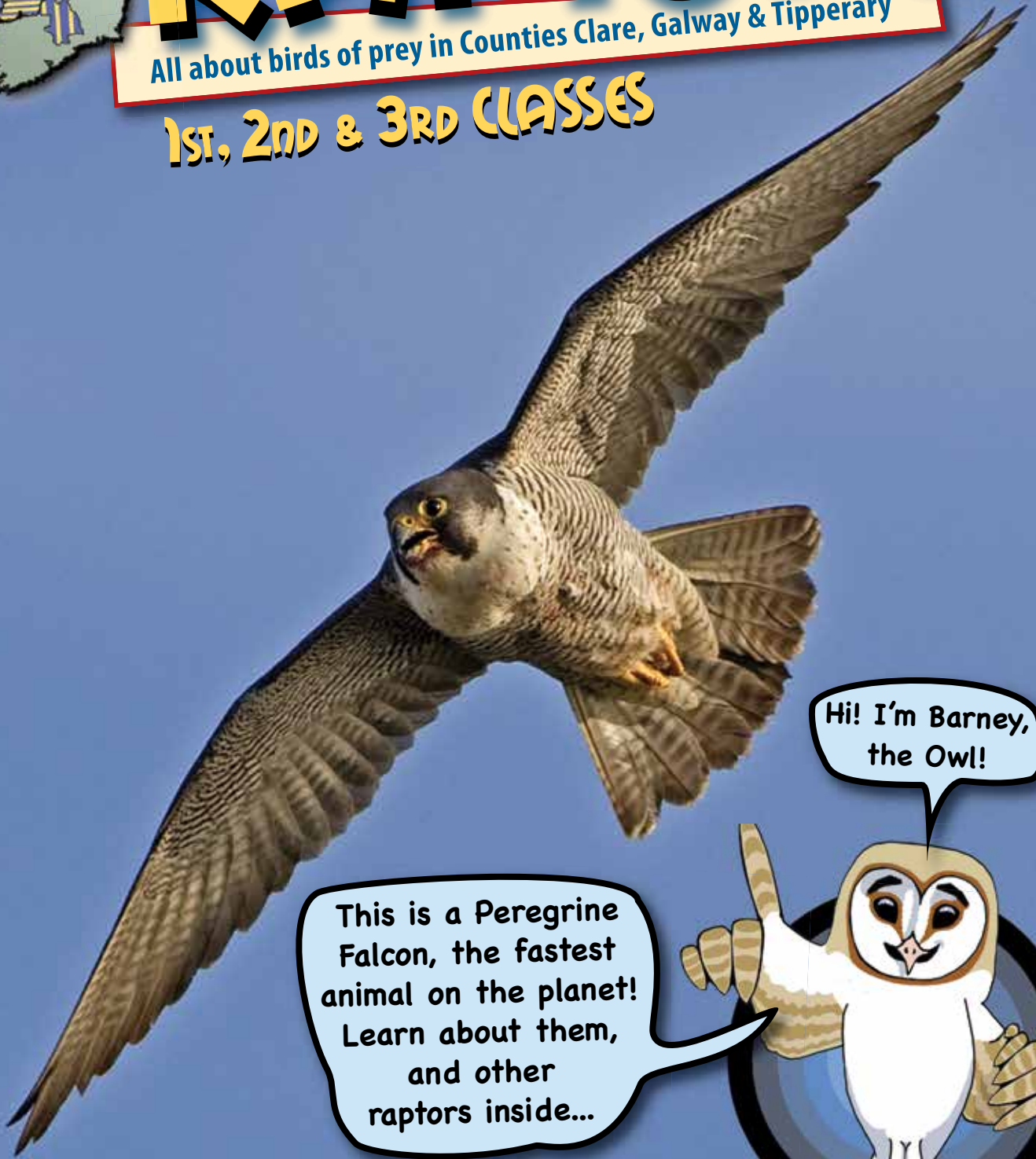




# RAPTORS!

All about birds of prey in Counties Clare, Galway & Tipperary

1ST, 2ND & 3RD CLASSES



This is a Peregrine Falcon, the fastest animal on the planet! Learn about them, and other raptors inside...



Hi! I'm Barney, the Owl!





I will be your guide for this book!



This is a Hen Harrier.  
It is one of the rarest raptors in Ireland. Clare, Galway and Tipperary are really important counties for Hen Harriers!



### Where's Barney?

Barn Owls have to search far and wide to hunt for mice. There are **5 BARNEY OWLS** and **5 MICE** hidden throughout this book... See if you can find them all!





# What is a Raptor?



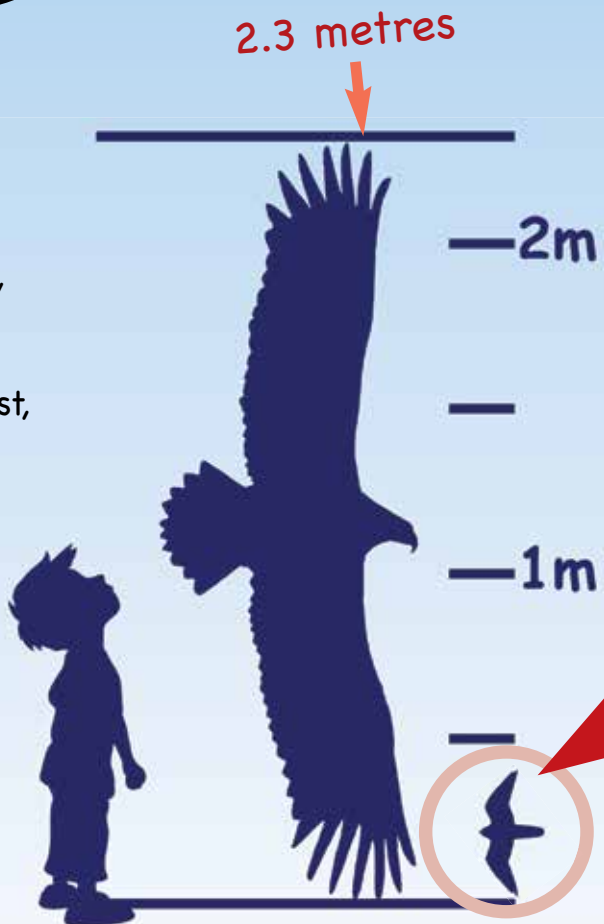
A huge White-tailed Eagle

A raptor is another name for a bird of prey. Raptors are powerful birds which hunt animals or feed off (scavenge) dead animals. All raptors have strong hooked beaks, sharp talons (or claws) and excellent eyesight to allow them to find food and survive.

Many different kinds of raptors, including falcons, owls, harriers and eagles, live in Clare, Galway and Tipperary, from the smallest, which is a falcon called the Merlin (just a little bigger than a thrush), to the largest, which is the enormous White-tailed Eagle

From one wingtip to the other, and eagles' wings are about 2.3 metres...

...much taller than you are!



Look at just how big a White-tailed Eagle really is!

And this is the size of the smallest, a teeny, tiny Merlin



# Why do raptors look like they do?

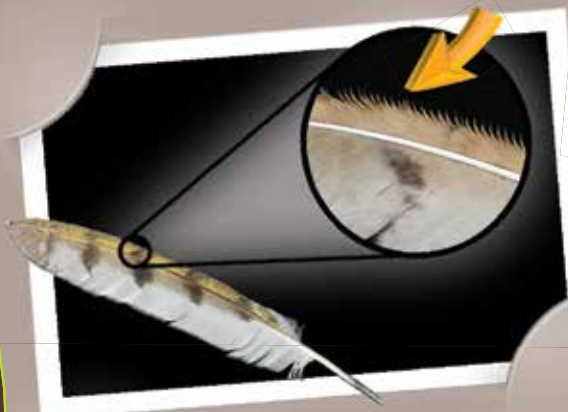


All raptors are specially designed to allow us to survive.

Look at all the cool features which I have so that I can find and catch food at night

## Raptor superpowers!

My wing feathers have special soft edges and barbs which makes my flight completely silent...



I have long legs, and sharp, strong talons so that I can catch rats and mice!



My ears are hidden behind my feathers. They are huge compared to how big I am. It would be like you walking around with elephant-sized ears!



I have amazing hearing! This is my best hunting tool of all. Look at my heart-shaped face. These feathers act like a satellite dish to help me hear the slightest noises. My hearing is so good I can even find and catch small mammals in complete pitch black darkness!!

# Parts of a raptor



See if you know the different parts of a raptor!

Use these words...

Feather

Tail

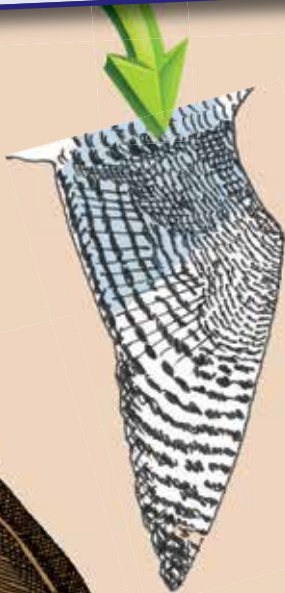
Talons

Beak

Eye

Wing

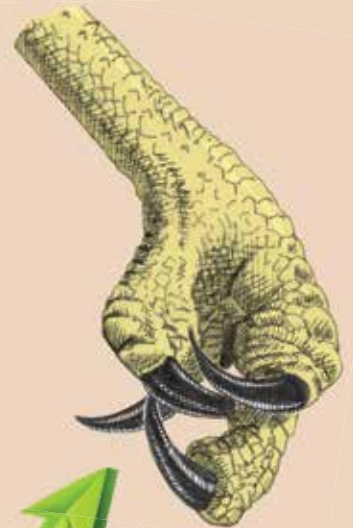
1. This is a



2. This is an



3. This is a



5. This is a



6. These are

4. This is a

How many did you get?  
(answers on the back page)

# What raptors can you see in Clare, Galway & Tipperary?



Counties Clare, Galway and Tipperary are great places to see raptors. Here are some you might see

- Raptors which live in Clare, Galway & Tipperary
- Hen Harrier *Comán na gcearc* ✓
  - White-tailed Eagle *Iolar mara* ✓
  - Barn Owl *Scréachóg reilige* ✓
  - Kestrel *Pochaire gaoithe* ✓
  - Buzzard *Clamhán* ✓
  - Sparrowhawk *Sporóg* ✓
  - Merlin *Meirliún* ✓
  - Peregrine Falcon *Fabhcún gorm* ✓
  - Long-eared Owl *Ceann cait* ✓

**Kestrel Pochaire gaoithe**  
A small falcon, very adaptable, lives throughout the country. Eats a range of prey including insects, birds, frogs and small mammals. Famous for hanging motionless in the air when it hunts, like a kite. One of most common birds of prey in Ireland... you might see one hovering over the motorway edges!



**Barn Owl Scréachóg reilige**  
The 'white owl', only comes out at night time. Known as the 'farmers friend' because they catch rats and mice on farms. They don't make a 'twit-two' call like you might think. In fact, the adults have a really loud screech, and the babies snore!



**Buzzard Clamhán**  
Looks like a small eagle. Often seen on farmland



**Sparrowhawk Spioróg**  
One of the most common birds of prey in Ireland. Hunts by surprising smaller birds with short, fast dashes. One has probably visited your garden, or near to your house.



### Hen Harrier

#### Comán na gcearc

One of the rarest birds of prey in Ireland. There are not many left but your county is really important for Hen Harriers! The uplands where they live are under threat, which is not good news for Hen Harriers.



### White-tailed Sea Eagle

#### Iolar mara

A huge eagle. Lives along the coast or around big lakes. Loves fish!

Eagles were reintroduced to Ireland after they died out (became extinct) here 100 years ago.



Lough Derg is perfect for White-tailed Eagles because there are suitable islands they can nest on, and loads of fish for them to eat.



### Peregrine Falcon

#### Fabhcún gorm

Very strong raptor. Catches big birds like ducks and pigeons. Lives along the coast on high cliffs and also in quarries and on tall buildings... even in cities and towns!



All the other raptors in this book live close to the lake also.

### Long-eared Owl

#### Ceann cait

A brown owl which nests in trees. Only comes out at night. It is more common than the Barn Owl, but very difficult to see. One probably lives close to your house or school!

### Merlin

#### Meirliún

A tiny falcon. Lives in very quiet places where there aren't many people. Very difficult to find. Very agile fliers.





# What do raptors eat?

Different raptors eat loads of different types of animals from beetles and worms to rabbits and foxes, and other birds!

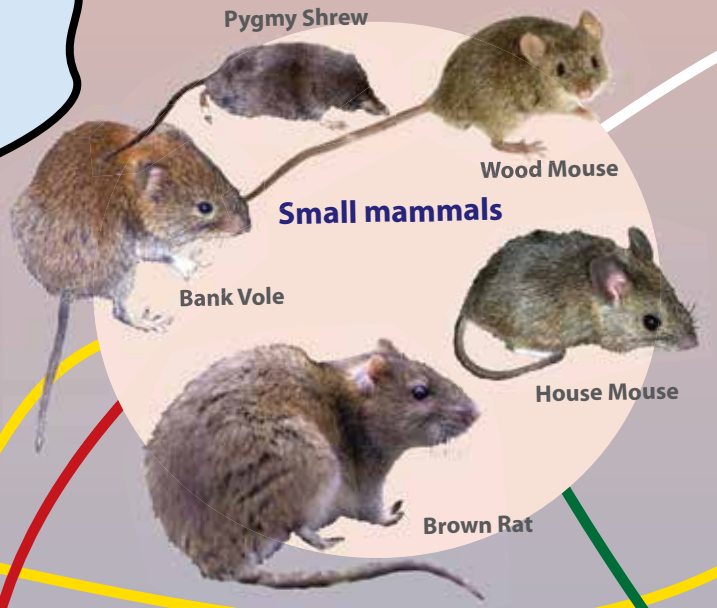
Raptors sit at the top of the food chain. This is a very important position, and we need them in the countryside.



Hen Harrier



Kestrel



Pygmy Shrew

Wood Mouse

Small mammals

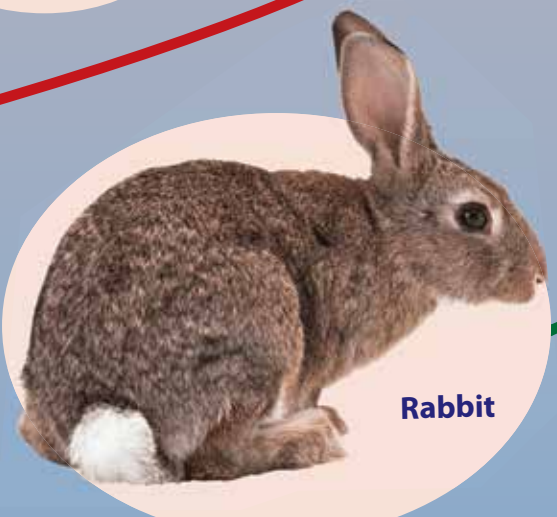
Bank Vole

House Mouse

Brown Rat



Insects  
Including beetles and other large insects



Rabbit





# White-tailed Eagle



**Fish**  
Like Mullet

## Small birds

Including Meadow Pipits, Wagtails, Starlings and more



**Barn Owl**

## Big birds

Crows, duck and Wood Pigeons



## Bats

Hard to catch, so rarely eaten!



**Peregrine Falcon**

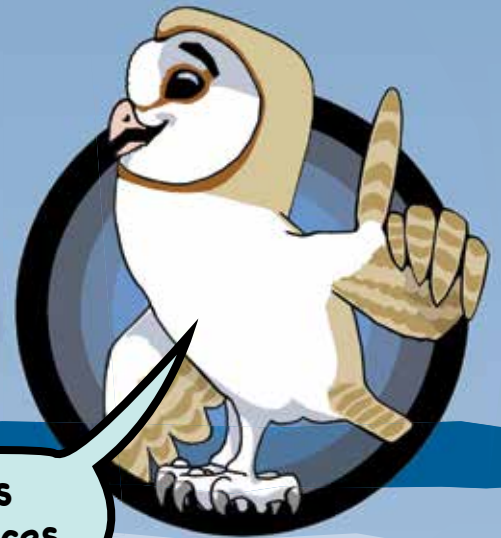
## Buzzard





# Nesting and nest sites

## finding a safe place to raise a family



Different raptors need different places to nest

**Kestrel** – “I can nest in loads of different places. All I need is a suitable flat ledge out of the wind and rain to lay my eggs. I am not good at building a nest with sticks, but I will use a stick nest built by another bird!”



Kestrel chicks



**Barn Owls**, like me, live in ruined buildings and old castles. We often nest down really deep chimneys. Home sweet home!



A Peregrine chick on a cliff ledge

**Peregrine Falcon** “I nest on a ledge on the highest cliffs, either in the mountains or on the coast. I can also nest on the top of big buildings in towns and cities where nobody can bother me. These buildings give me great views, and are like cliffs made by people!”



Hen Harrier chick

**Hen Harrier** – “I nest on the ground. This sounds simple, but I need a special type of place, where I can hide my nest from other animals so my chicks will be safe. I like hilly areas where there are not many people. This is one of the reasons why I am so rare.”

**Sparrowhawk** – “I build a small nest of twigs in a tree, in a really quiet thick hedge, or in a woodland.”



Sparrowhawk nest

**White-tailed Eagle** – “I build a huge nest of sticks, high in a big tree, usually on an island. This can be on the coast or on a big lake, like Lough Derg.”



White-tailed Eagle nest

# Help Barney owl get back to his nest



Home sweet home!



Like all raptors, I have to find the best places to hunt. These places can be a lo-o-o-ng way from my nest. Can you see the way back to my nest in the old castle?





See how many questions you can answer!

# Raptor Quiz?



## QUIZ

1. What is the fastest animal in the world?
2. What is the wingspan of a White-tailed Eagle?
3. Which bird of prey hovers in the air like a kite?
4. What is the smallest raptor in Ireland?
5. What do Peregrine Falcons eat?
6. What do White-tailed Eagles eat?
7. Which owl is known as the 'white owl'?
8. Which raptor eats rabbits?
9. Which raptor can catch prey in pitch dark?
10. Beetles are eaten by which raptor?

## WORD SCRAMBLE

Rearrange the five jumbled words below to make the names of five raptors...

1. WE LITIGATED A HEEL
2. LAGOON WELDER
3. REST ELK
4. REINFORCE PAN LEG
5. LAW BORN



## SPOT THE DIFFERENCE

There are five differences between the two Barney Owls



Can you find them?

## Answers

**Answers from page 3.** Number 1 was a wing, 2 was an eye, 3 a beak, 4 a feather, 5 a tail, and 6 were talons. How many did you get right?

**Answers from this page. QUIZ:** 1 = Peregrine Falcon. 2 = 2.3 metres. 3 = Kestrel. 4 = Merlin. 5. Big and small birds. 6 = Fish and big birds. 7 = Barn Owl. 8 = Buzzard. 9 = Owls, either Barn Owl, or Long-eared Owl. 10 = Kestrel.

**WORD SCRAMBLE** 1 = White-tailed Eagle. 2 = Long-eared Owl. 3 = Kestrel. 4 = Peregrine Falcon. 5 = Barn Owl.

Solution to the maze



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All illustrations, design and maps: Michael O'Clery.

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