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Contents of Owl Pellets

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# Notes and Discussion

## Contents of Owl Pellets

Homer F. Price

The following is a report on the contents of owl pellets personally taken in north-eastern Indiana and northwestern Ohio during the past four years.

Mr. Philip Moulthrop, assistant mammalogist at the Cleveland Museum of Natural History, has determined the contents of these pellets, while the writer has identified the pellets themselves. This was generally done by identifying the bird that flushed from the roost tree or vicinity of nest directly above the pellets.

Only two Ohio records are given as Mr. Moulthrop has or will prepare a paper on the Ohio pellets.

1. Great Horned Owl:—1 pellet collected in vicinity of Hoagland, Madison Township, Allen County, Indiana, May, 1938.  
*Sylvilagus floridanus mearnsii* (Cottontail Rabbit) ..... 1
2. Great Horned Owl:—several pellets in Mill Grove Township, Steuben County, Indiana, April 18, 1939.  
*Cryptotis parva* (Least short-tailed shrew) ..... 3  
*Peromyscus leucopus noveboracensis* (Deer mouse) ..... 6  
*Rattus norvegicus* (House rat) ..... 2  
*Sylvilagus floridanus mearnsii* ..... 1  
Small passerine birds ..... 2  
Starling ..... 1  
\*Quail or Hungarian Partridge (?) ..... 2
3. Northern Barred Owl:—several pellets in vicinity of Pleasant Mills, St. Marys Township, Adams County, Indiana, March 30, 1939.  
*Cryptotis parva* ..... 7  
*Blarina b. brevicauda* (Short-tailed shrew)..... 3  
*Peromyscus l. noveboracensis* ..... 5  
*Microtus p. pennsylvanicus* (Field mouse).....12  
Small bird (unidentified) ..... 1
4. Great Horned Owl:—several pellets 2 miles southwest of Aboite, Jackson Township, Huntington County, Indiana, April, 1940.  
*Sciurus hudsonicus loquax* (Red Squirrel) ..... 1  
*Sylvilagus floridanus mearnsii* ..... 1
5. Northern Barred Owl:—several pellets in vicinity of Aboite, Aboite Township, Allen County, Indiana, April 3, 1940.  
*Blarina b. brevicauda* ..... 2  
*Sciurus hudsonicus loquax* ..... 1  
*Microtus p. pennsylvanicus* ..... 6

\* Number 4 shot in pellet containing these remains would suggest game bird. The few bones were quail size.

<i>Rattus norvegicus</i> .....	1
* <i>Sylvilagus floridanus mearnsii</i> .....	1

I might mention that I failed to find the nest during a period of four years, and that my egg collection contains but fourteen sets of this species, taken during the past 27 years.

6. Short-eared Owl:—several pellets west of Edgerton, Jackson Township, Allen County, Indiana, April 1, 1940.

<i>Peromyscus maniculatus bairdii</i> (Prairie white-footed mouse) .....	5
<i>Peromyscus leucopus noveboracensis</i> .....	1

7. Barn Owl:—a number of pellets in Williams County, about one mile northwest of Evansport along the Tiffin River (Bean Creek), Ohio, May 14, 1939. These owls have nested in a large sycamore tree for at least 28 years. The tree measures seventeen feet and three inches in girth six feet above the ground. It is sixty-four feet up to the cavity which is large enough for a man to enter with ease. A formidable tree to climb.

<i>Cryptotis parva</i> .....	27
<i>Blarina b. brevicauda</i> .....	4
<i>Peromyscus maniculatus bairdii</i> .....	4
<i>Peromyscus leucopus noveboracensis</i> .....	5
<i>Microtus p. pennsylvanicus</i> .....	74
<i>Synaptomys cooperi stonei</i> (Cooper's Lemming Mouse) .....	1
<i>Mus musculus</i> (House mouse) .....	1
** <i>Sylvilagus floridanus mearnsii</i> .....	2

8. Barn Owl:—vicinity of Antwerp, Carvayall Township, Paulding County, Ohio, May 26, 1939.

<i>Cryptotis parva</i> .....	17
<i>Sorex cinereus cinereus</i> (Canada shrew) .....	1
<i>Blarina b. brevicauda</i> .....	1
<i>Peromyscus maniculatus bairdii</i> .....	6
<i>Peromyscus leucopus noveboracensis</i> .....	13
<i>Microtus p. pennsylvanicus</i> .....	37
<i>Mus musculus</i> .....	1
Mourning Dove .....	1

Mr. Moulthrop comments as follows, "Of interest are the large numbers of Least Short-tailed Shrews and the single record of the Canada Shrew in one of the Antwerp (Ohio) pellets. The pellets show that the Common Short-tailed Shrew (*Blarina*) is scarce out your way and that the Least Short-tailed Shrew (*Cryptotis*) is common. It is just the reverse in other parts of Ohio."

Williams County is in the northwestern corner of Ohio, while Paulding County borders Allen County, Indiana on the east.

\* "This is the first record we have for an *adult* rabbit as Barred Owl prey. Is there any chance that these might be Horned Owl pellets?"

The above comment is by Mr. Moulthrop. It is quite possible that there might have been one or two Horned Owl pellets mixed up with the Barred Owl pellets. Ordinarily I can distinguish between pellets of the two species. The pellets were taken at the base of a dead and hollow tree used for roosting by Barred Owls. I flushed Barred Owls from this tree several times in trying to find their nest.

\*\* Both very young.

PAYNE, OHIO.