

OWL PELLETS

A lesson in Food Chains Life Cycles, Interdependence & Ecosystems



SUGGESTED GRADES: Grades 3-4 or 5-6

OVERVIEW: This hands-on program will expand the students' awareness of food chains, life cycles, interdependence and ecosystems.

OBJECTIVES: Students will:

1. Observe the contents of a North American owl pellet
2. Learn about the habits of owls, their adaptations and roles in nature
3. Discover first-hand the types of prey owls consume
4. Expand their understanding of a simple food chain
5. Expand their understanding of the interdependency of all living things in an ecological system

ACTIVITIES: After an introduction to owls and their physical and behavioral adaptations, students will be divided into small groups of three or four. Each group will be given a sterilized owl pellet. Students will dissect the owl pellet, being careful to separate the tiny bones from the fur. Data sheets and bone sorting charts will be provided, to aid in prey identification. Students will observe the different types of prey consumed, the number of prey in each pellet, and see if they can put together a full or partial skeleton. If desired, once all the bones are separated the students can reconstruct their rodent(s) onto tagboard. These animal skeleton tagboards make interesting displays for the classroom to observe and discuss.

PROGRAM FEE: \$225 (materials included).

CONTACT: Hands on Nature at handsonnature@gmail.com or (508) 981-1335 to schedule an Owl Pellet program at your school.

What is an owl pellet? Many owls swallow their prey whole. The undigested part of an owl's meals (mostly bones and fur) are rolled and compacted into a "pellet" and regurgitated several hours later. These pellets are fascinating packets of information about our ecosystem!