

Owls Pellet Worksheet

Owl Pellets

Owl pellets provide clues about what an owl has eaten in the past twenty-four hours. Owls do not have a crop, the area in the upper esophagus that stores food for the bird, and they don't have teeth. Food is swallowed whole and passes straight to the stomachs. They do have strong hooked beaks that they use to tear apart the carcasses of prey too big to swallow whole. Skin and muscle are easy to digest but hair, bones, claws, and beaks are indigestible. Owls have two stomachs; the proventriculus and the ventriculus. The proventriculus is the stomach where gastric secretions digest the food just like in people. The ventriculus is the stomach where food is ground down by strong muscular contractions. The ventriculus is also called the gizzard. Any food material that the owl cannot digest with gastric acid or muscular contractions must be removed through a process called casting. About 12 hours after eating, the owl regurgitates the undigested food in the form of a pellet.

Owl pellets vary in size and shape depending on the species of owl and what it ate. Studying the bones found in the pellet can help determine what the owl was eating. In order to fully evaluate the pellet, you will dissect it and study its contents like a real scientist.

Getting Started

- Measure the pellet (length, width, and weight)
- Separate the individual bones from the fur
- Sort the bones for identification
- Tally the number of bones you find

Measuring an Owl Pellet

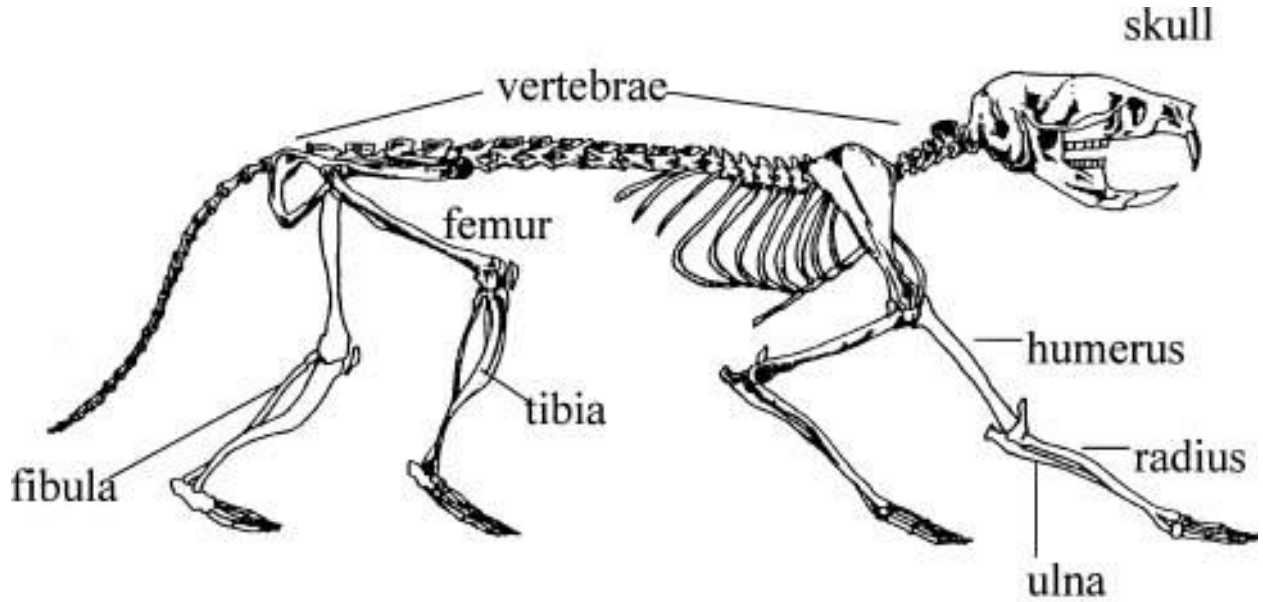
My owl pellet is _____ long

My owl pellet is _____ wide

My owl pellet weighs _____



Skeletal Chart for Owl Pellet Evaluation



Sorting Chart

	Skull	Ribs	Vertebrae	Teeth	Long Bones	Pelvis
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