

CASCADES RAPTOR CENTER

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Make a Papier-Mâché Owl

Owls are fascinating birds of prey. Many have extremely large eyes to help them see in low light conditions, and their beautiful feather patterns help camouflage them during the day. Making life-sized papier-mâché owls is fun and easy.

Materials

- Balloons of different sizes (larger balloons for larger owls)
- Long strips of newspaper
- Tempera Paint
- Flour
- Water

Procedure

1. First, students should pick an owl species to research. They should note the average size of the species and the specific color and markings of that species. Many libraries have bird field guides that could be used as a reference. The Cascades Raptor Center website (www.eraptors.org) lists many life history details for owl species found in Oregon. Once the students find their information, they can sketch a picture of the species as a guide for making their life-sized papier-mâché owl.
2. Now, have students tear stripes of paper that measure approximately 1" by 8". Using equal parts water and flour make a thick and creamy paste for applying the newspaper to the balloons. You may add more water or flour as needed.
3. Next, blow up the balloon to the appropriate size needed for the owl. This might require one student slowly blowing up the balloon while another student measures the balloon. Instruct students to be careful not to over-inflate the balloon and cause it to pop. Tie a knot in the balloon when it has reached the appropriate size.
4. Dip each strip of newspaper into the paste so that it is completely covered. Then stick the newspaper strip to the balloon continuing until the balloon is completely covered with newspaper.
5. Let the balloon dry completely overnight. Additional layers of newspaper may be added to give the owl more stability but it is important to let each layer dry completely.
6. Students can now paint their owls to look like their chosen owl species. Once the paint is dry students could add construction paper feet with raptor-like talons. Hang the owls from the ceiling or paint a habitat background scene on another piece of paper to display behind your owl. Habitat paintings could demonstrate how the owl is camouflaged in its habitat. Don't forget to add the owl's favorite prey species to the picture!