

Long-eared Owl Pellet Analysis

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CRO File
L.E. OWL

Long-eared owl (Otus otus) pellets were collected in the Saratoga National Historical Park, Saratoga County, New York, on 17 December, 1983, on ²⁵February and 31 March, 1984. Pellets were collected under dense white pines which were used as a daytime roost site southwest of the Chatfield Farm, ^{and} about 200 m north of the southern tributary of Mill Creek. The pellets were analyzed by identifying skull pieces. Only upper jaw fragments were counted to avoid duplication.

Results:

Date	Number of Pellets Analyzed	Number of <u>Microtus</u>	Number of <u>Peromyscus</u>	Number of <u>Blarina</u>	Total
12/17/83 & 2/25/84 Combined	83	78	5 (all juvenile)	2	85
3/31/84	6	6	0	0	6
Total	89	84	5	2	91

Average Number of organisms/pellet = $\frac{91}{89} = 1.02$

Discussion

Since 92% of mammals eaten were Microtus, probably M. pennsylvanicus, it is most probable that the owls are hunting primarily in the fields. Bent (1961) states that long-eared owls

hunt in the open and roost in dense thickets. Errington (1932) found that in Wisconsin in fall, winter, and early spring, mammals made up 99% of the food, primarily mice. A comparison of Errington's data with those of this study is presented below.

% of Diet Comprised of:	<u>Errington</u>	<u>George</u>
<u>Microtus</u>	83.5 %	92.3 %
<u>Peromyscus</u>	15.2	5.5
<u>Blarina</u> (and other shrew species)	0.4	2.2
Other	0.9	0

Clark (1982) suggests that owls often cast one pellet at the day roost and one at night on the hunting grounds. If this is true for long-eared owls, then with an average of one skull per pellet and two pellets per day, long-eared owls are preying on two mammals a day.

References

1. Bent, A.C. 1961. Life Histories of North American Birds of Prey, Dover Publications, New York, 482pp

2. Clark, R. J. 1982. Owl Pellets, Carolina
Tips, Carolina Biological Supply Co., 45:21-22.
3. Errington, P. L. 1932. Food habits of southern
Wisconsin raptors. Part 1: Owls. Condor ¹⁷⁶⁻¹⁸⁶ 35: ~~17-27~~