

Small mammal taphonomy: Intraspecific bone assemblage comparison between South and North American barn owl, *Tyto alba*, populations

Saavedra, Bárbara

Simonetti, Javier A.

Actualistic studies of small mammal taphonomy usually describe interspecific bone patterns of contemporary agents of bone deposition. These studies assume that each agent produces one specific bone pattern. Here we examine intraspecific bone patterning for bone assemblages produced by different barn owl, *Tyto alba*, populations. We analyse bone completeness and fragmentation patterns produced by this raptor between three Chilean and four North American localities. We found that the barn owl produces variable completeness and fragmentation patterns, suggesting that different raptor populations produce different bone assemblages. Our results suggest a different approach to the study of small mammal taphonomy, and that we should direct our efforts towards describing the variance associated with bone patterns. We should focus our attention on the processes that generate bone assemblages and their associated variability, emphasizing physiological and ecological causes. © 1998 Academic Press