

The Summer Diet of Barn Owl (*Tyto alba*) (Aves: Strigiformes) in the Southern Part of Danube Delta Biosphere Reserve

Attila D. Sándor

Natural Net Ltd., str. Pandurilor 100/5, Targu Mures, RO-540485, Romania; Tel/Fax: +40 365 422148; E-mail: adsandor@gmail.com

Abstract: The Barn Owl (*Tyto alba*) is a common nocturnal predator of agro-ecosystems and it is widely distributed, especially in European countryside. A first assessment of the diet and food selection was made for the Southern part of Danube Delta Biosphere Reserve, in the summer period, in a unique wetland-grassland complex, with large areas of steppes. Mammals dominated the diet spectrum, with the shrews (Soricidae) being the most frequent (49.4 %), followed by the mice (Muridae), and the voles (Arvicolinae). The mammalian component of diet is the most important also in terms of biomass (94.3%), the most important species is Sibling Vole (*Microtus epiroticus*) equaling 22.5% of all biomass consumed, followed by White-toothed Shrew (*Crocidura suaveolens*) and the Mound-building Mouse (*Mus spicilegus*). Birds, reptiles, amphibians and insects made up a small portion of the diet, both in terms of occurrence and of biomass. Eight species of birds were captured, the House Sparrow (*Passer domesticus*) being the most important. Two species of reptiles and at least four species of amphibians were recorded. Arthropods (at least 9 species) made up to 3.8% of the diet. The results suggest that the Barn Owl is a specialised feeder relying on small mammals and completing its diet with other prey only occasionally.

Key words: Barn Owl, *Tyto alba*, Histria, diet, summer, rodents, Soricidae, Danube Delta