



# GIVING A HOOT

OREM LANDS  
AN  OWL

**IN THE MOVIES, all dogs go to heaven.** In baseball, owls can only hope to become angels...

Los Angeles Angels of Anaheim, that is.

The Orem Owlz, took flight on their inaugural season in June. After four seasons as the Angels in nearby Provo, Utah, the Orem franchise enters the 2005 season with an entirely new image—one of the fiercest and coolest new logos in the minor leagues.

Like various other ball clubs in search of an identity this season—such as the Corpus Christi Hooks and Modesto Nuts—the Owlz turned to Studio Simon in Louisville, Kentucky to design an image that would stand out. Analogous to the enormously popular fashion set by the Lake Elsinore Storm, Simon created a primary on-field logo consisting solely of an owl's beak

and pair of glaring, angry yellow and blue owl eyes.

While this intimidating design is embroidered on all of the Owlz red game caps, it has also taken on a life of its own on the team's official website. When visitors access the team's homepage, an animated version of the 'Owlz eyes' appears at the top of the screen. The eyes open up and scan the surroundings, before intently gazing back at the website visitor.

The Owlz are donning two additional on-field hats this season. Their alternate cap is red with a giant white 'O' grasped in sharp talons. Batting practice cap boasts a more elaborate design: a red-plumed owl in flight, with the head of a baseball, the same intense eyes, and talons clutching two baseball bats crossed over its back.

While other minor league teams delve deep into their regional heritage or have a fan contest to name a new team, the new club management took complete charge in naming its team.

"We liked the double 'O' in Orem Owlz. A lot of teams in Utah have names that ended in a double-Z. It's a Utah thing. We did not want to necessarily carry on the double-Z tradition, but from a marketing standpoint it is a better draw with the Z," says Sarah Hansen, the Owlz assistant general manager.

In addition to the most obvious allusion, the NBA's Utah Jazz, the Owlz join the Utah Blitz (Professional Soccer League), Utah Starzz (WNBA), and Utah Freezz (World Indoor Soccer League) in state teams with nicknames ending with a 'Z'. Prior to becoming the Stingers, the Triple-A Salt Lake City Buzz also followed this unique tradition.

Surprisingly, the 2005 season will mark the first year in the team's lineage where their nickname differs from the parent team's nickname. The original Orem Owlz trace their history back to Helena, Montana. After playing as the Phillies from 1978-1983 and





**BIRTH OF AN OWL:** The Orem Owlz mascot Hootz was hatched in April and was an instant hit with the kids. Below, Hootz shakes hands with youngsters at his “coming out party.”



the Brewers from 1985-2000 in the Big Sky State, the team moved south and became the Provo Angels in 2001.

The first four seasons the Provo Angels used Brigham Young University’s Larry Miller Field on a year-to-year basis; as it became apparent that a permanent home was needed.

“[The new stadium] was going to be built in Provo, but that whole deal fell through,” Hansen said of the move. “Utah Valley State College was looking to build a new stadium themselves, but they did not have the funding to do it. The funding from our stadium in Provo was shifted over to Orem.”

Although the newly constructed stadium—the Home of the Owlz—is intended to host baseball fans strictly for home games, there is one Owlz fan that will be nesting in the stadium throughout the season. His name: Hootz the owl. His favorite thing to do: hooting and rooting for his favorite baseball team—the Owlz—no matter what time of day they play.

As the story goes, Hootz was rescued from the forest by the Owlz’ five owners before ever hatching. After receiving a ransom note from Oggie the Raptor (mascot of the Ogden Raptors, the Owlz in-state rival) saying he had kidnapped the Provo Angel’s mascot Charlie the St. Bernard dog, Orem’s owners found themselves in a dire situation.

Desperate to save their abducted mascot, they ventured into the dense Utah forests in search of an animal fierce, courageous, wise, and swift enough to rescue Charlie. After extensive searching, the owners stumbled across a giant owl egg—obviously fallen out of a nearby tree and abandoned by its mother. Realizing this nocturnal predator was the perfect animal to fight a raptor and rescue Charlie, Orem’s management cared for the egg until it hatched this past April at a local Ben & Jerry’s ice cream store.

Needless to say, the emergence of a six-foot tall owl with a wingspan greater in size than most Owlz fans was quite a sight. Essentially identical in appearance to the gallant red owl on the team’s batting practice cap, the appropriately named Hootz was born looking like a true baseball fan; his head was an enormous baseball and he already sported an Owlz jersey (with the number 05) and team’s alternate hat.

Residing in the Home of the Owlz, Hootz enjoys a luxurious mascot life. Not only does he have a beautiful scenic view of Mount Timpanogos and the entire Wasatch Mountain range, he gets to help Owlz fans cheer on his favorite team at all their home games. Yet there is one perk that stands out from the rest. Instead of snacking on stadium burgers and fries, the predatory owl will joyfully feast on Raptors, Mustangs and Osprey from Montana, and Chukars from Idaho all season long.

Eric Karlan

