

**FOOD HABITS AND PREY SPECIFICITY OF SPOTTED OWLET (*ATHENE BRAMA*  
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**R. Santhanakrishnan, A. Mohamed Samsoor Ali and U. Anbarasan**

Department of Zoology, Saraswathi Narayanan College,  
Perungudi, Madurai – 625 022, Tamil Nadu, India

**Corresponding Author Address**

**Dr. R. Santhanakrishnan**

Associate Professor, Department of Zoology, Saraswathi Narayanan College  
Perungudi, Madurai – 625022 Tamil Nadu, India. Mobile: +919443024377  
Email: rskbarnowl@yahoo.co.in

**ABSTRACT**

Food habits and prey specificity of Spotted Owlet (*Athene brama*) were studied in Madurai District, Tamil Nadu, India between 2007 and 2009 by analyzing their regurgitated pellets. A total of 4,181 pellets were analyzed and recorded 40,278 individual prey remains of various prey species. The number of preys per pellet varied from 1 to 31 with an overall mean prey of  $9.6 \pm 3.03$ . The analysis revealed that invertebrates were the most predominant prey (84.77%) followed by vertebrates (6.20%). Coleopteran insects (>40%) were the predominant prey items among invertebrates followed by Orthoptera (>33%). Reptiles and mammals were the vertebrate prey items which constituted 3.34% and 2.86% respectively. Mammalian prey species in the diet includes *Mus* spp., *Rattus rattus*, *Suncus murinus*, *Tatera indica*, *Bandicoota benghalensis* and micro chiropteran bats. Spotted Owlets consumed an estimated prey biomass of 8875.6g covering five mammalian species. Mammalian prey weight ranged from 5g (*Mus* spp.) to 84g (*Rattus rattus*) and they showed a preference to >68% in the 01-20g weight category.

**Keywords:** Coleoptera, Feeding, Invertebrates, Mammals, Spotted Owlet