

Changes in the feeding behavior and habitat use of The Desert Hedgehog *Paraechinus aethiopicus* (Ehrenberg 1832), in Saudi Arabia

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Abstract

Due to the urbanization and human invasion of the natural environments, a great deal of changes have occurred on the food composition and feeding ecology of several animals especially those are sharing humans their habitats in fields, wadis and gardens. The Desert Hedgehogs *Paraechinus aethiopicus* populations inhabiting different localities in Saudi Arabia were studied by using stomach contents analysis between February 2015 and October 2019. Precise analysis of 55 stomach contents of hedgehogs showed that the food of The Desert Hedgehogs *Paraechinus aethiopicus* is highly diverse and highly influenced with effect of humans on the environment includes cooked rice, insects, plant materials, egg shells, worms, garbage and remains of mammals and birds. Diet composition showed seasonal variations that are apparently associated with changes in the availability of different food items. The present results clearly showed that The Desert Hedgehogs *Paraechinus aethiopicus* is a generalist animal, capable of adapting to a great variety of dietary compositions in the study sites.

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