



## EAT

We all need to eat to survive, and although we might know a lot about our human digestive systems, what about other animals and birds?

Owls hunt at night and eat small mammals, insects and seeds. Some of their food can't be digested easily. When we can't digest something, we might vomit or poo it out whole (e.g. sweetcorn). Owls cough up anything they can't digest, in a pellet.

### Owl pellets

If you ever see an owl sitting in a tree during the day, you may very well see some owl pellets under the tree. And we can dissect these (take them apart) to find out exactly what the owl has been eating.

### You will need:

- Tweezers, forceps, or cocktail sticks.
- Small bowl for soaking pellets in and cleaning items taken out of the pellets.
- Small paper plates/bowls for dissecting the pellets on.
- A few drops of disinfectant (handsanitiser).
- Newspaper for blotting the pellet items on.
- Magnifying glass (optional).

### The activity:

- Ask participants to take a dry pellet and a small bowl, with tweezers or cocktail sticks and start to tease them apart.



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- Sometimes it might be easier to soak the pellets first, by adding some water to a bowl with a few drops of disinfectant. Add the pellets in, and soak for about half an hour until they sink. Take them out and leave them on the newspaper.
- Tell the participants to tease each pellet apart carefully, looking for bones, fur and other items in the pellet. They can remove these, clean them in the water and leave them on the newspaper to dry.
- What do they think the owl has been eating?

Could our diet become more similar to that of other species?

### **Edible bugs**

Entomophagy means 'eating insects as food'. Forget Bushtucker Trials, this is serious business. By 2050 there will be 2 BILLION more people on the planet, and we'll all need to be fed, to survive. On what though?

One of the options for solving the world's food shortage and making sure that we have a readily-available source of nutrients, is for us to start eating insects.

But because we see them as pests, we don't feel like eating them. In many areas around the world, people are eating insects and larvae as delicacies, and they also contain all the nutrients needed for a healthy life. There is 19-26g of protein and 6mg of iron per 100g of beef. Which is about the same as 100g of grasshoppers. Which would you prefer to eat?

We would not only be saving billions from starvation, but also saving the planet (farming is one of the biggest contributors to climate change).



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You can ask participants to try some insects (if available – see website links below), checking first to see if anyone has a shellfish allergy, as a precaution, or discuss what they think about having insects as their next meal.

**Further information:**

- Owl pellets – how to study their contents:  
[https://www.rspb.org.uk/Images/Owlpellets\\_tcm9-133500.pdf](https://www.rspb.org.uk/Images/Owlpellets_tcm9-133500.pdf)
- Grub: <http://www.eatgrub.co.uk>
- Bugs for life: <http://bugsforlife.com>
- Insects are food (recipes): <http://www.insectsarefood.com/recipes.html>



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