

Name: _____

Owl Pellet Dissection Activity

Owls are nighttime hunters who will eat small animals, such as mice, moles, voles, and even other birds. After the owl's body has digested its food, it will spit up the undigestible parts, such as bones, fur, and feathers. This owl's undigested food is coughed up in the form of an owl pellet.



Inside your owl pellet, you will find the bones of one or more small animals. You may find ribs, leg bones, back bones, or even skulls.

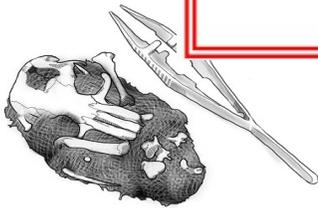
You are going to dissect your pellet and pull out as many bones as possible. If you're lucky, you may have enough bones to put together a whole animal skeleton.

Safety First

Your owl pellet is real, but it has been sanitized so it is safe for you to dissect. Even so, you'll want to be careful to stay away from the sharp parts to your face and hands. Owl pellets are not for animal consumption.



PREVIEW
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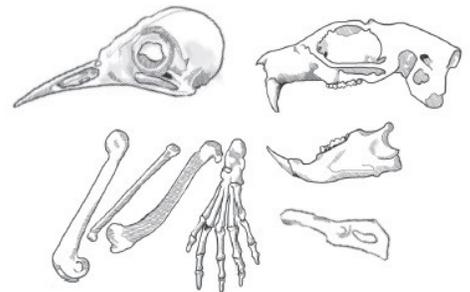
or break them easily.

You will be given a pair of forceps and a probe. Use these tools to help you break apart your owl pellet and search for bones. Try to brush off as much of the hair, fur, and dirt as possible so you can see the shape of each bone.

Identifying the Bones

Look carefully at each bone. You may want to use a magnifying glass to see them more clearly. Try to match up the bones with the illustrations on the *Owl Pellet Bone Chart*. This will help to determine what type of animal skeleton you have found.

After you have recovered as many bones as possible, lay them out on a piece of paper. Try to build an entire animal skeleton. You may not have all of the necessary bones, but do the best you can.

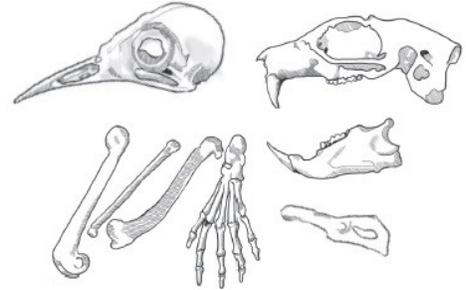


The contents of each owl pellet will be different. Once in awhile an owl pellet may have more than one skeleton in it, or you may find only part of a skeleton. What types of bones will you find?

Owl Pellets: Teacher Notes

Recommended Materials:

- **Paper plate, pan, or piece of foil**
 - to contain students' workspace
- **Rubber gloves**
 - to keep students' hands clean
- **Forceps and probe**
 - to help students break apart and explore the owl pellets
- **Owl pellet identification chart**
 - to help students identify bones; can be found on SuperTeacherWorksheets.com
- **Animal skeleton worksheets**
 - to help students assemble animal skeletons; available at SuperTeacherWorksheets.com
- **Blank sheet of construction paper or sheet of foam (dark colors are best)**
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Optional Materials:

- **Magnifying Glass**
 - to see the bones more clearly
- **Small brush**
 - to clean the bones
- **Hydrogen peroxide**
 - to clean and whiten the bones; use only with adult supervision
- **Small plastic containers or cups**
 - If your activity will span more than one day, students can store bones in a container.
- **Large plastic trays (lunch tray)**
 - to keep student materials together

Owl Pellets: Teacher Notes

Appropriate Ages:

- Students of all ages enjoy owl pellets, and you can customize your lesson accordingly. A third or fourth grade student can learn about owl pellets and owl anatomy, while a fifth or sixth grade student can learn about owl pellets and owl anatomy on a more advanced level.

Purchasing

- Owl pellets may be purchased from a variety of sources.
- Large bones and skeletons are available from a variety of sources.

Before the Lesson

- We recommend that you dig for owl pellets in the field.
- You can also purchase owl pellets from a variety of sources.

Management

- It is recommended that you break owl pellets into small pieces.
- Assemble the owl pellets into a display. This will help you to see the owl pellets and the bones.
- When you are done, you can use the owl pellets to make owl pellets.
- Encourage your students to discuss the owl pellets and the bones.

More Fun Ideas

- If you are using owl pellets with your students, you may want to clean them and soak them in hydrogen peroxide. Of course, adult supervision is recommended.



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