



PREDATORS: OWLS (6-8)

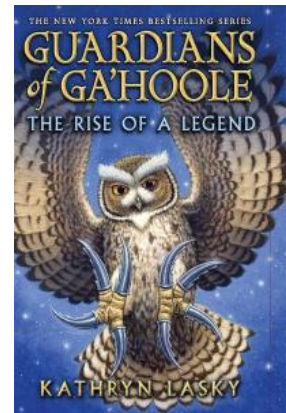
KEY CONCEPTS:

- **Predators** are animals (and sometimes plants) that hunt other animals for food. The food being hunted is the **prey**.
- **Raptors**, such as owls, are birds of prey that have sharp beaks and talons for hunting.
- **Dissections** involve taking something apart methodically in order to study it. This is a great way to learn more about an animal and its habitat.
- 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**.

LITERACY CONNECTION:

The [Guardians of Ga'Hoole series](#), by Kathryn Lasky, takes you to a magical world where owls are at war and a young owlet rises to become a legend. To be an engaging writer, an author must understand their subjects – human or animal.

“I have had to slip out of my own skin and into the feathers or pelts of animals for my fantasy series about owls... To do this, I would first have to learn all about the habits, habitats and behavior of a particular animal.” – [Kathryn Lasky](#)



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).
3. Use the forceps to remove small bones and a toothpick to separate the bones from the fur or feathers.
4. Sort the bones into groups. When finished, 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, use an [identification key](#) to learn more. Owls can eat more than one rodent before making a pellet, look for multiples of the same bones.

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@literacyabc.org