

## Hungry Barn Owl Babies



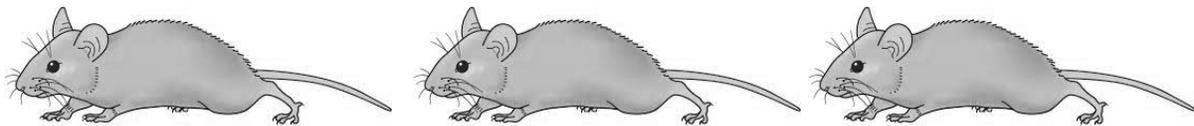
*This is a great activity when some outdoor exercise is called for.*

Bird parents are busy! Feeding growing chicks is a full-time job, and in many bird families, both mother and father hunt for food.

This is true for barn owls, who might have two clutches (lay two sets of eggs) per year. And each clutch might have as many as five or six hungry babies—or more. Nighttime hunting occupies these parents as they use their excellent hearing, night vision, and sharp talons to capture voles, mice, rats, or even large insects.

For this exercise, let's say that mom and dad have five babies, and each of these rapidly growing babies can eat five mice a night (which they can!). And it's five more mice each for mom and dad, who need the energy. So how many mice do they need to catch tonight? (Do the math with the kids; it's 35, of course.)

Prep: You'll need 100 or more "mice." I use this image; multiply and print on cardstock, laminate, and cut apart. Hoping you can do this in some outdoor space, you'll have spread all your mice around a large area ahead of time.



Time for your students to be busy barn owl parents. You (or additional helpers) will be the hungry chicks, and students will run to gather mice, return, and "feed" the chicks by putting their captured mice in a bag (or bags) that you or helpers will be holding. When the students are done, they will be nicely out of breath (!). But wait! Did they gather up all the mice they could at one time? Do barn owls do that? No; they catch one at a time. Now you—or your helpers—redistribute the mice around the area again and ask the students to catch the mice one at a time, as barn owls do it. And off they go!

At the end, the students should appreciate how much work bird parents have to do every day (or night) in order to feed their growing young!