mystery science

Grades K-5
Mini-Lesson + Activity: “Why do owls say hoo?”

VIDEO TRANSCRIPT

MINI-LESSON VIDEO 1

That's where it was—it was right there. Hi, it's Doug! So, the other night I was out here and this big animal turned its head and was looking right at me. It took me a second to realize it was an owl. I live in a big city so I forget that there are owls around me. But owls live just about everywhere. Someone named Destiny has a question for us about owls. Let's give her a call now.

[Video Call]

- Hi, Destiny!

- Hi, Doug!

- I have a question for you. Why do owls say hoo?

- That's a great question.

Why do owls say hoo? You know—hoo-hoo—like that. Well, I'm going to play you the sounds of four different birds. After listening to each sound, raise your hand if you think it's an owl. Okay, here we go. Sound number one. Okay. Sound number two. Okay. Sound number three. And sound number four. Okay, are you ready to find out which ones were owls? I'll play each sound again, and as I do, I'll reveal a photo of the bird that made the sound. Here we go. They were all owls! Number three was probably the one you guessed that was an owl. It's the call made by a

great horned owl. Sometimes I hear these in the park near my house. They make the classic—hoo-hoo—sound you might have heard in movies, like this. But not all owls sound the same, do they? There are many different kinds, or species, of owls. Each species of owl makes a different call. This one is a boreal owl. And this one, a barn owl. Ugh! Sounds terrible. And then this one is a snowy owl. Now, were you surprised? In fact, the great horned owl is one of only a few species of owls that make a hoo-hoo sound. But, why do owls make sounds at all? Do you have any ideas?

MINI-LESSON VIDEO 2

Scientists have studied this. They found out that owls tell other owls where they are by using their calls. Each owl has a territory or an area where it lives and hunts for food. It doesn't want other owls coming into its territory. So, by calling, it's usually telling other owls—stay out. Okay, I've got one more bird sound for you. See if you can guess what it is. Do you have a guess? Alright. Now, I'll reveal to you what it was. It's not an owl, it's a dove. This bird is called a mourning dove. Mourning doves make a hoo sound. Kind of like a great horned owl. They go hoo-*hoo*-hoo-hoo. So, owls aren't even the only birds that say, hoo. If you only hear them, but you don't see them, how could you tell them apart? Well, it's pretty easy, actually. Doves are like most birds. They're only out during the daytime. Owls are, of course, are nocturnal. You're only going to hear them in the late evening or at night. You can go out in the evening and look for owls. You can even try calling them. They might respond back to you. I'm totally serious. I've made the sound of a barn owl and had one call back to me once. You might even have more than one kind of owl where you live. Where I live, I can hear both barn owls and great horned owls. So, in summary, owls make sounds to tell other owls where they are. Different kinds of owls make different sounds. Not many species actually make that hoo-hoo sound. But you can

learn to identify owls and really any bird by the sound that they make. That's all for this week's question. Thanks, Destiny, for asking it. Now, after this video is done playing my friends and I here at Mystery Science have created a special sound activity where you'll use your ears to solve a Mystery. You can do this activity in a group or all by yourself, I hope you'll try it. Have fun and stay curious!

ACTIVITY INTRODUCTION VIDEO

In today's activity, you're going to be a sound detective. Detectives normally look carefully around them, investigating and using what they see as clues to help them solve mysteries. But today you're going to be a detective that listens for clues. Lots of people are sound detectives, you've probably met one before. People like doctors who listen to the sounds of your body to help you stay healthy or mechanics who listen to the sounds of cars for clues so that they know how to fix them. Listening closely to sounds can help you figure things out. So today you'll go on a sound adventure traveling to three different places. Once you arrive at each location, you'll only be able to hear what's around you. You won't be able to see. You'll need to use your ears and the sounds around you as clues to solve the mystery of where you are. I'll show you how to get started, step by step.

ACTIVITY STEP 1

Get your supplies. All you need for this activity are your ears, but we do suggest you get a pencil, and some paper for drawing and writing things down. When you're done with this step, click the arrow on the right.

ACTIVITY STEP 2

Okay. Let's do a practice round together so that you'll be ready for your sound challenges. You'll hear three different sounds that you might hear if you are visiting a particular place. So listen closely. Each sound will give you a clue about where you are. Now this practice round might be easy, but the challenges will get more and more difficult. Okay. You ready? Go ahead and close your eyes and listen. Here's sound number one. Here's sound number two. And here's sound number three. Okay, open your eyes, then click the arrow on the right.

ACTIVITY STEP 3

Do you have ideas about what was making each of the sounds? Can you use those sound clues to help you figure out where you are? Here's what we heard. We think sound number one is a rooster. We think sound number two is a pig. And we think sound number three is a cow. Using these three sound clues, we think you're probably on a farm.

ACTIVITY STEP 4

Okay. It's time to start your Sound Adventure. The first place you're going to visit is one you're probably familiar with. A house, but your challenge is to figure out which room of the house you're in. Are you in the kitchen? Or are you in the bathroom? We'll play three sound clues, so go ahead, close your eyes and listen closely. Here's sound number one. Here's sound number two. And here's sound number three.

ACTIVITY STEP 5

Before we tell you what we thought, take a moment to write or draw what you think was making each of the three sounds. We'll play each sound again. Here's sound number one. Sound number two. And here's sound number three.

ACTIVITY STEP 6

Now that you've taken a moment to write or draw your ideas about the sounds you heard, we'll share our ideas. Here's what we noticed. We think sound number one sounds like running water. You might hear running water in the kitchen or in the bathroom, so we weren't sure where we were. Then we listen to sound number two. And we think this might be the sound of someone brushing their teeth. So maybe we're in the bathroom. Then we've heard sound number three, and we think that's the sound of a toilet flushing. So using the sound clues, we think that you're probably in the bathroom.

ACTIVITY STEP 7

Okay. For your second challenge, I'll give you a clue. You're going to visit a park, but your challenge is to figure out if you are visiting a water park, or an amusement park. We'll play three sound clues. So go ahead, close your eyes, and listen closely. Here's sound number one. Here's sound number two. And here's sound number three.

ACTIVITY STEP 8

Before we reveal what we thought, take a moment to write or draw what you think was making each of the three sounds. We'll play each sound again. Here's sound number one. Sound number two And here's sound number three.

ACTIVITY STEP 9

Now that you've taken a moment to write or draw your ideas about the sounds you heard and think about where you might be, we'll share our ideas. Here's what we noticed. Sound number one sounds like a crowd of people. But there are crowds of people at both water parks and amusement parks. Sound number two also sounded like people, but we think it now sounds like they're on a roller coaster going up, down, and around. And sound number three—that reminded us of a song we heard from a merry-go-round. So we think you're probably at an amusement park.

ACTIVITY STEP 10

Okay. It's time for your final sound challenge. This one might be difficult. Your challenge is to figure out if you are at the beach or if you're in the swamp. Listen for the three sound clues that will help you decide. Close your eyes and listen closely. Here's sound number one. Here's sound number two. And here's sound number three.

ACTIVITY STEP 11

We thought this sound challenge was pretty difficult. We think one of the sounds might be an animal but we're not sure what kind of animal. So we decided to ask a scientist who studies

animals. Someone called a biologist. The biologist gave us another clue. She told us that a common animal sound you hear at the beach would be from seagulls, and they sound like this. She also told us that a common bird you would find in the swamp is an egret, and that kind of bird sounds like this. Does this sound clue give you any ideas?

ACTIVITY STEP 12

Now that you've gotten another sound clue from the biologist, we'll play the sounds again. Close your eyes and see if you can decide where you are. The beach or the swamp. You might want to listen for the sounds of a seagull or the sounds of an egret. Here's sound number one. Here's sound number two. And here's sound number three.

ACTIVITY STEP 13

Do you know where you are now? When we listened again, we thought that sound number two was the sound of an egret. So we think we're probably in the swamp. Sound number one is water, And sound number three, we still weren't sure about. So we asked the biologist, and she told us it's actually the sound. Of an alligator. So we figured it out we're definitely in the swamp.

ACTIVITY STEP 14

Congratulations! You're now an expert sound detective. If you want to keep practicing your detective skills, you can continue with our bonus challenge. All you have to do is find a room in your home. Once you decide which room you'll visit, your challenge is to sit with your eyes closed for thirty seconds and listen. How many sounds can you hear? And before you open your eyes, can you guess what's making each sound? You might be surprised by what you hear. Have fun, and stay curious!