



Read

# The longest night

It's December, and the longest, darkest night of the year leaves Owl bored and grumpy...

It was midwinter, the longest night of the year. For most animals that didn't matter. They slept snug in their beds.

But, as the sun went down, Owl woke up and blinked his big eyes. The day had been so short that it felt as if he hadn't had a good day's sleep at all.

Outside, the night was cold and frosty. Owl sat on his favourite perch, watching and waiting. There! Running along the ground through the fallen leaves. A mouse. Owl swooped down silently, caught the mouse and – GLOMP! – swallowed it whole.

He caught a few more until he was full.

As it was still dark, he wondered what to do next.

So he thought about tidying himself up. He preened and preened himself until his feathers looked as smart as ever.

It was still dark.

So he did his exercises, turning his head this way and that.

That passed the time. But there was not even a hint of dawn.

"Will this night never end?" he said.

He began to hoot.

Out in the dark, another owl hooted back.

"Hello-who!"

"What are you up too-who?" Owl asked.

"Nothing. You-who?"

"I'm bored," Owl hooted back. "There's nothing to do-who."

"I'm going to meet the rest," the other owl hooted. "Do you want to come too-who?"

"I do-who!" Owl said.

So they flew to the old oak tree where the parliament of owls met.

Did you know a meeting of owls is called a parliament? Owls thought of themselves as wise, but even they got grumpy sometimes. Everybody was unhappy about the long night.

"We should tell the moon to get up later and go to bed earlier!" said another owl.

"No, we should tell the sun to get up earlier and go to bed later!" said another.

"But now mid-winter is over, the days will get longer and the nights shorter.



Come summer, there will be barely enough night time left to do anything!" moaned another owl.

Some agreed. Some disagreed, and everyone tutted and mumbled.

They spent so long moaning that, by the time they had finished, it was dawn.

"At last!" said Owl, stretching his wings as the sun rose.

"Well done everyone, another problem sorted," said the leader of the parliament. "Go back to your roosts, have a nice sleep and be ready for shorter nights."

So Owl flew back to his roost and settled down for a good day's sleep, knowing that the next night would be just that little bit shorter.

