

First Record of Romanian Hamster *Mesocricetus newtoni* (Mammalia: Cricetidae) in South-East Bulgaria

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Abstract: Remains of the Romanian Hamster *Mesocricetus newtoni* were found in Eagle Owl (*Bubo bubo*) pellets in South-East Bulgaria (UTM square NG09). This new locality for the hamster species lies 50 km south-west of the nearest previously known locality in the Aitos Mountain. It is located in a region with a hilly relief, an altitude of 50-150 m and prevailing open habitats. In this area the Romanian Hamster is a rare prey of the Eagle Owl (0.11% of the total number of small mammals, n=896 ind.), which most probably reflects its low population density. A great variety of small mammals occur in this region: 28 species or 72% of all small mammals identified in Bulgaria. The great species richness results from the co-occurrence of Steppe, Mediterranean, Boreal and Nemoral species in the area. The region is suitable for inclusion in the National Ecological Net.

Key words: *Mesocricetus newtoni*, *Bubo bubo*, small mammal's community, South-East Bulgaria