

OWLS AND OWL PELLETS

NOTE: Please contact the Cooper ESC staff to have the entire Owls and Owl Pellets Activity Center sent to you. **You** must supply the owl pellets. Attached is a list of sources and prices.



ACTIVITY:

listen to the calls of three owls
dissect owl pellets
record the findings on worksheets
discuss the natural history of owls

LOCATION:

CESC staff will inform you of the location for this activity.

EQUIPMENT AVAILABLE:

tweezers
water container
magnifying glasses
charts of rodent bones
clip boards
tape recorder
owl call audio tape

EQUIPMENT BROUGHT FROM SCHOOL:

owl pellets (one pellet per two or three students)
copies of worksheets
paper plates (one per student)
plastic bags for dissected pellets
pencils
permanent marker

ASSIGNMENT FOR GROUP LEADERS A FEW WEEKS PRIOR TO TRIP:

The leader reads all the material about the center. The leader may wish to do more research about owls in general and the owls of our area. The owl calls on the tape are of the great-horned owl, western screech owl, and elf owl. The ferruginous pygmy-owl is also a Tucson resident.

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 keeping time and sequence in mind.

DIRECTIONS FOR GROUP LEADERS ON TRIP DAY:

Check the contents of the "Owls and Owl Pellets" activity box.
Preview the owl call tape.
Fill the little container with water. (optional)

THE LESSON: (Choose from the following ideas.)

1. Read "Owls" (included in this packet)
2. Listen to the three owl calls on the tape. The calls are of the elf owl, screech owl, and great horned owl. 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.

The next activity 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.

CLEANUP:

After the last group, rewind the tape and replace all materials in the box and place it on the table in the teachers' cabin, "Biznaga".

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 \$1.95 each or Medium Pellets for \$1.10
- Pellets Inc. <http://pelletsinc.com/>
PO Box 5484
Bellingham, WA 98227-5484
1-888-466-OWLS Fax: 1-360-738-3402
Prices range from \$0.75 to \$2.05 depending on size
- 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 \$0.95 to \$2.05 each
- Acorn Naturalists <http://www.acornnaturalists.com>
155 El Camino Real
Tustin, CA 92780
1-800-422-8886
Economy Pellets for \$1.29 each and Premium Pellets for \$2.19 each
- Owl Brand Discovery Kits http://www.obdk.com/scripts/products_fast_order.asp
1-877-570-3405
From \$1.10 to \$1.85 depending on quantity and size
- Mountain Home Biological http://www.pelletlab.com/p_s_owl_pellet1.shtml
1-800-958-9629
From \$0.85 to \$2.05 depending on size