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The African Scops-Owl *Otus senegalensis* is the smallest South African owl – 16 centimetres in length and weighing a mere 65 g. In contrast to its picture here, it is usually a master of camouflage and perches motionless against the branch of a tree where its cryptic coloration makes it difficult to detect. At the approach of danger, it elongates its body and raises its 'ear' tufts to further enhance its disguise. The call is a ventriloquial insect-like 'prrrup' emitted monotonously at 5-second intervals. Prey comprises mainly insects, and it hunts by dropping from a perch. Until recently, its breeding biology was little known except that it lays 2 - 3 eggs in a vertical hole in a tree stump, and at dusk the male brings prey for the incubating female.

Photo and text: Peter Steyn
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