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# Owls, pellets and ancient environment

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## Résumé

Originally, the Common Barn-owl (*Tyto alba*) had used to nest in rocks, but gradually it had adapted to cultural landscape. Long human occupation of the Nile Valley with an abundance of old and abandoned buildings have created almost optimal living space for this owl, which population density is still relatively high around the Egyptian Nile.

Owl's pellets are often used for the study of the owl's diet. They contain indigestible parts of prey and they are regurgitated usually every evening (before the hunting) at the same place, where an accumulation of the pellets can be created. As food opportunists, the barn owls hunt every appropriate prey; this ability is often demonstrated in arid areas, where the animals cannot be very selective about the diet.

Several assemblages originated in the ancient owl's pellets were analysed during the field works at the necropolis of Abusir (Egypt). Bones of rodents (mice and rats, gerbils and birds etc.), white-toothed shrews, bats, frogs, small birds, and other vertebrates, and even fragments of invertebrates were found during the analyses. Species composition of these assemblages give us not only information about the structure of the owl's diet, but also about the former environment. Moreover, in comparison with recent assemblages we can study changes and trends in both of these aspects.

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