



GETTING INSIDE A MEAL: OWL PELLETS

Question for kids: Can you guess an owl's last meal?

Because owls are nocturnal, we don't see them much in our day-to-day life. What you might not realize, is that they leave behind "pellets" of indigestible portions of their meals. You can carefully dissect a sterilized pellet and literally piece together what owls eat in the wild.

MATERIALS FOR THIS ACTIVITY:

- [Owl Pellet Dissection Kit](#)
- [Magnifying Glass, 2" Diameter, 3X](#)
- [Dissecting Tray, Styrofoam](#)
- [Nitrile Gloves, Medium](#)

- [Owl Pellet, Large](#) (optional extra)
- [Economy Owl Pellet Kit](#) (optional for small group)



WHAT IT TAKES



FOLLOW THIS EASY, STEP-BY-STEP ACTIVITY

In this activity, kids will use tools to carefully take apart a heat-sterilized owl pellet to determine what small animal(s) were the bird's last meal. Possible pellet skeletons include those of mice, voles, birds, and more.

- 1 Inspect the outside of the owl pellet, looking for feathers or other interesting items.
- 2 Gently pull apart the pellet using the forceps and probe, being careful to not break apart any of the skeletons within.
- 3 Try to reconstruct the skeleton when all the bones have been found, and identify the animal. There might be more than one!

HOW

BUY EVERYTHING YOU NEED FOR THIS ACTIVITY IN ONE PLACE

See all of these products and more on [one handy shopping page](#).



Owl Pellet Dissection Kit

Includes identification key



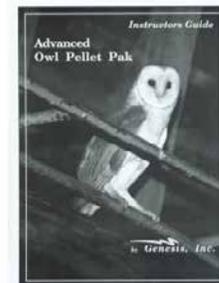
Owl Pellet, Large

1-1/2" or larger owl pellet



Magnifying Glass, 2" diameter, 3X

Optical glass lens



Owl Pellet Guide, Advanced

Learn about biomass & food webs

[See all related products](#)

A FEW TIPS TO HELP YOU OUT

- Use disposable gloves when handling the owl pellet and dissect on a tray, not directly on a table top or desk.
- Use the probe to separate the bones from fur or feathers.
- Take care when removing skulls and jawbones.
- When you've finished sorting the bones, roll the last bits of fur between your fingers to find little bones or teeth that might have been overlooked.
- Owls usually eat more than one rodent before regurgitating the remains.

GO BEYOND THE ACTIVITY!

- After removing all the fur from the bones, soak the bones in diluted bleach for three minutes to whiten the bones. Then mount them to an index card with glue.
- Use the owl pellet as an opportunity to explore food chains. You can ask students to draw an owl and all the animals it eats, and discuss how food chains affect animals of all sizes, and even plants.

NEED HELP WITH THIS ACTIVITY?

Call 1-800-860-6272 or email service@homesciencetools.com.

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TIPS

MAKE IT YOUR OWN

HELP