

# Dissect an Owl Pellet

Investigate what owls eat by dissecting pellets and identifying bones!



Great Gray Owl

[Image: allaboutbirds.org.](http://allaboutbirds.org)

Owls eat shrews, voles, mice, small birds, insects, and occasionally hares and squirrels. They can't chew their food, so they either swallow it whole or tear it into pieces before swallowing.

The indigestible parts of the food (bones, fur, feathers) are collected in the gizzard, and after several hours an owl will regurgitate a pellet containing the undigested material. Examining these pellets can give us clues about what owls eat.

## Materials Needed:

Owl pellets\*, Bone Chart, tweezers or toothpicks. *Optional:* Disposable gloves, tray or paper plate, magnifying glass.

\*Owl pellets can be ordered from [www.acornnaturalists.com](http://www.acornnaturalists.com).

## Instructions:

**Step 1:** Put the owl pellet on a tray or paper plate. This will make clean up easier when you're done! Gently pull on the ends of the pellet to unwrap it.

**Step 2:** Use the tweezers and toothpicks to separate bones from the fur and feathers. Use a magnifying glass to find the smallest bones!

**Step 3:** Gently brush the remaining fur and feathers off the bones. Compare the bones you found to the Bone Chart to identify them.






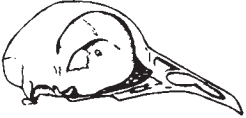








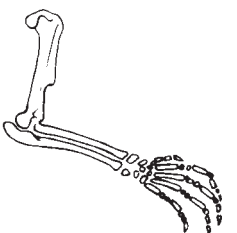
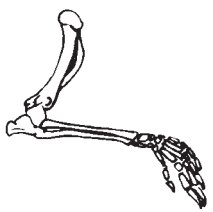
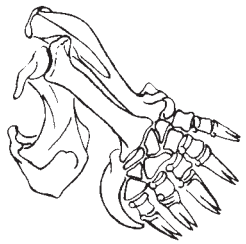

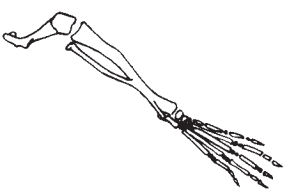
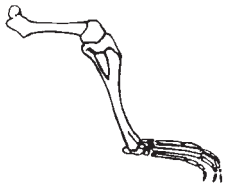
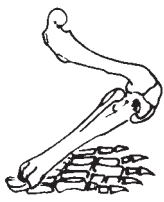
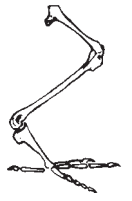
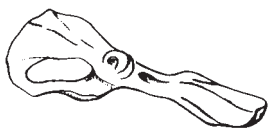






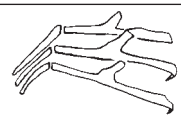
[Image: www.carolina.com.](http://www.carolina.com)

## Think and Discuss:



- What kinds of animals did the owl eat?
- Did anything you found surprise you?
- How can owl pellets help us understand more about owls, what they eat, and food chains?

# Owl Pellet Bone Chart

	Rodent	Shrew	Mole	Bird
Skull				
Jaw				
Scapula				
Forelimb				
Hindlimb				
Pelvic Bone				
Rib				
Vertebrae	