

Read Aloud Ideas

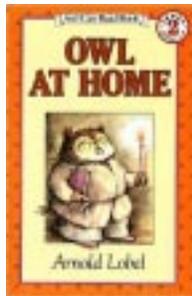
by Marty Layne
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February 2009

As the days lengthen - the cold strengthens. It is staying lighter later and later each day. I can notice the difference. February is a month that celebrates a number of things - black history, heart health, cherries, friendship, Laura Ingalls Wilder's birthday(Feb. 7, 1867 - Feb. 10, 1957), and bird feeding. I'm going to focus on books about birds and animals in this edition of Read Aloud Ideas.

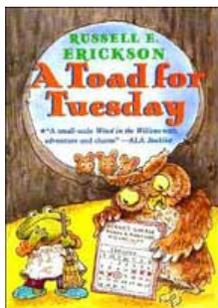
We had a barred owl in the oak tree in our backyard in November of 2008. As I was looking around online to find photos of owls and to find out what they sounded like, I came across the Cornell Lab of Ornithology. This site is a rich source of all sorts of information, including the sounds and calls of many birds. The barred owl makes an incredible variety of hoots and clacks!

It was on that site that I found out about the **Great Backyard Birdcount** that happens every February all over North America. You'll find information on this site about how to take part in the birdcount, why to do it, fun quizzes and links to the database of birds at the Cornell Lab of Ornithology.

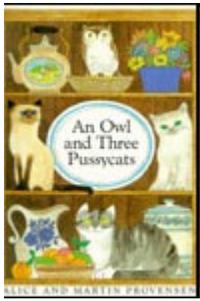


We'll start with books where owls are one of the main characters.

Owl At Home by Arnold Lobel - these 5 stories about Owl are fun to read aloud as well as an easy to read book. Owl is a bit confused about how things work. What seems to delight young children as one reads these stories to them is that they know things that Owl does not. In particular the Strange Bumps story brings giggles as Owl tries to determine what the two strange bumps are that he sees under the covers in his bed. Whenever he moves his feet, the bumps move.



Can a toad and an owl be friends? **A Toad For Tuesday** by Russell E. Erickson is a 64 page delightful, engaging, exciting story. Warton decides to go visit his Aunt Toolia using his new skiis. On his way, he is caught by George the owl. Warton manages to talk George into waiting until Tuesday to eat him. As the days go by, the suspense builds. This book goes in and out of print. It is available second hand - look for it at various resellers online. It's worth the hunt or try your library.

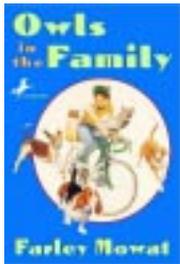


An Owl and Three Pussycats

by Alice and Martin Provensen

A little owl falls out of a nest and is rescued by the people who live on Maple Hill Farm.

The little owl is taken care of, fed, and gradually taught to fend for himself in the wild. He is finally able to catch his own prey and flies off to return less and less often. The cats all have different personalities and are included in the story at various times. A great picture book about loving and letting go. 2/3 and up.



Owls in the Family

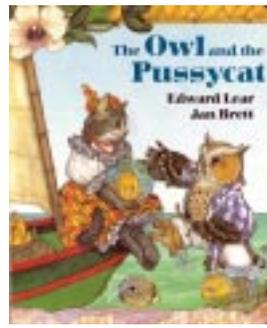
by Farley Mowat

The first two chapters in this story demonstrate that this book was written quite a while ago.

I don't think Farley would promote hunting for birds' eggs or baby owls now. However, the boys do not rob baby owls out of a nest, instead they rescue a baby owl who survived a big wind and rainstorm and is the only one of his nest mates to still be alive after the storm. A short while later, Billy (who is Farley and telling this autobiographical story) rescues another baby owl from some boys who are throwing stones at it.

What struck me as I continued to read was the freedom the boys had to explore and play in the prairie outside Saskatoon. This story is sure to delight children ages 7-8 and up as Billy relates the adventures he has with his friends and his owls.

I'll close this section about owls with Edward Lear's poem *The Owl and the Pussycat*. It's available in various formats. I like the one by Jan Brett. I've included the entire poem here. It's fun to sing as well as recite but I can't find an audio clip online of the version I'm familiar with.



Illustrated by Jan Brett

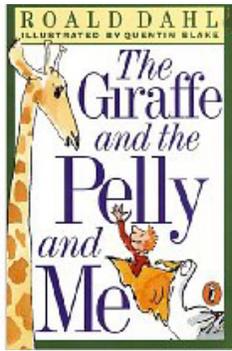
www.janbrett.com

The Owl and the Pussycat by Edward Lear

The Owl and the Pussy-cat went to sea
In a beautiful pea green boat,
They took some honey, and plenty of money,
Wrapped up in a five pound note.
The Owl looked up to the stars above,
And sang to a small guitar,
'O lovely Pussy! O Pussy my love,
What a beautiful Pussy you are,
You are,
You are!
What a beautiful Pussy you are!'

Pussy said to the Owl, 'You elegant fowl!
How charmingly sweet you sing!
O let us be married! too long we have tarried:
But what shall we do for a ring?'
They sailed away, for a year and a day,
To the land where the Bong-tree grows
And there in a wood a Piggy-wig stood
With a ring at the end of his nose,
His nose,
His nose,
With a ring at the end of his nose.

'Dear pig, are you willing to sell for one shilling
Your ring?' Said the Piggy, 'I will.'
So they took it away, and were married next day
By the Turkey who lives on the hill.
They dined on mince, and slices of quince,
Which they ate with a runcible spoon;
And hand in hand, on the edge of the sand,
They danced by the light of the moon,
The moon,
The moon,
They danced by the light of the moon.



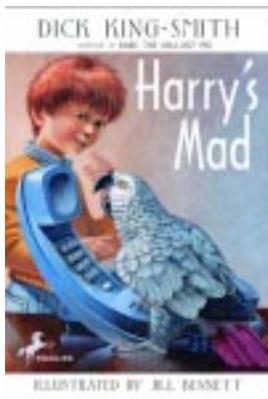
The Giraffe and the Pelly and Me

by Roald Dahl

A goofy, fun, and enchanting book by Dahl. It has songs sung by all three animals named in the title as well as text that move the story along. These three animals are the ladderless window cleaning company. They make friends with a little boy who has always wanted to reopen a shop in the same location the three animals have opened up their cleaning company. A duke comes along, sees the name of the company and asks them to come clean his house which has 333 number of windows.

The Pelican has a retractable beak to carry the water, the Giraffe has an extendable neck to reach up high enough to bring the monkey to the right height to wash the windows using the water in the pelican's peak. A robber is spotted. His crime is foiled and everyone lives happily ever after, including the little boy who with the Duke's help reopens the candy store stocked with, among many other things, candy from Wonka's Factory.

Although it is in picture book format - large and illustrated with Quentin Blake's drawings on each page - there is a lot of text. Great for children 4 and up.



Harry's Mad by Dick King-Smith

I had tears of laughter rolling down my face when I read this book to my children. It's about a boy who receives an African grey parrot from an uncle who has died. Madison (Mad for short) can talk. Not only can he talk, but he knows what he's saying.

Harry and Mad become great friends and manage to have adventures together without letting on that Mad can not only repeat what he's heard but he knows what he's saying. The American version has been changed from the original one published in UK. If possible, read the British version (published by Penguin or Viking). It's funnier and retains all of the author's original manuscript. Great read aloud for 8 and up.



The Cuckoo Child by Dick King-Smith

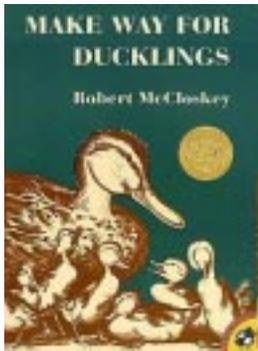
On a school outing, Jack Daw, who loves birds, notices that an ostrich egg is going to be fed to the snakes. He manages to bring the egg home to his family's farm.

Once he gets home with the egg he puts it under a broody goose who is quite surprised when this egg hatches 41 days later.

Oliver the ostrich gets into some funny situations as he's growing, but manages to save his gosling brothers and sisters from a fox.

Another winner from Dick King-Smith filled with details and a blend of poignant and hilarious scenes like his many other books.

Great read aloud for 7 and up.



Make Way For Ducklings

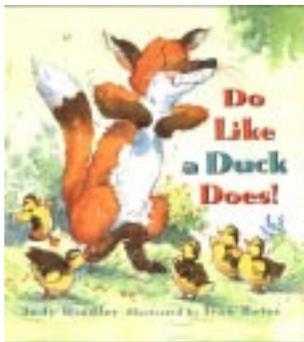
by Robert McCloskey

A favorite picture book for generations of families. The book was first published in 1941, won a Caldecott Medal for illustrations in 1942 and has been delighting children, parents and teachers ever since.



by sculptor Nancy Schön

Since 1978, Boston has hosted an annual Duckling Day parade each spring, in which children dressed as ducklings and their parents retrace the path taken by Mrs. Mallard and her ducklings to get from the Charles River to the Public Garden. Make Way for Ducklings is the official children's book of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.



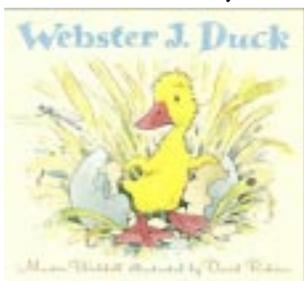
Do Like A Duck Does

by Judy Hindley

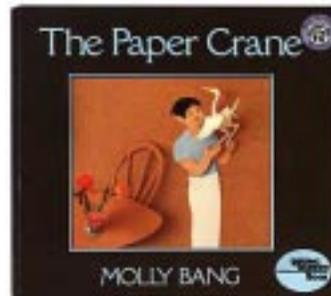
This delightful book has a rhyming story. A fox pretends he is one of Mrs. Duck's ducklings. She takes her brood and the fox through a number of different activities and the fox tries to "Do like a duck does." Mrs. Duck is quite protective and fierce. The fox finally slinks away and the duck family is safe. Fun read aloud for 2 and up.

Webster J. Duck

by Martin Waddell



Similar to *Are You My Mother?*, Webster hatches out of his egg and goes looking for his mother. Good for 2 and up.



The Paper Crane

by Molly Bang

A gentle, calm story. Whenever I look at the cover of this book, I find myself breathing more deeply.

An old man comes to a restaurant that has seen better days. The owner is so happy to have a customer that he prepares a delicious meal for the stranger. The stranger pays by folding a paper napkin into a crane.

He tells the owner that anytime he claps, the paper crane will dance. That is just what happens and as the word spreads, more and more people came to the restaurant and it thrives once again. Then the stranger comes back. More mystery happens. For 4 and up.

Feedback and comments are always welcome.

Donations are gratefully accepted.

Happy Reading!