

LONGEARED OWL

asiootus

Superb camouflage, an ability to alter its shape to blend with its surroundings (by fluffing up or flattening feathers), very nocturnal habits and a preference for woodland habitat combine to make this our least -seen owl.

The Long -Eared Owl's most prominent features are the pronounced 'ear' tufts from which it derives its name. In most 'tufted' owl species (the Eagle Owl family for example) these probably have nothing to do with hearing but are used to reflect mood or to aid with camouflage. The Long-Eared Owl has remarkable hearing. Its pronounced facial disc channels sound to complex and asymmetric ear openings which run nearly the full height of the skull. The muscles which control the position of the ear tufts are also thought to play a part in changing the shape of the ear openings so it is possible that these tufts may play a role in hearing that enables this owl to detect and strike prey with total accuracy, even in complete darkness.

The principal prey consists of small mammals but, during the winter, the British population places a far greater reliance on small to medium -sized birds as a food source than in other countries.



FactFile

Length: 35cm -37cm

Wingspan: 90cm -100cm

Weight: 0.2kg -0.4kg

Habitat: Small patches of woodland, especially conifer plantations.

Abandoned crow and magpie nests are used to lay a clutch of 3 -5 eggs which are incubated for up to 30 days. The young leave the nest about 3 weeks after hatching at which time the female joins the hunt. Fledging takes place at 30 days and full independence is achieved at 60 days. Breeding success is poor with only about 24% of eggs resulting in fledged young.



The invisible owl.