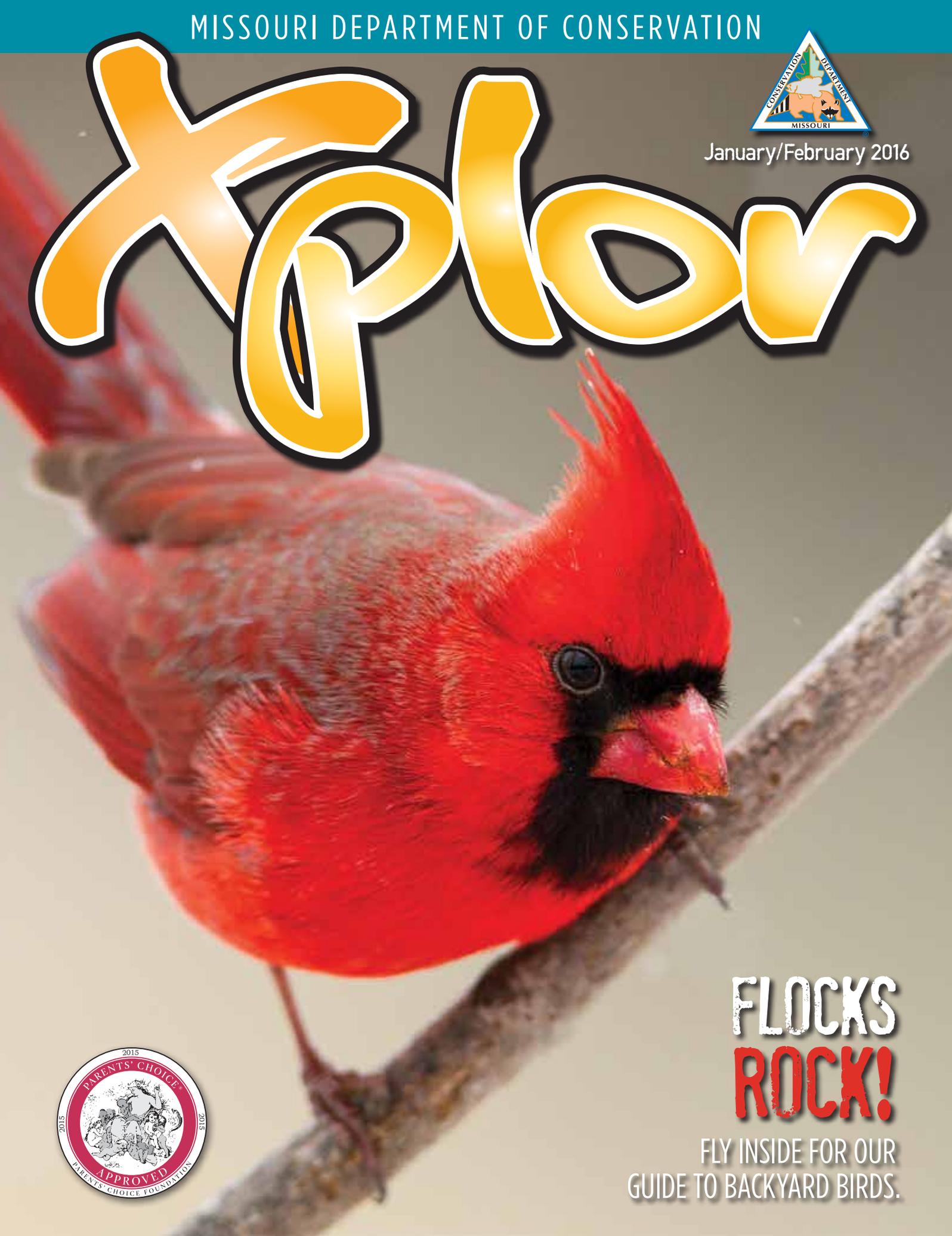


MISSOURI DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION



January/February 2016

Xplor



**FLOCKS
ROCK!**

FLY INSIDE FOR OUR
GUIDE TO BACKYARD BIRDS.

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Make our mini field guide to learn about the birds in your backyard.
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This red fox is up early, hoping to fill his growling tummy.

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Mama bear's furry bed is just right for this little Ozark black bear cub.

📷 by Jim Rathert



Xplor

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We recycle.
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Xplor with friends.

ON THE COVER

Northern Cardinal

by Noppadol Paothong

GET OUT!

DON'T MISS THE CHANCE TO DISCOVER NATURE AT THESE FUN EVENTS



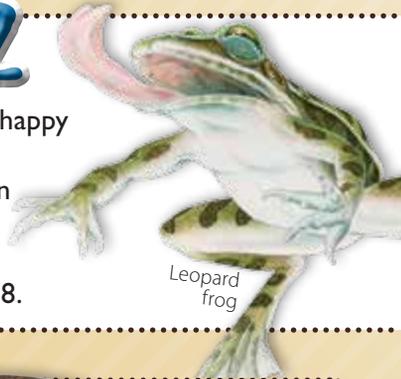
Gray squirrel

1

Take to the woods during the two-part **SQUIRREL HUNTING WORKSHOP**. Burr Oak Woods Conservation Nature Center in Blue Springs. January 9, 9 a.m.–1:30 p.m. and January 23, 9 a.m.–3 p.m. Ages 10 and older. Youth must be accompanied by an adult. Register at 816-228-3766.

2

Learn what it takes to keep nature center reptiles, amphibians, and fish happy at **FEEDING FRENZY**. Cape Girardeau Conservation Nature Center. January 14, 1–2:30 p.m. For more information, call 573-290-5218.



Leopard frog



Bald eagle

3

Meet both a golden and bald eagle at **DISCOVER NATURE: EAGLES**. Twin Pines Conservation Education Center in Winona. January 29, 11 a.m., 1 p.m., and 6 p.m. Register at 573-325-1381.



Reel in a rainbow at a lake near you during **WINTER TROUT FISHING**. Each winter, the Conservation Department stocks more than 70,000 **rainbow trout** in lakes across the state. Get hooked at on.mo.gov/1k87SOk.

Illustration by Joseph R. Tomelleri

4

Learn upland hunting basics at the **YOUTH/WOMEN PHEASANT CLINIC AND HUNT**. August A. Busch Shooting Range and Outdoor Education Center. Clinic on February 25, 6–8:30 p.m.; Women's hunt February 27; Youth hunt March 5. Ages 11 and older. Youth must be accompanied by an adult. Register at 636-441-4554.



There is plenty going on outdoors, even in winter. Watch for these natural events around the following dates.

JANUARY 2

White-tailed deer bucks begin to shed antlers.

JANUARY 12

Look for signs of deer and rabbits feeding on saplings.

JANUARY 22

Peak numbers of bald eagles gather this month near lakes, rivers, and wetlands.

FEBRUARY 3

Cedar waxwings flock to feed on cedar berries and other fleshy fruits.

FEBRUARY 20

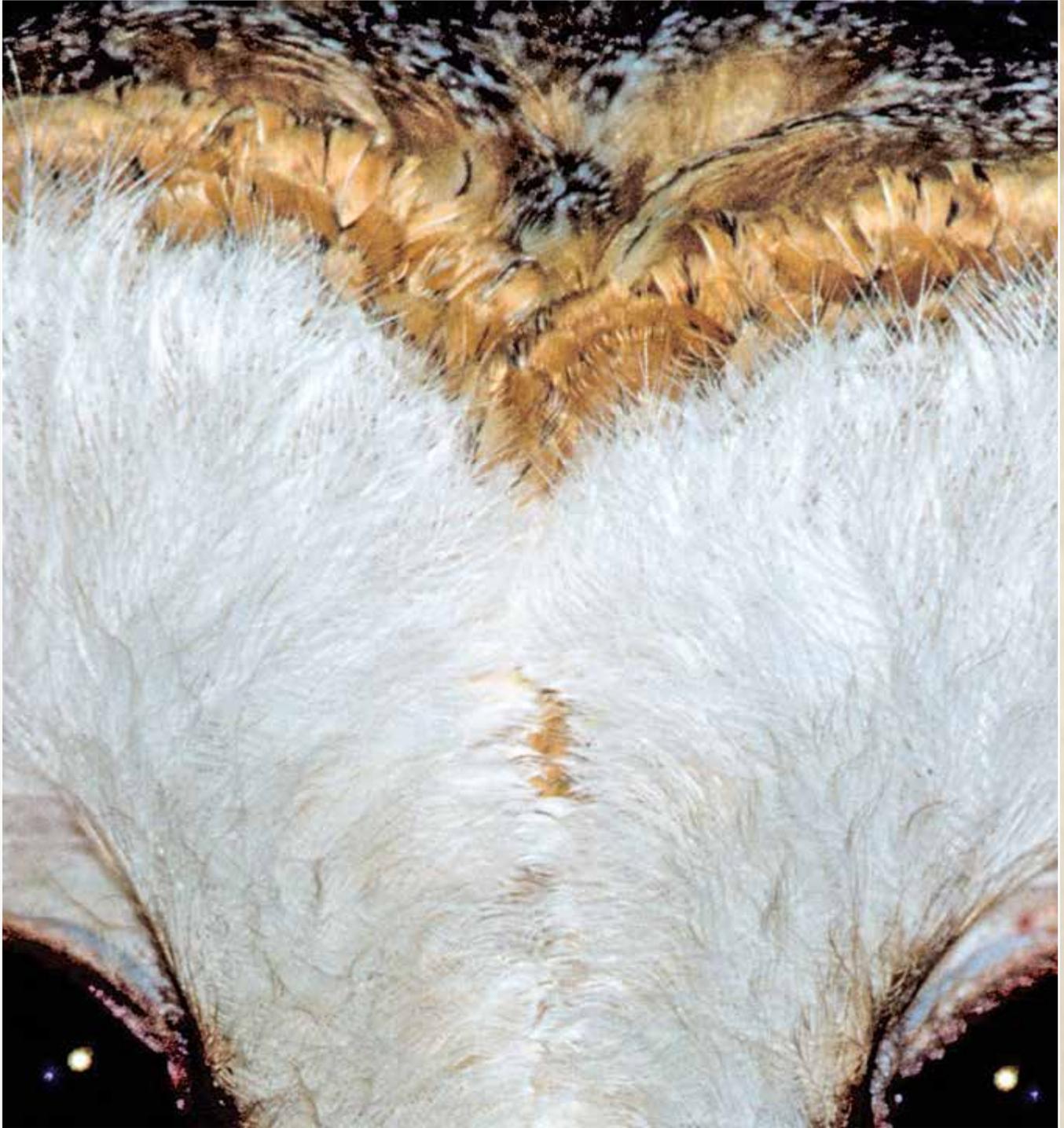
Coyotes are seeking mates. Listen for howling.

FEBRUARY 25

Listen for chorus frogs. Their call sounds like a thumbnail scratched along a comb.

WHAT IS IT?

DON'T KNOW?
Jump to the back cover to find out.



- ① I'm wild about you, Valentine.
- ② If you look into my eyes, you'll see my heart.

- ③ I stay up all night.
- ④ I hunt by sound as well as by sight.



Into the WILD snowy trail

Don't stay inside when the snow gets to blowing. Head into the wild to see nature coming and going. (Just don't forget to bundle up!)



Great-horned owl

LOOK

If you're walking through a pine or cedar thicket, and you see what looks like white paint spilled down a tree, look up. The paint is probably owl droppings, and there's a chance the bird is snoozing somewhere up above. The dense branches shelter sleepy owls from wind and snow.

Take a Closer Look

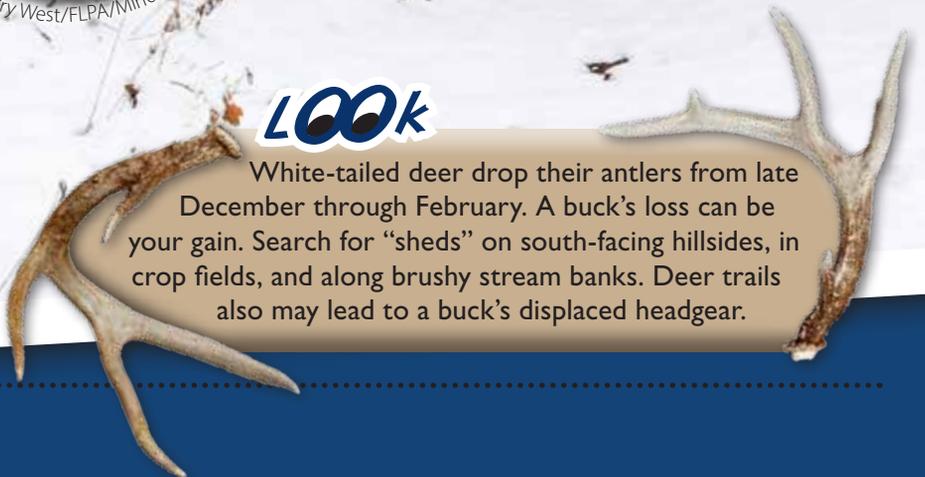
On sunny winter days, look closely at the ground around tree trunks. You might see what looks like pepper dusting the snow. The "pepper flakes" are tiny insects called snow fleas. Snow fleas — which aren't actually fleas — have two tails that are tucked underneath their bellies and held in place with hooks. When the flea wants to flee, it releases the hooks, the tails spring out, and the flea flings forward.



© Larry West/FLPA/Minden Pictures

LOOK

White-tailed deer drop their antlers from late December through February. A buck's loss can be your gain. Search for "sheds" on south-facing hillsides, in crop fields, and along brushy stream banks. Deer trails also may lead to a buck's displaced headgear.





LOOK

The large leafy nests you see in the tops of trees don't belong to birds. Squirrels build them by piling layer after layer of leaves inside a framework of branches. When the leaf pile is big enough, the squirrel digs out a cozy hole in the center in which to sleep.



Gray squirrel

Heads Up!
To stay toasty on the trail, dress in layers. If you get hot, peel a layer off. If you get chilly, put one on.



What Happened Here?

Yellow-bellied sapsuckers drill tidy rows of shallow holes into living trees. When sweet sap leaks out, the little woodpeckers return to lick it up.



Eastern cottontail rabbit

Listen

If you hear birds but can't see them, hiss through your teeth to make a loud *pish-pish-pish* sound. This raspy noise mimics the alarm call of a wren or chickadee, and curious songbirds will often emerge to investigate.



Blue jay



American goldfinch

Did You Know?

Eastern cottontail rabbits may stain snow pink, red, orange, or brown with their urine (pee). The colors are caused by pigments in plants the rabbit has recently eaten. Take-home point: Don't eat yellow snow — or any other color that's not white!



American goldfinch

Northern cardinal

Purple finch

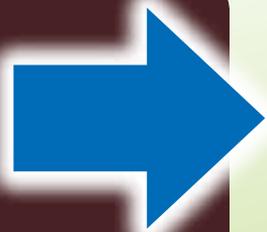
American goldfinches

Feathered feeding frenzy

by Matt Seek

Nothing brightens a gray winter day faster than watching a flock of colorful birds gobble seeds at a bird feeder. Providing a feast for your feathered friends is as easy as scattering birdseed on the ground around your house. If you want something a little fancier, you can buy a feeder or make one yourself (see Page 11). Place the feeder near a window, preferably close to bushes or trees so birds have a place to escape to if the neighborhood cat comes prowling. Once the table is set, grab a pair of binoculars and sit where you can watch the feathered feeding frenzy.

But First, Make This Field Guide

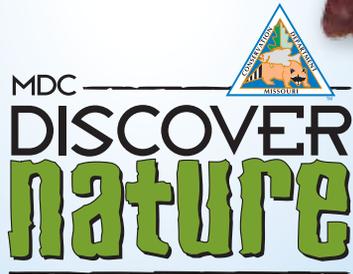


- 1 Cut out the next two pages along the dotted lines.
- 2 Fold each cut-out down the middle.
- 3 Stack the cut-outs so the pages are in numerical order.
- 4 Staple the cut-outs together along the middle between pages 8 and 9.
- 5 Sit with this field guide where you can see birds.



Female northern cardinal

Male northern cardinal



mdc.mo.gov

You Discover BACKYARD BIRDS



White-breasted nuthatch

A Mini Field Guide to the Feathered Foragers at Your Feeder

Frequent Fliers

Pine Siskin

Pine siskins show up in Missouri when seeds get scarce in northern forests where the birds usually live.



American Goldfinch

American goldfinches are active, acrobatic little birds that sometimes hang upside down to feed.



Red-Bellied Woodpecker

Red-bellied woodpeckers aren't well-named. Although the red on their heads stands out, the blush on their bellies is hard to see.

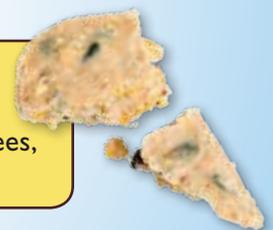


Dried kernels of corn are prized by blue jays. Cracked corn is eaten by doves and sparrows.



Peanuts are treasured by nuthatches, woodpeckers, titmice, and blue jays.

Peanut butter and suet (animal fat) attracts woodpeckers, chickadees, and nuthatches.



What if you forget to fill your feeder? Don't sweat it. Birds will find food elsewhere. But to keep your feathered friends coming back, keep the food a-coming.

Treats for Tweets

Birds of a feather may flock together, but different birds have different tastes. Offer several of these treats to attract a variety of tweets to your bird buffet.

Black-oil sunflower seeds attract the widest variety of birds. Cardinals especially love 'em.



Doves, juncos, and other ground-feeding birds prefer millet.



Niger seed (also called thistle) attracts finches and pine siskins.



Many kinds of birds may visit your feeder. Here are a few others to watch for.

European Starling

European starlings were brought to New York City from Europe in the 1890s. They are now one of the most common birds in the U.S.



House Sparrow

House sparrows have a pecking order. Males with the biggest black patches on their throats get to eat first.



Cooper's Hawk

Cooper's hawks sometimes swoop in to pluck songbirds from feeders. Don't despair. Hawks have to eat, too.



Northern Cardinal



Bird Feeder Faves: Sunflower seeds
Wild Menu: Seeds, berries, small insects

Female cardinals are the same size and shape as males but aren't as colorful.

In the spring, cardinals sometimes attack their reflections in windows, believing the reflection is another bird invading their space.

Cardinals are wary birds, often flicking their tails and whistling a sharp "chip" to show they're worried.

White-Crowned Sparrow



Bird Feeder Faves: Millet, thistle, cracked corn
Wild Menu: Weed and grass seeds, insects, berries

Sparrows with the brightest colors on their heads get to eat first. Duller birds have to wait their turn.

White-crowned sparrows often hop backward then forward, dragging both feet on the ground. This isn't some funky dance. It helps turn over leaves to expose hidden seeds.

House Finch



Bird Feeder Faves: Sunflower seeds, thistle, millet
Wild Menu: Seeds, berries

Flocks of finches may stay at feeders a long time, eating tons of seeds and keeping other birds from taking a turn.

Purple finches look a lot like house finches. To tell the birds apart, look at the streaks on their sides. Male house finches have brown streaks; male purple finches have rosy streaks.

Male house finches come in many shades, from yellow to orange to red. They get their color from pigments in the wild seeds they eat. Female house finches are brown.

12

Blue Jay



Bird Feeder Faves: Peanuts, sunflower seeds, cracked corn

Wild Menu: Acorns, insects, berries, small animals, bird eggs

These “bully birds” often shriek “Thief! Thief!” before swooping in to a feeder. The call scares away other birds, leaving the jay to have the food all to itself.

You can tell a blue jay’s mood by looking at the crest of feathers on top of its head. A happy jay keeps its crest down. When a jay is mad, its crest comes up.

The black band on a blue jay’s chest varies from one bird to another. It may help jays recognize friends, family, and strangers. Can you tell the jays apart at your feeder?

5

Chickadee



Bird Feeder Faves: Sunflower seeds, peanuts, suet
Wild Menu: Insects, spiders

When a chickadee spots danger, it gives an alarm call to warn other birds: *chickadee-dee-dee*. The more *dees*, the bigger the danger.

Chickadees are bold, curious birds. With lots of patience and a steady hand, you can coax a chickadee to eat seeds from your palm.

Chickadees hide most of the seeds they take for later use. Even with a brain smaller than a raisin, the little birds can remember the precise location of thousands of seeds.

10

Dark-Eyed Junco



Bird Feeder Faves: Millet, sunflower seeds, cracked corn

Wild Menu: Mostly weed seeds but also a few insects

The boss bird in a flock of juncos feeds in the center where it’s safest. You might see juncos lunge at each other and flick open their tails. This is how they figure out who is in charge.

Juncos often scratch around in feeders, kicking seed over the edge to birds feeding on the ground below.

Juncos are nicknamed “snowbirds” because they appear in Missouri during late fall and winter. In spring, they migrate north to nest.

7

Mourning Dove



Bird Feeder Faves: Cracked corn, millet, sunflower seeds

Wild Menu: Weed and grass seeds

When a mourning dove takes flight, its wings make a whistling sound.

Doves quickly gobble seeds, storing them in a pouch in their throat called a crop. Once a dove has topped off its crop, it flies to a safe perch to digest the meal. One dove had more than 17,000 grass seeds in its crop!

Downy Woodpecker



Bird Feeder Faves: Suet, peanuts, sunflower seeds

Wild Menu: Insects, acorns

When a downy woodpecker is angry at another bird, it fans out its tail and swings its beak like a sword.

Male downies keep females from feeding in the best spots. When males arrive at a feeder, females often fly away to hide in a nearby tree.

Males aren't total bullies, though. If a male spots danger when he's alone, he keeps quiet. When he's with a female, he gives an alarm call to alert her of the threat.

Tufted Titmouse



Bird Feeder Faves: Sunflower seeds, peanuts

Wild Menu: Mainly insects in summer; acorns and seeds in fall and winter

Titmice flit down to a feeder, grab the largest seed they see, and dash away. At a safe perch, they hold the seed with their feet and peck it open. Many seeds are hidden in trees for a later snack.

Tufted titmice couples defend their territories year-round. That's why you usually see only one or two titmice at your feeder at once. If you see more, they're likely kids joining mom and pop for dinner.

White-Breasted Nuthatch



Bird Feeder Faves: Suet, sunflower seeds, peanuts

Wild Menu: Insects, acorns, seeds

Though small, nuthatches are feisty. They often swing their long, sharp beaks like swords to drive away other birds. When this happens, only woodpeckers hold their ground.

Nuthatches love to swipe peanuts and stash them away to eat before bedtime. Seeds with shells require too much effort to crack right before bed, so they are usually eaten on the spot.

Make a pine cone bird feeder



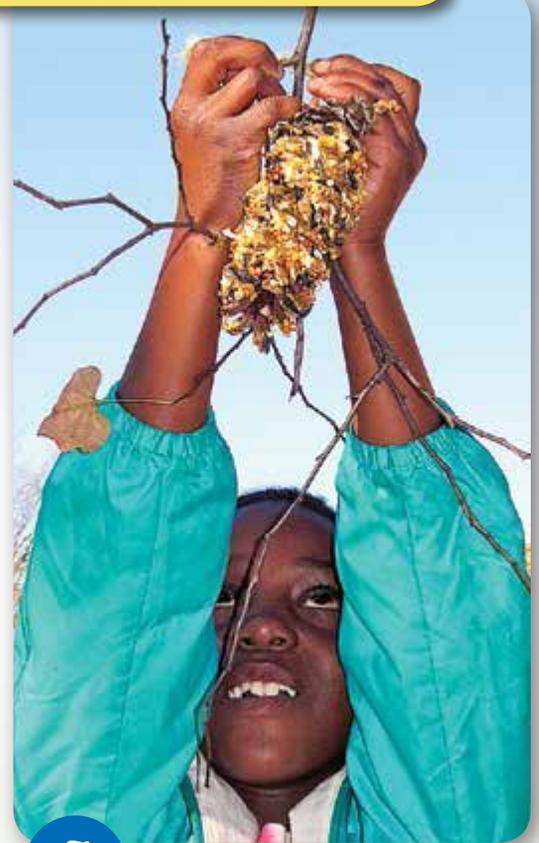
1 Gather a bunch of pine cones. Tie yarn or twine around the top of each one.



2 Use a butter knife or Popsicle stick to cover the cones with peanut butter. Fill all the little spaces.



3 Pour birdseed into a small tub or cake pan. Roll the cones through the seed. Press firmly so plenty of seed sticks to the peanut butter. Keep rolling until each pine cone is completely covered.



4 Tie your pine cones to sturdy branches where you can keep an eye on them. In no time, hungry birds will arrive for a feast! When your pine cones are picked clean, reuse them to make new bird feeders.

To learn more about backyard birds and what to feed them, visit on.mo.gov/1lw0f4L.

RED'S WINTER HUNT

WORDS BY Brett Dufur

ARTWORK BY David Besenger

THE MORNING AIR IS CRISP.

Fresh snow blankets the forest floor. Out from his den, a red fox blinks, adjusting to the morning light. He's up early, hoping to fill his growling tummy.

Red moves slowly through the hushed forest, searching for signs of his next meal.

Not even the birds are making sounds yet. A few trees crackle and complain in the frozen winter air, but Red is warm, thanks to his thick fur. He scans the landscape with his sharp eyes and listens intently with his big ears.

Red sniffs first to the right, then to the left. There! He locks onto a faint smell. But what is it? It's not a rabbit or a mouse. Instinctively, Red crouches low, choosing his steps carefully. His nose leads him toward tall, dry grass. Little by little, the morning woods are coming alive with the sounds of other wildlife, but Red's ears are focused completely on what's just ahead.



SNIFF ...
SNIFF ...
SNIFF ...



The scent gets stronger. Red breaks into a trot, closing distance fast. His small, catlike paws make only whispers in the powdery snow. Did Red's nose lead him to his next meal? What could it be?



Trembling with excitement, Red launches toward the scent, ready to spot his prey.

QUAIL!



They burst into the sky in every direction. Red tries to grab a quail on the wing ...



... but ends up with only a mouthful of snow. Red doesn't give up the hunt. He knows the forest will provide. He waits for another sound, scent, or sign. Suddenly, a cottontail scoots by, unaware a hungry fox lurks nearby. The chase is on! The surprised rabbit zigs and zags.





That's one fast bunny! Soon, Red grows tired of chasing the zippy rabbit. Once again, he has nothing to show for his hunt but a snow-covered snout.



The morning sun warms Red's thick coat. He yawns slow and long. A fussy cardinal lands on a branch above him, calling *Chip! Chip! Chip!* Red decides to move on. Just then, his ears catch a tiny sound he knows well ...



A mouse! Nothing stirs atop the freshly fallen snow, but Red hears the small sounds of a deer mouse hard at work making a den below the snow. Red hovers right above, targeting the sound. His stomach growls, as if to say, "Don't miss again!"

Red springs straight up. Using his bushy tail to help balance, he buries his face deep in the snow. His sharp teeth snag a surprised mouse. Red's winter hunt was a success!



THIS ISSUE:

SHORT-TAILED SHREW VS DEER MOUSE

Illustrated by David Besenger

High-Energy Fuzz Ball

Shrews hunt constantly and burn energy so quickly that if they miss one meal they might die. When stressed, a shrew's tiny heart can beat up to 1,300 times per minute.

Sonar Rover

Due to poor eyesight, a shrew sometimes just bumps right into its next meal. However, it can use high-pitched chirps, like a bat, to locate prey.

Tiny but Toxic

A shrew paralyzes prey with its fanglike teeth and poisonous saliva. It packs enough venom to kill 200 mice.

Mouse Missile

A deer mouse can zip along on just its hind feet, dragging its tail for balance. They've been clocked at 8 feet per second.

Hidden = Alive

To stay out of sight, deer mice often use tunnels and runways through tall grasses made by other mice and shrews. For a mouse, staying hidden means staying alive.

AND THE WINNER IS...

The shrew's venomous bite missed its mark, leaving it with only a mouthful of mouse fur. The lucky mouse left the shrew in the dust with a quick flick of its powerful back legs.

STRANGE but TRUE!

YOUR GUIDE TO ALL THE
UNUSUAL, UNIQUE,
AND **UNBELIEVABLE** STUFF
THAT GOES ON IN NATURE



In frigid winter weather, **STRIPED SKUNKS** curl up for power naps that can last several weeks. During these super-sized slumbers, the musky mammals burn fat like marathon runners. Female skunks, in particular, may drop 40 percent of their weight.

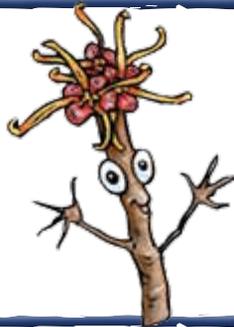
Over a third of all the **INDIANA BATS** in the world spend winter hibernating in Missouri's caves. During their deep sleep, the little bug munchers crowd together on cave walls in clusters of up to 500 bats per square foot.



NORTHERN SAW-WHET OWLS normally eat mice, but they occasionally prey on birds — sometimes birds bigger than themselves. They are known to take robins and even pigeons, which weigh three times more than a saw-whet.



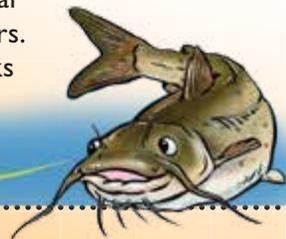
OZARK WITCH HAZEL zooms to bloom first in Missouri most years. In mid-January — often while snow still blankets the ground — the shrubby trees unfurl frilly, flashy flowers to lure any flies, moths, or bees that may be buzzing about.



Although they're not much bigger than a hummingbird, **GOLDEN-CROWNED KINGLETS** can survive temperatures more than 40 degrees below zero. The hardy *brrrds* often huddle together on chilly nights to stay warm.



Every inch of a **CATFISH'S** slippery skin, from its whiskery barbels to the tip of its tail, is covered with taste buds. But this sense-sational skin isn't made to savor flavors. It helps a catfish nab snacks in dark, murky water.



Why doesn't a **DUCK'S** foot freeze in icy water? Plumbing. As warm blood flows down a duck's leg, it passes alongside cold blood returning from the foot. This cools the blood down so it doesn't lose much heat but keeps it warm enough to avoid freezing.



Next time you complain about having to eat broccoli, consider the **COTTONTAIL**. Rabbits eat their own droppings. By having food pass through their digestive tracts twice, bunnies absorb more nutrients.



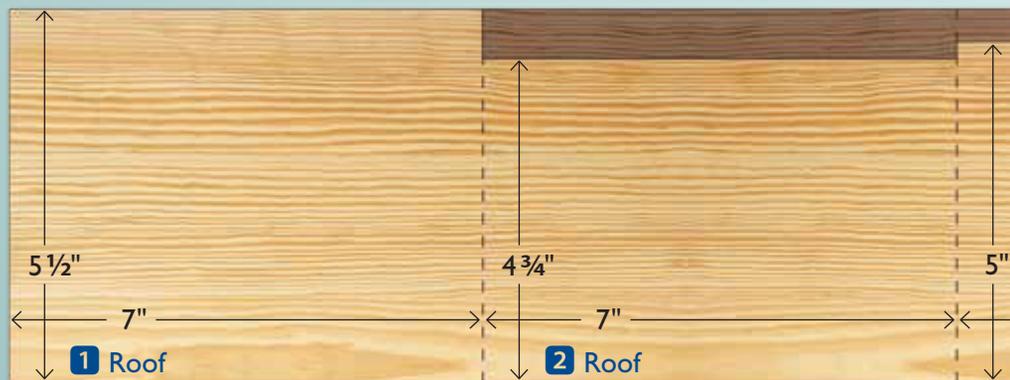
HOW TO

Build a Wren House

Wrens are divas of the bird world — though small, they have oversized attitudes and sing loud, cheerful songs. Build a wren house this winter so you'll be ready for the show when spring arrives.

WHAT YOU WILL NEED

- 1 X 6 cedar or untreated pine board at least 3 feet long
- An adult with a saw
- Tape measure
- Pencil
- Drill
- 1 1/8-inch drill bit
- Countersink drill bit
- Screwdriver
- 1 5/8-inch exterior wood screws (about 30)
- Two small eye screws
- Short length of cord or wire

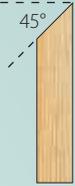


HERE'S WHAT YOU DO

1 With an adult, measure and cut the first piece of the wren house. Measure from the new end to cut the next piece. Repeat for all pieces.

2 Drill a 1 1/8-inch hole in the front piece.

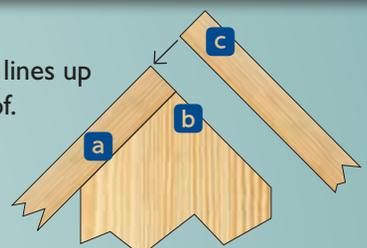
3 Cut the top of each side at a 45 degree angle.



4 Attach the front and back to the bottom with screws. Drill pilot holes with a countersink bit so the screws don't split the wood.

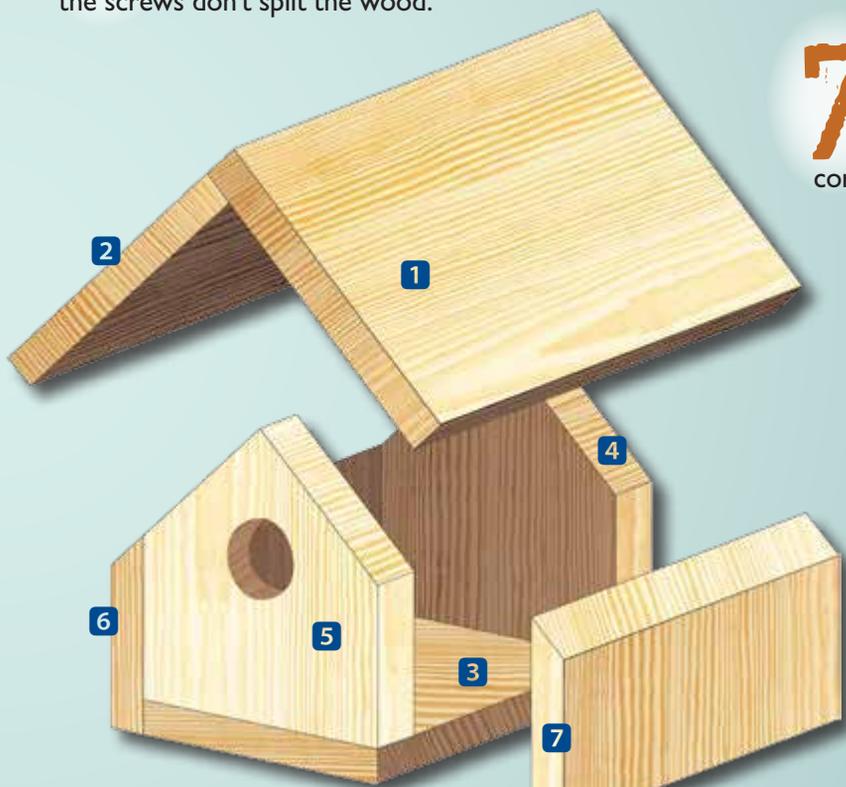
5 Attach the sides.

6 Attach the roof pieces. Start with the smaller roof (a). Line up its edge with the peak (b). Make sure the larger roof (c) lines up with the face of the small roof.

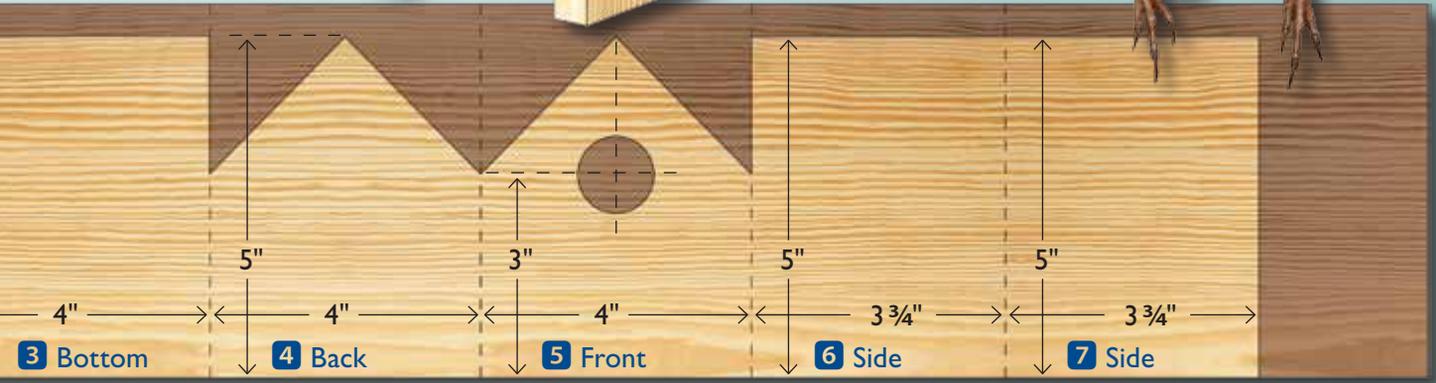


7 Twist two eye screws into the peak of the roof. Tie cord or wire between the eyes.

8 Hang your wren house 6 to 10 feet high in a tree. Wrens prefer areas that have lots of bushes and shrubs. If you build more than one house, space them at least 20 feet apart.



Carolina wren



XPLOR MOR

BRUSH PILE UP

Large brush piles are like high-rise hotels for critters. The nooks and crannies between branches provide “rooms” where many kinds of mammals, birds, and reptiles hide from predators and take shelter from weather.

More than 50 animals are piled into this brushy hotel. How many of each kind can you find?





Carolina wren



Opossum



Raccoon



Striped skunk



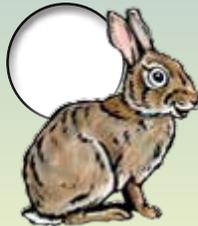
Northern bobwhite



Eastern chipmunk



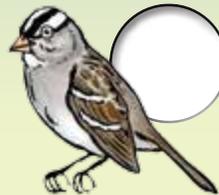
Dark-eyed junco



Eastern cottontail rabbit



White-footed mouse



White-crowned sparrow



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- 12) Tax Status: The purpose, function, and nonprofit status of this organization and the exempt status for federal income tax purposes has not changed during preceding 12 months.
- 14) Issue Date for Circulation Data Below: August 2015
- 15) Extent and Nature of Circulation
 - a. Total Number of Copies (Net press run):227,436
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 - (2) Mailed In-County Paid Subscriptions Stated on PS Form 3541:0
 - (3) Paid Distribution Outside the Mails Including Sales Through Dealers and Carriers, Street Vendors, Counter Sales, and Other Paid Distribution Outside USPS:0
 - (4) Paid Distribution by Other Classes of Mail Through the USPS:2,296
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 - (1) Free or Nominal Rate Outside-County Copies Included on PS Form 3541:225,140
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 - (3) Free or Nominal Rate Copies Mailed at Other Classes Through the USPS:0
 - (4) Free or Nominal Rate Distribution Outside the Mail (Carriers or other means):0
 - e. Total Free or Nominal Rate Distribution:225,140
 - f. Total Distribution:227,436
 - g. Copies not Distributed:3,000
 - h. Total:230,436
 - i. Percent Paid:1%
- 16) Electronic Copy Circulation
 - a. Paid Electronic Copies:0
 - b. Total Paid Print Copies:2,296
 - c. Total Print Distribution:227,436
 - d. Percent Paid:1%
- 18. Signature and Title of Editor, Publisher, Business Manager, or Owner: I certify that all information furnished on this form is true and complete. Shawn Cunningham, Distribution Manager, 10/12/15

Answer: Carolina wren 8, Dark-eyed junco 5, Eastern chipmunk 5, Eastern cottontail rabbit 4, Northern bobwhite 4, Opossum 2, Raccoon 3, Red fox 1, Striped skunk 4, White-crowned sparrow 6, White-footed mouse 15

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ANSWER TO

WHAT IS IT?

FROM PAGE 3



Owl you be my Valentine? Barn owls' heart-shaped, feathered faces funnel sounds to their super-sensitive ears, which are the best of any animal ever tested. They can nab mice and voles in the dark and from under tall grass. Barn owls' large eyes are twice as sensitive as human eyes, too. These sensational senses make barn owls excellent mousers. They eat about four every night — that's 1,460 per year!