

Barn Owl *Tyto alba*: three siblings and seven generations

by Ernst Kniprath & Susanne Stier-Kniprath

If in a single year three sisters breed very successfully this is worth being mentioned. And if additionally they before had survived a winter, which at least in central Europe had been very detrimental, we indeed should do so.

In the county of Northeim in Lower Saxony, Germany, in 2009 we had the brood of Tanja and Sammy, who succeeded in producing four fledgelings. Three of these were recovered 2010 as breeders in the region. As there were quantities of voles, all three produced a second brood. Two of these second broods were divorce-second-broods, each

with a new ♂, the third one was a normal second brood with the previous ♂. All five ♂ involved were immigrants. One of the three sisters had 13 and the other two ones 14 young, altogether 41, what means one third of all fledgelings of that year in the study area.

When controlling the descent of the three sisters we found that in this kinship we at least partly know seven generations (fig. 1). All parent birds involved in these twelve broods had been controlled, twelve of them were immigrants, eight were own recruits and the last four ones were found

twice as second breeders (Ulf and Ursel had a second brood as pair).

These twelve broods were found at altogether nine places within a radius of less than 5.5 km.

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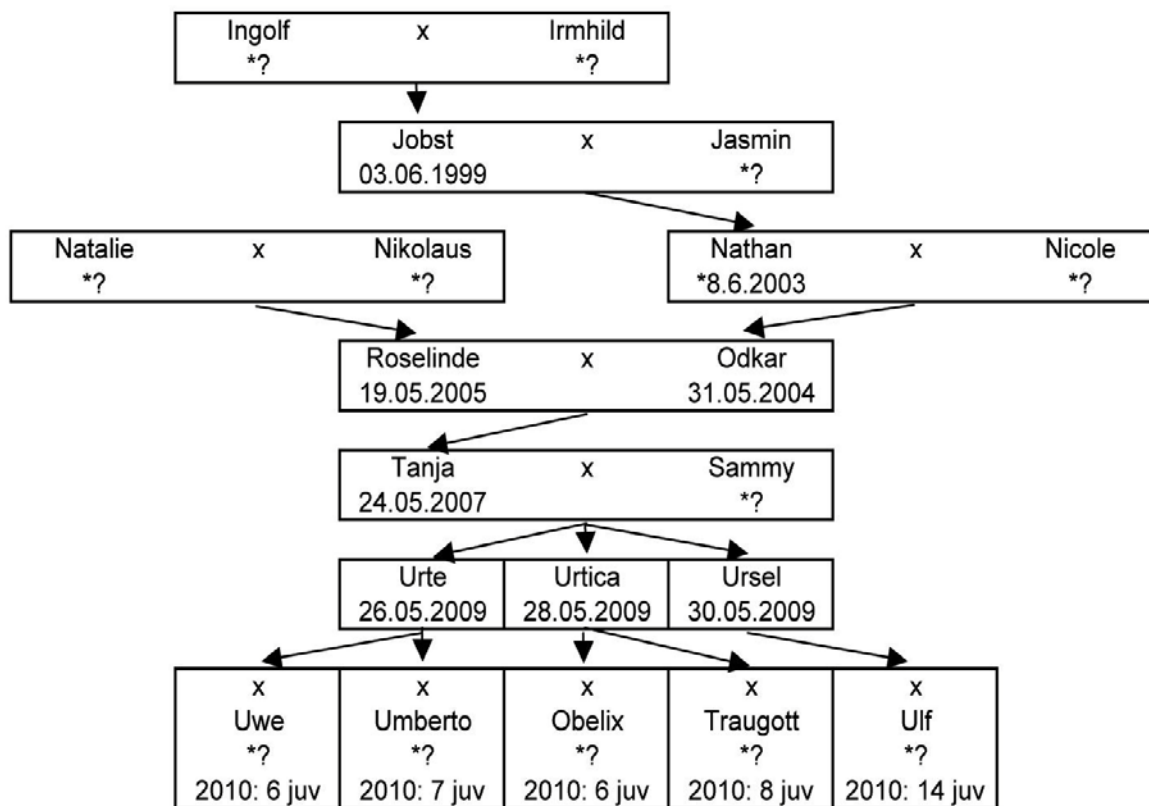


Figure 1: The descent and the offspring of three barn owl siblings (♀)

