

Sooty's Story and Quiz

Note for teachers: The following is based on a true story about a Tawny Owl who was found by a concerned member of the public and brought to Suffolk Owl Sanctuary to be rehabilitated. It includes some useful owl facts and has been designed to help children to learn about owls.

Once upon a time there was a small cottage on the edge of the woods. In the woods lived a family of Tawny Owls. When the chicks were a few months old, they started hunting in the woods by themselves, catching all sorts of prey such as mice, voles and shrews with their sharp talons. Their parents didn't want them in their nesting tree anymore, so the chicks had to find a new place to sleep during the day.

Early one December morning, one of the chicks had a full belly of voles when he spotted a perfect place to rest for the day. It was a deep, dark hole where he could hide and digest his meal. He flew around to check for danger before committing to fly into the hole. Once in, he couldn't find the base, and tumbled through the dark tunnel and landed in a heap at the bottom.

The Oakes family were sitting down to breakfast when they heard a strange noise coming from the back of their wood burning stove.

"Santa's come early" said Mr Oakes. He quietly walked over and removed the grille from the back of the stove, which revealed some rather bedraggled feathers.

Mrs Oakes fetched a towel and carefully they eased the rather sorry looking bird out from the chimney. Looking back at them was a grubby round face and big dark eyes. "I think it's an owl" she said. "Poor thing's fallen right down our chimney!"

Mr Oakes found a box and they gently placed the owl in the box, then phoned their local owl rescue centre to find out what to do next.

"You've done the right thing calling us" said Jess, who ran the Raptor Hospital "I'll come round and take a look."

When Jess arrived and peeked into the box, she exclaimed "Gosh! What a mess you've gotten yourself into, Sooty!" She returned to the hospital and with the help of a volunteer they carefully lifted Sooty out of the box and gave him a thorough check. Apart from being black from the soot, there appeared to be no injuries, so the next job was how to clean him up!

Warm soapy water can work miracles, and soon Sooty was starting to show his true colours, the mottled browns and creams of a young Tawny Owl. It took several baths to get him clean, taking care not to damage any of his feathers or get any water near his eyes or ears. Once he was clean, he was put into a nice warm box with plenty of towels to dry off, and left in the quiet to recover.

After a day in the box, Sooty was moved into an aviary where he could stretch his wings and fly about to demonstrate he wasn't injured and there was no lasting damage to his feathers. After a few days of observation, Jess decided that he was ready to be released again.

On Christmas Eve the Oakes family gathered outside in their garden, with a box at their feet. It was getting dark but a bright moon was rising behind the woodland at the bottom of their garden. The children were very excited to see Sooty again, but Jess had explained that he probably wouldn't hang around once the box was open.

Mr Oakes reached down and carefully lifted the lid, and sure enough, Sooty flew straight out into the night sky. But he didn't go very far.

"I think he's landed in that tree over there?" said James

The family waited for a few minutes but it was getting cold and dinner was almost ready. As they turned to go inside, Sooty gave a "Hooo-hooo"

"Aww, he's saying thank you!"

Sooty's Quiz

Note for teachers: The following questions are based on the information in Sooty's Story and are designed to help children to learn about owls and other raptors, as part of the KS1 Science Curriculum.

- 1) What kind of owl is Sooty?
- 2) Where does Sooty live?
- 3) How old was Sooty when he left the nest?
- 4) Name one kind of prey Sooty is good at catching.
- 5) What does Sooty use to catch his prey?
- 6) Where does Sooty decide would make a perfect place to rest?
- 7) What colour are Sooty's eyes?
- 8) What colour are Sooty's feathers?
- 9) What shape is Sooty's face?
- 10) Name one of the things the family did to keep Sooty safe.

Extension questions:

- A) What kind of place could you take an injured owl to?
- B) What noise do Tawny owls make?

ANSWERS:

1. A Tawny Owl
 2. In the woods
 3. A few months
 4. Mice/voles/shrews
 5. Sharp talons
 6. Deep, dark hole/ Chimney
 7. Dark
 8. Mottled brown and cream
 9. Round
 10. Put him in a box/wrapped him in a towel/kept him warm/ called the rescue
- A) Bird Sanctuary/Vet
 - B) Males go "hoooo" and females go "ke-wick"