

Owl Pellet Dissection

Discover what an owl ate



What is an owl pellet?

While owl pellets may look like poop, they're actually more like owl vomit! After swallowing prey whole, owls use their gizzards to pack undigestible parts like bones, teeth, and fur into a ball called a pellet. Owls spit up or "cast" pellets about twice a day.

Pellets provide a record of what owls have eaten, which makes them useful for ornithologists (bird scientists) to learn more about the owls and their ecosystems.

Many other kinds of birds that eat insects, fish, mammals, and crustaceans also cast pellets including kingfishers, falcons, and herons. Some mammals like otters also regurgitate scales, exoskeletons, and bones to protect their digestive systems from damage.

Kit contents:



sterilized barn owl pellet



forceps



magnifying glass



toothpicks



rodent bone guide

Owl pellet dissection

Safety Note

Owl pellets can contain harmful bacteria like Salmonella, so only dissect sterilized pellets.

1

Examine your owl pellet.
What do you notice?

2

Gently tease your pellet
apart. Do you see fur? Bones?
You may want to lightly
dampen your pellet.

3

Try and identify what you find.
What animals did the owl eat?

Sketch your findings:



brnnotes.org



meigspointnaturecenter.org



Watch an owl nest
cam and learn more
about owls
[tinyurl.com/
ImagineFOwl](http://tinyurl.com/ImagineFOwl)

