



# OWLS

OUR MOST ENCHANTING BIRD



MATT SEWELL



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## ABOUT THE BOOK

In this beautiful follow-up to *Our Garden Birds*, *Our Songbirds* and *Our Woodland Birds*, street artist Matt Sewell captures the world's most evocative bird: the owl. In his much-loved pop-art watercolours and accompanied with his whimsical descriptions, Matt Sewell expresses the individual characters of owls as never before.

From tiny Elf Owls to huge Eagle Owls, from the mysterious creatures of the night to an impossibly fluffy baby owl, they are undoubtedly one of the world's most intriguing feathered friends. These wise, magical birds are otherworldly in their striking colours and stature, and it's not just birdwatchers who are obsessed. With 50 hand-selected, hand-painted owls, this is a delightful gift which appeals to owl lovers, bird-watching enthusiasts, children, adults and art and design fans alike.



## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Artist and illustrator Matt Sewell has been described as the Banksy of the bird world. Matt works in a variety of media including T-shirts, posters, interiors, sculptures and walls. He has illustrated for the *Guardian* and *Barbour*, amongst many others; painted underpasses for the RSPB; and exhibited in London, Manchester, New York, Tokyo and Paris, as well as being an avid ornithologist and regular contributor to the Caught by The River website (he also designed their logo). He lives in Shrewsbury with his partner and two children.



OWLS

OWLS  
MATT SEWELL







For my goldfinches, Jess, Romy and Mae

# FOREWORD

Matt's latest book looks at our favourite nocturnal, nonchalant birds of prey: the Owl. Wide eyed in the still of night. Silent in flight. A strange rotating head. Imperious and haughty. It's not surprising the mysterious Owl has meddled with peoples' minds. Through myth and folklore, we've managed to lay some peculiar extra baggage on these 'all-seeing, all-knowing' creatures over the years. Holding vigils for virgins? Harbingers of horror? Wizard's wingmen? Or simply a marvellous niche invention for the afterhours?

Whatever they are up to, they are a personal favourite of mine and my band British Sea Power. Perched amongst tree branches, we often employ decoy 'Long-Eared Owls' on stage. They watch over us, staring out into the audience, giving us some added primeval stage presence. The Owls are watching yooooouuu-ooooo.

Martin Noble, August 2014





# INTRODUCTION

It's simple: everybody loves owls! They are all things for all men – including all women and children. Tough, wise, spooky, scary, majestic, austere, spiritual, easy to draw, inspirational and cute.

In a work of wonder, every family of owl has evolved totemic skills for survival in habitats around the globe – from the lush woodlands of home, mountainside glades of the Himalayas and the world's peaks, savannahs of Africa, dust-bowls of the Americas and the equatorial tropical rainforest everywhere south of the meridian.

However we like to depict the owl, their unique individuality throughout the species and their unflinching colonisation of our Earth is simply breathtaking.

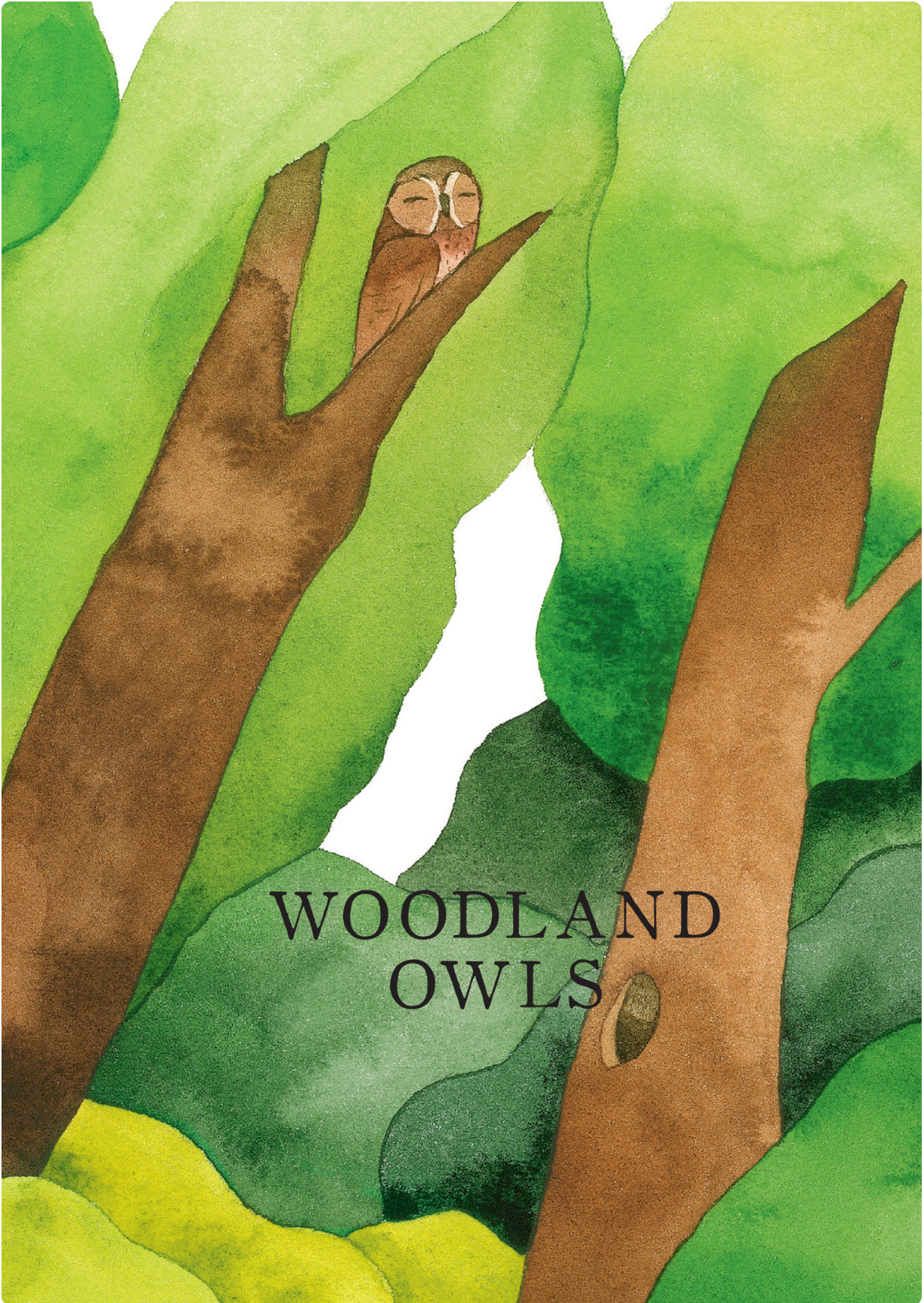
And that is why I love owls.











WOODLAND  
OWLS





# Barn Owl

## *Tyto alba*

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Easily one of the most beautiful, elegant and enigmatic of all animals, never mind owls, the Barn Owl is transcendental to view in the wild: a shining pure illumination and the darkest of eyes unfathomably deep.

They were not always deemed this way, and so the legend of owls as cursed creatures, ill-fated doom-bringers of destruction arose from this spectral bird, whose call is a bloodcurdling shriek that could strip the fingernails from all those unfortunate enough to meet it. A wing or even a whole Barn Owl would be nailed to a barn door to keep out all witchery ways and evil doings, so feared and ominous were they.

But however they got their name, Barn Owls are a natural wonder. They are found all around the world on silent wingbeats, with a face you could never forget.





# Pygmy Owl

## *Glaucidium passerinum*

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This bushy-eyebrowed owl bumbles around the woods hunting birds twice his size, like a pocket-sized politician after a liquid lunch, frequenting many a glade stretching across northern America, central Europe and many parts of Asia. There are a few variants of this little fellow, notably the Northern, Ferruginous, Andean and Cuban Pygmy Owls, depending on where you're looking. But whichever one you see, they will all be roughly the height of a new pencil – with much of that being their head.