

Owl Pellet Program Activity Instructions

Set Up:

Leader has a guide sheet with commentary and clues about each stop for the “choose your path” zoo tour loop, where students hope to obtain all the necessary traits to become the ultimate predator. The leader also has “wrong turn” facts for students to decode if the incorrect answer is provided OR as an extra challenge if you want.

Activity:

Students will think about the special senses and skills raptors have to be successful predators in order to choose their path through the zoo, collecting traits along the way to create the ultimate super-predator. What makes raptors such great hunters - is it excellent eyesight, is it super strong talons, or is it silent stealth? At each super skilled species stop (bobcats, snowy owls, African crested porcupine, bald eagles, snow leopard, wolves, and royal python) have students do the following:

Listen and Learn (1-2 min):

Students listen to the facts presented by the leader at each animal stop about the senses and skills necessary to be a great predator. Based on this information provided, students will guess which animal is the next stop.

“Choose Your Path” Vote (30 sec):

Grades 3-5 (Pages 2-5) students will act out the animal they vote for to proceed.

Grades 6-8 (Pages 6-10) students will hear a riddle and guess the animal to proceed.

Wrong Turn Raptor Fact Decoding (1 min):

If the students select the incorrect choice for the next stop, the leader will provide a raptor fact question for the students to decode or answer. The correct answer must be given or decoded before moving on to the next animal stop.

These questions can be given as “flight deviations” at the Leader’s discretion for an extra challenge despite correct animal guesses as noted above.

Obtain Predator Skill (30 sec):

Students win the specified trait for their end-of-game predator if they make the correct animal selection. Leader punches trait on punch card.

Stop 1 (Start Here): Bobcats

Leader Reads: Large cats like bobcats have excellent vision, especially at dusk or dawn, or in low light conditions. However, raptor vision is better! While our next animal also has fantastic vision, its eyes are fixed and cannot move. Should our next stop be the snowy owls or the naked mole rats?

Students Answer: Snowy Owl! (students must act out their answer to vote)

Leader Reads: (if students incorrectly choose naked mole rats) We've made a wrong turn! Let's decode this raptor fact to continue on to the snowy owls...

Hawks have eyes that point forward like ours. This gives them _____ vision, which helps them judge distance. **Answer: binocular**

Have students close one eye and try to touch a distant object. Then use both eyes. Which is easier? This is binocular vision.

Leader Reads: (if students correctly choose **snowy owls**) You now have gained the **Excellent Eyesight Trait!**

Stop 2: Snowy Owls

Leader Reads: Snowy owls are silent, camouflaged hunters of the Arctic with excellent eye sight. But they also rely on other senses to help them hunt. One of their senses is actually really bad - owls can't really smell their prey at all! So, *who* would have the better sense of smell - African crested porcupines or barn owls for our next stop?

Students Answer: African crested porcupines! (students must act out their answer to vote)

Leader Reads: (if students incorrectly choose barn owls) We've made a wrong turn! Let's decode this raptor fact to continue on to the porcupines.

"True or False: Some owls have ears that are not in the same spot on both sides of their head. **True.** Why?"

a) to look funny

b) to scare their prey

c) to hear better in all directions

Leader Reads: (if students correctly choose **African crested porcupines**) You have now gained the **Good Sense of Smell Trait!**

Stop 3: African Crested Porcupines

Leader Reads: Porcupines may look slow, but their sense of smell helps them to find food and to protect them from danger. While porcupines have good noses, they are not the strongest animal out there. When it comes to strength, there is a clear winner in our next match up: meerkats or bald eagles?

Students Answer: Bald Eagles! (students must act out their answer to vote)

Leader Reads: (if students incorrectly choose meerkats) We've made a wrong turn! Let's decode this raptor fact to continue on to the bald eagles.

This part of a raptor's body is super strong and used to grab prey.

a) beak

b) talons

c) feathers

Leader Reads: (if students correctly choose **bald eagles**) You have now gained the **Power/Strength Trait!**

Stop 4: Bald Eagles

Leader Reads: Bald eagles have incredibly strong talons to grab their prey. In fact, they can squeeze hard enough with their feet and talons to crush bone - over 400 pounds of pressure per square inch! Which of these two animals has similarly useful and dangerous claws - a mountain goat or a snow leopard?

Students Answer: Snow leopard! (students must act out their answer to vote)

Leader Reads: (if students incorrectly choose mountain goat) We've taken a wrong turn! Let's decode this raptor fact to continue on to the snow leopard.

Many raptors ride warm, rising air currents called _____ (E T R H L S A M) to soar high without flapping their wings. **Unscrambled answer:**

Thermals. Scrambled letter are on the back of this page to show the students.

Leader Reads: (if students correctly choose **snow leopard**) You have now gained the **Sharp Talons or Claws Trait!**

Stop 5: Snow Leopard

Leader Reads: Snow leopards have retractable claws and massive paws for silent climbing and killing prey. Their deadly claws are a lot like raptor talons, and they have excellent eyesight too! But there is another animal here at the zoo that outcompetes even a snow leopard with its hearing. Our next animal hunts by sound and teamwork, and can hear its prey and its friends from miles away. Are we headed to the wolves or to the axolotl next?

Students Answer: Wolves! (students must act out their answer to vote)

Leader Reads: (if students incorrectly choose axolotl) We've taken a wrong turn! Let's decode this raptor fact to continue on to the wolves.

The _____ (G E A L B D E A L) builds the largest nest of any other bird species in North America. The nest can be up to 9 feet long & 20 feet deep!

Unscrambled answer: Bald Eagle Scrambled letters on back of this page.

Leader Reads: (if students correctly choose **wolves**) You have now gained the **Fantastic Hearing Trait!**

Stop 6: Wolves

Leader Reads: Just like many raptors rely on their hearing and sound to hunt (some can even hear their prey moving under the snow!), wolves hunt and find other pack members by using their fantastic ears. However, because wolves often communicate by howls that can be heard over long distances, they are not stealthy hunters like many of our raptors, especially owls which have silent flight. When it comes to stealth and sneaking up on prey, who comes out on top - a Kunekune pig or a royal python?

Students Answer: Royal python! (students must act out their answer to vote)

Leader Reads: (if students incorrectly choose Kunekune pigs) We've made a wrong turn! Let's decode this raptor fact to continue on to the royal python.

True or False: Snowy owls can rotate their heads 270 degrees in both directions because they have 14 neck vertebrae instead of 7 neck vertebrae like humans do. **True**

Leader Reads: (if students correctly choose **royal python**) You have now gained the **Stealth Trait!**

Stop 7: Royal Python

Leader Reads: Royal pythons don't fly or chase after their prey. They wait - silent, still, and deadly. Pythons are ambush predators, so stealth is very important, much like how owls need to be silent flyers in order to catch their food.

Wrap Up

Leader Reads: Let's see how many of the necessary traits you collected to become the ultimate super predator! Every predator doesn't have the best of every single skill, but usually they have a good combination of the traits and skills you learned about with some of our zoo animals today. What kind of predator can you make with all the skills and super senses you collected?

Have students break into small groups to discuss traits and what kind of predator they can create with all of their skills and super senses based on traits awarded on the punch card! This may be done once students have returned to the classroom or school.

Traits:

Excellent Eyesight
Good Sense of Smell
Power/Strength
Sharp Talons or Claws
Fantastic Hearing
Stealth

Take some time to discuss what their animal would look and then once back in your own classroom, have the students design an animal with the traits they earned. If you'd like, have students draw their ultimate predators, and send us pictures at info@saskatoonzoosociety.ca

Possible Starting Locations
C= Zoo Entrance
D= Affinity Learning Centre/Discovery
Centre



Owl Tour Map

Stop 1 (Start Here): Bobcats

Leader Reads: Large cats like bobcats have excellent vision, especially at dusk or dawn, or in low light conditions. However, raptor vision is better! While our next animal also has fantastic vision, its eyes are fixed and cannot move. Solve this riddle to find out where our next stop should be.

I wear a snowy, silent cloak,
I hunt where others freeze or choke.
My eyes see well in darkest night,
I strike in silence - not in flight.
Whoooo am I?

Students Answer: Snowy Owl!

Leader Reads: (if students need more assistance in guessing, provide the choices **snowy owls** or **naked mole rats**)

(if students incorrectly choose naked mole rats) We've made a wrong turn!
Let's decode this raptor fact to continue on to the snowy owls.

Hawks have eyes that point forward like ours. This gives them _____ vision, which helps them judge distance. **Answer: binocular**

Have students close one eye and try to touch a distant object. Then use both eyes. Which is easier? This is binocular vision.

Leader Reads: (if students correctly choose **snowy owls**) You have now gained the **Excellent Eyesight Trait!**

Stop 2: Snowy Owls

Leader Reads: Snowy owls are silent, camouflaged hunters of the Arctic with excellent eye sight. But they also rely on other senses to help them hunt. One of their senses is actually really bad - owls can't really smell their prey at all! So, *whoooo* would have the better sense of smell, based on this riddle?

I'm slow but smart, I sniff with skill,
I smell my food beyond the hill.
My nose is keen, my eyesight poor,
I shuffle softly on the floor.

With quills I warn, I do not chase,
Who smells the best and wins the race?

Students Answer: African crested porcupines!

Leader Reads: (if students need more assistance in guessing, provide the choices **African crested porcupines** or **barn owls**)

(if students incorrectly choose barn owls) We've made a wrong turn! Let's decode this raptor fact to continue on to the porcupines.

True or False: Some owls have ears that are not in the same spot on both sides of their head. **True.** Why?

a) to look funny

b) to scare their prey

c) to hear better in all directions

Leader Reads: (if students correctly choose **African crested porcupines**)

You have now gained the **Good Sense of Smell Trait!**

Stop 3: African Crested Porcupines

Leader Reads: Porcupines may look slow, but their sense of smell helps them to find food and to protect them from danger. While porcupines have good noses, they are not the strongest animal out there. When it comes to strength, there is a clear winner in our next match up. Let's see if you can find the answer to this riddle...

I fly so high and dive so fast,
With piercing cry and wings so vast.
My talons grip with crushing might,
I snatch my prey mid-second flight.
My feathers shine, my gaze is bold,
Which bird is mighty, fierce, and gold?

Students Answer: Bald Eagles!

Leader Reads: (if students need more assistance in guessing, provide the choices **meerkats** or **bald eagles**)

(if students incorrectly choose meerkats) We've made a wrong turn! Let's decode this raptor fact to continue on to the bald eagles.

This part of a raptor's body is super strong and used to grab prey.

a) beak

b) talons

c) feathers

Leader Reads: (if students correctly choose **bald eagles**) You have now gained the **Power/Strength Trait!**

Stop 4: Bald Eagles

Leader Reads: Bald eagles have incredibly strong talons to grab their prey. In fact, they can squeeze hard enough with their feet and talons to crush bone - over 400 pounds of pressure per square inch! Which animal, based on this riddle, do you think has equally dangerous and helpful claws?

I move through snow on silent feet,
With spotted fur and stealthy beat.
I leap with strength, I stalk with grace,
My claws help me in a frozen place.
I do not fly - I climb rocks instead.
Who's the mountain's silent dread?

Students Answer: Snow leopard!

Leader Reads: (if students need more assistance in guessing, provide the choices **mountain goat** or **snow leopard**)

(if students incorrectly choose mountain goat) We've taken a wrong turn! Let's decode this raptor fact to continue on to the snow leopard.

Many raptors ride warm, rising air currents called _____ (E T R H L S A M)
to soar high without flapping their wings. **Unscrambled answer:**

Thermals

Leader Reads: (if students correctly choose **snow leopard**) You have now gained the **Sharp Talons or Claws Trait**

Stop 5: Snow Leopard

Leader Reads: Snow leopards have retractable claws and massive paws

for silent climbing and killing prey. Their deadly claws are a lot like raptor talons, and they have excellent eyesight too! But there is another animal here at the zoo that outcompetes even a snow leopard with its hearing. Our next animal hunts by sound and teamwork, and can hear its prey and its friends from miles away. Where are we headed next based on this riddle?

We howl beneath the moonlit sky,
Our ears are sharp, we hear, we spy.
We hunt in packs, we move with care,
Our prey may flee, but we are there.
Alone, we're strong, but with the crowd,
Our voices rise both fierce and loud

Students Answer: Wolves!

Leader Reads: (if students need more assistance in guessing, provide the choices **wolves** or **axolotl**)

(if students incorrectly choose axolotl) We've taken a wrong turn! Let's decode this raptor fact to continue on to the wolves.

The _____ (G E A L B D E A L) builds the largest nest of any other bird species in North America. The nest can be up to 9 feet long & 20 feet deep!

Unscrambled answer: Bald Eagle

Leader Reads: (if students correctly choose **wolves**) You have now gained the **Fantastic Hearing Trait!**

Stop 6: Wolves

Leader Reads: Just like many raptors rely on their hearing and sound to hunt (some can even hear their prey moving under the snow!), wolves hunt and find other pack members by using their fantastic ears. However, because wolves often communicate by howls that can be heard over long distances, they are not stealthy hunters like many of our raptors, especially owls which have silent flight. When it comes to stealth and sneaking up on prey, who might come out on top based on this riddle?

I never chase, I never roar,
I wait in stillness on the floor.

My tongue will taste what I can't see,
Then I strike - no time to flee.
I do not shout, I do not fly,
But watch your step, or you'll pass by.

Students Answer: Royal python!

Leader Reads: (if students need more assistance in guessing, provide the choices **royal python** or **Kunekune pig**)

(if students incorrectly choose Kunekune pigs) We've made a wrong turn!
Let's decode this raptor fact to continue on to the royal python.

True or False: Snowy owls can rotate their heads 270 degrees in both directions because they have 14 neck vertebrae instead of 7 neck vertebrae like humans do. **True**

Leader Reads: (if students correctly choose **royal python**) You have now gained the **Stealth Trait**!

Stop 7: Royal Python

Leader Reads: Royal pythons don't fly or chase after their prey. They wait - silent, still, and deadly. Pythons are ambush predators, so stealth is very important, much like how owls need to be silent flyers in order to catch their food.

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