



Birds Of Prey

Teacher Informational Sheet

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GENERAL

Our naturalists gear each program to the grade level of your students and will accommodate any competency level if notified in advance. Our programs stress hands-on and direct involvement learning. *ALL Groups Meet In The Visitors Parking Lot.*

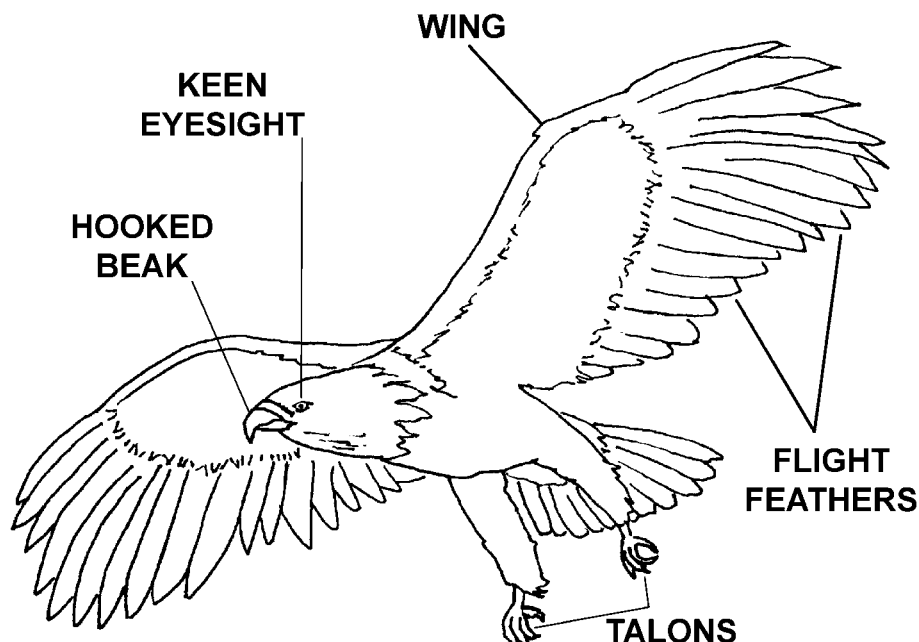
BIRDS OF PREY (GRADES K-2ND; 60 MINUTES, GRADES 3RD-7TH; 90 MINUTES)

Soaring, diving, catching prey on the wing. Raptors capture the imagination of young and old. The live raptors in our outdoor Birds of Prey House provide a unique opportunity for students to observe the physiology and adaptations that enable birds of prey to do what they do so well. An investigation of raptors, including the dissection of an owl pellet (for grades 3+), provides insight into "specialization" and what life is like near the top of the food chain. **Materials fee of \$15 per class for grades 3+.**

WHAT ARE RAPTORS?

Owls, hawks, and hawklike birds including vultures, osprey, eagles, harriers, and falcons, are birds of prey. Birds of prey, especially hawks and their relatives, are also called **raptors**, a Latin word meaning "plunderer."

Birds of prey have special characteristics and adaptations for hunting that set them apart from other birds. Raptors are characterized by strong legs, powerful feet with sharp talons, a hooked beak used to tear prey, keen eyesight, and excellent flying ability.

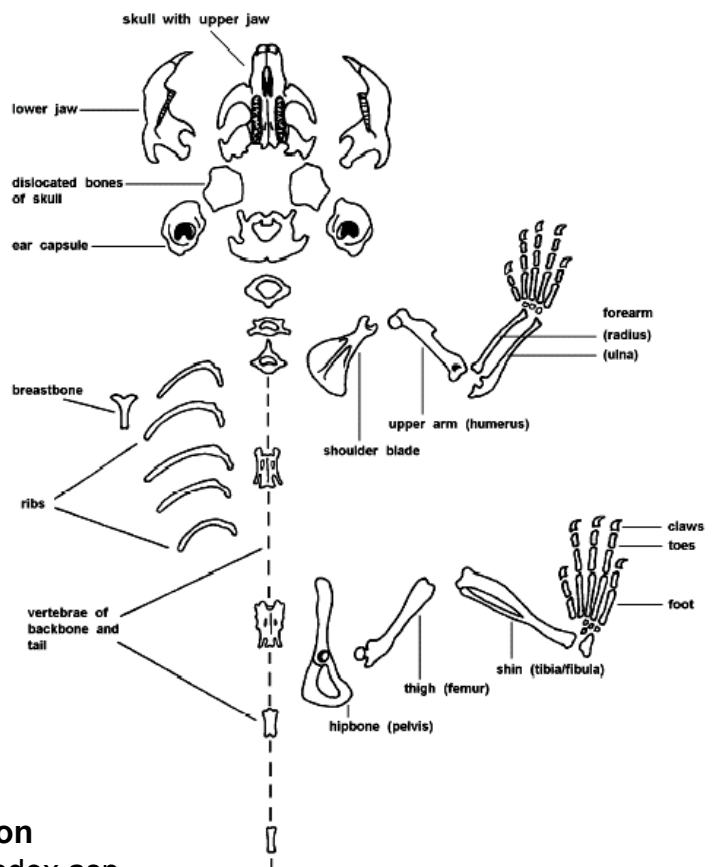




OWL PELLETS

Owl pellets are made up of bone, teeth, hair, feathers and exoskeletons of various animals that are preyed upon by owls. Pellets are produced and regurgitated not only by owls, but also by hawks, eagles and other raptors that swallow their prey whole or in small pieces.

Compared to mammals, raptor digestive tracts have weaker enzymes and acids which do not digest the entire meal. Instead, the muscles of the bird's digestive system form the undigested fur, bones, etc. into a wet slimy pellet. Owls feed and then regurgitate a single pellet approximately 20 hours later.



Owl Pellets - A Scientific Investigation

<http://www.rspb.org.uk/youth/makeanddo/do/pellet/index.asp>

This website has information about owl pellet study that may be useful to look at prior to your visit.

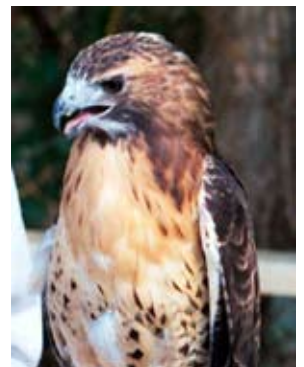
A SHORT LOOK AT THE RED-TAILED HAWK

RED-TAILED HAWK (*BUTEO JAMAICENSIS*)

The red-tailed hawk is one of the most common and best known of all the North American hawks.

They are found over the entire continent, in a wide range of habitats from deserts to forests and are common here in Westchester.

The female red-tailed is larger than the male. Females have a wingspan of 4-5 feet and a body length of 19-23 inches, while the male has a wingspan of 3.5-4 feet with a body length of 17-21 inches.



Unlike great horned owls, these hawks generally migrate and are seen flying through Westchester in the fall. They may make frequent stops in trees along the interstate highways to hunt for food.

A red-tailed hawk's diet consists almost entirely of rodents, especially mice. Other prey may include

SOME WEB PAGES WHICH MAY BE OF INTEREST:

IdahoPTV.org - Great all around raptor pages with classroom activities.
<http://www.idahoptv.org/dialogue4kids/birdsofprey/raptors.html>

New York State Department of Environmental Conservation
Facts about New York wildlife. <http://www.dec.state.ny.us/index.html>

Carolina Raptor Center - Information & games/activities for kids of all ages.
<http://www.carolinaraptorcenter.org/index.php>

Hudson Valley Raptor Center - Local information about raptors.
<http://www.hvraptors.com/>

