

Non-destructive Methods to Determine the Diets of Birds

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We discuss a variety of methods of collecting information on the diets of birds, including observation, examination of faeces, emetics and stomach-flushing. Stomach-flushing is described in detail. We believe it has certain advantages over other methods; it samples food from the upper parts of the gut before most digestion has occurred and incurs very low mortality. Advantages over collection of birds are that the same individuals can be resampled and birds that are being studied ecologically and behaviourally can also be sampled. It also overcomes the ethical objections to killing large numbers of birds.

Identification and analysis of samples are briefly discussed.