

# Diet and hunting – medium-sized owls

Owls are designed to catch, subdue and dismantle live prey. They have powerful, clawed feet for catching and holding animals and hooked beaks for biting and tearing. Worldwide, there are species small enough to specialise on insects and large enough to capture mammals heavier than themselves. Some specialise in freshwater fish, caught in the manner of a fish-eagle. Owls catch prey by seizing it in their feet; they then kill it with a bite to the neck at the base of the skull. They have high metabolic rates and so have a high demand for food, and they need considerable skill to capture prey that is equally skilled at evading capture.

Medium-sized owls, such as the Southern Boobook and Long-eared Owl, hunt prey in somewhat different ways, and by exploring the diet and hunting methods of certain North American and European owls we can better understand diet and hunting in Australian owls.