First Record of Muskrat *Ondatra zibethicus* (Mammalia: Arvicolidae) in South Bulgaria

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**Abstract:** Remains of the Muskrat (*Ondatra zibethicus*) were found in Long-legged Buzzard (*Buteo rufinus*) nest in South Bulgaria (UTM square NH60). This new locality for the Muskrat is located near the town of Yambol, the Tundzha River and its feeder the Mochuritsa River. Parts of the two rivers and several small artificial lakes are overgrown by aquatic plants that are suitable habitats for Muskrat. The distance from around 130 km between the new locality and the known distribution in North Bulgaria without any contact between the Tundzha River and the Danube River with its feeders eliminates the possibility for the natural spreading of the Muskrat in the vicinity of the town of Yambol.

**Key words:** *Ondatra zibethicus, Buteo rufinus*, Bulgaria

The Muskrat (*Ondatra zibethicus* (LINNAEUS, 1758)) was introduced in Bulgaria in the Srebarna Lake on the Danube River (Silistra district) in 1956. Its natural spreading along the Danube River and its feeders is also supposed. The current distribution of the Muskrat encompasses rivers and lakes in North Bulgaria, with watersides covered by aquatic plants ([Peshev et al.](#) 2004).

A left semimandible of a Muskrat (*Ondatra zibethicus* (Linnaeus, 1758)) was discovered in the food remains from a Long-legged Buzzard (*Buteo rufinus* (Cretzschnar, 1827)) nest on 29.05.2007. Its distal and proximal parts are damaged and the incisor is missing. There are only the first two molars, which are not in a good state of preservation. The determination of the semimandible is according to the alveolar pattern with two roots of the molars (Görner, Hackethal 1987). It is possible to measure only the alveolar length of the molars $LaM_1-M_2 = 12$ mm. The mandible belongs to an adult individual.

The nest of the Long-legged Buzzard is located near the town of Yambol not far from the Tundzha River and its feeder the Mochuritsa River (UTM square MH60, the elevation 130 - 150 m a. s. l.). Parts of the two rivers and several small artificial ponds formed in the sand-pit are overgrown by aquatic plants. They correspond to the suitable habitats for Muskrats, reported by Peshev et al. (2004). The new locality lies around 130 km south of the nearest known area of its distribution in North Bulgaria. The Tundzha River does not contact with the Danube and its feeders. That is why I suppose the Muskrat comes from a private collection in the region and its breeding here is probable.

**References**


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