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ALL ABOUT OWL DIET



WRCS

A Manual for Identification of Prey Remains from Owl Pellets

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Foreword

Owls constitute a vital part of the food web and trophic system of many ecosystems, including forests, woodlands, grasslands, wetlands, and even aquatic systems and urban environments. India has reason to boast of its major complement of 33 owl species that occupy essentially the full range of ecosystems from dry deciduous forests of teak and sal in North and Central India, to the complex wet evergreen forests of Western Ghats, to the hills of shifting cultivation in the Northeast, to arid desert grasslands of Rajasthan, to the remote archipelago of the Andaman Islands, and beyond.

But research and conservation are severely needed for a number of owl species in India whose ranges and populations are becoming restricted for a variety of reasons -- conversion of habitat to agricultural, forestry, and urban use; catching and selling of owls for traditional and some clandestine purposes; disruption of the food web and prey base; persecution based on local beliefs; changes in habitat conditions from shifts in weather and climate; and other factors. Understanding their food and dietary patterns is one vital key to knowing how and where to provide for their appropriate habitat conditions and amounts for their conservation and recovery.

The authors of this compendium on owl prey identification have provided a much-needed, practical guide to aid such research. Moreover, they have continued to also provide research on owls in the wild, demonstrating how diet plays an essential role in the distribution and continued coexistence of owl species, such as that of species of owlets occurring in central India, and of the genetics and population dynamics of the critically-endangered Forest Owlet, only recently rediscovered after thought for many decades to be extinct.

This volume will be of immense use to student and professional alike, as we continue the journey of ecological research, discovery and conservation.

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