

How to towel-wrap an owl

For single handed re-hydration or force-feeding



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To be able to carry out this procedure effectively, make sure you have read our do-it-yourself guide to the short-term care of a wild owl page on our website, or the relevant section in the Barn Owl Conservation Handbook.

Before wrapping the owl, prepare everything you will need (fluid, cut-up food, etc.) and place everything within reach of a chair or a stool with a foot rest (see final picture). Lay out a fairly thin folded towel on a table, so that it is a little wider than the owl's length and about three times as long.



1. With the owl restrained around both legs and wings, hold it very gently chest-down on the towel, close to one end of the towel, with its legs lying straight out behind it and its face level with the folded edge of the towel.



2. At the base of the tail, wrap the legs, wings and tail reasonably tightly using the short end of the towel.

3. Roll the first half-turn, keeping the wrap tight (the tightness is mainly around the legs).



4. Roll the owl through one complete rotation, wrapping tightly around the legs but keeping no tension on the rest of the wrap. The owl is now on its front again.



5. You are now ready to do the final wrapping which will be much less tight. Position your hands as shown below.





6. Cross the towel over the owl as shown.



7. Pick the owl up holding the tight part of the wrap and complete the looser wrap as shown.



Your owl-wrapping is now complete! The owl will be unable to wriggle out as long as the leg-wrap remains reasonably tight.



Now sit down, placing the wrapped owl vertically between your thighs, so that your legs are keeping gentle pressure on the leg-wrapping. Position the owl side-on so that it faces the hand that will feed it (or administer the fluid). Your other hand will start this procedure by coming in from behind, over the owl's head, and grasping the upper mandible between thumb and index finger.

The reason this method of towel wrapping works well is because the *legs are kept straight*. If the initial wrap is allowed to slip loose the bird will raise one of its feet, grip the towel, and push its way out. If this happens, simply re-wrap the bird, paying more attention to the tightness of the initial wrapping around both legs, wings and tail. It is perfectly acceptable to towel-wrap a bird with a wing injury (because the wing will be kept in the naturally folded position). However, great care obviously needs to be taken when wrapping a bird with a leg injury (because the legs will be straightened). In such cases, getting a helper to hold the bird (rather than wrapping it) may be necessary.

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