

FEEDBACK

1995/96




Issue Number 14

Barn Owl Trust Waterleat Ashburton Devon TQ13 7HU Registered Charity No 299 835



The Barn Owl Trust: Conserving the Barn Owl and its Environment

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Welcome to Feedback

After a very busy and exciting year the Trust is now preparing for its winter events and for 1996. Two further nestbox workshops are planned for Devon and Cornwall in November and January, these will provide some, much needed, new homes for Barn Owls in the south west in addition to those erected by Trust staff and volunteers.

The Trust's booklet "Barn Owls on Site - a Guide for Developers and Planners" has proved a great success with many Councils and Country Agencies ordering additional copies for staff. There have been some very positive developments for Barn Owls as a direct result of the Trust's Barn Conversion Research Project Report. Planners are now starting to understand the seriousness of the situation for Barn Owls and act accordingly. North Cornwall District Council has adopted all six of the recommendations made in the report, all rural barn conversions in this district must now include provision for Barn Owls, (see article on page 6).

We have two new students on placement from the University of Plymouth. Steve Panks and David Royle are carrying out survey work and nestboxing for the Trust and Steve has been persuaded to write a piece for Feedback. There is also an item about Barn Owls in

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Thank you to everyone who has contributed to this issue of Feedback.

Copy date for issue no.15 is 9th April 1996

Germany following a visit to the Trust in September from Jan Ebert a student from Bavaria. Devon's Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group have made a contribution with an article "Rough Grassland - Friend or Foe", the results of the Cornwall Barn Owl Survey also feature in this issue and of course we have the usual Feedback bits and pieces too including the winners of our Bird Quiz and Wordsearch competition.

We hope you find this issue of Feedback both interesting

and informative and that it encourages your continued support for the Trust. Those of you that receive the Trusts annual report will have noticed a significant increase in income over the last financial year, this has almost matched the increase in the Trust's work load and has enabled us to cope with the increase in demand for our services. To all of you - Thank You for helping to make it all possible.

***Together we can make
a world of difference***



TRUST NEWS

The end of an era - no more Moon

By David Ramsden BOT Conservation Officer.

Some of you may recall reading an article about Moon in the last but one issue of *Feedback* (1994/95). For those of you who don't know, Moon was an outstanding volunteer and a Barn Owl. She is pictured on the front cover of this issue of *Feedback*. Since I hand-reared her in 1988 Moon accompanied me on a total of 213 school visits. Sadly, a few weeks ago she was discovered dead from a suspected heart attack. Needless to say this has left a large owl-shaped hole in our lives. Although there are thousands of Barn Owls in captivity I am sure that there are none like Moon - she was

truly exceptional. She was never held bodily, except during her annual check-up, and never tethered. She entered her traveling basket voluntarily and emerged from it likewise, to delight all of the children we have visited. After a forty minute lesson on Barn Owls and countryside changes she would emerge to fly obligingly around the classroom above the heads of spell-bound children. She was a brilliant emissary for her species. She achieved so much doing something she seemed to enjoy and she made a memorable impression on everyone she met. Moon will live on in the hearts and minds of many

people for years to come. She is sadly missed by everyone here at the Trust

A big thank you to the children at St. David's First School (Exeter) who sent a wonderful selection of cards and greetings when they heard about Moon's death.

Moon is a hard act to follow, however the educational visits undertaken by the Trust benefit so much from appearance of a live bird that two new "volunteers" Star and Shadow, are being trained for the role, More news in the next issue.

New Trust Poster

Anyone that likes Barn Owl pictures will be delighted to learn that the Trust has had a new poster printed. Reproduced in full colour from an original oil painting by Ian Nathan (which sold for £8,000) the picture is a breathtaking study of Barn Owls in their natural environment. Printed on acid free paper, by kind permission of Washington Green Ltd. all proceeds from the sale of the posters benefit the Trust. Way back in 1990 the Trust first benefited from Ian Nathan's generosity when another of

his paintings was auctioned raising a donation of £1,700. Copies of the poster are available from the Trust for £3.00 + £1.00 p&p. The Trust also has two colour Barn Owl portrait postcards

for sale, one from a photograph and one from a water colour by Andrew Miller. Postcards are 25p each plus 20p per order to cover postage.



Barn Owl Trust Feedback 1995/96

1994 Cornwall Barn Owl Survey

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

Whenever survey results are produced the one thing that everyone expects to find out is the overall population level. "How many pairs are left" is the first and often only question. If accuracy were unimportant we could easily "guesstimate" an answer. However, anyone who has studied the subject is aware that the Barn Owl is a very difficult bird to survey and that every large scale population estimate to date has been based on insufficient data.

This survey, the largest census ever carried out in Cornwall, follows on from the 1993 Devon survey, (see Feedback issue no. 12) and follows the same methods. The aims were to:

- a). establish the number of known sites within Cornwall where breeding or roosting occurred within 1994.
- b). to analyse the types of breeding and roosting sites used.

The methods were:

- 1). To visit all Barn Owl sites listed within records held separately by both organisations to check if these were occupied during the year and whether or not breeding occurred.
- 2). To request details of occupied sites through the media, posters, personal

contacts and other organisations.

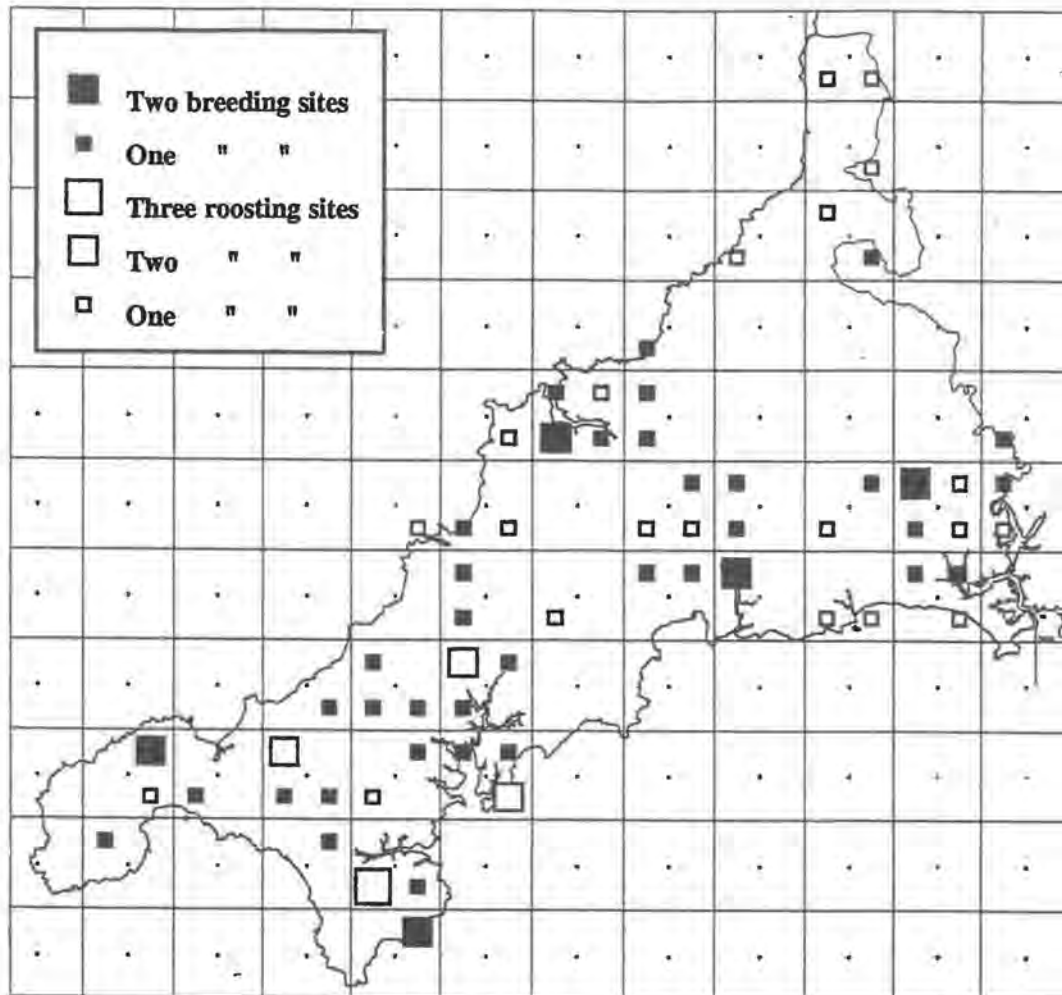
Overall 45 breeding sites and 61 roosting sites were recorded during the survey and of the roosting sites 30 were found in 5km squares where no breeding was recorded (see map). There were no records of Barn Owls in the area of Bodmin Moor, however, with a few exceptions, the species appeared to be quite well distributed within the county. Surprisingly there were few records in central Cornwall (the three 10km squares south of Wadebridge) and in the coastal / border area to the north of Bodmin Moor.

The results of past surveys show a marked east / west divide. Shawyer estimated that in 1983-85 there were 10 pairs per 10km square in west Cornwall (by far the highest figure for any part of mainland Britain) compared to 6.2 in the east and that the birds were more evenly distributed in the west. The BTO atlas of breeding birds (1989-91) showed a marked lack of records for east Cornwall. There is no doubt that the species is under recorded, however given the random nature of the data collection in this survey and relatively little bias caused by local observer effort, it is likely that the distribution

recorded is quite representative. Similarly relative population density between different parts of the county is not likely to be heavily biased as no squares were thoroughly searched. Whilst Barn Owls were more evenly distributed in the western half of Cornwall there is no evidence that the population density was greater there in 1994.

Analysis of the types of sites used by Barn Owls in Cornwall showed that the majority of known breeding sites were buildings (76%) and of these 74% were agricultural. Out of all buildings used for breeding more than half were in use and almost half of known breeding sites were in nest boxes. It should be noted however that Barn Owls breeding in boxes are more likely to be reported than other nest site types. Birds nesting in hollow trees are less likely to be reported but in spite of this seven such sites were notified.

Analysis of the type of buildings used by Barn Owls, and the wall and roof materials, reflect that the birds probably used whatever was available. No evidence emerged of any marked preference. Some of the more unusual sites where



breeding occurred included a disused tunnel and a viaduct.

In summary the Barn Owl is still fairly well distributed in Cornwall with five well dispersed 5km squares holding two or more breeding pairs. However no evidence was found for a greater abundance in west Cornwall as was previously thought to exist. The experience of the few dedicated fieldworkers in the county indicates that numbers are low and that occupied sites were (are) being lost through the demise of old hollow trees and buildings.

Barn Owls are very difficult to survey. Exhaustive searches were not undertaken as part

of this survey. However out of ninety two known historical sites checked by the Barn Owl Trust 32% were found to be unoccupied. The county population level in 1994 was certainly not less than 45 breeding pairs and was probably in the range of 100 - 200 pairs which is very low. The future of Cornwall's remaining Barn Owls depends to a large extent on national and European farming policy. Schemes such as long-term set-a-side and new tree plantations can be very beneficial and will hopefully expand. The provision of nestboxes has helped the Barn Owl tremendously in Cornwall and next January's nest box workshop in east Cornwall

will also go some way to assisting the birds, however is essential that, as old barns and hollow trees disappear, more boxes are provided particularly in modern farm buildings. There is hope and a lot yet to be done.

Note: It is not possible in the space available to give more than a brief outline of the results of the survey however a full report by Grant, Lord and Ramsden will appear in the 1996 journal of the Cornwall Bird Watching and Preservation Society. Copies of the report will also be available from the Barn Owl Trust in 1996. Please enclose £2.00 to cover photocopying and postage.

North Cornwall gets it right

District Council help for Cornish Barn Owls

Following the production of the Trust's Barn Conversion Research Project Report earlier this year, Local Authorities across Britain were asked to adopt six recommendations promoting Barn Owl conservation in the planning process (see page 7 of *Feedback* issue no. 13).

We are very pleased to report that North Cornwall District Council are the first to inform the Trust that these recommendations have been adopted. A.C. Philp, Director of Planning and Development responded on the 28th June 1995, " I have now placed the general summary of the report before the councils planning committee and the committee has resolved to adopt each of the six recommendations". In short, this decision means that North Cornwall District Council has agreed to protect existing Barn Owl sites, give relevant training to planning officers, consult English Nature whenever any evidence of occupation by Barn Owls is found, stipulate that provision for Barn Owls is made in every barn conversion in rural areas whether or not Barn Owls are present at the time of conversion and recommend that nestboxes are provided in new modern barns.

Well done North Cornwall District Council !



More recently, in October, our Conservation Officer visited Bodmin to talk to the district's planning officers and give them a training session enabling them to recognise signs of Barn Owl occupation whilst visiting proposed development sites. The Trusts new booklet on the subject "Barn Owls on Site - a Guide for Developers and Planners" is proving to be an invaluable guide.

Where North Cornwall are leading the way..... others will surely follow.

Photo: Kevin Keatley.

East Devon District Council have recently notified us that their Environment and Planning Committee have "agreed to ask the Association of District Councils to lobby the government to extend protection afforded under the Wildlife and Countryside Act to sites used by Barn Owls in the same way that bat roosts and breeding sites are protected" (this is in accordance with recommendation 1 of the B O T BCRP Report).

Barn Owls in Bavaria

Jan Ebert



In September 1995 I spent four days as a visitor with the Barn Owl Trust. I come from the south of Germany (Bavaria) where I work for the preservation of the Barn Owl on behalf of "Landesbund für Vogelschutz in Bayern" an organisation which deals with the protection of birds in Bavaria. The idea of the visit was to exchange experience concerning the Barn Owl, especially ways of helping it to survive. In the following article I have attempted to outline the situation of the Barn Owl in Germany.

Germany is predominantly inhabited by the subspecies *Tyto Alba Guttata* in meadow land areas which are low in altitude (up to 600 metre above sea level). Although

Photo: David Ramsden

the Barn Owl is well distributed over Germany it is listed in the Red Data Book as a "threatened" species. It is especially bound to man, that is, it exclusively uses human buildings such as church towers, barns dovecotes etc. for roosting and breeding. Natural breeding sites (for instance in hollow trees) are not known. The main prey items of the Barn Owl are the Field and Common Voles, also shrews and mice. Depending on the number of prey, Barn Owls usually breed twice a year, in exceptional cases, three times. The average number of eggs is 4-7. There was a case however when a Barn Owl laid eleven eggs, hatched them and managed

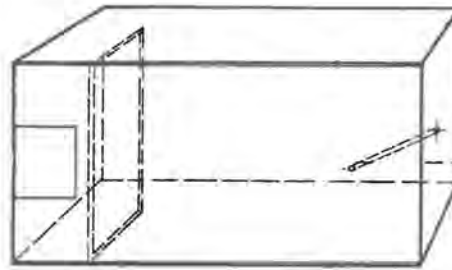
to fledge all eleven young. (The record number of eggs laid is 15).

The decline of Barn Owls is due to the loss of breeding sites, loss of habitat and increasing road deaths. In recent decades church towers which were/are a main breeding sites for Barn Owls have been closed with wire in order to prevent doves and jackdaws entering because of the accumulation of their droppings. Also the renovation and restoration of old barns and other tall buildings and the construction of new barns without access holes have contributed to the decline of the Barn Owl. The change of meadow land into arable land and the removal of hedgerows (affecting prey species) is another problem for the Barn Owl.

The main effort to protect the Barn Owl in Germany involves the erection of nestboxes and the opening and reopening of suitable buildings. Because droppings are a problem, especially in churches, a special nesting box was designed (see illustration).

These boxes are erected immediately behind the access point of the building thus preventing the owls gaining access to the main body of the interior. In barns

(which are usually wooden in Germany) an entrance hole is sawn out behind which the nesting box is directly screwed into the wall. Where droppings in the building are no problem, an additional entrance hole is sawn out which makes it possible for the owls to get into the interior of the building (for roosting and hunting during the winter). Nestboxes erected in this way cannot be entered by Beech Martens which are known to inhabit barns and would eat eggs or young Barn Owls. The interior of the box is divided between the entrance and the breeding area by the provision of a partition in order to darken the breeding section and discourage doves.



Our aim is to provide every suitable village with at least one nestbox, better two or three because experience shows that Kestrels often use them and occasionally Tawny Owls.

Studies in the Saarland by Karl Rudi Reiter show that the loss of breeding sites was the main factor in the decline of the Barn Owl, especially the grating of churches. With the beginning of the erection

of nestboxes an increase in the Barn Owl population could be recorded (see chart), which also applies to most of the rest of Germany. In the long-term however, it is important to preserve the environment of the Barn Owl - and of course nature in general - if we want to ensure that this beautiful bird and other living beings on this planet survive.

Nest boxes Breeding pairs

	Nist-kästen	Brutpaare
1963	5	5
1970	30	20
1975	105	50
1980	170	75
1985	280	110
1990	520	313

Working with the Barn Owl Trust

Steve Panks - Student Fieldworker

Like my predecessor Lizzy Elford I am student at Seale Hayne, a faculty of Plymouth University. I am studying for a degree in rural resources management and currently working with the Barn Owl Trust for a year as an integral part of my course. Working with the Trust gives me a great sense of well-being. It is good to know that, incidental to merely gaining work experience, I am doing something positive to counter the actions of human kind on the environment.

I have been with the Trust for nearly two months now and in that time I have had a

multitude of experiences. During the first month I worked very closely with David Ramsden, the Trust's conservation officer. The majority of our time was spent visiting known breeding sites where I watched as David ringed the owlets. This was a great privilege for me, one that enabled me to see wild Barn Owls and their young at close proximity.

At the time I thought the experiences of the first two days with the Trust would be hard to beat, but on my third day something happened that I will never forget. David

and I traveled to a location in east Devon with a Westcountry Television crew to film Barn Owls in a converted barn. I thought that I would just be an observer but I was mistaken. David crawled up into the nest space and to my amazement passed one of the owlets down for me to hold whilst he ringed it. Words can not describe how I felt holding this little white ball of fluff, it was fantastic. Then to cap it all I ended up being filmed and appearing on the television. However, I don't think I'll give up my day job just yet!



During the first month I learnt a tremendous amount about Barn Owls, their habitat requirements, diet and nest sites. David taught me how to identify signs of Barn Owl occupation, how to age pellets and feathers and

Photo: David Ramsden.

how to tell a roosting site from a breeding site. After the month's initial training it was time to fly the nest (pardon the pun) and go it alone. Now most of my time

is spent carrying out fieldwork. I am currently engaged in survey work with another Seale Hayne student, David Royle, who is also on placement with the Trust. We spend one day a week in the office dealing with paper work and record keeping, a necessary part of the work.

Probably the most important thing I have learnt during my short time with the BOT is the importance of the Trusts conservation work. Not only directly, through nestbox provision and the like, but also more indirectly, through raising public awareness by the provision of information, school visits, talks etc. It is very rewarding, and a real privilege to be a part of the Barn Owl Trust, all be it only for a short period.

Rough Grassland - Friend or Foe

**Sian Kirkpatrick - Farm Conservation Advisor
Devon Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group**

Most people would expect the conservationist to view rough grassland as a friend whilst the farmer would see it as foe. But is this the case? Grasslands which are best for wildlife are the product of skilled farming management. They are unimproved and contain a greater variety of flora and thus fauna than improved grasslands.

Due to changes in farming, particularly this century, much of our rough grassland

has been lost, however, many farms still have areas that have not been touched for years. Often these are in the more inaccessible parts of the farm such as low lying wet areas and steep or rough ground. Field margins are another important area for rough grassland.

Rough grasslands support a wide range of wildlife and those of great antiquity will support rarer flora and fauna than new wildlife grasslands.

It is an ideal habitat for populations of small mammals, including shrews, which feed on invertebrates and short tailed voles which are themselves prey for such animals as Barn Owls. This is due to the dense cover and because grass is dominant in the sward. For some species the grassy tussocks found in rough grassland provide concealment from predators and protection from extremes of temperature and humidity. They can be excellent as

hibernation sites for beetles and nesting sites for birds.

There are a whole range of things that influence the type of flora and fauna present in rough grassland such as aspect, soil, temperature etc., but management and nutrient enrichment are of major importance. The availability of nutrients influences the sward as grasses and clovers respond to nutrients more vigorously than most other plants thus outgrowing and replacing them. An area enriched with fertiliser will hold less species, and less flora diversity means less fauna diversity. This is a very important point when you think that many species rely on different plants to complete their lifecycle. For example, the small copper butterfly will only lay its eggs on sorrels, while the adult will feed on a variety of nectar plants.

Many of these grasslands have developed their wildlife interest through livestock management as part of a farming system. Often it is best to graze this sort of

grassland with cattle as they will eat a wider range of the coarser plants than sheep so that the effect of grazing is more evenly spread. Their trampling opens the sward up more than sheep and can also break up the mat more rapidly, so encouraging new growth and germination. The important thing is to get the balance between stocking rates and the amount of food the grassland can offer. It is a fine balance and there are no hard and fast rules. You often hear of certain stocking rates for certain areas in the countryside, however, it is better to think about "flexible stocking rates" when considering management. This will allow for changed productivity from year to year according to weather, previous grazing effects or vigour and seasonal differences in species abundance. Similarly, if the existing wildlife interest is high then past management must be about right and should be continued. Winter grazing is best, about October to December,

Photo: David Ramsden



although over poaching should be avoided. Vigorous swards may need additional grazing in August or September, but again it comes back to that flexible approach as every grassland differs.

To maintain rough grassland low intensity grazing is the required management so that the end product should be an area with a range of plant structures including short swards, tall herbage, scattered grass tussocks and limited areas of bare ground, and possibly small areas of open scrub. This is likely to hold a wide variety of invertebrates, small mammals and birds. Undergrazing leads to an increase in growth of vigorous rank grasses and eventually scrub, and loss of wildlife interest. Overgrazing creates bare and poached ground which provides an ideal habitat for weeds such as thistles to colonise, reduces the wildlife interest and tramples nests of ground-nesting birds. Overall, it can be seen that these types of grassland are extremely important in terms of nature conservation, and must be looked after for future generations.

Having had a brief look at rough grassland and its management, is it friend or foe? Friend of course. It has a high conservation value, which provides pleasure in itself and many of these areas are unlikely to be cost effective to improve, so what could be better?

More bits of BOT news

Graham Deykin Promotions Officer

The last six months have been extremely hectic, but extremely satisfying in terms of achieving the Trust's aims and increasing awareness of the plight of the Barn Owl.

The fourth annual Sponsored Walk on the Flete estate at the end of May was very successful with 258 walkers taking part. Unfortunately many of the participants were not sponsored, but the weather was excellent and everyone had a thoroughly enjoyable day, even those who found the river crossing slightly deeper than anticipated! The walk raised approximately £1,620 for the Trust this year.

We also attended the Devon County Show in May where we were housed in a small barn which was very kindly lent to us by T T buildings of Bideford. It was a very busy three days and we dealt with hundreds of enquiries from interested visitors and met many Friends of the Trust although the Queen and Prince Philip didn't quite make it to our stand! It was also the first show attended by Fran and David's briard puppy, Lupé, - definitely a crowd puller! We are hoping to attend the Royal Cornwall Show next year as well.

In June, prior to the arrival of our two students on placement, Derrick Crocker

once again proved what an asset he is to the Trust when he spent two weeks here at Waterleat and refurbished our working environment. John and Margaret Rhodes also spent many days here with paintbrushes in hand and by the time the students arrived in July we had acquired some second hand desks and borrowed some garden chairs and created a space for them. Our office has also benefited from a new telephone system (which has improved communications both within the office and with the outside world) and the purchase of a brand new photocopier, made possible by specific grants. This will greatly improve our free information and advice service by enabling us to produce leaflets of a better copy quality more quickly and economically. This service now costs over £10,000 a year to operate (a 250% increase in a year) which reflects the public interest in the Barn Owl but also puts a great strain on our resources.

We are hoping to introduce a Family Friends Scheme shortly, which will cost a minimum donation of £20 a year. It will have all of the benefits of single membership as well as a children's "goody bag" and a "free admission" for children incentive at a number of

participating places of interest and attraction. We shall also be testing a Life Membership Scheme which will be available at £250. We have held a number of flag days and street collections with the assistance of volunteers throughout the year which have proved an important source of revenue for the Trust as well as putting us in the public eye. We hope to increase these in 1996 so if you live in Devon or Cornwall or are planning a holiday in the area and would like to help - please let me know.

Both Westcounty Television and BBC South West have featured the Trust's barn conversion research project work during the year which has led to an increase in enquiries on how to provide provision for owls in barn conversions.

Many thanks to all of you who have returned your draw tickets (often with a donation) This year looks set to be a record breaker with £1,576 of tickets sold so far and two weeks still to go.

We have received several enquiries about the availability of Christmas cards from the Trust. We have a small selection of children's designs available in one colour bearing the message "Happy Christmas

and a peaceful New Year". These are available in packs of six for £2.00. Next year we hope to have the funds available to have a selection of Cards printed in colour.

Barn Owl Trust Christmas Puddings

You can support the Trust this year whilst eating your Christmas dinner. We have a very special, light and delicious 1lb Christmas pudding full of luxury fruits and nuts soaked in brandy and dry sherry available to raise funds for the Trust. Made by the Ultimate Plum Pudding Company, the puddings are available for £3.99 at events listed on the accompanying "Forthcoming Events" list or by post (please include £1.00 extra for post and packing). Vegetarian puddings are also available, please state preference if ordering by post. These puddings have been sampled by Trust staff who unanimously agree that they're yummy!



New Stone Wall

We are delighted to thank Diana Smurthwaite and Mike Wallsh who gave up a week in September to come and

rebuild the old stone bank in front of our main aviary block. This now looks absolutely wonderful and will last for many years.

Recycling Funds

A small local nursery has provided an example of a very successful fundraising idea for the Trust. Hill House Nursery at Landscope have recycled all of their empty compost sacks by offering them to their customers with a suggestion that they might make a contribution to the Trust. The nursery has benefited because it disposed of unwanted plastic sacks, the customers have benefited because the sacks are heavy duty and very useful and the Trust has benefited financially. In May, we received our first cheque of £37.40 these were followed by several more throughout the summer. To date this year we have received a total of £198.65. This is an excellent fundraising idea which not only generates income for the Trust but also makes use of something that would otherwise be thrown away. Thank you very much to Valerie, Raymond and Hillary at Hill House Nursery and to the customers for their support. We would be delighted to hear from anyone with a fundraising idea that could be put into practice fairly easily. You can ring the office on a Tuesday or Thursday to discuss your idea or alternatively drop us a line.

How we produce Feedback

Recently someone asked *who* we got to produce our newsletter *Feedback*. For those of you that don't know both the Trust's Annual Report and Feedback are both low budget productions and created entirely by Barn Owl Trust staff and volunteers. Items of interest and contributions (thank you for those) that come into the office during the year are put into special files and when the time for production draws near, they are sorted, edited and typed onto a word processor and photographs and illustrations are pasted in. The Annual Report is photocopied and collated here, whilst Feedback gets sent to the printers and then is returned here to be mailed out with any enclosures. Its lots of work and always a struggle to put together on top of our general workload but we are pretty pleased with the results of our efforts - we hope you are too!

Thank you children

We continue to receive a wonderful selection of letters and pictures from children, many of which adorn our office walls. Thank you too to the Friends of the Trust for your letters and support. We love to hear from you all.



How you can help

With increasing demand for our services we obviously need to find more ways of generating income to cope. We are desperately in need of an assistant conservation officer and extra admin support but of course these things cost money and grant giving Trust's are not generally interested in funding posts. The two students working with the Trust are self funding, they do three days a week here and work elsewhere to support themselves during their placement. Our two full time and two part-time staff are all very dedicated and on low wages, they and our amazing group of volunteers make it possible to achieve so much, on what is, compared to other organisations, a relatively small income. In fact the Trust's income has risen incredibly over the last eight years and Friends of the Trust have played a major part in generating this increase both through their annual / monthly donations and through fund raising events. We were delighted with the positive response to the increase in the Friends subscription earlier this year - thank you all for your continued support. We now need to build on what we have achieved to date and increase our "core funding" by increasing the number of Friends of the Trust and encouraging fund raising

events. If you know of anyone who might like to become a Friend please ask for a leaflet or two to pass on. If you would like to organise a fund raising event we have a leaflet giving lots of ideas and will help with advice and information.

Adopt an Owl

The Trust's Owl Adoptions help to support our resident birds and have proved very popular as gifts. With Christmas looming if you are stuck for unusual ideas you may like to consider giving an Adoption as a present. The adoption pack includes information on the Owl concerned (one of our resident birds), a certificate of adoption, an A3 colour poster, a badge, car sticker, annual report, issues of Feedback throughout the year and an end of year summary. The cost of adoption is £30 per year.

Plant and Craft Sale

This years annual plant sale raised £500 for the Trust. Next years sale will include a craft section and Margaret Crocker who organises the event would like to hear from anyone, anywhere in the country who would like to contribute craft items or plants to the event on Saturday 27th April 96. She can be contacted during the evenings on 01803-712486.

Can you help or do you know someone who can ?

Do you have any of the following items lying around at home surplus to requirements and gathering dust. They could be put to good use if you would like to donate them to the Trust. Alternatively you might like to consider sponsoring something on the list. We are always grateful for the donation of items which save the Trust money. Thank you for your consideration.

- Nail carrying boxes with compartments.
- Waterproofs for fieldworkers and aviary cleaners.
- Plastic curver boxes.
- Rechargeable torches.
- Crow bar and post driver
- Office chairs, we need four.
- Office desk.
- Creosote.
- 14' touring caravan - for events.
- Extension leads, interior and exterior quality.
- Video camera and player.
- Work-top (or small) fridge.

Many thanks to Paul Bray (projector), Mrs. Scott-Forbes (rechargeable torch), Mervyn Sanders (fan heater and metal cabinets), Mrs. Owlett (kilos of nails), Eillen Hooper-Bargery (office sundries), Mrs. Taylor (digital scales) and to everyone that has provided tea-chests for nest boxes. We are very grateful for your support.

Your letters

Dear BOT

I would like to briefly tell you about the Barn Owl occupation of our garage during the summer. From about April we watched the pair of adults nearly every evening hunting from the nestbox installed in our garage roof space.

I fixed a baby alarm transmitter to the side of the nestbox so we could listen to their activities from the house and on the 10th June we first heard the sound of young owls. The adult birds continued to feed the young for about 8/9 weeks until we saw the fledglings first attempts at flight in the garden on 31st July. I would sincerely like to thank you for introducing us to the Barn Owl and although it has taken four years for our site to be occupied the last six weeks have been a delightful and rewarding experience. We feel honored that the owls chose our garage to make their home.

Roy Page.

Photo: Roy Page.



Barn Owl Trust Feedback 1995/96

John Waring, a "Friend of the Trust" in East Sussex, would like to hear from any "Friends" in the area who are interested, or who have relevant experience in making provision for Barn Owls during the restoration of old buildings. He can be contacted at work on 01323 891623 or at home on 01323-895110.

Dear BOT

Just a note to let you know that the owls in the loft of our new house bred this year and fledged two young. We think that one left the nestbox on the 20th July as there seemed to be extra activity and commotion! We rarely see an adult but the young come back to the nestbox for the day. They are wonderful to watch as they gain confidence.

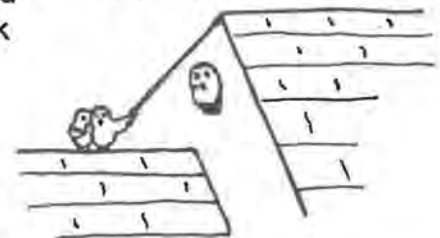
Cathy and Roger Pole.

Dear BOT

We were pleased to see you on your recent visit and to discover that we had four young Barn Owls in our loft this year. I was sure from the noises that there were at least two and thought possibly three so the discovery of four was even better than we'd hoped. If the noises from our bedroom ceiling are anything to go by, things seem to be going well with plenty of deliveries (we've heard up to three within 15 minutes at times) which start off lots of excited screaming and thumping.

From our bedroom window I saw one of the adults hunting at 9.00am in bright sunshine and could hear the young hissing and scuffling around in the loft waiting for his return. Like last year, I have a vision of these huge young Barn Owls sitting in the loft screaming for food, too fat to get out when the time comes for them to leave and the two distraught parents wearing themselves to a frazzle to keep them satisfied!

Pat Dunham.



... AND THIS IS OUR YOUNGEST!

Dear BOT

An aunt of mine died recently and instead of sending flowers we were asked to send money to charity. The Barn Owl Trust is one that I feel sure that Auntie Ina would have approved of.

Mrs. Henderson.

Delightful gite to let in the heart of the Normandy countryside - with resident Barn Owls - 90 mins from nearest port, Caen, - ideal spot for walking cycling and "relaxing". Sleeps 4. Price per week from £100 low season to £200 high season. Tel: Alison or John on (00 33) 33 59 29 16 for more details

Puzzles and Prizes

This issues puzzle was sent in by Becky and Jemma Hard from Devon.

Thank you girls for providing this Brain Tester. There will be token prizes for the 1st, 2nd and 3rd correct entries drawn. We hope we have lots of participants.

Bird Quiz

The winners of the Bird Quiz were notified in September. First with all 60 questions correctly answered was Robert Hamar of Sparkwell, he won the £25 first prize (kindly donated by Marie-Anne Martin). In 2nd place, Barbara Kirby of Liverton received two books with her 59 correct answers. Jointly in 3rd place (with 58 right answers) were Tony Moore of Paignton and Mrs. A Remfrey of Shrewsbury who received a book each. Thank you to everyone who supported the Trust by buying the quiz and taking part, we hope you enjoyed doing it as much as we did.

Wordsearch

The hidden message in the wordsearch competition was "Conserving the Barn Owl and its Environment" (where have you heard that before !) We had a record breaking number of correct entries for this competition and put all of them into a box and asked an independent observer, (the photocopier maintenance engineer) to draw the three

Becky and Jemma's Brain Tester

Take the first letter of each answer and rearrange them to make the name of an owl.

1. Have this if you're thirsty (5)
2. They grow on trees (6)
3. King of the Jungle (4)
4. You put your letter in this (8)
5. Goes off with a bang (3)
6. It makes you cry when peeled (5)
7. Jewelry for your fingers (5)
8. Melted Ice (5)
9. Keep these trimmed on your fingers (5)
10. Not new (3)
11. You will have trouble packing this trunk (8)
12. You can make cider from these(6)



Answers must be received before 1st April 1996. Good luck.

prize winners. Christine Wise of Surbiton, A M Salter of Exeter and Beryl Welsh of Modbury will all shortly receive copies of *Care for the Wild* by Bill Jordan. Well done everyone and thank you for joining in.

Can you design an appropriate caption for this picture ? We will locate a prize or two for the best efforts and look forward to reading them. Captions to reach us by 1st April 1996.

Caption Competition

Its quite a long time since we have had a caption competition in Feedback although we do have a couple of pictures in the office which regularly have *their captions* changed ! We thought you might like to be introduced to Sharon (administration) and Graham (promotions) who both work for the Trust), if you ever ring the office on a Tuesday or Thursday its quite likely to be Sharon you're talking to.



Barn Owl Trust Feedback 1995/96

Tail piece



What an amazing summer we've just had and an incredibly bountiful Autumn we are now experiencing! Despite all of the pressure we human beings put on our natural environment, or maybe because of it, Mother Nature has created an exceptional harvest of fruits, nuts and fungi in the south west where the Trust is based. Having been out regularly gathering berries for wine and mushrooms for breakfast I have been delighted to share in these natural gifts and have a really good excuse for loitering in the countryside when there's lots of work to be done. Some old country

folk say that a lots of berries is a sign that we are in for a hard winter. The summer, which was so long and hot (for Britain), wasn't good for everything, I met lots of people who found the heat too much and lots of shallow rooted and young trees died as the result of so little rain. Barn Owl breeding success in the south west was very disappointing too, with many traditional breeding sites having no young and broods sizes generally low. The area of Devon where the Trust is based is described, by a very close friend of mine, as a "temperate rain-forest". Certainly it *seems* to rain a tremendous amount

here as it did most of the time from July 94 to May 95, which made the summer so much more remarkable. It is possible that the summer was the result of global warming, due to the burning of fossil fuels and global deforestation or, maybe its Mother Nature showing us what She is capable of. Whichever, (if either is the reason) the good summer weather drew a lot of people into the countryside giving them the opportunity to enjoy a natural, or at a least semi-natural environment. Hopefully this will have encouraged at least some of them to appreciate the countryside and think about conserving it. Of course wherever you are YOU can take an active part in conservation by doing things to help conserve the environment and our natural resources. Walk or cycle instead of driving, recycling and campaigning, these things can be done wherever you happen to be. Being a Friend of the Barn Owl Trust helps too.

We hope you have enjoyed reading this issue of Feedback and that it will encourage you to do your bit for the environment. Thank you for your support, it is individual donations and the efforts of volunteers that make so much of our work possible. Good luck with all of your conservation efforts.



JOIN YOUR FRIENDS FOR CHRISTMAS

A Friend of the Trust helps us to carry out our work of Conserving the Barn Owl and its Environment.

Friends support our conservation, education, information and research and help us to provide our free national information and advice service.

Regular donations enable us to respond to emergency calls and look after our resident birds.

This costs as little as £15.00 a year (just 30p a week)

The Barn Owl Trust is planning to introduce a "Family Friends" scheme before the end of 1995.

Additional Family benefits will include free entry for children at a number of attractions and a children's "goodie bag"

A whole family can become Friends of the Trust for only £20 a year.

Overseas Friends are catered for too at £20.00 a year for individuals and £25 00 for Families.

What great Christmas gifts!



Please call us for more details on 01364-653026