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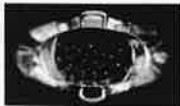
Culture



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26 November 2013, 17:09

Baby owls adjust their call volumes to show how hungry they are



Rex Features

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Siblings squabbling over who's the hungriest sounds like decidedly human behaviour. But new research show that's exactly what happens among barn owls. VoR's Vivienne Nunis spoke to Professor Alexandre Roulin, who is part of the research team at the University of Lausanne.

Scientists in Switzerland have discovered brother and sister baby owls - known as nestlings - use their voices to tell each other just how hungry they're feeling.

It helps them decide who should receive the next meal when the adult barn owl returns from a night of hunting.

Roulin said: "The key thing is that the barn owls are nocturnal and the parents go out of the nest during many hours to four each. For the chicks they hunt small mammals and in between the siblings are talking to each other. And the function of these calls is, to negotiate, which individual will have access to the next prey item that the parents will bring back to the nest."

"The key issue is that the prey items that the parents bring are not divisible - one chick will get the prey. And thus, they have the system to inform each other, which individual is more motivated to get the prey."

Can you be sure that the chicks are always telling the truth about how hungry they are?

Roulin said: "Yes, there are several reasons why they should tell the truth. The thing is that you will waste too much energy by calling all night long and when he gets the food he's not hungry - there's no use to call so much for him."

(Voice of Russia)



Vivienne Nunis

Birds, Hunger, owl, News

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- No, it should remain part of the UK
- Yes, if that's what Scotland wants
- It won't make any difference

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