



### Welcome to Feedback

You may have noticed that this issue of "Feedback" the Trusts bi-annual newsletter seems a little heavier than usual - that's because it is! We've increased the size from 12 to 16 pages in order to provide you with more "feedback" and information. We have articles on "The habitat requirements and diet of breeding Barn Owls in Devon and Cornwall," Recycling, Snow, and one from our student field-worker. News of the Devon Barn Owl Survey, the Barn Conversion Research Project and of this years Cornwall Barn Owl Survey is also included. "Friends" have produced a Barn Owl Trust puzzle page (a first) which we hope you'll enjoy.

Feedback is produced to keep Friends and supporters in touch with our work and reflects the Trusts aims and philosophies. We would be interested to receive any "feedback" from you on the content of this newsletter or news/photographs of your projects relating to either Barn Owls or the Trust. In this issue we have a feature called "Help," (pages 8 & 9) which outlines the needs and requirements of the Barn Owl Trust and suggests ways in which our "Friends" can become practically involved in helping the Trust to sustain its development. Much of the energy that keeps the Trust active and able to achieve so much



*This Owl was photographed by Friend of the Trust Angie Broadberry. It is carrying food into a church tower in Norfolk. See item on page 2.*

comes from volunteers who give their time in a huge variety of ways to support our work. Could you do something? We hope that this newsletter will

encourage you to continue to support the Barn Owl Trust and to "do your bit" for the environment, after all.... Together we can make a difference! Good Luck.

# News

## **OWLS IN THE BELFRY!**

Angie Broadberry is a Church Warden in Norfolk. Her church has resident Barn Owls and she contacted the Trust in 1993 for advice as they needed to make plans for extensive repairs to the tower and thatch. A box and platform have since been provided for the Owls to encourage them to stay put during the renovations. We were delighted when Angie sent us a copy of her recorded observations of the Owls and a selection of photographs taken of the Owls entering and leaving the Church. Angie noted that all the photographs of the owl carrying food showed it using its right foot.. She writes *"When our congregation is small I often think there are TWO MORE in the roof (our OWLS)! They are the only ones who are allowed to sleep through the sermon!"*

## **UPDATE ON BARN OWL RELEASE LICENSING SCHEME.**

During 1993 the first year of Barn Owl release under licence some 150-200 information packs were distributed by the Department of the Environment, 78 licences were issued for the release of 527 Barn Owls nation wide. The "Code of Practice," for release operators has been re-entitled "Guidelines," and the Department of the Environment are currently receiving applications for Barn Owl releases during 1994. The address for a copy of "Guidelines for the Release of Captive Bred Barn Owls in Britain," and a licence application form is - Wildlife

Licensing Section, Department of Environment, Room 809, Tollgate House, Houlton Street, BRISTOL, BS2 9DJ.

## **NATIONAL BARN OWL SURVEY.**

The British Trust for Ornithology and The Hawk and Owl Trust are preparing for a new national Barn Owl survey to take place during 1995, 96 and 97. This year is being used as a Pilot year to determine whether the proposed methods for the full survey are the right ones. The methodology was discussed at length at a recent meeting of the Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC) Barn Owl Liaison Group in Peterborough. A number of concerns were expressed about the proposed methods which have still to be addressed. However the Survey in some shape or form will go ahead as funding has been secured. Approximately 350 volunteer fieldworkers will be asked to intensively search 25 square kilometres of countryside each, three times a year for the next three years. The amount of effort required to search an area will depend largely on the number of potential Barn Owl sites available. In some parts of the country 4 or 5 days may suffice. Searches in the West Country however are likely to take between five and fifteen days per 25 sq. km. If you are interested in country walking, have transport and an interest in owls you may like to take part. If so please contact the Trust for further details and we will pass your name onto the survey organisers.

## **BOOKS FOR SALE.**

"Care for the Wild" a registered charity based in Sussex have made a £100 donation to the Trust and provided us with copies of the book, "Care for the Wild," by WJ JORDAN and JOHN HUGHES, to sell for fund raising purposes. These paperback books are available from the Trust at £4.95 p+p free.

## **BOOK NEWS**

Those of you who like photographs of Barn Owls may well be interested to hear of a childrens book with excellent pictures. A Family of Owls by Manfred Rogl and Wolfgang Epple was first published in Germany in 1988 and then by A C Black in England. The book has large clear print and superb colour photographs and tells the reader about the courtship, hunting, breeding, hatching and rearing of Barn Owls. Advertised at £6.95 the book is currently available at £3.50 and can be ordered from good bookshops. ISBN no 0-7136-3124-4.



*This young Cornish Owl was caught posing in the ivy by Mrs P. House.*

# BOT News

## CORNWALL BARN OWL SURVEY

The Barn Owl Trust and the Cornwall Birdwatching and Preservation Society are conducting a joint Barn Owl survey in Cornwall during 1994.

Anyone interested in participating should contact the Trust.



### NOTICE

Attention all Barn Owls in

### CORNWALL

Please ask anyone you fly past to phone the

Barn Owl Trust on

**0364 653026**

to report your 1994 roosting or breeding site.

*A six figure map reference would be much appreciated.*

*Thank You*

## AVIARY BUILDING

The Trusts project to rebuild the main aviary block was completed in November 1993 and we now have 23 owls residing in its three sections. Thanks go to the Jean Sainsbury Charitable Trust the Marchig Charitable Trust and the R.S.P.C.A. for funding the project and to all the volunteers who helped with the building. Special thanks must go to South Devon Conservation Volunteers, West Devon Conservation Volunteers, Dereck Crocker, Di Smurthwaite and Mike Wallsh for all their efforts. The stone wall in front of the aviary is due to be rebuilt by volunteers later this year.

## TRUST VIDEO FOR SCHOOLS

Barn Owl Trust school visits have been happening since 1989. Moon the Trusts tame Barn Owl is almost 6 years old and has accompanied David Ramsden our Conservation Officer on almost 200 visits to schools in Devon, Cornwall and Somerset.

In order to spread the conservation message further the Trust has been working with students from Plymouth College of Art and Design and children from Lanherne Preparatory School to produce a video of a Barn Owl Trust school visit suitable for sending to schools where a personal visit isn't practical. The video is aimed at primary school children and will be accompanied by a teachers pack. Like the school visits the video will tell the children a story of the Barn Owls on a particular farm and how they have been affected by the changes to the countryside since the last war. The video and teachers pack will be available for hire from the Trust from September 1994. Please send

an SAE marked BOT VIDEO, for more details.

## LEGACY LEAFLETS

Our legacy leaflets are at the printers as I write. Many thanks to those of you who responded to Simons request for names of solicitors who might be prepared to take them, we would be pleased to hear of any others. The decision to produce and to process the design of a leaflet of this sort has been long and slow. However, we are very pleased with the finished product and are extremely grateful to artist Andrew Miller who's artwork makes it extremely attractive.

## RESTORING THE BALANCE

Our folded Barn Owl Trust leaflet has been re-designed and updated. This leaflet now incorporates details of the Friends scheme. If you have a Barn Owl Trust leaflet dispenser the new leaflets are now available. Thanks to Paul Adams our multi talented illustrator for his assistance.



*The Trusts new aviary block.*



## RECYCLING.



Most people reading this newsletter will be aware that the Barn Owl Trust has an interest in recycling. Indeed until the summer of 1993 we ran our own community recycling point here at Waterleat and collected tins, paper and stamps. The provision of newspaper banks and canbanks by private companies and local authorities has increased dramatically over the past few years and this means that there is no longer the need locally for US to provide this service. Our recycling shed is now used for storing nestboxes and the like. We continue to run the aluminium recycling scheme for schools and to collect recycling credits from friends of the Trust and volunteers who recycle their own waste. Margaret Crocker has taken the post of voluntary BOT recycling officer. She writes...

Reduce, Re-use, Recycle are words we often read. Recycling is a very emotive subject, one which causes passionate debate of environmental and economic issues, the ethics are quite straight forward if we want a cleaner, greener land.

Incineration is not the answer to waste disposal, not only does it give off toxic fumes, it also encourages the human race to consume more (rather than reduce) if they know such waste is easily disposed of. Landfill sites are unsightly when in use and when full often emit dangerous gasses for many years. It is becoming difficult to find new sites to replace full ones. The cost of disposing of waste is

rising and is of course eventually paid for by us, the consumer/users. Rumours abound that recycling is not always economically efficient - that producing new items can cost less than recycling. Even if it is not economically viable to recycle it is more environmentally sound to reuse our waste than it is to continue to use the earth's natural resources, many of which are not replaceable and which inevitably will one day run out. Many waste items can be re-used given a little thought. It takes so little personal energy to collect recyclable items and dispose of them in the relevant can, paper, bottle banks etc. Many local councils are now rapidly increasing their facilities and are working with the recycling companies. In some towns and cities now there are wellington boot banks, these boots are reduced to granules to produce new boots, fencing stakes etc. A sound use for otherwise bulky waste items. Car battery and waste engine oil sites are also provided as are Salvation Army banks for unwanted clothing which will be re used thus helping others. Reprocessing some products is very energy efficient when compared to processing the original raw materials. A 25% energy saving on glass, 50% on paper and a massive 90% plus on aluminium cans.

Facilities for plastic recycling lag way behind other kinds of waste, one of the main reasons for this we are told is because of the cost of storage and transportation of lightweight items. The answer, one would have

thought would be to build more recycling plants thus reducing the cost of transportation or to insist that supermarkets become responsible for collecting and transporting plastics to recycling plants. Surely, the responsibility for recycling should lie with the manufacturers and supermarkets, who seem to encourage over packaging. Ideally they should work together to reduce unnecessary packaging. We the consumers, should refuse to accept boxes within boxes, and two, three or four layers of plastic, tin, foil etc. and individual packaging within multipacks. We must voice our opinion and lobby the manufacturers and suppliers and encourage them to reduce unnecessary packaging or risk losing the custom of responsible consumers. The supermarkets some of which do supply recycling facilities must go further and supply all the relevant recycling banks.

Pause and think when you purchase goods. Do you need to buy packeted goods when you could buy them loose. Think how much paper goes into making tea bags, how many trees globally get felled over a year to satisfy human convenience? What raw materials are needed to make modern consumer goods and what we are doing to our planet by taking these materials? Our grandparents managed with far less, CAN'T WE! If we do really need them lets *Remember Reduce, Re-use, Recycle* and if in doubt *Refuse*, and by doing this we are helping to protect our environment.

Margaret Crocker



## BOT News

### **BARN CONVERSION RESEARCH PROJECT.**

In many parts of the country there is a real shortage of old barns for birds to roost and breed in. Traditional barns were constructed to suit a way of farming which has virtually disappeared. When no longer useful

agriculturally "old" barns are normally demolished, left to decay, or converted into homes for people. The Barn Conversion Research Project which the Trust began in 1990 aims to assess the effect of barn conversion on local Barn Owl populations. The field work for this project was carried out between April 1990 and December 1993. A total of 863 buildings have been surveyed to assess overall site availability (how many potential breeding and roosting sites are there per area). A further 904 buildings and 26 hollow trees have been searched three times a year within 20 Barn Owl study areas in order to assess the overall effect in each area of the loss of occupied sites.

Our Conservation Officer who carried out the field work is now office bound until a full report has been produced which should be ready by July 1994. The next issue of Feedback will feature an article based on the research - the first of its kind.

In future years as a result of this research local authority planning officers throughout the UK will have a much better understanding of the effect of their decisions and the likely benefit of future conditions on planning permission where Barn Owls are present.

### **NEW RESIDENTS**

Among the casualties the Trust has received since the last issue of Feedback are four Owls that have not recovered from their injuries well enough to be released and will remain here as residents.

"Pylon," a Barn Owl was found with a broken wing underneath electricity pylons (hence the name) and Rame (Barn Owl) was discovered hung on a wire fence with wing damage. Tintah another Barn Owl came to us with an amputated wing and has adapted to his disability and settled into our disabled owls aviary well.

Rhodes (the Tawny Owl) arrived with injuries to both wings and is not flying sufficiently well to be released. Brent "the hedgehog," is gaining weight and has been moved out of his box in the bird room to a house with a run to acclimatise him to the world again prior to being returned to the garden he was "rescued from."

### **SPONSORED WALK**

What are you doing on Bank Holiday Monday 30th May? Would you like to join us for our third annual sponsored walk?

We are returning to the Flete Estate in the beautiful South

Hams area of Devon on Bank Holiday Monday, 30th May for our 3rd Annual Sponsored Walk. Last years walk on the private estate was a great success raising over £1,000 for the Trust and was very much enjoyed by the walkers. This years walk will take participants through the woodland to the west of the river Erme along the old carriage track to the picnic area (3.25miles) below Flete Castle. There is then a choice of three routes back to the starting point. Route 1 - back the same way (6.5 miles).

Route 2 - a walk down the east side of the estuary through watermeadows to a foot bridge and back along the original route (7 miles).

Route 3 - walk through woodland on the east side of the estuary to the beach and across the river by paddling at the marked point (8 miles).

The first stage of the walk to the picnic area is fairly suitable for pushchairs. For those that may wish to participate but can only manage a short distance a shuttle service back to the starting point can be arranged if we know in advance.

We hope you'll come along and join us for the day. For more details please send an SAE. Registration charge is £2 per adult, 50p per child.

*Rosie Waine and Elizabeth Elford represent the Trust at Devon Association of Resources for Teachers Conference and Exhibition.*



## THE HABITAT REQUIREMENTS AND DIET OF BREEDING BARN OWLS IN DEVON AND CORNWALL.

Jon Blount is a student of Rural Resources Management at the Seale-Hayne faculty of the University of Plymouth. In part fulfillment of this degree course, he has undertaken an in-depth study of the Barn Owl. He writes...

In response to the worrying mortality figures for released captive-bred Barn Owls, the Department of the Environment's (DoE) has attempted to raise standards by publishing a *Code of Practice* for release operators (see article in Feedback issue number 10). This document states that any proposed release area must contain at least 50 hectares (ha) of "prey rich," rough grassland within a one kilometre (km) radius of the nest. However, no scientific evidence is given to support this figure, and I suspect that it is rather high, and probably unrealistic.

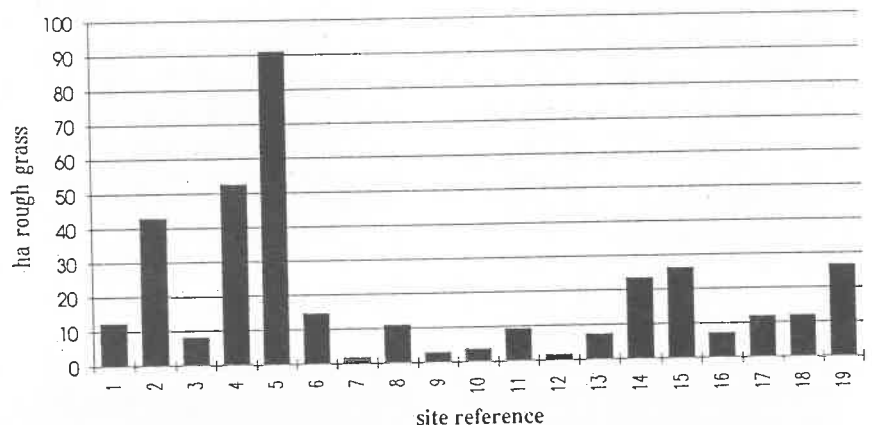
With this background, I set out to gather information on what habitats wild Barn Owls were actually using in the local area. The real test of the food-providing quality of a habitat (how many prey species it supports) is whether Barn Owls choose to breed there; if they do breed then the supply of small mammals or other prey must be adequate, and conversely, the absence of breeding *may* be attributed to poor food supply. In my quest for breeding owls I searched through Barn Owl Trust records and conducted my own original data collection in the field.

Habitats were mapped and

farmers interviewed from East Devon to West Cornwall - some 19 sites in all. Land-use ranged from very arable, to very pastoral, to very traditional (lots of rough grass), and even a few very residential areas. The results confirmed my suspicions: only 2/19 breeding sites had in excess of 50 ha of rough grass within a 1 km radius of the nest; they ranged from just 2 ha to some 91 ha, and the average area was just over 19 ha (see Table).

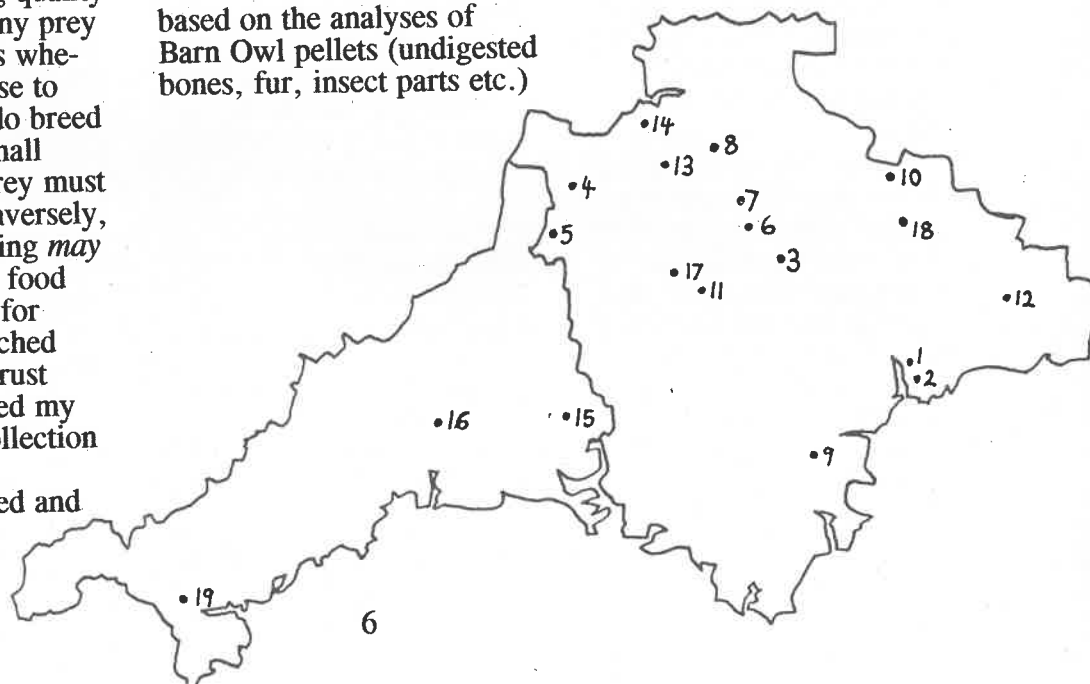
we know that the Barn Owl is a very opportunistic feeder. When the favoured prey of field vole and common shrew are less available, other secondary prey species become more important. I looked in detail at the nest material of five breeding sites, and determined the breeding season diet from the food remains therein. The results have been subjected to rigorous statistical testing, and compared with other diet studies from the Westcountry. The pattern is

Hectareage of rough grass within a 1 km radius of nest (sites 1-19)



These results beg the question *how can Barn Owls survive (and even breed!) where the habitat appears to be so marginal?* The second half of my study has attempted to address this issue. From numerous diet studies based on the analyses of Barn Owl pellets (undigested bones, fur, insect parts etc.)

very significantly similar for all sites, with the field vole almost invariably taken most often, and an assortment of secondary prey species forming the remainder of their diet. The exact composition of diets varied from



site to site, because no two owls or habitat mosaics were the same. The conclusion which can be drawn from this work is that all habitats differ and all diets differ slightly, but the general pattern is that the field vole is of foremost importance followed by common shrew or wood mouse, with other prey of secondary importance. Clearly, the Barn Owl *can* breed where the availability of rough grassland is low, if the habitat has other redeeming features. For example, the residential areas reflected a high predation on birds (eg Starling). Therefore, when assessing potential release sites, all prey-supporting habitats should be accounted for, and not only rough grassland - a commodity which is in decline in many areas.

In defence of the DoE, its suggestion of 50 ha minimum rough grass availability was probably intentionally high, to discourage all but the most conscientious of Barn Owl breeders/releasers! However, while "best quality," Barn Owl habitat is a rare feature in modern farmland, it is important to establish that other habitats may also be suitable for release schemes.

Jon Blount

**Jon's report will be finalised in May, and interested readers should contact him through the Trust's office.**

#### **BARN OWL RE-INTRODUCTIONS.**

It has been a year since the Barn Owl was placed on Schedule 9 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act,

making it illegal to release captive Barn Owls into the wild except under licence issued by the DOE.

Licencees are obliged to follow codes of practice, based largely on methods developed by the BARN OWL TRUST over the last seven years or so. This being so, it seems opportune to fully update our interim report *Barn Owl Re-Introduction Report 1986-1988* and produce a definitive document covering our own releases up to 1992. Our aim is to compare the effectiveness of the two release methods (Long Term and Young Clutch) as judged by follow up local searches and the post release records kept by the release volunteers, and to compare the survival of released birds with wild birds by using the results from ringing these with BTO rings.

Initial analyses have already been carried out and I recently gave an illustrated lecture to the BTO's annual Ringing and Migration Conference on this subject. The aim now is to complete a more detailed statistical analysis and then put words to paper!

Keith Grant.

#### **DEVON BARN OWL SURVEY 1993.**

The question most frequently asked about Barn Owls is simply "How many are left?" The simple answer is nobody knows! In spite of its size, colour and close association with man, the white owl is one of the most difficult birds to survey. The best survey method is to search every potential roosting and breeding site for signs of occupation. Sites

such as tree hollows and rock crevices may be occupied as well as farm buildings, however exhaustive surveys are incredibly time consuming. To date there has never been a County or National Barn Owl survey which has managed to search more than a tiny fraction of its area. The Trust has been collecting data on Barn Owl sites and sightings since 1985 specifically in Devon and Cornwall and last year we attempted a County Survey for the first time. The survey, a joint project with the Devon Birdwatching and Preservation Society, aimed to re-visit all known Barn Owl sites in the County to see if they were still occupied. This has proved a mammoth undertaking as the Barn Owl Trust had over 200 sites to check!

Elizabeth Elford, a student on placement with the Trust has done the majority of the visits along with various other volunteers from the Barn Owl Trust and the Birdwatching Society. We were disappointed to find that many of the buildings which had resident Barn Owls in the 1980's are now unoccupied. The impression gained was that the birds are still in decline. Some sites were old barns and have now collapsed, others have been converted. Many sites however still looked very suitable but the birds had gone for some reason.

We are now in the process of dealing with all the data and producing maps to accompany the report which will be published later this year. The centrepiece will be a map giving totals of known breeding sites in each five kilometre square in Devon occupied in 1993.



## HELP, HELP, HELP!!

As I'm sure most of you are aware the Barn Owl Trust is a small national charity which aims to conserve the Barn Owl and its Environment. The Trust has come a long way since its first hand written newsletter in 1986 and its registration as a charity in 1988 (6 years ago). We have established a track record of efficiency and credibility and have achieved a great deal in the Trusts four main areas of work (conservation, education, information and research) to benefit Barn Owls and, we believe, all with a personal touch. All this sounds rather like singing our own praises but actually we're not, we're singing the praises of the volunteers and friends that make it all possible. The vast majority of the Trust work is done by unpaid volunteers.

The Trust has achieved so much in such a short time thanks to the activities of its volunteers and its Friends. The Friends scheme started in December 1991 now generates 25% of the Trusts income, the rest comes from grants for specific projects, donations and fundraising (much of which again is done by volunteers and Friends). As the Trust develops so does our workload, we receive more requests for information, advice and assistance each year. In order to respond to these requests we need to increase our resources accordingly, however as with many small organisations we find ourselves in a "catch 22" situation. We are too busy dealing with the day to day work of the Trust to be able to devote time to

the public relations and grant applications that are necessary to raise the money to employ more people to help with the things that need to be done - and so it goes on. In order to break out of this situation we need assistance. The Trust "team" is extremely good but doesn't have the time to put into the promotion that we need to expand our Friends scheme (and therefore our core income). We were recently visited by John and Jan Hilton from London, they first heard of the Barn Owl Trust in 1988 and became friends in 1992. In the course of conversation we chatted about things like promotion and public relations and the result of this conversation was Johns suggestion that there maybe Friends of the Trust with skills, expertise or contacts that could help in this area. If there are, and you are one, we'd love to hear from you.

In this issue of Feedback we've decided to ask if you, our Friends, can help the Trust in any additional ways. Please excuse us if you think we're being forward, we are extremely grateful for your regular support through the Friends scheme, but there may be some of you that would like to do a bit more, to get involved and to make an additional contribution. Look through our list and see if there's an idea that appeals to you.

THANK YOU for your consideration.

### HOW YOU CAN HELP:

- SPONSORED WALK** - Join us and join in (see page 5).
- FRIENDS SCHEME** -

promote it to your interested friends (see below).

**DRAW TICKETS** - Can you sell some?

**FUND RAISING EVENT** - invent your own idea or ask for a copy of our A-Z of fundraising.

**NEWSCLIPPINGS** - if you buy papers this ones easy.

**LEGACY LEAFLETS** - do you know a solicitor that might take a few?

**G.A.Y.E.** - Support the Trust direct from your pay.

**ITEMS NEEDED** - Is there anything on our list you have that you no longer want or need, or could you sponsor something.

**PUBLICITY AND P.R.** - if you have any ideas or would like to help with this please write to Simon at BOT.

### FRIENDS IN NEED.

The idea that a little from a lot of people can make a really big difference is very close to my heart. It runs in parallel with the idea that regular, reliable support means you can plan for the future from a secure base. If you want to help Barn Owls, if you believe in the need for someone, somewhere to be watching over our wildlife heritage, if you support the idea that the natural world is an essential backdrop to our daily lives you are probably already a friend of The Barn Owl Trust - if not, why not become one of the many that help the few to look after and watch over what is so precious. And all from your living room arm chair. Becoming a Friend of the Barn Owl Trust means filling in a simple form. A piece of paper that will, along with lots of other bits of paper from many other people,





help the Barn Owl Trust plan for the future, secure in the knowledge that you, and many others like you, will be supporting our work once each year.

Many people promise to covenant the Barn Owl Trust a minimum of £10 each year. This income amounts to 25% (one quarter) of the Trust's annual running costs. If you covenant your donation and you are a tax payer, the Trust can claim back tax that has been paid on your donation. Thus £10 becomes just over £13.

From the point of view of running the Trust, this regular, secured income means we can plan for the future. Projects can be instigated and followed through without the worry of having to find extra money to complete tasks and finish programmes of work. Thus the Trust can commit itself to research programmes which require a sound funding base.

If you are already a Friend, your support is most welcome, THANK YOU. There is however something more you can do to help. If you know anyone who shares your concern for Barn Owls, wildlife and nature conservation, why not give them a Friends leaflet. Discuss it with them if you wish, or just give it to them to consider. With each new Friend, the plans for a future where people respect nature and recognise its place as integral with the needs of humans, come just a little closer.

So, here's a *challenge*. How about we increase the percentage of the Trust's income coming from its Friends scheme. Can we make it 33% (one third) by the end of 1994? Ask one of your friends to become a Friend of the Barn Owl

Trust - please ask us to send you a form. Together we can make a difference. I'll keep you posted.

Simon Roper

### NEWSPAPER CLIPPINGS

If you read anything in your local or national newspaper relating to Barn Owls or the Barn Owl Trust we'd like to hear from you. Your clippings (or photocopies of them) with the name of the paper and date of issue will help to keep us informed of the Media's coverage of Barn Owl Topics. If you "clip" regularly, save them up and send them in together to save postage.

### CAN YOU HELP OR DO YOU KNOW SOMEONE WHO CAN?

Digital scales - up to 2kg for weighing birds.

Laser printer.

Desk Top Publisher.

Rechargeable Torches.

Crow Bar.

Post driver.

Hand Tools (*for nestbox workshop*) Hammers, saws, wire cutters, tin snips.

Nails.

Nail carrying box with compartments.

Creosote.

Galvanised iron roofing sheets and telegraph poles (*for constructing Barn Owl roosting/ breeding site.*)

Tea Chests.

We are also exploring the options available to acquire a new computer for use as a data base/word processor as our current facilities are stretched to their maximum capacity.

THANKS to Joyce Scott

Forbes for providing us with a rechargeable torch and to Brian and Alison Darch and Jackie Harding for finding and delivering (not an easy job) our two "new" filing cabinets.

### GIVE AS YOU EARN

(GAYE) is administered by the Charities Aid Foundations. If your employer operates GAYE you can support the Trust through donations made directly from your pay. This provides a regular income for the Barn Owl Trust and every time you give -- the tax man does too!

Anyone donating at least £10 a year (that's just 20p a week), will become a Friend of the Trust and will automatically receive copies of our newsletter, the Trusts annual report, a Barn Owl Trust Car sticker and a "Friends," badge. If you decide to give £10 a month it will only cost you £7.50 because the Tax man won't take the £2.50 you have paid in tax (at basic rate) it will come instead to the Barn Owl Trust.

Anyone can join GAYE if they are receiving pay or a pension taxed through PAYE. It is a great way to give. If you are interested contact the Barn Owl Trust and we will send you a form giving more details.

### FLAG DAY OCTOBER 1994

If you live in the Exeter area and have a few hours you can spare to help us with a flag day collection at Sainsburys (Cowick Street) on Thursday 20th October, Friday 21st October and Saturday 22nd October 1994. We'd be very pleased to hear from you.



## FOUR WHEEL DRIVE MADNESS!!

For those of you who read my article in the last issue of Feedback entitled "A Day in the Life of a Student Fieldworker," you will already know that I am a student from Seale-Hayne working for the Barn Owl Trust as part of my degree course. Well, time is flying by and it seems almost impossible that I have been working for the Trust for 8 months. Most of this time has been very hectic and it is only very recently that I have concluded the site visits for the 1993 Barn Owl Survey. At the beginning of September David placed a draw in front of me full of at least 200 site records which needed to be confirmed. Each record was delicately marked with a yellow flag which I had to remove once the site had been checked. To me this appeared to be a mammoth task and it has taken me 5 months to check all the sites to ascertain whether Barn Owls are still using them and to determine if they bred last year. Armed with my hard hat, a ladder, torch and numerous flasks of hot coffee I started out in search of Barn Owls. It is only recently that I have been able to take the Susuki four wheel drive vehicle out on site visits which saves a lot of time and leg work (as Barn Owls tend to choose the most inaccessible barns possible!) At the end of November I gazed in dismay at the draw full of records, all I seemed to see was a sea of yellow flags, my efforts didn't seem to have made any effect on reducing the number of records at all and I looked at David wistfully. It was at



this point the deadline for checking the records was dropped back until the end of January, a sigh of relief passed my lips and my face lit up. Even so, it was time to really go mad and visit as many sites as humanly possible during January. The Susuki was pushed into greater action and I was frequently seen flying too and fro along the motorway. During a single day I was covering as many as 100 miles chatting to farmers along the way and giving out information and answers to some of the many questions I was asked about making and putting up nest boxes and Barn Owl habitat. I was disappointed to find that at many of the sites I visited the Barn Owls had disappeared and indeed many of the buildings had fallen into dereliction or weren't there anymore. Some days were really encouraging and I would see one or two Barn Owls which made the work feel very worthwhile. However, there were times that I would spend a week visiting sites and perhaps not see anything. This reinforces the importance of regularly collecting data on Barn Owls and checking sites to verify

it. At some of the sites I checked the records dated back to the 1960's, before I was born and I was frequently greeted by some very surprised farmers! The task of analysing the data is the next step and includes statistical analysis, mapping and producing duplicate copies of all the records. I am delighted to have finished this task and there are NO yellow flags in sight! Survey work is both enjoyable and rewarding and is of paramount importance to the future of Barn Owls. Most of the farmers/land owners I have spoken to are very proud of the fact that they have Barn Owls using their buildings and land for hunting and breeding and would do almost anything possible to make sure they remain. It is only through survey work that we can establish where the Owls are and then conservation measures can be implemented to encourage and protect the birds. Perhaps then the sight of a Barn Owl WILL NOT be such a rare occurrence. Thank you and may God Bless you.

Lizzy Elford  
(Student Fieldworker)

# International News

## INDIAN OWLS

In December 1993 we received a letter from India asking for information about the Trust and its work. A Barn Owl project began in September 1992 in the Tamilnadu State in Southern India. Their research project funded by the Indian Council of Agricultural Research is to determine the agricultural pests (small mammals) taken by Barn Owls. They also hope to enumerate the number of Barn Owls in their region, to study their roosting and nesting characteristics, to study their habitat requirements, to erect boxes within their study area and to create awareness of the beneficial role of the Barn Owl in agriculture among the public. Their preliminary studies of the diet of the Barn Owl in their study area, indicate that 86% of the owls diet is composed of rodent pests of agricultural importance and they hope to use the Barn Owl to control these pest species.

## SPAIN

Inigo Farjardo from Madrid who visited the Barn Owl Trust in 1990 and spent three months working here at Waterleat in 1992 is now working as a researcher for an ornithological encyclopaedia in Spain.

## AUSTRALIA

In the last issue of Feedback we mentioned that Sue Williams (BOT) had been corresponding with environmentalists in Australia. This led to information about the Trust being included in "The Bird Observer," published by the



Bird Observers Club of Australia. Paul Peake one of the contributors to the feature writes "Collecting new information about Australia's nocturnal birds is not just an academic exercise. Owls, in particular are under threat, with 10 of the 21 Australian taxa (species and subspecies) extinct or threatened. The record is indeed a sorry one. Even common species such as the Barn Owl, Tawny Frogmouth, Australian Owlet-nightjar, White-throated Nightjar, and Spotted Nightjar are becoming rarer. In Australia the family Tytonidae is represented by the Barn, Masked, Easter, Grass and Sooty Owls. The Barn Owls food includes mice and native rodents and they may increase rapidly in response to a mouse plague. In southern Australia many are found dead, apparently of starvation, in winter. The Barn Owl Trust indoor and outdoor nestbox designs were included in the feature as were items on the "Captive Barn Owl Crisis," and "Barn Owl nestboxes are they worthwhile?" adapted for Australian readers from Feedback No. 10

*Four of the Trusts resident Owls roost together - Winking, Blinking and Nod the Tawny Owls and Pepper the Barn Owl were all given sanctuary by the Trust. Photo: Steve Taylor*

## CROSSWORD PUZZLE ANSWERS:

ACROSS(1)Nestbox (7)Save (8)Woodland (11)Feed (13)Nervous (14)Tried (15)Thought (17)Perch (20)Start (21)Water Level (23)Cunning (25)Shy (26)Broadside  
DOWN(2)Side (3)Blade (4)Sap (5)Ream (6)Owlet (9)Office (10)Lend (12)Volunteer(15) Thyme (16)Horseshoe (18)Retain (19)Recycle (22)Rigid(24)Nub



This issue of Feedback was put together by Frances Ramsden and Lizzie Elford. Illustrations by Paul Adams and Steve Taylor.

**GRAND DRAW**

## GRAND DRAW

Its now a year since the Trust sent out Draw Tickets with Feedback for the first time. We had never done anything like this before and were delighted with the response with many people requesting more tickets to sell to raise funds for the Trust.

Many thanks go to Jane and Christopher Chapman of the Ship Inn at Axmouth for organising and running both the draw and Owl Night. The winners of the first four prizes were as follows:

J. Mundy, Corsham, Wiltshire  
S.J. Smith, Corsham, Wiltshire  
Linda Greevson, Totnes  
Rob Hudson, Plymouth  
Other prizes went to Taunton, Torbay, Exeter, Wales, Cornwall and Honiton. A list of all 32 winners is available on receipt of an SAE.

## NEW GREEN CENTRE IN SOMERSET.

David Ramsden (BOT Conservation Officer) was in Somerset in February as guest of honour at the launch of a new environmental centre and retail shop in the High Street of Wellington. Poppy Seeds was established over a year ago by Dawn Harries as an environmentally sound catalogue business and has gone from strength to strength. The company has now moved into new premises with the aim of building a comprehensive environmental information centre for the County and a retail outlet for their environmentally friendly gifts and goods. Dawn



and David are shown here with children from Nynhead primary school and a paper mache Barn Owl created by Paul Adams.

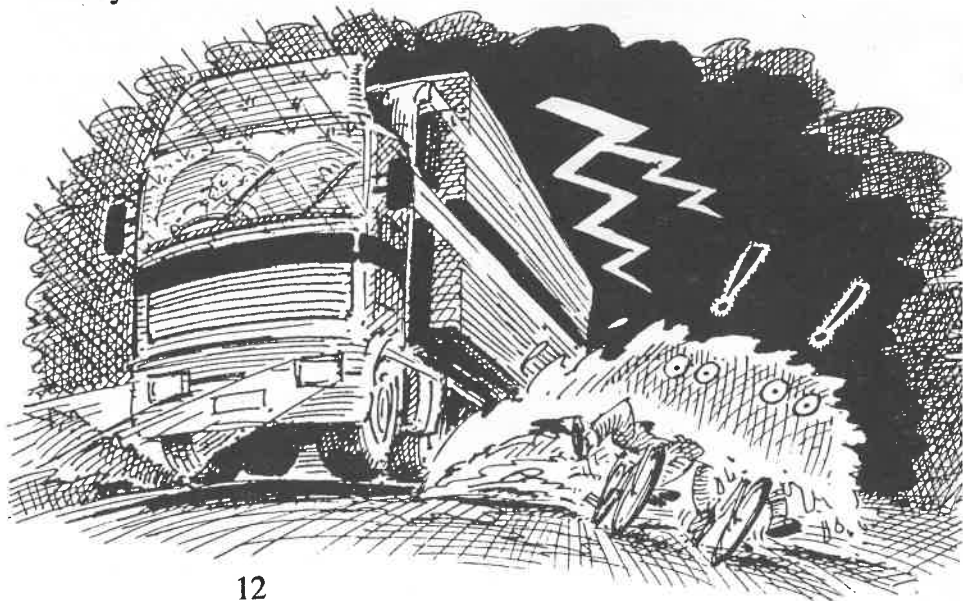
## CORSHAM 100 MILE CYCLE MARATHON 1993

The 100 mile cycle ride held in Wiltshire in September 1993 to raise funds for the Barn Owl Trust and the Corsham scouts by Richard and Karen Chislett resulted in a donation of £322.16 to the Trust. Richard writes.....

Cycle through the glorious countryside of Wiltshire and

see rural England at its best and perhaps worst, that's what 38 "mad" riders did in September 1993 during the worst weather that could be thrown at them. The BBC Met Office warned of atrocious weather sweeping across the country and advised people to "batten down the hatches," and stay at home. But these 38 hardened and determined riders ignored their advice and raised a total of over £600 to be split between The Barn Owl Trust and Corsham Scouts. YIPPEEE!

Riding mainly on lanes and "B," roads we started out at 07:30 cycling east along the



# Fun Fund-raising News

Vale of Pewsey Route. This superb ride from Corsham to Great Bedwyn (36 miles) offers spectacular scenery of the Marlborough Downs, busy market towns, quaint villages like Lacock, an occasional white horse and long barrow.

After every 20 miles there was a check point with a welcome hot drink a biscuit and encouragement from the back up crews.

North on the country route towards the historic railway town of Swindon cycling past the Savernake Forest and through the hilly section around Ramsbury. Cycling along the disused railway line around Swindon the promised severe weather arrived - wet and horizontal, but we were at least 60 miles into the event and the lunch stop at the mansion house of Lydiard Park.

West now but still on the County Route towards check point 4 at Badminton.

Conditions were now quite severe. After check point 4 I started to question our "sanity," and wondered what we were doing out here in torrential rain as we turn South, into a head wind.

Besides having to convince myself to keep going I also had to convince a fellow rider, Steve, that we can make it by keeping up a steady pace. Thoughts of the beautiful passing countryside were now firmly at the back of our minds as we were concentrated on finishing.

The final sting in the tale was the sleepy village of Slaughterford, bad enough going down the very steep wooded valley but horrendous coming back out - it was time to get off and push! Knowing we only had 5 miles to go it didn't seem quite so bad, but Steve

didn't agree. He said he would never ride another 100 miles.

Most riders finished around 16-17:00 hours. We were all congratulated, given a hot drink, something to eat, a certificate and asked whether it was worth it, and would we be prepared to do it again????

After a little time to reflect and relax even Steve said - YOU BET!

Richard Chislett

## **BOUNCING BROWNIES**

The 1st Llandaff Brownies have raised £236.90 for the Trust with a sponsored Disco Ball Bounce and Coffee Evening.

Parents were invited to come along to have coffee and watch their daughters bouncing in groups of 4. The girls averaged 200 bounces in 2 minutes and then entertained their Mums and Dads with songs. WELL DONE Brownies and thank you to Janice Thorne who organised what turned out to be a bouncing success.

## **MORE THAN £1,000**

Following the mention in Feedback 93/94 of the £929.45 raised by our 1993 sponsored walk - we were delighted to receive a donation of £85 from Friend of the Trust Marie-Anne Martin towards the walk. This combined with some very late sponsor money brought the total raised to £1027.92. Can we beat it this year??

## **WELL DONE LOUISE!**

Louise Baudoy aged 11 has been raising funds for the Trust since she was 9. In December she sent us a

cheque for £31, she raised £20 by doing a 7 mile sponsored walk and £11 were the proceeds from her little shop.

## **BEEES RAISE FUNDS FOR OWLS.**

The girls at Western College Preparatory School, known as the Busy Bees raised £24.85 for the Trust after a Barn Owl Trust school visit by Moon and David.

## **DAWLISH FRIENDS.**

Class 8JC at Dawlish Community College became Friends of the Barn Owl Trust in November 1993 and have raised £13 for the Trust with a class collection.

## **CHRISTMAS TREE OWLS**

Mrs Price from Exmouth used a branch from a fir tree as her Christmas tree in 1993 and made a donation to the Trust of her Christmas tree money. Thank you!



# Puzzle Page

How many words can you make from  
**ORNITHOLOGY**  
Write and let us know.

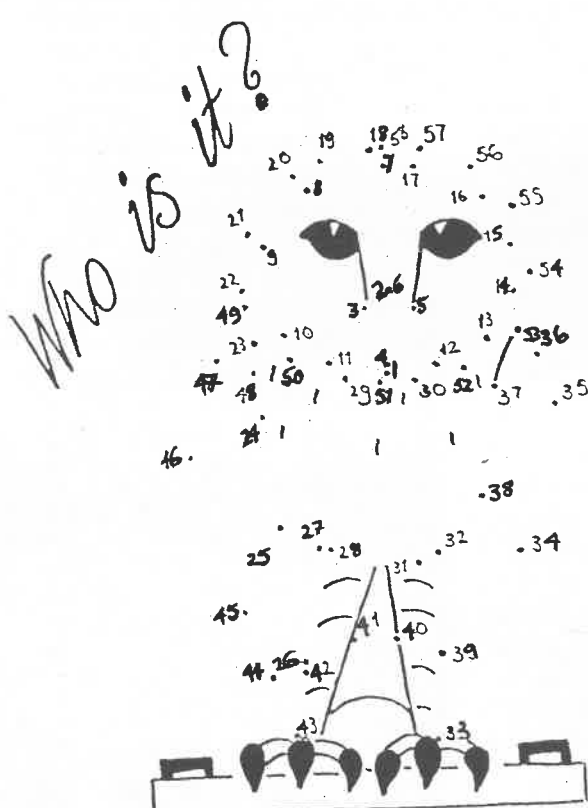
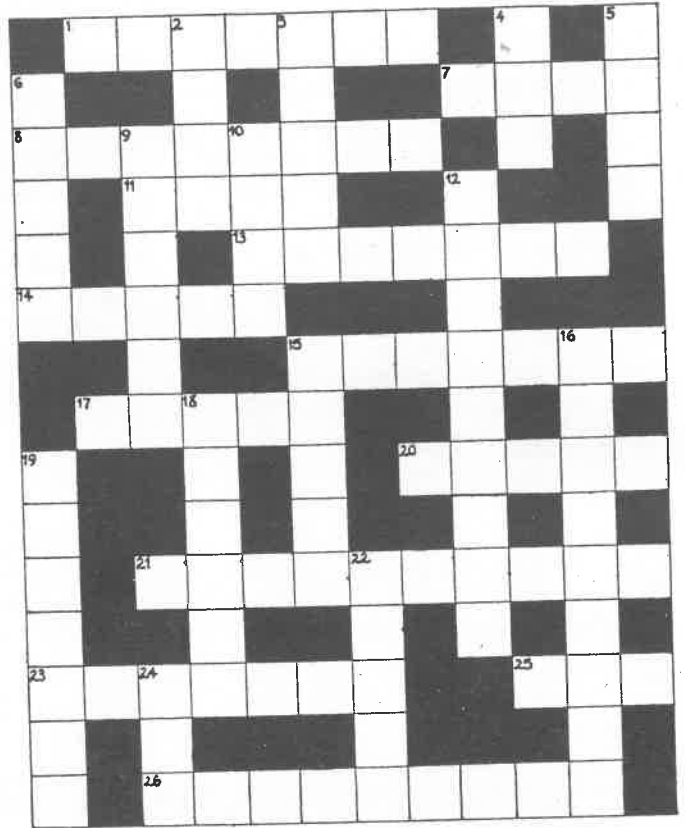


## ACROSS

- 1) Man-made bird house
- 7) To avoid wasting
- 8) Collection of trees
- 11) To give food to
- 13) Timid
- 14) Made an effort
- 15) Power of thinking
- 17) A bird's resting place
- 20) Set in motion
- 21) Liquid measurement
- 23) Crafty
- 25) Reserved
- 26) A strong attack in words.

## DOWN

- 2) A slope of a hill
- 3) A single narrow leaf of grass.
- 4) A trees tears
- 5) Quantity of paper the same size
- 6) Young owl
- 9) The nerve centre of B.O.T.
- 10) Give a helping hand
- 12) Un-paid helper
- 15) A herb
- 16) "U" shape piece of metal
- 18) To keep in one memory
- 19) Re-use
- 22) Not bending
- 24) Gist (of the matter).



## WORDSEARCH

- |           |         |                |
|-----------|---------|----------------|
| Owlet     | Screech | Feather        |
| Eagle Owl | Hoot    | Vole           |
| Tawny     | Claw    | Prey           |
| D.O.E.    | Beak    | Fly            |
| Raven     | Egg     | Barn Owl Trust |
| Habitat   | Barn    | Ornithology    |
| Nest Box  | Birds   | Waterleat      |
| Pellet    | Roost   | Tyto Alba      |
| Aviary    |         |                |

Crossword by Dereck Crocker (answers on page 11).  
Wordsearch by Chris Mallins  
Dot to Dot by Rachel Brewer



## MORE SNOW!

I don't know about you, but I for one love snow! As long as I've got fuel for warmth and plenty of food in the pantry I wouldn't mind being snowed in for weeks. For wild creatures however, snow is serious stuff. Many mammals such as dormice and hedgehogs have spent many days in preparation for winter. Some birds such as Jays will bury food in the late summer for use in the winter. For Barn Owls and indeed for most birds winter snow can spell disaster. Barn Owls hunt mainly over grassland feeding on voles, shrews and mice. Small mammals such as these are active throughout the winter and can survive perfectly well beneath a blanket of snow. Barn Owls can actually hear the movements of small mammals through a thin layer of snow and may still be able to catch them. But if the top layer of snow is frozen hard or if the snow is more than a few inches deep the Barn Owl is in serious trouble. It is at times like these that they may turn to other food sources. Large roosts of smaller birds such as Starlings may be preyed upon. They have even been seen beating their wings against bushes to dislodge roosting birds. Very rarely Barn Owls are seen feeding on carrion, perhaps a dead bird or rabbit on the side of the road. Behaviour may change in other more subtle ways too. Hunting from a perch such as a tree or post can help to conserve energy, hunting during the warmer hours of daylight and roosting in smaller spaces can also reduce heat-loss and some energy. However in spite of

these ploys many Barn Owls die during severe winters, their frozen emaciated bodies may be found in barn or field. Following a very severe winter it can take two years for Barn Owl numbers to recover to their former level. In regions with good habitat this pattern of short term decline and recovery is normal. However in regions of the country with less rich habitat and therefore less food, the ability to recover can be reduced. Long term Barn Owl decline is then a series of downward steps hastened by natural causes such as snowcover.

Meanwhile, when we have snow lets enjoy it, be thankful that we have evolved the instinct to store food and remember the wildlife which has not.

David Ramsden. Feb 1994

## LAST WORDS

In recent years frogs have "hit the news," as many have been found inexplicably dead in ponds and gardens throughout the UK. There are various theories for these deaths but most agree that the cause of the decline/disease is something that affects these creatures through their amazing skins. Pollution and ultra violet light as a result of Ozone depletion have been suggested but as yet no one knows exactly what the cause of the problem is and its happening to species worldwide. Frogs have been around for a lot longer than humans and have adapted to life in a huge variety of climates and environments, they fill an ecological role as both predator and prey item. Each time a species is threatened or becomes

extinct the ecological balance is tipped. We human beings are at the top of the current evolutionary tree but if we continue to allow the natural world around us to become impoverished the "tree," that supports us may well come crashing down.

The North American Indians saw life as a circle. This philosophy whereby you (or your descendants) will return to your starting point and thereby have to deal with the situations you are now creating is a valuable ethic for those who believe in conservation of the natural world. We should think of ourselves as guardians of the earth for our children rather than it being our birthright to exploit and develop. We are all continually faced with personal choices that affect our environment and future generations. We all have the power to make a difference and to do our bit for wildlife conservation, our fellow humans and the environment. Lets make the right choices and play our part in improving things for our children or at the very least prevent things from getting worse. Recycling, buying wisely, supporting conservation initiatives and becoming a Friend of the Barn Owl Trust are all things that are easy to do and DO make a difference.

Thank you for reading this newsletter we hope you found it interesting and that you enjoyed hearing about the work of the Trust. Please continue to support the Barn Owl Trust as it is individual donations and the efforts of volunteers that make our work possible. We wish you peace and happiness in your lives.



## SALES GOODS



*T.Shirts and Sweat Shirts Photo: David Perkins.  
modeled by volunteers.*

**BARN OWL TRUST T-SHIRTS AND SWEAT SHIRTS**  
100% UNBLEACHED COTTON

### T-SHIRT/SWEAT SHIRT DESIGN

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NEW SIZES! XL L M S C 31"-32"
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Four Owlets in a Row £2 + £1 p&p  
Set of two posters £3 + £1 p&p

### COLOUR PRINTS

Selection of signed "Baby Owl" full colour prints 8" x 10" by wildlife artist Dick Twinney

Individual prints (unframed) £14 each  
Set of six (unframed) £60 per set  
Framed Prints £25 each  
Set of Six (framed) £130 per set  
Designs available are Barn, Tawny, Little, Long Eared, Short Eared and Snowy Owlets

### BADGES

Logoor Barn Owl on Post 50p

### PENCILS

BOT With rubbers 30p

NEW

### POCKET MIRRORS £1

Barn Owl Trust Logoor Barn Owl on Post 75mm.

BOOKS Care for the Wild, Paperback by W.J. Jordan + John Hughes £4.95 NEW

Please note with the exception of posters and clothing there is no additional charge for postage and packing. However a SAE or a donation towards the cost would be very much appreciated.

If you are a Friend of the Barn Owl Trust you will automatically receive a copy of the next newsletter. If you are not yet a Friend and would like to receive a copy to learn more about our work, please write and let us know.



Together we can make a difference.



**THE BARN OWL TRUST, WATERLEAT, ASHBURTON, DEVON, TQ13 7HU.**