CAPE GRASS OWL *TYTO CAPENSIS* PELLET INDICATES A RANGE EXTENSION FOR THE VLEI RAT *OTOMYS SUNGAE* IN THE UDZUNGWA MOUNTAINS, TANZANIA

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During observations of a Cape grass owl *Tyto capensis* (A. Smith, 1834) in the Mtitu Valley of the Udzungwa Mountains, Tanzania, Liz Baker found pellets at the roosting site of a breeding pair. One pellet was collected for prey analysis. There is little specific information regarding the contents of owl pellets from this species within Tanzania. We report our observations here to contribute to the information regarding grass owls in eastern Africa.

*Tyto capensis* is extremely localised and uncommon in Tanzania. Of the more than 1 million records collected over 35 years for the Tanzania Bird Atlas, the species has been recorded a mere 31 times. It occurs in just 17 of the 350 quarter degree atlas squares (4.85%; Baker & Baker, Tanzania Bird Atlas, in prep.).

The breeding owls were first observed in the Mtitu vicinity on 30 January 2012 by Tanzania Bird Atlas field assistants Maneno Mbilinyi and Leons Mlawila. The pellets were found at noon on 9 February 2012 at the following locality: Iringa Region, Kilolo District, Udzungwa Mountains, Mtitu Valley, 8.21816°S, 35.79011°E, 1900 m. The habitat of Mtitu Valley is wet grassy marshland. The roosting site was about 200 m from the Mtitu River in a valley bottom consisting of wet grassland with many grass tussocks. The nearest habitat alteration, which was agriculture, was in a valley 0.5 km away. The roosting site was consistent with grass owl sites, in that it had tunnels within the grass leading outwards in different directions (Fry et al., 1988).

The pellet that was collected was 55 × 30 × 30 mm. The pellet was placed in water to facilitate the removal of the bony elements within. The remains of at least four species of vertebrates were identified within the pellet, including two mammals and two frogs. There were at least two frogs of different sizes (i.e. tibiofibula 17.0 mm vs. 9.7 mm in length), but we could not identify these to species level.

Based on the presence of only two sets of limb bones and unique cranial elements, we conclude that only two individual mammals were present in the pellet. Enough of the crania of the mammals was present to allow generic identification. One *Mus* Linnaeus, 1758 was identified based on the following tooth characteristics: a third upper molar that was significantly reduced in size relative to the other molars, and a first upper molar with the anterior lingual cusp set behind the middle and labial anterior cusps (and the mandible was 15