



Conference Abstract

# Distribution, population density and habitat preferences of the Barn Owl (*Tyto alba*) in Sliven and Yambol districts, SE Bulgaria

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## Abstract

The Barn Owl (*Tyto alba* Gould, 1837) is a rare and endangered species in Bulgaria, included in the Red Data Book (Golemansky 2015) as “Vulnerable”, with national population estimated at 200–700 pairs. Barn Owl presence was surveyed using sound provocation during the night at 161 points in 52 small to medium-sized settlements in Sliven and Yambol districts (Thracian plain, SE Bulgaria). The studied territory was about 1190 km<sup>2</sup>. The habitats presented in a 3-km radius around the presence and potential absence points were statistically analysed. The species was found to be a quite common breeding species in the study area – a total of 56 Barn Owls were registered, at 50 points (31.1%), in 31 settlements (62% of all studied). Clear defensive behavior was observed against the source of the sound in many occasions. The average density of the population was 4.2 occupied territories / 100 km<sup>2</sup>. The occupied locations were situated mostly in settlements laying in deforested lowland areas (far from large forest patches), with flat or hilly relief, covered by agricultural lands, pastures and steppes. The number of presences was found to be scarce in villages along heavily used motorways. Traffic-caused mortality of Barn Owls is commented as a probable explanation.

## **Keywords**

Barn Owl, density, habitat preferences, sound provocation, defensive behaviour

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## **References**

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