

# **Kids Dissecting Owl Pellets**

## **Introduction**

My favorite bird is the owl. There are many different types of owls. At first we didn't know what is an owl pellet but at the Inglewood Bird Sanctuary we learned what owl pellets are and why people dissect owl pellets.

## **Background Information**

Common owls in Calgary are: the Great Horned owl, Snowy owl, Burrowing owl, and the Great Grey owl.

In September our class attended Nature School at the Inglewood Bird Sanctuary. We met Oberon at the Inglewood Bird Sanctuary with his caretaker, Gayleen that told us the story about how Oberon lost his wing. Afterwards we were able to dissect owl pellets. An owl pellet is a small sausage shaped object containing undigested parts of what they have eaten.

## **Factual Information & Supporting Research**

### **What is in an owl pellet?**

On owl eats its prey whole. Things that are too dangerous to pass through the owl's digestive system come out as an owl pellet. The pellet is regurgitated, so that is a fancy way to say barf or throw up. This is normal for owls and does not hurt them. In an owl pellet you can find

bones, fur and teeth of the mammals the owl eats. As well as the exoskeletons of insects, feathers and beaks of other birds. Other animals that also have pellets are hawks and eagles.

### **Do different owls have different pellets?**

By comparing two owl pellets we know that different sized owls eat different food. For example the burrowing owls are small and their pellets are 2.5 cm in length and The Great Horned Owl which is bigger, has pellets are 5.7 cm in length. All owls' diets are different depending on their habitat and their size. A larger owl will eat more food.

### **Why do people dissect owl pellets?**

Owl pellets tell scientists information about an owl. They can tell the migration of the owl and their habitats by looking at the animals that are in a pellet and figuring out where those animals live.

### **What is useful about owl pellets?**

Owl pellets are useful to owls to clean their digestive system. It takes away the parts of the prey, like bones, beaks and teeth, that could hurt the owl's stomach. Pellets can be held by the owl for 20 hours. An owl must get rid of the pellet before it can eat again.

Scientists dissect owl pellets to learn about owls. Dissecting is the act of separating or dividing an animal or plant into parts in order to examine

or study its structure. Owl pellets are helpful for scientists to calculate the overall population of owls and to study their habitat and ecosystem.

### **What can owl pellets tell you about an ecosystem?**

How pellets are changing tells us about the changes in an ecosystem. Scientists take the pellets to their lab and check the biodiversity of an ecosystem by looking at how many different species of small animals live in the area. They use information to decide how to manage and protect different species of owls.

### **The “So What” - Opinion & Recommendations**

We think that owl pellets are important because it is important to know what owls eat and if their ecosystem has changed overall. It is also important for scientists to do experiments on pellets to learn more about the owls. They can also tell us if there is anything dangerous to the owl or the ecosystem in the pellet.

Humans should help owls by protecting their ecosystems. When people are visiting an ecosystem they should respect owls by not scaring and taunting them. Owls should eat their natural prey so humans should not feed owls or leave garbage in their habitat.

## **Conclusion**

We feel that owls are very important to our ecosystem. People need to be aware of dangers of destroying animal habitats and be proactive in saving them.

Thank You.