THE BARN OWL

Barn owls are medium-size owls (about the size of a crow) with big heads and long legs. The head is large because barn owls have sensitive eyes for seeing in the dark and large ears to hear the faintest sound made by their prey.

Barn owls are found all over the world. They are able to live in forests and deserts, but they are most often found around fields and pastures because that is where they find their favorite food—rodents.

Barn owls sleep and rest all day, never going out until after dark. They are nocturnal, meaning they are active only at night. Night is the time when mice, voles, and gophers are active as well, so if there is a barn owl around, the little rodents are in danger.

Barn owls fly slow and low, looking and listening for voles. Their flight is absolutely silent. When they spot a vole, they drop on it and capture it in their talons, or claws. They then swallow their catch whole. A single barn owl may catch twenty or more mice in one evening, especially if there are young owls at the nest that need to be fed.

All owls have an interesting way of dealing with their food. After digesting the nutritious parts of the small animals they eat, they regurgitate (bring up from the stomach) all of the undigested parts in a tidy little pellet. The pellet is composed of the bones, teeth, and fur of the animals they eat. Sometimes a pellet will be composed of the remains of a single rodent, and sometimes there may be several animals rolled into one.

Because barn owls don't tear their prey to pieces, there is always a complete skeleton of at least one rodent in every pellet. Every bone from the skull to the last tip of the tail bone will be there. A good observer with a little patience will be able to find and identify all of the bones in a skeleton.

Barn owls do live in barns, but they also live in holes in trees, cracks in cliffs, and burrows in cliffs. They find humans to be good company because of the large numbers of mice that live around cultivated fields and in barns. Next time you are near a field or pasture at dusk, keep your eyes open for a big white slow-flying bird—the barn owl.

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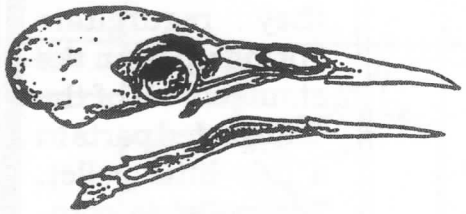
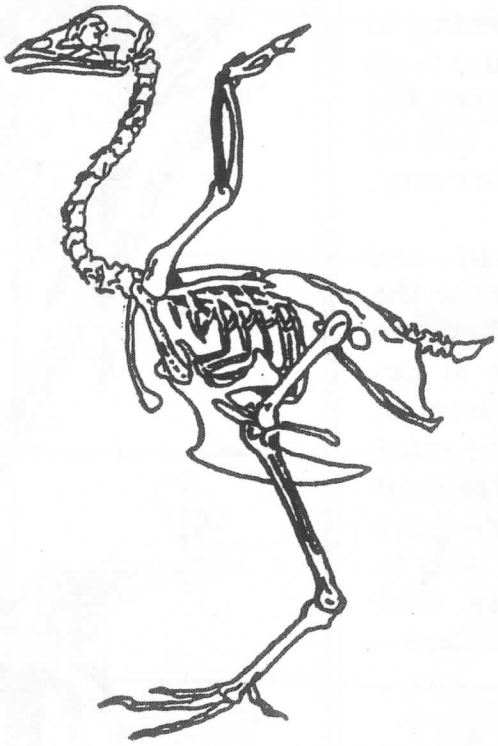
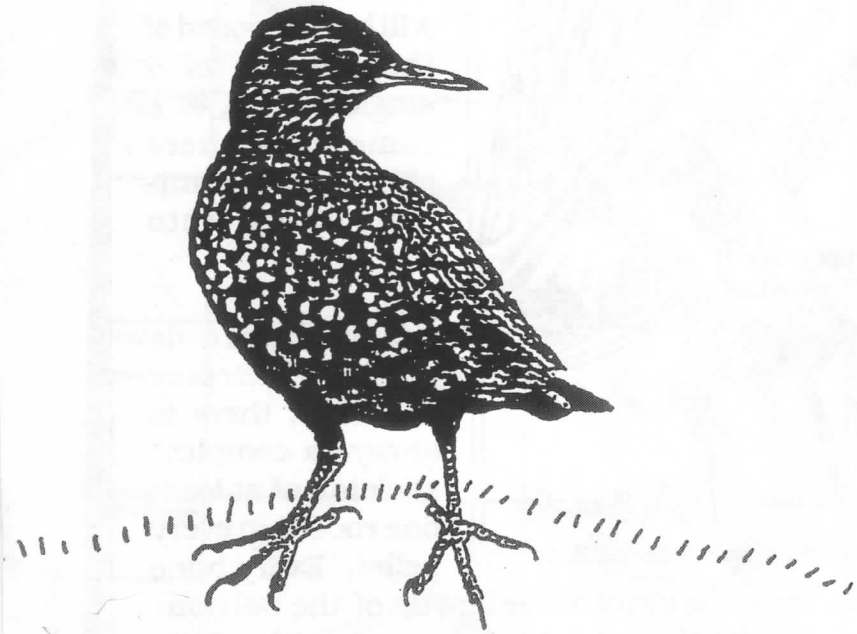
Starling

Bird Skeleton







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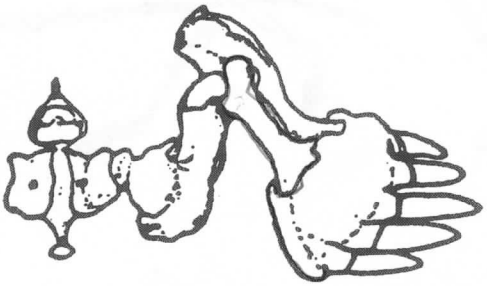
Mole

Skeleton



Forelimb

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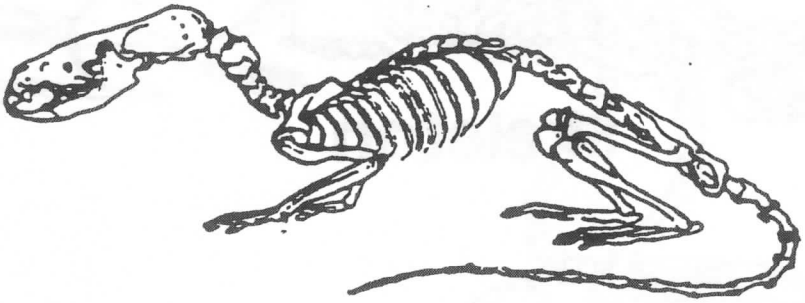
Shrew



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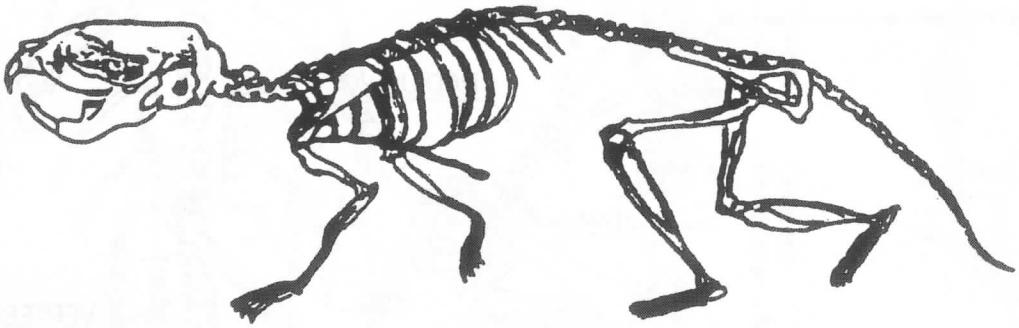
Vole



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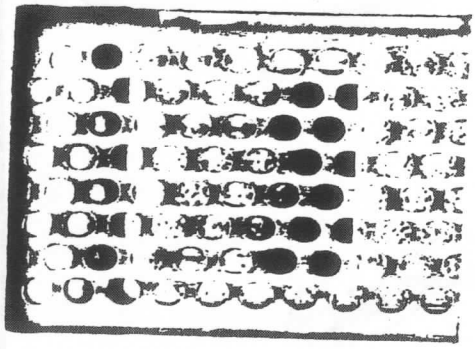

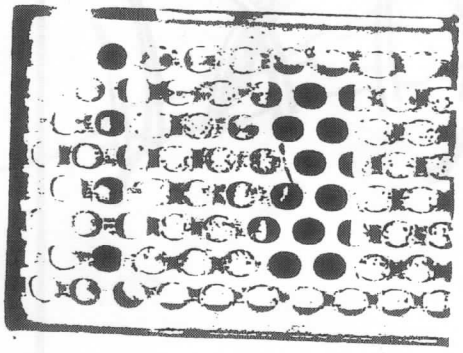

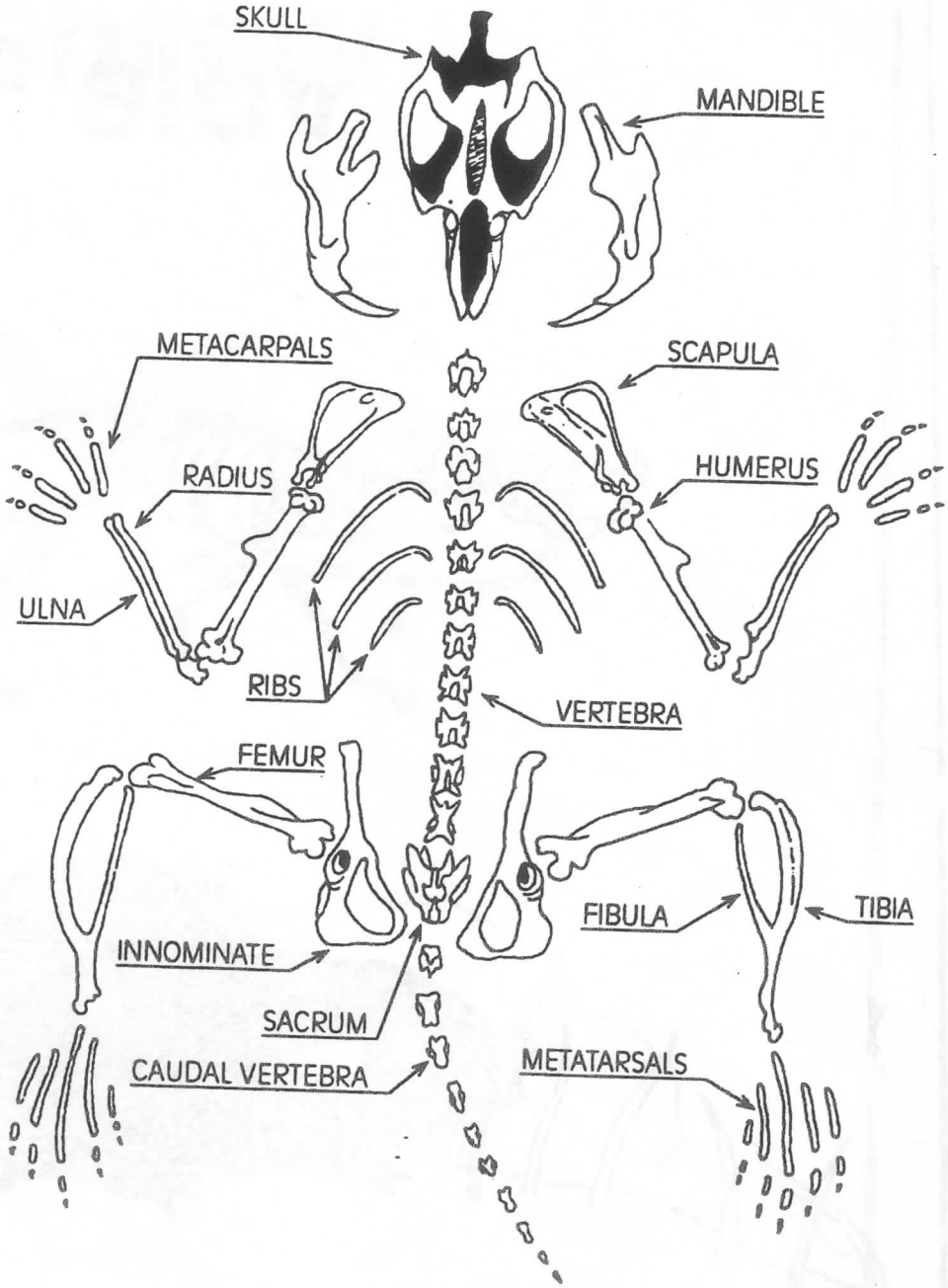

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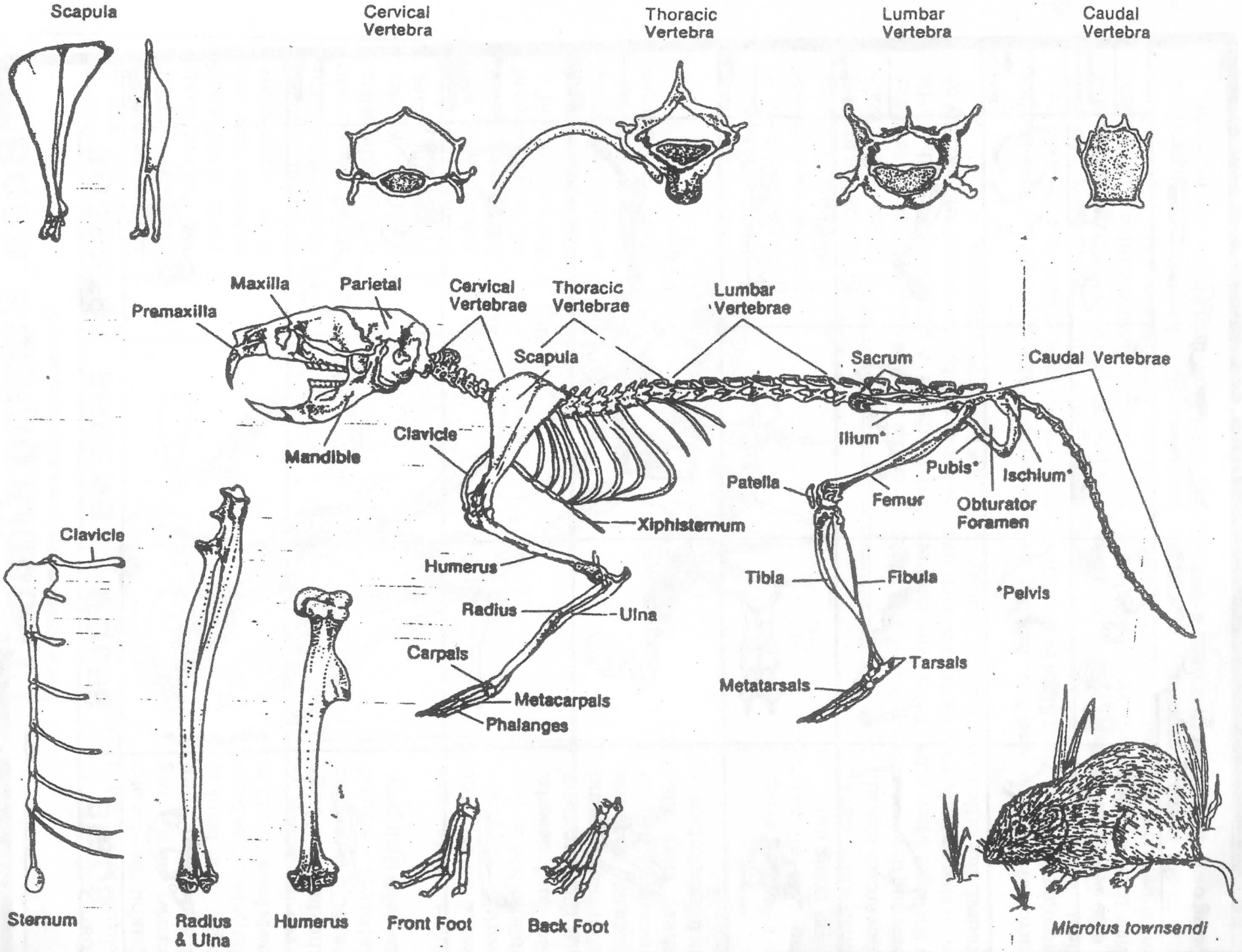
Scapula
Cervical Vertebra
Thoracic Vertebra
Lumbar Vertebra
Caudal Vertebra
Premaxilla
Maxilla
Parietal
Cervical Vertebrae
Thoracic Vertebrae
Lumbar Vertebrae
Scapula
Sacrum
Caudal Vertebrae
Mandible
Clavicle
Ilium*
Pubis*
Ischium*
Patella
Femur
Obturator Foramen
Xiphisternum
Humerus
Tibia
Fibula
*Pelvis
Radius
Ulna
Carpals
Tarsals
Metatarsals
Metacarpals
Phalanges
Clavicle
Sternum
Radius & Ulna
Humerus
Front Foot
Back Foot
Microtus townsendi

Vole

Bone Sorting Chart

	RODENTS	SHREWS	MOLES	BIRDS
Skulls				
Jaws	Loose Teeth			
[illegible]				
[illegible]				
Hips				
Hind Legs				
Assorted ribs				
Assorted vertebrae				

CATERPILLAR LARVAE AND COCOONS

CATERPILLAR DROPPINGS

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