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A birds eye view, an ariel photograph of a BCRP study site. Photo: Steve Wood.

Barn Conversions - The effects can be devastating.

Preliminary results of the Barn Conversion Research Project.

In October 1994 the Trust announced some of the results of its four year Research Project which began in April 1990.

The Barn Conversion Research Project aimed to find out what effect the conversion of an occupied site had on the local population - whether the birds simply moved to another nearby barn or whether the effect was more serious. The project also

aimed to assess the overall site availability (i.e. how many potential roosting and breeding sites are left per area) and to assess the relative suitability of different types of farm buildings.

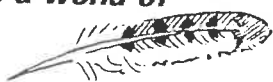
Continued on page two:

Welcome to Feedback.

Things have been extremely busy here since the last copy of Feedback with increases in enquiries, live bird emergencies and our general workload. We hope that this issue will bring you up to date with the Trusts developments. We have news on the results of the Devon Barn Owl Survey and some preliminary results from the long awaited Barn Conversion Project as you will have seen from the front page. We also have an update on the "Owls in the belfry," an article on living with Barn Owls and all the usual Feedback bits and pieces. In this issue we have two competitions with donated prizes, one of these has an entry fee which we hope will raise some funds to support our work. We hope that lots of you will enter and that you will enjoy the challenge.

The Barn Owl Trust aims to conserve the Barn Owl and its Environment. We believe that no species can survive in isolation and therefore through our Barn Owl conservation work we hope to increase awareness of the species links to the environment and the role we can *all* play in helping to conserve both this beautiful bird and our planet for future generations. Feedback is produced bi-annually to keep Friends and Supporters in touch with our work.

We hope you will enjoy reading this issue and are encouraged to continue to support the Trust and to do your bit for the environment. Many thanks to the volunteers and to the Friends of the Trust that make our work possible. ***Together we can make a world of difference.***



Barn Conversions

Continued from page one.

Britains Barn Owl population is estimated to have declined by 70% since the 1930's. The major cause of this decline is the loss of foraging areas such as rough grassland and hedgerows caused by increasingly intensive farming. The loss of traditional breeding sites such as old barns and hollow trees has been identified as a cause of decline. However the role of the loss of barns through conversion in the decline was largely unknown.

The conversion of barns into human dwellings is a national phenomena as is the loss of old barns through decay, collapse and demolition. Enquiries received by the Trust have shown that all over the country Barn Owls are being evicted from their chosen sites, some of

which may have been used by the birds for many years. The problem is particularly acute in the South West where the Trust is based and where the research was conducted.

The first section of the project involved the monitoring of twenty separate study areas. Each study area had at its centre a site where Barn Owls traditionally roosted and bred. In some areas this central site was converted to a dwelling during the four year study period, in others the sites remained unchanged thus allowing a comparison to be made. In addition some of the barn conversions within the study areas had provision for Barn Owls incorporated. This allowed us to get information on the usefulness of such provision. In order to determine the effect of the conversion of sites it was essential to take into account all other changes which may have



affected the birds such as habitat (farmland) changes and the use of rodenticides (Rat poison). Each study area was therefore subject to intensive data collection which included habitat mapping and re-mapping, interviews with all farmers and exhaustive searches of every potential roosting or breeding site every four months throughout the four years of the study.

Over the past ten months all of this data has been collated and analysed with the help of Dr Paul Chanin. What has emerged is that the effect of Barn Conversion is more dramatic than even we had anticipated. In five out of nine study areas where the central site was lost. Barn Owls not only stopped using the site they **DISAPPEARED FROM THE ENTIRE STUDY AREA.** In the remaining four study areas where the site was converted the birds declined to some extent. However in the three study areas where the central site was converted and provision for Barn Owls was incorporated the birds not only stayed in the area, the level of "owl activity" actually increased slightly. Out of eight study areas where no change occurred to the buildings the birds sadly disappeared from one study area area however in the main there was little or no change found.

In every study area there were plenty of alternative sites which birds could, in theory, have moved into when their chosen barn was converted, why therefore did they leave the entire study area of 1.5 Km radius in so many cases? The

effects of habitat changes and rodenticide use can be ruled out as possible causes as all this data has been subjected to an analysis which highlighted the loss of sites as by far the most significant factor. In global terms the Barn Owl is quite an adaptable species occupying a variety of habitats, however it would seem that as individuals the birds are far less adaptable. Nobody knows why particular birds will choose to use certain sites and seemingly never enter others in their home range. Site selection behaviour and the apparent inability to transfer to alternative sites is an area where further research is needed. One thing which emerged very clearly from the study is the need to incorporate provision for Barn Owls into Barn Conversions to enable the birds to carry on using their chosen site. The increased human activity around a Barn Conversion does not seem to pose a problem for most birds who have shared "their" barn

with the new human residents when provision for them was made.

Several other interesting results have emerged from this section of the project including data on the widespread use of highly toxic "second generation" rodenticides to control rats on farms. Also, habitat mapping has revealed that some Barn Owls are able to survive and breed successfully in areas with little or no ideal foraging areas within 1 Km of their nest sites.

In further issues of Feedback more results of the project including a study of the availability of potential Barn Owl sites and the suitability of various kinds of farm building will be presented.

A copy of the full report will be available from the Trust as soon as it is completed - hopefully during the forthcoming winter 1994-95.



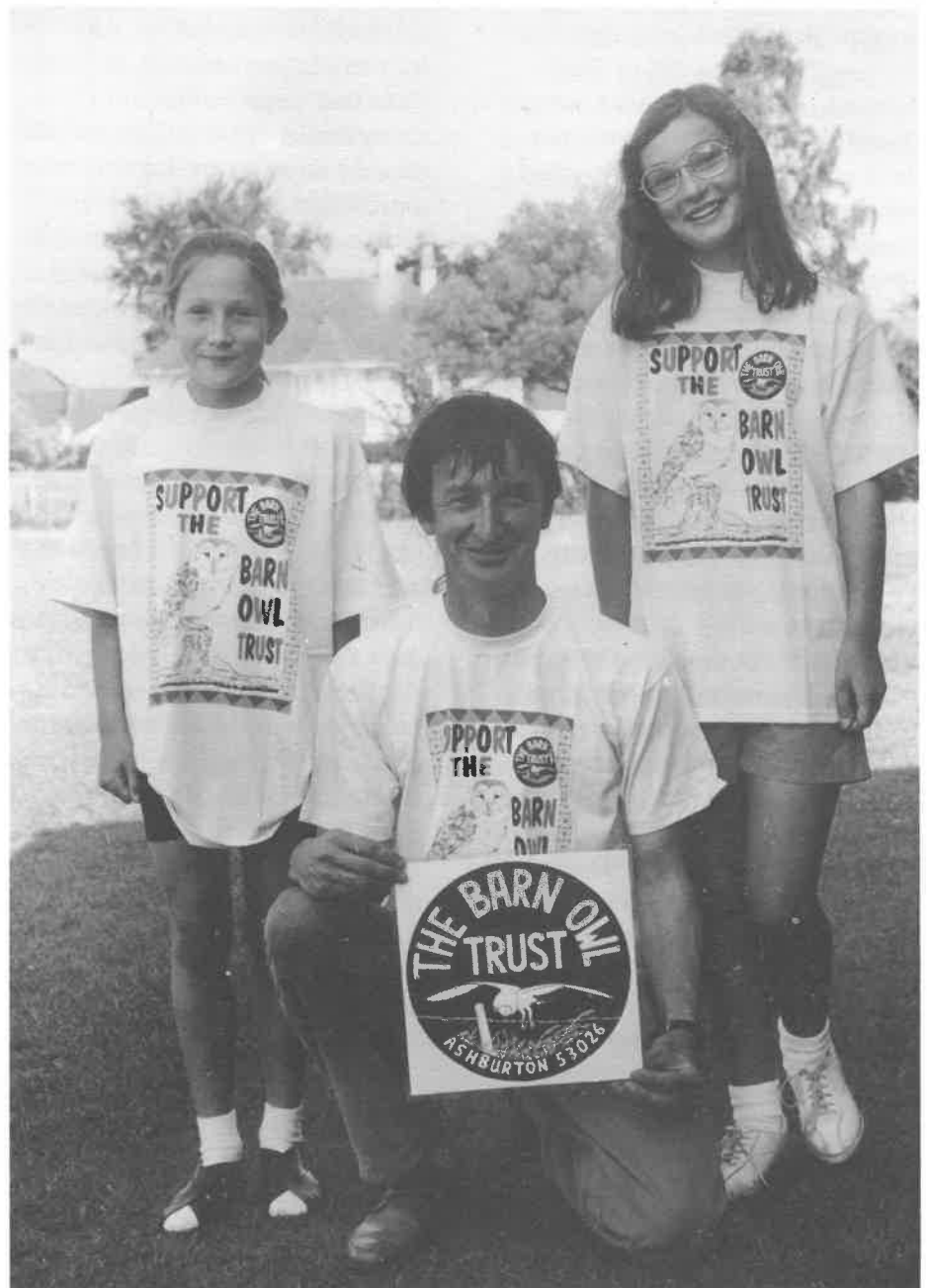
BOT News

Pseudo Bumblefoot?

In August this year we found that for the first time in thirteen years of owl keeping we had an epidemic here amongst the birds here. Our veterinary surgeons have been treating the infected birds and we are taking all possible steps to contain the infection which is thought to be pseudo bumble foot. As yet we have not been able to identify the source of the infection but surmise that it may have been brought in by a casualty bird. However, our investigations continue and we would be pleased to hear from anyone with experience of this infection. We will have more news in the Spring issue of Feedback.

Trust Staffing.

Sue Williams who has been with the Trust since February 1993 began a B.A.course in September which has unfortunately cut down the number of hours she has available to work with the Trust. However we haven't lost her as she continues to come into the office for eight hours a week. We wish you well with your course Sue and are delighted that we will still be keeping you part-time. We are pleased to welcome Sharon Clayborough to the Trusts team. Sharon took up her post as Administration Assistant at the beginning of September and has been working alongside Sue learning the ropes, Sharon is now dealing with many of the enquiries and the day to day



running of the office. In October Graham Deykin joined the Trust as Promotions Officer to deal with and expand the Fund-raising and Promotional side of our activities. We were delighted when during his first week "in post" Graham secured the donation of the long awaited set of digital scales from Segar Wedo Ltd. These will be used in the bird room for weighing casualty birds. Well done Graham.

Poppy Seeds T.Shirt

Poppy Seeds the environmental and retail centre in Wellington, Somerset, ran a competition with children from Wellesley Park Primary School this summer. The children were asked to design a Barn Owl Trust T.Shirt for Poppyseeds to produce. The winners of the competition eleven year old Gemma Nicol and Madeline Sands are seen (above) wearing

their winning design with David Ramsden, Trust Conservation Officer. The T-Shirt printed in full colour on 100% unbleached cotton is available in a variety of sizes at £7.99 for children and £11.99 for adults from Poppyseeds or from the Trust. Congratulations to Dawn and Colin at Poppy Seeds on the arrival of their daughter "April" on September 29th.

BOT Reuse Labels

Many of you will be aware of the Trust's interest in recycling and other environmental issues. In the office we try as far as possible to recycle all the waste we create and we re-use old envelopes where ever possible, lots of you will have received post from the Trust in a re-used envelope. After many years of using labels purchased from other organisations the Trust has now had its own labels printed. These will be used in the office and are also available for sale in packs of 50 at £1.40 inclusive of postage and packing.

Shell Grant

The Trust has recently received a grant of £300 from the Shell Better Britain Campaign towards the purchase of tools for use at nestbox workshops. These will be used for the first time at our workshops this winter, in November at Kingswear and January at Musbury.

John's Esso Donation

John Rhodes a BOT volunteer who transports birds to and from the vets for the Trust secured a grant of £250 towards the work of the Trust

from the Esso Staff Charity Fund.

Sales Goods Leaflet

Enclosed with this copy of Feedback you will find our new sales goods leaflet. This has been produced on the Trust's new computer (as has this copy of Feedback,) and has been printed free of charge for the Trust by Penwell Ltd of Callington in Cornwall who also printed the newsletter for us. A separate sales goods leaflet frees up space in Feedback for more news and we hope it will enable us to distribute information about our range of sales goods more easily. If you are thinking about Christmas at the moment many of the items in the leaflet would make good gifts and we do have Christmas cards available (in the childrens designs only). They come individually or in packs of six carrying the message "Happy Christmas and a peaceful New Year".

Sponsored walk

We had 170 people turn out for this years Sponsored Walk on the Flete Estate in the South Hams of Devon and the event raised an amazing £1,742.48 which delighted us all. We were very lucky with the weather and everyone had a thoroughly enjoyable day. Ross Williams from Hampshire was the adult collecting the most sponsorship with £250 and the child was 9 year old Jacob Ramsden with £53. Both were awarded prizes. Plans are already underway for next years walk which will once again be held on the Flete Estate on Bank Holiday Monday 29th May 1995.

Our grateful thanks must go to Anthony Mildmay-White (owner of the Estate). The walk is our biggest fund-raising event of the year. Thanks also to everyone that participated making it such a successful day. We hope to see you there next May.

Can you help or do you know someone who can?

The Trust traditionally includes a list of things it needs in Feedback. Do you have any of these things lurking or unwanted in your home? Maybe you do and would like to donate them to the Trust or maybe there is something in the list that you would like to sponsor. We are very grateful for donations of items which either save the Trust money or make life easier. Thank you for your consideration.

Upright Hoover for the office
Plastic curver boxes
Hand tools (*for nestbox workshops*)Hammers, saws, wire cutters, tin snips
Nails and nail carrying box with compartments
Clean empty plastic storage boxes with lids (e.g. ice-cream)
Old ten pence pieces and other unwanted coins
Rechargeable torches
Crow bar and Post driver
Tea chests
Laser printer
Galvanised iron sheets
Old telegraph poles
Electric jug kettle (the one in the office has just stopped working!)
Pedigree chum puppy food for feeding Hedgehogs- (we have released six young hedgehogs from here this year).

Supporting the Cutting Edge

by Simon Roper: Trustee

I have always thought that the 'cutting edge' of any wildlife conservation organisation is the 'on the ground' or the 'out in the field' work that gathers or provides information or helps wildlife to survive the ever present onslaught of the human race. This is not to diminish in any way the behind the scenes support that such a 'cutting edge' requires, but rather to acknowledge firmly what we in the wildlife conservation movement are trying to achieve.

What counts is enabling the "cutting edge," the conservation and educational work to continue. Such work inevitably needs support, mostly that of cash (in one form or another). As the Barn Owl Trust moves into the second half of the 1990s the demand for more conservation and educational work is increasing. The Barn Conversion Research Project and the County Survey have highlighted threats to the Barn Owl population such as the loss of occupied sites. It is to these threats that the "cutting edge" must be applied in order to protect the Barn Owl and its environment.

It is against this background that the Trust has taken a brave step - to employ a full time Promotions Officer and Fund-raiser to gather the necessary resources to allow the Trust 'cutting edge' to do its work. Graham Deykin (a brave man indeed) has joined us for an

initial period of three months to raise much needed financial and material assistance for the work of the Trust. Jointly, the Trust and Graham are risking a little to gain a lot - with a clear focus on the objective of supporting our conservation and educational work.

Graham has worked as a fund-raiser before and he comes to us with a good deal of ability and lots of enthusiasm. His appointment will inevitably mean some changes. You may begin to spot a few more fund-raising ideas in Feedback. When you're out and about you may come across Barn Owl Trust promotional material where it hasn't been before. There will also be a great deal of 'behind the scenes' fund-raising. All of this will be with the aim of securing our future conservation work.

As Trustees we will strive, on your behalf, to make sure that the balance between 'too few' and 'too many' appeals for money is achieved. We are conscious that with all the charitable calls on everyone's pockets the balance can sometimes swing too far towards the 'please give' extreme - where every piece of mail you receive asks for a donation in one form or another. This is a difficult balance to achieve, perhaps because it is different for all of us, but we hope that we can find a good balance and achieve our objective in supporting all the vital work carried out by our 'cutting edge'.

Introducing Graham.

The Barn Owl Trust is now employing a full time Promotions Officer/Fund-raiser in the person of me, Graham Deykin. So, if any of you fancy running, jumping, swimming, knitting, slimming or even sleeping for the Trust, or could involve a local pub, club or school in a fund-raising event, I am the man to contact.

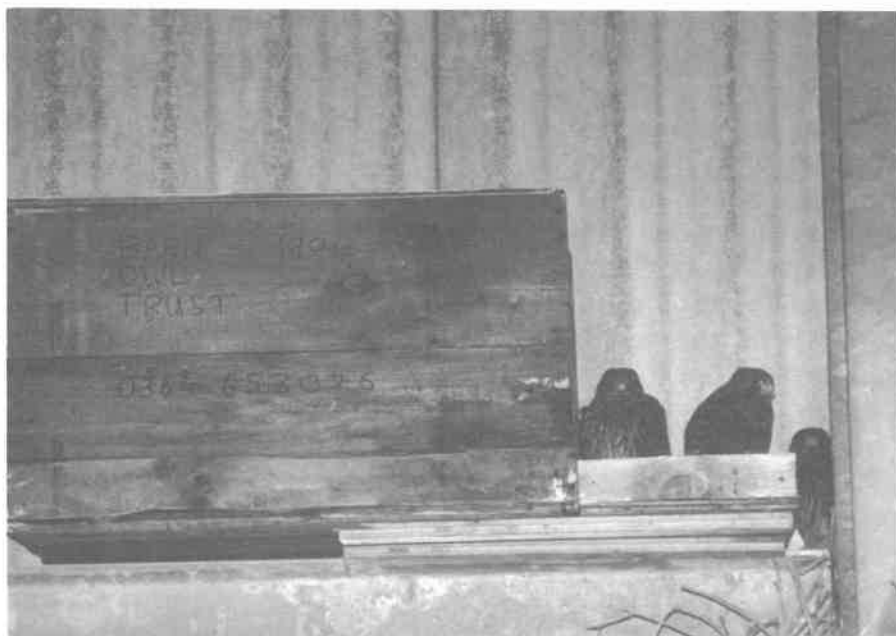
We have a number of new conservation projects that we hope to implement including the employment of an Assistant conservation Officer to help cope with our increasing workload and money is urgently required, so if you can help in any way, please let us know. If you would be prepared to undertake a street collection in your town or village, hold a coffee morning, or maybe spend a few hours collecting in a supermarket on a Saturday, it would be greatly appreciated. Also, if you know any novel or different ways of raising funds, I would very much like to hear from you.

With Christmas fast approaching, another way the Trust can benefit, is if you purchase some of your presents, cards, etc. from the enclosed sales goods leaflet. Purchasing your Christmas goodies through the Webb Ivory Catalogue is also a way of fund-raising for the Trust, for every item purchased, 25% goes to the charity of your choice. For further details contact Webb Ivory direct., at: Primrose Hill, Preston Cross, PR1 4WT. I look forward to hearing from you with any ideas you may have.

Graham Deykin

Operation Kestrel

Operation Kestrel took place at the beginning of July when the Barn Owl Trust was called in to the Kingsteignton depot of the international company Watts, Blake and Bearne where a family of Kestrels had called a halt to work in one of their enormous storage and loading bays. Two young kestrels had left the nest before learning to fly and were sitting on the clay where the men and machinery needed to work. The first step after receiving the call was to contact English Nature to obtain permission to move the birds from their present position in order that they could be relocated somewhere safer and work at the site could be resumed. Two of the four Kestrels were still on the ledge near the old Jackdaws nest where they had hatched. When we arrived at the site the others needed to be recovered from the clay mountains in the loading bays below the nest. All of them needed to be caught up and boxed before a nestbox could be erected. A hydraulic lift was called in and using this and a good deal of scrambling and clambering all of the Kestrels were safely accounted for. A box was then erected close to the nest site to contain the birds and hopefully prevent them from falling onto the clay again. During the operation an adult Kestrel flew in and out of the building several times to see what was going on and shortly after we left they were seen feeding the young. Another couple of visits were made to the site during the next week to check the birds and to ensure that all was well. The Kestrels



did wander out of the box but they all fledged successfully without holding up work again and they were all seen flying around the site.

We have advised that the old Jackdaw nests are removed during the winter to prevent the birds using them next year and

*Top: Erecting the nestbox.
Bottom: Three of the four young Kestrels siting outside their new home.
Photos: Kevin Basford WBB*

that nestbox provision is made on the site in places where the young can fledge successfully without causing disruption to the work..

1993 Barn Owl Survey of Devon

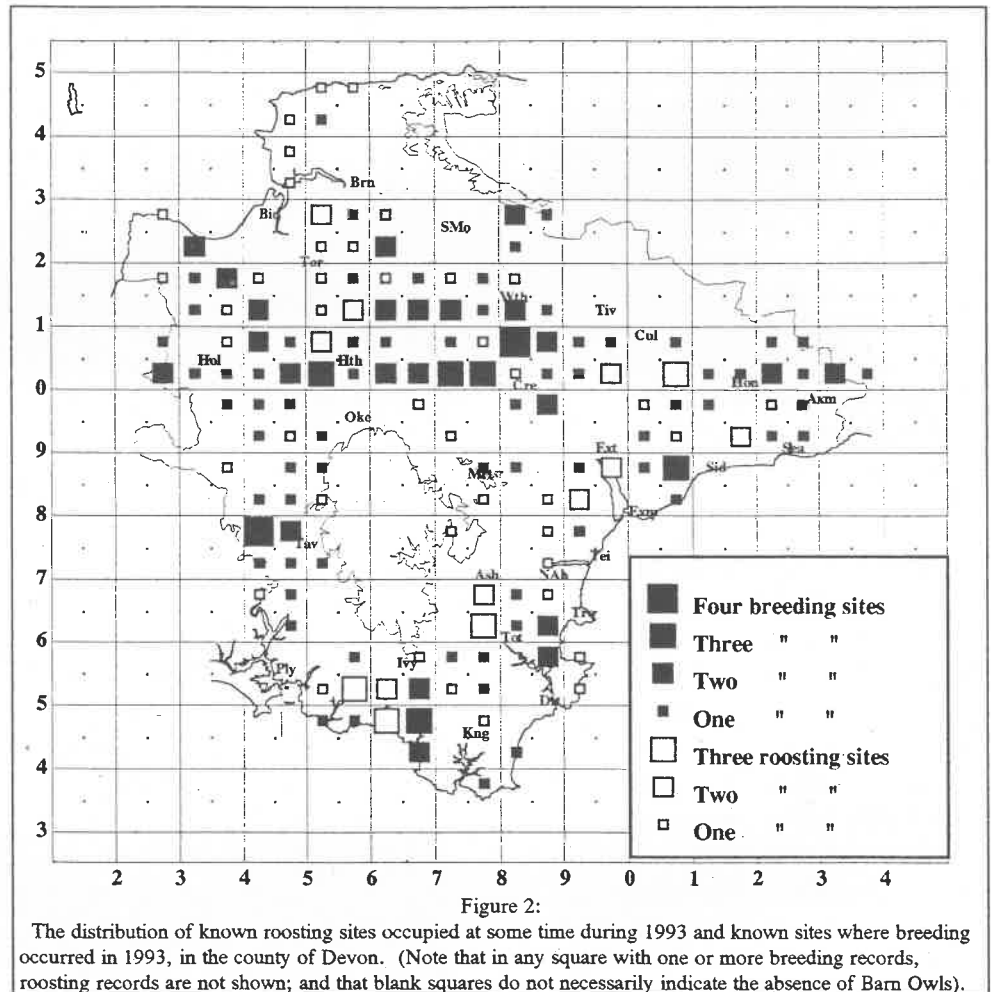
A joint project by the Barn Owl Trust and the Devon Bird Watching and Preservation Society

The aims of the 1993 Devon Barn Owl Survey were to: a). establish the number and distribution of known sites within the county where breeding or roosting occurred during the year. b). to recheck Barn Owl sites found by the 1983 DBWPS Survey collated by M Davies (unpublished) and to analyse any trends. c). to analyse the types of breeding and roosting sites used.

Overall, 137 breeding and 151 roosting sites were recorded during the survey and of the roosting sites, 71 were found in 5km squares where no breeding was recorded (see map). The maximum of four breeding sites was reached in only two squares (in the Crediton and Tavistock areas).

We have identified breeding sites in the county within 400 metres of each other. The main concentration of records were mid to West Devon from Crediton to Hatherleigh, Holsworthy and Tavistock. Records were surprisingly thinly scattered in East Devon and with gaps also obvious in parts of the South Hams. Few breeding or roosting sites were reported from Dartmoor and its fringes and the Somerset border.

The 1983 DBWPS Barn Owl Survey (M. Davies unpublished) located a total of 116 breeding or roosting sites. Of these 66 were rechecked during the course of the 1993 Survey and



Barn Owls found to be present (breeding or roosting) at only 28 (42%) of them. The BOT checked 449 sites known to have been occupied within the last ten years, of these 235 were unoccupied, and only 214 (48%) had signs of the birds being present (125 roosting and 89 breeding).

Analysis of sites used by the Owls showed a marked preference for agricultural buildings with only three records of breeding in tree cavities and one in a tree nestbox. 113

breeding or roosting sites were located in used agricultural buildings, 104 in disused agricultural buildings, 17 sites were recorded in used domestic buildings and 12 in disused domestic buildings. Other breeding site locations recorded were three in disused churches or chapels, three in dovecotes, two in stables, one each in a school, a disused mill and a disused quarry storage building. One of the domestic sites was down the chimney of an occupied dwelling. Roosting sites included three in holes in

quarry faces, a disused railway station, a disused radar station and a cricket pavilion (in use), three were in domestic sheds or garages.

The analysis of records also showed that in agricultural buildings where breeding sites were located 52 were in nestboxes and 27 on or in walls, with 16 others.

Barn Owls are known to show considerable site fidelity, often using the same traditional site for many years. It is particularly disappointing that of the DBWPS sites rechecked only 42% were still occupied and similarly only 48% of the sites known to the BOT. Some of the sites checked by the BOT which are now devoid of Owls were barns either in the last stages of decay, totally demolished or are now converted for human dwellings. However most sites were still available and in most cases there was no obvious reason for the Owl's disappearance.

In summary the Barn Owl is still fairly widely distributed within the county, with a population density of three or more pairs per 5 km square found in some parts of central, west and north-west Devon. However negative survey results from squares such as SX77SE indicate that the Barn Owl is absent from many of its former haunts and numbers generally are very low.

The majority of known sites are traditional agricultural buildings (both in use and disused) with cob or stone walls. Where birds were known to be breeding in modern type or open Dutch

barns, nest boxes were used in most cases.

Barn Owls are very difficult to survey. Exhaustive searches of all potential sites were not undertaken as part of this survey, however 53% of the known historical sites checked were found to be unoccupied. The county population is estimated to be within 250-350 pairs, which, for a county the size of Devon is very low. The release of captive -bred birds, the provision of nestboxes (particularly in modern farm buildings and barn conversions) and the creation of foraging habitat has probably helped to maintain the population at its current level, the scope for improvement is immense and depends to a large extent on national and European agricultural policy.

Given that we are unlikely to see a return of the large scale habitats available to the Barn Owl during the early part of this century or a major reduction in our transport system, we can still help the Barn Owl retain a viable, albeit much lower population. There is hope for this enchanting bird.

Keith Grant

Notes: It is not possible in the space available to give more than a brief outline of the results of the survey however a copy of the 10 page report by Grant, Pearce and Ramsden is available from the Trust. If you would like to receive a copy please send £2.00 to cover photocopying and postage. An identical (1994) survey of Barn Owls in Cornwall is currently underway

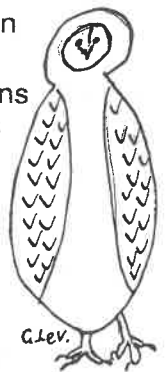
These poems and drawings are from pupils at Western College Prep School in Plymouth.

The Night Hunter



Day has ended, night has come,
All is quiet except for one
Long clear call of an Owl
Echoing out from the barn
As it soars over the meadow
Hunting for a feast.
The Barn owl hovers
Then swooping down
It pierces its prey
With long sharp talons

Kate Webster



Owls

There are long eared Owls,
There are short eared Owls,
There are Barn Owls too.
All glide through the night air,
Never a sound do they make

Rosie Kneen

Moon the Owl of midnight

There was an Owl
Her name was Moon
Here she comes
Screeching
Flying silent as the moon
She flies over fields and houses,
Past windows with people on
couches.
Then fly away, fly away
The Moon Owl creeps
Away from the morning.
Now the Moon Owl sleeps.



Eleanor Gale

Our Extended Family

I have always enjoyed the Devon word "grockle" For the past 3 years we have made a living from "grockles"; aided in the process by a pair of Barn Owls. Just three years ago we purchased a redundant farm with a superb range of buildings and set about converting them to four holiday cottages -for "grockles". We were very aware of the Owls living in a modern Dutch barn which we intended to demolish, but we knew little about their lifestyle. How quickly we got "hooked" on our Owls. Long before we had moved in, let alone started the conversion we approached the site with an expectant caution- hoping to catch a glimpse of these beautiful ghostly birds.

David Ramsden must have groaned at yet another loss of a breeding site. He did not show it. Instead he fired us with enthusiasm to try to keep them on the site. On his instruction we set about providing two alternative nest boxes. The first one was a magnificent "bungalow" halfway up an ancient oak tree overlooking a nearby brook. The second was a triangular insulated box built into the apex of one of the barns (prior to conversion) with a new access hole through the stone wall- and a perch outside. Following David's advice the Dutch barn was removed after the new sites had been provided.

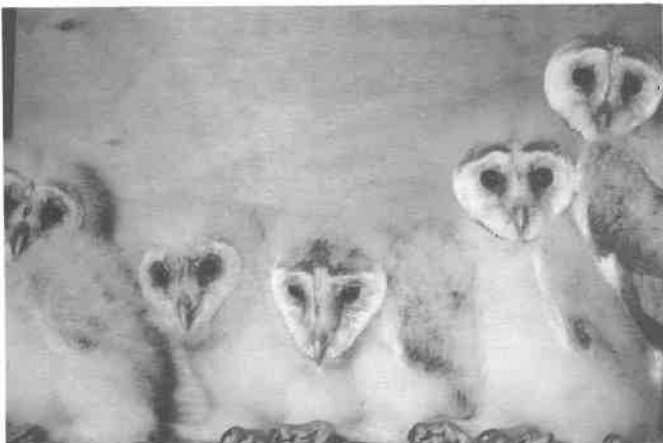


Photo: Kevin Keatley

The peaceful haven for wildlife had by that time turned into a crowded noisy building site: a cacophony of sound hammering and banging- radios blaring - people and dogs. Lovely grassy paddocks were turned into a sea of mud. You can imagine our delight when in the middle of all

this, long white streaks appeared below the perch outside the new residence. It was particularly interesting that these shy birds should remain while the remainder of the building was being converted- literally under them.

Three years on the owls have produced three young families totalling 10 owlets - one second brood after the first failed during a period of very wet weather. Both owls can be seen at dusk most evenings as they swoop down past our drawing room window into the shippon - it appears to be a temporary roost with plenty of droppings but few pellets. (The shippon is open fronted ; one of the remaining unconverted buildings). We love "our " Owls and think they sort of like us too. It is almost as if they fly past to greet us. Although if you disturb a hunting bird at night you are liable to get a banshee scream that sends shivers down your spine.

The "grockles", especially those that share their cottage with the Barn Owls, often become as obsessed and curious as we are - wanting to know about habitat- environmental issues - etc. This leads on to a lively interest in all the wildlife around. There is a small lake in front of the cottages which attracts a host of birds some of which stay to breed. Currently we have families of Mallard, Canada Geese, Coot and Swan. Visitors include Nightjars, Kingfishers, Buzzards, and of course the inevitable Heron. We hear the Tawny most nights and found his pellets around the oak tree "bungalow", but have had only one sighting of a Little Owl. Our ancient Landrover sits conveniently below the Barn Owl nest site so visitors can watch the owls emerge. The best entertainment is when they are feeding especially when the fledglings sit on the perch hissing for food. Then our friends gather - not for dinner - but to watch the owls from the bedroom window.

The whole project, catapulted onto us by redundancy, leaves us totally exhausted at times. But then you watch the silent Owl pass so close and you are lifted up in pure delight.

Hanneke Coates.

Owls in the belfry

On the front page of the last issue of Feedback we had a photograph of a flying Barn Owl taken by Angie Broadberry of Norfolk. Angie is a Church Warden and her church has resident Barn Owls. She contacted us for advice when the church needed extensive repairs to the tower and thatch. A box and platform were installed for the Owls before the renovation work began and we were delighted to hear from Angie in August with the following news and pictures:



Update on Our Owls and the repairs to the Church

May and June saw the church tower covered in scaffolding for extensive repairs and lots of activity on the roof to patch the thatch. The only access for the Owls into their nest in the roof space was via a small window half way up the south side of the tower. The accuracy of their flight as they negotiated the scaffolding was amazing and what is more the obstacle course did not deter them. An Owl, presumably the male, was often seen flying in and out during daylight hours by our builders working on the tower! We think the eggs must have hatched in about the second week in June because on August the 2nd I discovered a beautiful 7-8 week old Owlet in a cupboard 20 feet below the nest site. It didn't seem to be damaged in anyway from its descent.

I contacted a friend with bird handling experience for help and advice. She (Christine) thought the

Owlet had not been there long and needed to be moved back to the nest.

With both hands full of Owlet, Christine led the way up the unlit spiral stairway to the first floor of the tower where we placed the Owl into the roof opening. We could hear a lot of hissing down at the east end in the darkness. Then off it went. In our dim torch light we watched it fly the length of the roof. When it reached the east wall we saw an adult bird and one or two (it was hard to see) younger chicks come out of the shelter of the roof to meet it. At first they seemed to chase it off - perhaps anyone coming in is expected to bring food and it hadn't..... but after a few seconds we saw him join them, happily reunited.

Later in the month I popped up to the churchyard to see if I could see any activity. I had just reached the porch when I heard a fluttering and a pigeon came out of the Owls window in a "head over heels" fashion followed closely by one of the young Owls. It flew over the churchyard and to the back of the church where it perched on the west gable end. Another young Owl had gone further and was perched in an oak tree in a neighbouring field hissing for food. A lovely half an hour!



A challenge for Feedback readers: We want access for our Owls into the church but not for pigeons or jackdaws. Could anyone design an entrance hole which the Owls would be happy with but would deter the other species? Any ideas would be welcome

Angie Broadberry.

Early Days in North Yorkshire

Our aspiration to reintroduce the Barn Owl to areas where it was previously well distributed coincided conveniently with the introduction of the DOE licensing scheme in 1993. As part of the Catterick & Feldon Military Conservation Group we have, to date, been issued with five licenses allowing the release of 23 juveniles by the Young Clutch release method.

Barn Owls were once a regularly observed species in much of North Yorkshire, but in recent years there have been only isolated sightings as the numbers have dwindled following the pattern in other parts of the UK.

In Catterick Garrison we have two aviaries and have tried to breed our own young for subsequent release. Our original pair from a rescue centre has done us proud, but the second couple appear to have little in common and failed to generate a single addled egg. We have exchanged this latter pair on a loan basis. Fortunately our juvenile numbers have been supplemented by The Barn Owl Trust and breeders across the country who have found themselves with surplus young captive-bred Barn Owls.

Our birds are housed at Colburn Hall by kind permission of the late Mrs D'Arcy Hildyard in an old Saxon undercroft. Here they have been cared for by Neil Clark one of our group for the past two years. It is a time-

consuming commitment. Little did we realise that the adult care regime pales into insignificance where the Young Clutch Release Scheme is concerned. This we have found demands even greater dedication over a protracted period. Our owls have been released with this in mind, it would be impractical to select sites which are difficult to access.

Over the two years we have used four release sites; we would have used more but availability of juveniles this year has been reduced, with only six birds reaching the release stage. Our activities are dogged continually by adults resolved to feed on their own offspring, and nothing we have been able to do seems to discourage this unfortunate behaviour. We have considered a variety of solutions, all without success.

Of 17 birds released in 1993 we have received information on seven found dead. So far we have heard nothing of those which flew this year, and when last seen they were busily quartering the area around the release site, bringing immense pleasure to all who saw them.

Our aim to increase the local population has shown some success in that two of the birds released in 1993 reared two pulli close to their original release site this year. In addition, we have had regular reports of a pair 800m from a

second release site and individual observations have been recorded on several occasions elsewhere.

There is great variation in dispersal, the seven recoveries have been found between 1km and 262km from their respective release sites, the furthest being near Towcester in Northamptonshire 141 days after ringing. Recoveries to date indicate that the birds died between 48 and 278 days after being placed in the release box, (they were very random).

The causes of death follow accepted patterns and are as follows:

Lack of food	2 (64 and 85 days)
Cause unknown	2 (141 and 278 days)
Collision with window	1 (193 days)
Road casualty	1 (53 days)
Savaged	1 (48 days)

It would be premature to draw any conclusions from our activities at this stage, and we have a great deal more to do with the project in the future. There is no doubt, however, that we have made a start, and we have proof positive that there are more Barn Owls in the area than two years ago which is our incentive to continue. There is much to learn and the dispersal to all points of the compass is a cause of some concern although inevitable. Despite locally adequate feeding areas capable of sustaining

limited pairs there is clearly a ceiling. Birds moving away have had obvious difficulty in finding food elsewhere. Our release sites are based generally on low-lying valley bottoms where damp meadows and grassland edge provide a plentiful supply of prey. The adjacent high ground and moorland is entirely unsuitable for Barn Owls, so

there is a degree of restriction where suitable territories may be established. Although we are a far cry from saturation point, we will be monitoring our program carefully in the months ahead and the circumstances of future recoveries.

On a final note may we record our sincere thanks to the staff

of The Barn Owl Trust and also to the DOE licensing department at Bristol, both of whom have responded to our enquiries and requests very often at short notice.

Major Tony Crease
Catterick Garrison

Volunteers.....

Moon the Barn Owl an Outstanding volunteer

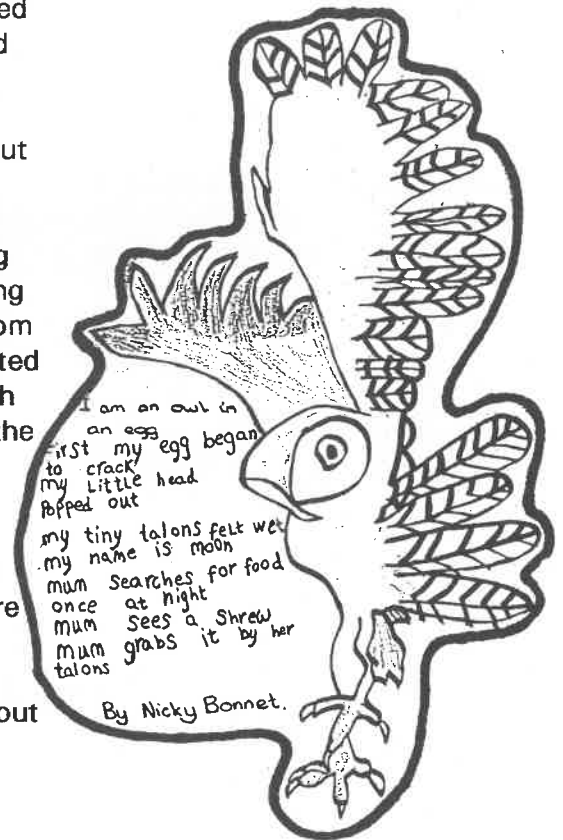
It is over six years now since Moon was hatched here at the Trust. Her parents were, like so many others, disabled wild birds, both road casualties unable to be released. They were one of seven breeding pairs here in 1988, their young all being released into the wild. Moons parents were not good at hatching and rearing their young and Moon the only surviving Owlet from the brood had to be removed at 10 days old and hand reared. Hand rearing from this age meant she became imprinted and was unsuitable for release into the wild so we applied for a licence from the DOE in order to be able to take her into local schools. Moon was just seven weeks old when we did our first school visit together (before she learnt to fly). Now a six, Moon is still going strong and accompanies me on school visits approximately once a week during term time.

On the morning of a school visit Moon enters her basket perched on the back of my hand - all Owls dislike being held bodily and I personally don't like to see

them tethered, No food is used to lure her - she is so well fed she probably wouldn't be interested anyway. A typical school presentation lasts about an hour and Moon waits patiently in her basket before making her appearance during the last five minutes and flying obligingly around the classroom over the heads of quietly seated children - an experience which makes an impression to say the least. Going back into her basket is the same voluntary procedure which is usually accomplished easily although once it did take an hour before she was ready to go back in! Moon has now visited 183 schools and been seen by about 12,000 children, helping to spread the conservation message to future generations (we do not take her to adult talks)

It is an honour to accompany such an exceptional bird. I only wish that I had seen a Barn Owl when I was six.

David Ramsden
Conservation Officer



Thank you

To Mrs Scott Forbes, Peter Chapman and Thornes China of Exeter who all donated T.chests to the Trust. I am sure you will be please to know that these have now been made into nestboxes by volunteers.

.....and Volunteering

A Barn Owl Trust Volunteer!

"Well what do you do"? we're asked. Well not being office types, we do the practical jobs., like cleaning the aviaries when other volunteers are sick or they need a hand. Then there is always the caravan to spruce up and get ready for the District and County Shows. On his holidays Derrick gets up early on show mornings and helps put up the stand and unpack all the boxes for display. Later on in the day he takes a turn at talking to the visitors at the event. Then of course at the end of a long day there is all the packing up to do. The next day some of the other volunteers help unpack and put it all away. There are always the greetings cards that come flat packed; they have to be folded, enveloped, bagged and labelled. The Annual Report needs photocopying, collating, (hopefully in order) stapling and packing (a major task) ready to be sent to the Friends of the Trust. Feedback, similarly, has to be enveloped, labelled and stamped. Prior to this of course they have to be photo-copied or collected from the printers by one of the other volunteers. After all the activity that goes on in the office (and there is a lot) someone needs to clean it. (You see it's all practical) Then of course there is the annual sponsored walk which we are pleased to say is becoming very popular. Those of you that came along will remember all the guiding signs, arrows and written words of encouragement. Well, it takes at least four of us about six hours

prior to the event to go around and put them all in place and then afterwards remove them all again and make sure the site is all packed away and left clean and tidy.

Derrick does a lot of the carpentry and general repairs to the office and aviaries and makes nestboxes for the Trust. Recently the Trust, with the help of lots of volunteers has constructed a new aviary block. Meanwhile at home we still collect aluminium cans and silver foil which we sell for the Trust. Although you have to collect quite a lot for a small return every penny helps and we are recycling our waste. We are always sowing seeds or potting up plants for the annual Plant Sale (a big thank you to all those of you who donated plants).

There is of course one volunteer task which is of great importance. I think it's what I do best for the Trust, that of course is the making of teas and coffees at the nest box workshops and other events. After all who can survive without their good old cuppa'. Cheers!

Margaret Crocker.

Young Volunteers

Matilda and Frances Jaine live near one of our Barn Owl Foster Homes. They have been raising funds for the Trust and recently sent us £8.62. They write: In the holidays two of our friends called Becky and Suzy came over and we set up a stall at our front garden gate, we sell

pictures that we have painted and post cards that we have drawn. Sometimes we set up games. We like raising money because it helps Owls and it is fun.



Louise's Little Shop

Louise Baudoy (11) continues to raise funds for the Trust. She recently sent us £27.50 from this and the sale of raffle tickets. Well done once again Louise. We like your letters.

Becky and Gemma also send us nice letters and have raised some funds for the Trust by selling BOT badges and car stickers to their friends.

Thanks to:

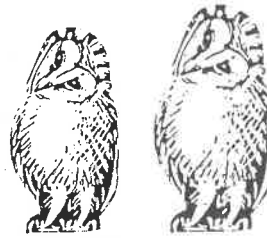
Kevin Webber for sending us £105.00 he raised from running in the Taunton Half Marathon in April, Well done Kevin.

M G Jeavons for £50.00 from his book launch and raffle, congratulations on realising your lifelong ambition of having a book published.

Richard and Karen Chislett for selling £52.00 worth of draw tickets and for raising funds through sponsored bike riding. The Alyn & Deeside Community Rangers organised a sponsored Bird Race and collected £40 in aid of the Trust.

We are very grateful to you all and of course to everyone else that has helped with fund-raising.

Puzzles and Prizes



Bird Quiz

The Bird quiz and the First prize of £25.00 has been donated to the Trust by Friend of the Trust, Marie-Anne Martin.

If you like a challenge and would like to help raise funds for Barn Owl conservation please send £1.00 and an SAE

to the Trust for an entry form and a full set of questions

These five questions are a taster to whet your appetite for the full set of 60 questions. The answers are all names of birds.

Good luck.

Scarlet Beginning -----
 Will you cook yours at
 Christmas -----
 Castle on board -----
 Magician of old -----
 Machine for lifting heavy
 weights -----

Closing date 1.8..95.

"British Birds" Wordsearch Competition

This competition and the prizes have been donated by Royal Mail International.

There are 10 prizes of sets of six Aerogrammes so if you have friends or family overseas you will find them very useful - have a go.

There are 15 words to find.

Send your completed form to the Trust before 1.2.95.

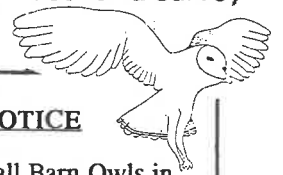
Barn Owl	Pigeon
Mute Swan	Jay Puffin
Nuthatch	Magpie
Mallard	Aerogramme
Harrier	Kingfisher
Grouse	Jackdaw
Kestrel	Golden Plover

R	N	U	T	H	A	T	C	H	K	A	B
T	E	H	U	M	U	T	E	S	W	A	N
K	O	V	M	R	O	F	S	T	R	I	E
I	G	R	O	U	S	E	W	N	O	M	N
N	W	E	R	L	E	H	O	T	M	N	E
G	A	I	A	W	P	W	I	A	R	E	I
F	D	R	H	C	L	N	R	J	A	Y	P
I	K	R	A	E	I	G	E	T	Y	M	G
S	C	A	S	F	O	I	G	D	R	E	A
H	A	H	F	R	D	R	A	L	L	A	M
E	J	U	E	N	O	E	G	I	P	O	E
R	P	A	T	K	E	S	T	R	E	L	G

1994 Cornwall Barn Owl Survey

A joint project by the Barn Owl trust and the Cornwall Birdwatching and Preservation Society.

We are still collecting data for the Cornwall Barn Owl Survey. If you know of any roosting or breeding sites in the county occupied during 1994 please contact the Trust for a survey form.



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

Owl Ode

In June we received an adult Tawny Owl that had been caught up in a fruit cage. The bird spent ten days here recovering from its ordeal and was then ringed and returned fit and well to its home in East Devon where it inspired Mr G Nash to put pen to paper and write:

An Owling Success

Gee wizz, what a tiss,
What have we got here?
Something is wrong, something amiss,
An Owl's been caught I fear.
Look there. In the wire
of that fruit cage I see
A tawny owl, its legs all tied
but it seems alive to me.
Shelagh to the rescue,
Shelagh sets it free,
But now whatever should she do
As it's hungry as can be.
The Vet will know the answer,
He lives just in the Town.
She phones and says what's happened,
He says 'OK bring it down'.
He says he's got to feed it,
It really is a must.
And he knows someone to do it,
Down at the Barn Owl Trust.
So once again our feathered friend,
Is in the car and gone,
To be lovingly administered,
By those at Ashburton.
A week goes by and owl is well,
He's ready to go home.
So they decide to take him back,
And it's all arranged by phone.
When the phone is answered,
Shelagh says "You know its queer,

But ever since we found the owl
Another owl has waited here."
"Oh that is great, we're on our way,
We'll see you late tonight,
To set him free and then perhaps,
The mates can reunite".
That's my story, it is done,
And we'll never know the end,
But one thing's sure, for every owl,
The Ashburton Trust's a friend.

Tail piece.

Worry, stress, chaos strain, anxiety these are all familiar words in our society. We all try to cope with the hectic pace of life in the 1990's and most of us, at sometime, feel that we have too many demands placed on our time, our money and our energy. In the "great scheme" of things, (in the long-term), most of our troubles won't really be that important (although that's not how it feels at the time). Taking a break when you have a deadline to meet or a crisis to deal with feels like the last thing you can do - but although it may seem difficult it **will** help you to view the situation (whatever it is) more objectively and therefore make you better able to cope. A walk in the country (or in the park if you live in a city) is great for changing your perspective. Look around you at the trees, the birds, the natural world.

We are incredibly lucky in this country - far more fortunate than many people in the world. Although almost all of us would like more of something, we have enough to survive and have the luxury of making choices. We have been given the gift of life and a beautiful

planet to spend it on. We should all make time to think about the good things around us and how we can preserve them for future generations. Stand back for a while from 20th century stress and appreciate how nature struggles to survive in our man made environment - despite her struggle she will ease your heart and bring you peace.

All of us have a role to play in the conservation of our environment. Each time a new road is built or a new waste tip created a little bit of the natural world disappears. We can make choices that directly affect our impact on the environment both as individuals and as part of society. No effort you make is wasted, nothing you do too small. The population is made up of individuals and your contribution to conservation is as important as anyone else's. After all when our children and grandchildren grow up shouldn't they have a natural world to enjoy and sustain them? You can plant a tree, recycle your waste, think before you buy, put up a nestbox, support a conservation project, volunteer, write a letter, all of these things can make a difference. Becoming a Friend of the Barn Owl Trust helps us to do our bit too.

We hope you have enjoyed reading this issue of Feedback and will continue to support the Trust and its work of conserving the Barn Owl and its Environment. It is individual donations and the effort of volunteers that make so much of our work possible. Thank you.
Good luck with all your conservation efforts.