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# White feathers help make ghostly barn owls dazzling killers

Tom Whipple,  
Science Editor

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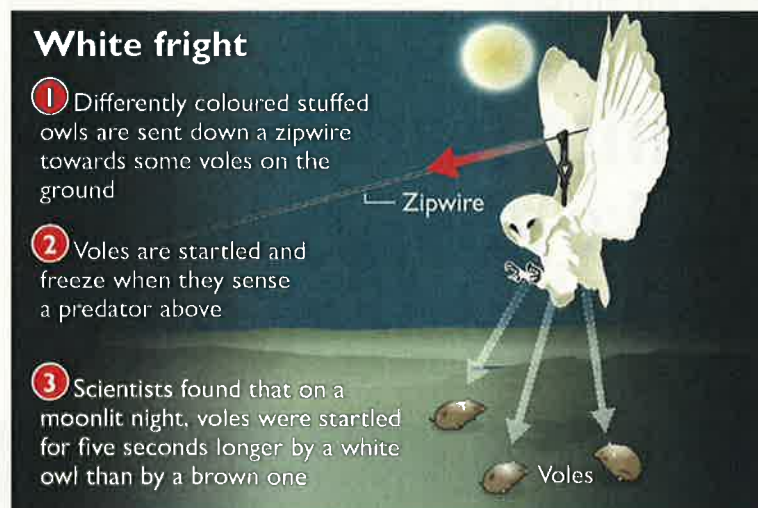


Scientists found that voles were “petrified” by white-breasted barn owls  
ALAMY

Few sights in nature are more majestic than the silent glide of a barn owl on a moonlit night, its white breast flashing through the trees.

Not though, if you're a vole: then, the same sight is petrifying. So petrifying that it might explain why owls are white in the first place.

Scientists came to this conclusion by attaching stuffed owls of different colours to zip wires and sending them swooping over the heads of voles.



They found that on a moonlit night the voles stood stock still, startled, for five seconds longer by a white owl than a brown one. “The