watch you, and play along.

- Have them practice moving their eyes in their sockets without moving their head. Explain that owls can't move their eyes because they are so big, so they move their heads instead. How far can they turn their heads on their necks? Explain that if they were owls, they could see all the way around to the back without turning around.
- Tell them there is a little mouse in the grass down by the sidewalk (have a toy mouse placed there). Can they see it? If they were an owl, they could see it from far away. Walk over and pick up the mouse just to show them that it's really there.
- They also hear the mouse running in the grass. (show them where the owls ears are on its head). The owl tilts his head from side to side to hear better. Practice tilting your head from side to side. Have them close their eyes while you walk around the group making little squeaking noises. Ask them to point to where the noise comes from. That's what an owl listens for.
- Now they see the mouse start to run. They swoop down to catch the mouse. Have them practice flapping their wings very quietly—they have to fly silently to catch the mouse. Pull out your talons (hands with fingers curled) to catch the mouse.
- How does an owl eat the mouse? He doesn't chew at all—he swallows it whole! Have everyone take a big gulp and pretend to swallow the mouse. Explain how the owl's tummy pulls out the meat from the mouse and wads up the bones and fur into a pellet. Then the owl spits it out! (and you thought spitting out food was rude!).
- Show the kids an owl pellet.

**Now it's time to be a bat!** Bats aren't birds at all. They don't have feathers like birds and they don't lay eggs. They have fur and their babies are born alive, just like people. They are mammals, and are very special animals. Let's see if we can be a bat.

- Stand up tall and hold your arms out to your sides with your elbows bent and fingers spread wide. Your wings are made out of your arms and fingers. (show picture to illustrate). Explain how you have very thin skin spread out between your arms and fingers to make your wings and you can fly very fast. Practice flapping wings.
- Look at your thumbs. Bats use their thumbs to hold on to things like walls and trees, or climb around. Wiggle thumbs and pretend to climb a tree!
- Bats' ears are very big so they can hear insects moving around with their special echolocation. Make big ears by putting hands behind them. Move around and pretend to listen closely. Pretend like you are an insect and move around the circle of kids. Make "beep" sounds as you move and tell the kids they have to keep facing you to hear where you are. They want a bug snack! Explain that bats make little beeping sounds that we can't hear or see, but the beeps hit an insect and fly back to the bat's ears. It's pretty cool stuff! Explain how they need to eat LOTS of insects every night so they are going to have to keep eating, take a little rest, and then eat some more.
- Morning is coming so it's time to go back to sleep. The bats go back to their cave in the rocks. They hang upside down to sleep! Show them how our muscles make our hands and fingers form a fist. Bats feet work just the opposite! Their fingers make a fist when they are sleeping, and they have to use their muscles to open them. That's how they can sleep without falling down. Show them a clothespin and relate it to the bat feet.

### **Conclusion:**

Bats and Owls are both creatures of the night. They have the special body parts they need to find lots of food and be awake at night. They are our night-time friends!

**Activity:** Pass out night scene pictures and let kids add bat, owl, and star stickers to their picture.

*Written by Deborah Price for the City of Fort Collins Natural Areas Department, revised April 2013.*