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Heavy metal contamination in little owl (*Athene noctua*) and common buzzard (*Buteo buteo*) from northern Italy

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Abstract

In this study, two raptor species, the common buzzard (*Buteo buteo*) and the little owl (*Athene noctua*), were investigated for lead and cadmium concentrations, using liver, kidneys, pectoral muscle, sternum bone, and feathers. All the collected birds died at the Centro Recupero Rapaci of Lega Italiana Protezione Uccelli in Sala Baganza (Parma, Italy). They arrived alive at the Centro between November 1998 and November 1999 but died or were put to death as a consequence of injuries or other ailments. The results of the investigation do not show an excessive exposure to cadmium, whereas some interesting data have emerged in the case of lead. The concentration of the latter in the liver and in the bone of two little owls seem to suggest the possibility of chronic exposure. The high values found in one common buzzard, on the other hand, suggest an acute exposure and, probably, a case of lead shot ingestion.



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Keywords

Lead; Cadmium; Little owl; Common buzzard; Shot; Sentinel species

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