

Barn Owl

Effraie des clochers
Tyto alba

Rare species
(Nordic limit of its
distribution)

Wingspan: 109 cm à 119 cm



The Barn Owl is recognizable by its heart-shaped face. Its eyes are dark brown, almost black. Its plumage is pale beige on the chest and rust with grey spots on the back. The Barn Owl is a slender bird with lightly feathered feet. Its head is not crested.



The male and female are similar, but the latter is larger.



The Barn Owl is found mostly in open terrain, such as fields and cultivated lands.



It feeds primarily on rodents, such as mice and voles. The Barn Owl hunts mostly at night.



The Barn Owl can live 21 to 34 years.



As its name suggests, it often builds its nest in a barn, a church bell tower or an abandoned house. It can also build its nest in a tree hollow or nest box. The female typically lays 4 to 7 eggs.



The young take flight around 50 to 64 days of age. They remain dependant upon their parents 3 to 5 weeks after their first flight.



The species is rarely found in Quebec, as our winters are too harsh; we see it mostly in tropical and temperate regions. The Barn Owl population has decreased as a result of new agricultural practices and urbanization.



Previously, people believed that barn owls brought misfortune and so they were chased off. Some people even went so far as to nail the bird on the door of their house to ward off demons. In some cultures, the birds were nailed to the homes of people who were disliked in order to attract misfortune to them. Today, the hunting of birds of prey, regardless of the species, is illegal in Quebec. The Barn Owl is far from bringing misfortune! To the contrary, she rids us of the mice and rats we do not want anywhere near or in our homes!