

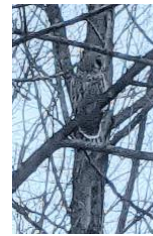
## EARTH CARE & SPIRITUALITY MONTHLY REFLECTION

April 2022

Owls & Evolution by Stephen Hastings



I was walking my dog early in the morning in our backyard when she suddenly jumped up in the air reaching for something. I looked up too and there was an owl swooping right over us! It perched in a tree and stayed for a few minutes before flying off. I even got photos on my phone. There it is: a Barred Owl (I think) – perched and departing.



This was very pleasing to me because for a good while I have had this growing curiosity about owls. I've read that they are very common. And yet, I rarely see them. I've heard them way more than I've seen them. So, I know they are out there, and that piques my curiosity.

But, specifically, why owls? I think just because they are yet another example of nature's many marvels and simply making their presence known through their calls at night invites curiosity. I've also had a little bit of experience with them. An ecologist attended a VBS program at one of my churches and brought in owl pellets. That was fun. You disassemble the hairy pellet which contains the bones of a recent meal and try to reassemble what they ate. Mole, vole, or mouse? And I remember going to a raptor demonstration in Vermont that included an owl. It flew back and forth between the trainers without making the slightest sound through the air. Such is the stealthy design of its wings. Then there's the eyes; and, just as importantly, the ears! Yes, at night they see better than daytime-seeing-animals because they have way more rods than cones in their rather large eyes. It's actually the two large eyes that take up most of the space in their large heads. That primarily allows them to fly at night without hitting things. The rodent-catching, though, is more about hearing. They have excellent hearing that is also extremely accurate. I watched a nature special on Snowy Owls recently that showed an owl catching a rodent that it could hear under the snow! It wasn't sight, it was sound that guided its flight path – the noise made by a mouse under the snow, heard from quite a distance. Amazing!

Where did all that come from? Evolution: the Creativity of God in action. In the beginning, when God began the creating, all kinds of things were possible, things that came to be for awhile, are here today, or may yet come to be in the "Great Chain of Becoming," this creative originating matrix called the universe. Science: insight to the creativity of God. Some hear "evolution" and say that's not how it happened; other's hear "evolution" and say that's how it's happening: Glory to the Creator! The heavens tell the glory of God – Psalm 19. O God, how majestic is your name in all the earth – Psalm 8. Go to the ant, you lazybones; consider its ways, and be wise – Proverbs 6 (That's such a great line! Here's to the great ant biologist E.O. Wilson who died in 2021.) It's a consecrated neighborhood of creativity out there – a sacrament. Listen to nature. Consider its ways. Holiness is in permanent oversupply, and most of it is outside.

There's the wisdom in an owl.

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