

Mate exchange in the barn owl *Tyto alba*

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In another paper in this issue (KNIPRATH & STIER: Schleiereule *Tyto alba*: Mehrfachbruten in Südniedersachsen) the different strategies in double breeding in the barn owl in the study area of the authors have been described. In this area in the year 2007, an especially successful year for the barn owls, by ringing of all participants the combination of more than one of these strategies has been registered leading in the result to an exchange of the mate between the two partners.

In each of two neighbouring villages with three and respectively four barn owl nest boxes there has been an early brood (of the pairs ROTTRAUT / ROBERT and RIKE / ORNATUS). The distance of the two broods measured 1.4km. Nearly 20 days after finishing her brood with ROBERT (about day 119 after egg laying) ROTTRAUT laid the first egg of her brood with ORNATUS. About 92 days after egg laying of her first brood (with ORNATUS), what means already before the regular end of that one, RIKE began her second brood (with ROBERT).

We may imagine the sequence like this: After finishing her brood with ROBERT, ROTTRAUT deserted him and their common chicks (divorce). She allowed ORNATUS in the next village to court her in his "second box". Indeed, in his "first box" there were still his chicks with RIKE. For ROTTRAUT this brood was a normal second brood. In this brood the first egg was laid on July 6th. This day was day 84 in the brood of ORNATUS with RIKE. So for ORNATUS this was a case of a late bigyny: His brood with RIKE not yet had been finished.

But then RIKE deserted ORNATUS (divorce) and the chicks of her first brood. She moved to the next village to ROBERT, whose chicks with ROTTRAUT already had fledged. So these two could perform their second brood in the box of the first brood of ROBERT (astonishing, as of course this box was polluted, and as there were still three free boxes in that village). Egg laying there had begun on July 15th. This day was the 95th one after egg laying of the first brood of RIKE. If we count in that this egg laying was preceded by some 14 days of courtship and for RIKE for regenerating her reserves, this brood for her too was a divorce-second-brood. Indeed, with high certainty during this fortnight she did not joint her first brood. For ROBERT this brood with RIKE has been a regular second brood. His first brood had ended some 20 days before.