

## barn owl *Tyto alba*

Kingdom: Animalia

Division/Phylum: Chordata

Class: Aves

Order: Strigiformes

Family: Tytonidae

ILLINOIS STATUS common, native

### FEATURES

The barn owl averages 14 to 20 inches in length (tail tip to bill tip in preserved specimen). It has long legs and dark, forward-facing eyes. The white-feathered face is heart-shaped. The face appears to be flattened. The barn owl has yellow-brown or rust-red feathers on the back and wings and white feathers on its lower side. This raptor has a strong bill and sharp claws to help it capture prey items.

### BEHAVIORS

The barn owl is an occasional, permanent resident in Illinois. It lives in open areas. It flies much like a butterfly with a fluttering action. The call produced by this owl is a rasping hiss or snore. The barn owl originally nested and roosted in hollow trees but now uses barns, steeples, grain elevators, abandoned buildings and other humanmade structures. No nest building takes place except for sometimes using owl pellets as a base for the eggs. The breeding season occurs from March to June. Four to nine, white eggs are deposited by the female. Incubation is done solely by the female over the 32- to 34-day incubation period, but she is regularly fed by the male. The first young owl hatched may be two weeks old when the last egg in the clutch hatches. The barn owl eats voles and other small mammals and birds.

### HABITATS

Aquatic Habitats

none

Woodland Habitats

none

Prairie and Edge Habitats

black soil prairie; dolomite prairie; gravel prairie; hill prairie; sand prairie; shrub prairie

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