BARN OWL

BY SHARON BEALS

COLLECTION DESCRIPTION

Contemporary
United States

Barn Owl
Tyto alba

Spooks Canyon, San Diego, California, collected in 1931
Western Foundation of Vertebrate Zoology

With asymmetric, echo-locating ears, noiseless flight-feathers, night-visioned eyes, and long legs that can snatch prey from grass and snow, no venturing mole, rat, or vole is safe from this nocturnal hunter. They nest in cavities in river banks, cliff faces, trees, barns, houses, church steeples, even stacked hay bales. As part of the mating ritual, the male provides the female with an abundance of prey, leaving the nest cavities filled with bones and fur, and cushioned by their pellets.

The nests were photographed in four science collections: The California Academy of Sciences, The Western Foundation of Vertebrate Zoo...