



Discover **BARN OWL PELLETS**

Though these slightly unpleasant-looking objects appear to be droppings, they are in fact the regurgitated waste from owls and other birds (and they don't smell at all!)

These pellets can be found on the ground by nesting sites and are safe to pick up and handle. Dissecting a pellet is a great way to find out what the bird has been eating.

All owls produce pellets, along with other birds of prey, crows and even sparrows. When an owl catches its prey, such as small mammals, mice or shrews, it swallows it whole without chewing. The food then passes down a tube in its throat and into its gizzard where the food is ground down into pieces by strong muscles.

You will need:

- A pair of thin gloves
- Tweezers
- A tray
- A mammal bone guide which can be downloaded from www.barnowltrust.org.uk



The useful, digestible parts then pass to the small intestine to be used in the body whilst the indigestible parts such as the fur and bones are formed into a pellet. After 8-10 hours the pellet is forced back up the tube to the beak where it is regurgitated or 'coughed' out of the body.

Carefully break apart the pellet with your fingers and use tweezers to separate the bones that you find. Match these up to the bone guide to find out what your bird's last meal was! Each pellet can contain the bones and fur of up to 6 mammals.

Fortunately in Jersey we have a successful population of Barn Owls, with 50 chicks recorded this year. Occasionally Long-eared and Short-eared Owls can also be seen in the Island.

