



Owls and Owl Pellets

Location of activity provided by staff

Grades: (suggested) 4-8

Summary
Activities: 25 mins

Subject: Ornithology & Exploration

Activity Objective:

To have students learn more about owls by dissecting owl pellets, recording their findings on worksheets and discussing the natural history of owls.



Materials & Preparation:

PROVIDED:

- Tweezers
- Water container
- Magnifying glasses
- Charts of rodent bones
- Clipboards

NOT PROVIDED:

- Owl pellets (1 pellet per 2-3 students)
- Copies of worksheets
- Paper plates (one per student) & plastic bags for dissected pellets
- Pencils & a permanent marker

PREP: Look over the contents of the “owl” activity kit, fill the little container with water (optional), leader may wish to do additional research about owls.

NOTE: **YOU must supply the owl pellets** - attached is a list of sources and prices***

Key Vocabulary Terms: owls, pellets, habitat, identification

There may not be enough time to do all the activities in the time allotted. Select the activities to be used for the center and work out a plan for keeping the time and sequencing in mind

Activities: (25 mins)

(Choose from the following ideas.)

1. Read "Owls" (included in this packet)
2. **OPTIONAL:** (If you have a phone and want to look up the owl call of the great horned owl, western screech owls, and elf owl you can). Ask the children if they can identify the calls. You may wish to show the pictures of the three owls and ask them to match the calls with the owls.
3. Display and discuss the charts.
4. Divide the students into teams of 2 or 3 (depending on the number of pellets available). Each team receives one owl pellet.
5. The owl pellet is placed on the paper plate. You may wish to soften the pellets with a few drops of water from the little containers. Students use tweezers to remove the bones from the pellet. They examine the bones, using the magnifying glasses, and try to identify them by matching the bones to the diagrams on the chart. Count the skulls to determine the numbers of animals the owl ate in a 24-hour period.
6. Place the bones in a plastic bag to save for reconstruction back at school. Write the students' names on the bags with permanent marker for identification. The adult leader collects the bags after each center and gives the entire collection to the teacher.

NOTE: The activity below may be done during the center, or if time does not allow, it can be done back in the classroom.

7. Position the bones on a piece of colored cardboard and reassemble the skeleton of the prey animal. The bones are glued to the cardboard. A wooden toothpick, with the end chewed, makes a tiny glue brush.

Clean Up:

After the last group, place all materials in the box and place it on the table in the "Biznaga" building.

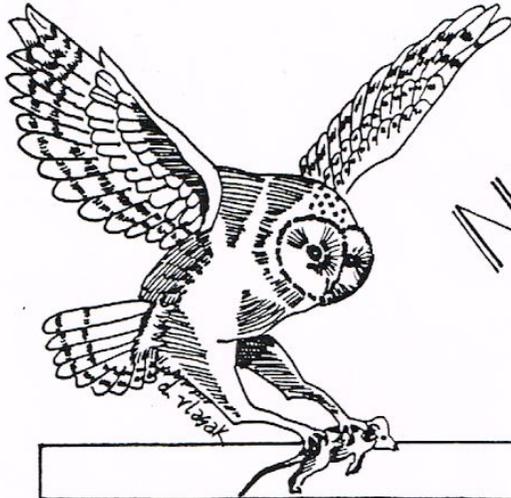
Be sure all foil scraps, baggies, paper plates, and other debris are removed from the activity site.



Where can you buy owl pellets?

Cooper Environmental Science Campus **DOES NOT** provide owl pellets for the Owls and Owl Pellets Activity Center. You must purchase your own pellets before your scheduled trip. Plan to order the pellets at least **six weeks before your trip** or you may be forced to pay extra for shipping. Here are some options for purchasing pellets:

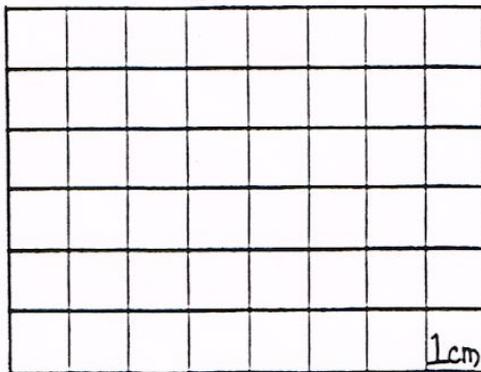
- Hawks, Owls, and Wildlife <http://www.owlpelletkits.com/>
701 Groveside Road
Buskirk, NY 12028
1-518-686-4080
Extra Large Barn Owl Pellets \$2.15 each or Medium Pellets for \$2.00
- Genesis, Inc. <http://www.pellet.com/>
PO Box 2242
Mount Vernon, WA 98273
1-800-4PELLET (Ordering Only) 1-360-422-6764 (Info)
Small to Jumbo size for \$1.95 to \$2.35 each
- Acorn Naturalists <http://www.acornnaturalists.com>
155 El Camino Real
Tustin, CA 92780
1-800-422-8886
Economy Pellets for \$1.55 each and Premium Pellets for \$2.95 each



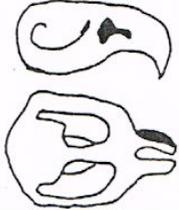
NOCTURNAL HUNTER

EXAMINE & RECORD	
LENGTH OF PELLETT	
WIDTH (at widest point)	
COLORATION	
VISIBLE CONTENTS	

Make a scale drawing of pellet



Now carefully tease away all fur and discover the contents of the pellet. Separate and clean all bones, even the tiniest ones. Sort them by type: skulls, femurs, vertebrae, etc.

Sample of Bones Found in Barn Owl Pellets		Description or Number
	Rodent Skull	
	Incisor or Front Tooth	
	Mandible or Lower Jaw	
	Pelvic Girdle or Hip	
	Femur or Thigh	
	Tibia and Fibulla or Lower Leg	
	Vertebrae or Backbone	
	Humerus or Upper Arm	



The lower jaw of a mouse, showing the long, curving front teeth and the rather knobby cheek teeth.



The lower jaw of a shrew, showing the small pointed teeth which it uses to cut up insects and other small animals.



The lower jaw of a vole showing the rather long, columnar cheek teeth which distinguish this animal from a mouse.