



PREDATORS & PREY: OWL PELLETS (3-5)

The SCIENCE of RAPTORS (BIRDS of PREY):



Predators are animals that hunt other animals for food. The food being hunted is the **prey**.

Raptors are birds with sharp beaks and talons used for hunting small animals.

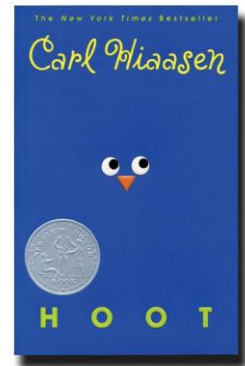
➤ Raptors eat prey whole, but are unable to digest the bones, fur and feathers. These leftovers are cast (spit out) in the form of a **pellet**.

Dissections are a scientific way of taking something apart to study it.



LITERACY CONNECTION:

[Hoot](#) by Carl Hiaasen is a tale of how a young boy and his friends work to save some local owls. Don't have the book? Click the title for digital access.



ACTIVITY: OWL PELLET DISSECTION

Materials: tray, toothpick, forceps (tweezers), [owl pellet](#), paper, pencil (optional – gloves, [pellet ID chart](#))

1. Carefully unwrap and inspect the outside of the pellet.
2. Over the tray, gently pull apart the pellet (be careful not to break any of the bones inside it). Use the forceps to remove small bones, and a toothpick to separate the bones from the fur or feathers.

TIP: Be careful while removing the skulls and jawbones, since they are the best way to identify what prey animals the owl ate.

3. Sort your bones into any groups you want.
4. Group similar bones together. When you've finished sorting the bones, roll the last bits of fur between your fingers to find little bones or teeth that might have been overlooked.
5. Once you've found all the bones, try to figure out what animals were eaten by using an [identification key](#).

Owls can eat more than one rodent before making a pellet, so you might find multiple bones that look the same.



Be sure to WASH YOUR HANDS when finished!

EXPLORE: How many different kinds of animals did you find evidence of in the pellet? What can you conclude about the eating habits of the owl that made your pellet?

For step-by-step instructions, watch the video at: [Owl Pellet STEM Activity](#)

This at-home educational activity is from the Literacy Coalition of Palm Beach County's literacy-based Stories & STEM program. Stories & STEM is made possible with support from Prime Time Palm Beach County, Inc., which receives significant funding from the Children's Services Council of Palm Beach County, Inc.

Having fun? Send pictures or video links of you and your Stories & STEM projects to csharkey@literacypbc.org