



Issue Number 24 - Autumn 2000



FEEDBACK

The Barn Owl Trust, Waterleat, Ashburton, Devon TQ13 7HU - (01364) 653026 - Registered Charity: No: 299 835



A range of experiences...

- South Hams scheme success
- BOT the movie
- Mixed breeding season
- Boxes on bikes
- Strange bedfellows

Barn Owl Trust News

B.O.T. the Movie

Friends of the Trust now have an opportunity to take a look at the work of the Trust from the comfort of their own homes. A new video allows you to take a peek into the life of a Barn Owl family from hatching to fledging and also gives you the opportunity to see staff and volunteers in action.

With footage of radio tracking, nestboxing and pole box erection, the video, filmed and produced by John Woodland, enables you to see some of our practical conservation in action. John is a British Trust for Ornithology regional representative and also conservation officer for the Devon Bird Watching and Preservation Society. A keen amateur film maker, John lives in Devon with his wife Jen.

The 24 minute video is available on loan free of charge from the Trust. However if you would like to make a donation it would be most welcome. It costs us about £1.50 for post and packing.

Please let us know if you would like us to send you one.



Troon and Gulliver star in the video with their family

Photo: Kevin Keatley

Barn Owls Need Friends

An old leaflet has received a new look to help the Trust recruit Friends. In order to continue and develop our Barn Owl conservation work the Trust needs to secure more Friends and a more regular income.

The new leaflet features a wonderful Barn Owl portrait by photographer Mike Read and provides information about both the Trust and its work.

We have enclosed a copy with most Feedback mailings for information and also in the hope that you will pass it on to a potential Friend.

We would be pleased to hear from anyone who can provide a home in a suitable shop, waiting room or other public place for a leaflet dispenser and leaflets. Thank you for your help.

Barn Owls Weather a Mixed Breeding Season

Unseasonal weather this year has upset the breeding pattern of wild Barn Owls.

You may remember that in February 2000 we enjoyed two weeks of summer weather. This caused some pairs to start breeding two months early, while snow and rain later in the spring delayed many others.

The Trust checks selected breeding sites every year in June and July when we expect to find young in the nest. This year we've found that at some sites the young have fledged very early while at other sites the females were still on eggs in August. David, our Senior Conservation Officer, said, "It was a very unusual year."

"Of those birds which bred at the normal time, many either failed or raised smaller broods - even in areas of good habitat. More pairs have bred late this year, which is worrying. Research shows that owlets fledging later stand less chance of surviving the winter. The only explanation seems to be the weather."

Mike Toms, of the British Trust for Ornithology, said: "This pattern of earlier and later breeding was repeated across England. In some areas the brood size was healthy - 5 or 6 owlets - in others, such as the South West, brood sizes were less good. The South West is usually a more productive area with lower mortality."

"Wet summer weather may have helped the Barn Owl population a little by extending the breeding season of Barn Owl prey such as field voles. This would mean that there's more food available for later broods. Some pairs may even have second broods."

Barn Owls cannot hunt in rain and prolonged periods of wet weather can lead to starvation. With a species as rare as the Barn Owl, the survival of every individual is important.

Generally only 1 in 4 young survive into the next breeding season. We have got our fingers crossed for some dry weather to set up this year's young for the winter.

The Birds

Over the last few months we have seen a mixture of birds coming into the sanctuary. Our birdroom has been busy with recuperating and convalescing owls. Some of these we were sadly unable to save, all those that fully recovered were released back into the wild. The rest will remain in our care.

During the early weeks of the summer we received three young Tawny Owls from different places. All had become separated from their parents and were in need of supplementary feeding. By the time this issue of Feedback goes to print all three will have been released. It might be worth mentioning here that it is quite common to find Tawny owlets out of the nest - the parents will usually be close by. Unless the bird is in imminent danger of being squashed or in obviously poor condition, it is better to leave it where it is.

In two separate cases Buzzards were brought to us with such horrific injuries, probably from flying into wire, that they both had to be put down. In July we took in a Sparrowhawk with a wing injury. When X-rayed it was discovered to have been shot. Good news about this bird, we passed it on to a local bird hospital where despite two fractures it made a full recovery and has since been released.

We have received many injured Barn Owls over the past few months with injuries caused by flying into overhead cables and wires and also from collisions with cars. One bird from a North Devon Barn Owl Scheme site had flown into wires and dislocated one wing so badly that it had to be amputated by the vet. The bird is now resident in our disabled bird aviary and seems to be adjusting well. A fledgling Barn Owl that had fallen out of the nest and fractured a wing is recovering and will hopefully be suitable for release. We have also been informed about some Barn Owls that have died in cattle troughs. If you have one please consider fitting a water float - ask for our leaflet No. 31.



Photo: David Ramsden

We were asked to release a Jackdaw that had been hand reared. This proved to be a bit of a problem as it obviously knew when it was well off and kept coming back. I think David had to speak to it quite firmly in the end!

As far as our resident birds are concerned, we were sad to lose one of our Barn Owls during this period - Mountjoy a male captive bred bird.

In the Pond Aviary which is just outside the office we had four resident Barn Owls and Rave (the Raven). Two of the Barn Owls, Valentine and St David, forged a very close relationship which threatened to create all sorts of problems as St David was unwilling to accept other males in the aviary. With space always at a premium this could have meant the end of a beautiful friendship if they had to be separated. However, moving George (the Barn Owl) into the aviary during August seems to have calmed things down. It's great to watch a pair of Barn Owls together and see how they relate to each other.

The Short Eared Owl mentioned in the last issue of Feedback continues to thrive and is currently sharing its aviary with Dusty, a very gentle female captive bred Barn Owl that we took in last summer. Dusty

now shares school visits with New Moon and accompanies Paula, one of our conservation officers, when she gives talks to schools and young people's organisations. Incidentally the Barn Owl Trust has just made its three hundredth school visit and has now talked to over 16,000 children.

Since April we have been delighted to receive grants to support our welfare and rehabilitation work from the Barry Green Memorial Fund, Marchig Animal Welfare Trust and William Haddon Charitable Trust. Thank you to these charitable trusts and to everyone else who has supported this work.

Sandra Reardon

WANTED! **Volunteer** **Aviary Cleaners**

**Become a
Barn Owl Trust Volunteer
- Give us your time -
just 3 or 4 hours on a regular
basis, weekly or fortnightly
and help to keep our aviaries
spick and span**

**Talk to our conservation team
on a Tuesday or Thursday
for more details**

Fieldwork Notes

A Very Unusual Nest

This summer with a nest photography license from English Nature I've had a few good months of watching, photographing and videoing wild Barn Owls in a nestbox I made at a BOT workshop. There was competition for the box and the Barn Owls had to evict Jackdaws who had started carrying in twigs to make a nest. Later on the owls shared the box with a Stock Dove which hatched two chicks just inches from the owls.



Stock Dove on young in a nestbox with juvenile Barn Owls Photo: Kevin Keatley

I took advice from the Trust and put up a hide on top of a 16' tower. All went well and over a few days I moved it closer to the box, I also fitted a light on a timer. The owls carried on as usual and I spent many hours sitting waiting for the chance of a photo. As the Stock Dove chicks got older the adult started to leave them on their own. At the same time the owlets were growing fast and were getting more rowdy when the owls brought in food.

By the first week in August there was only one Stock Dove chick in the nest and by mid August the second one had disappeared. The young Barn Owls fledged around the 5th September and I watched them sitting on the tray of the nestbox or on the top of the barn door waiting for the adults to bring in food which they took into the nestbox or onto the straw bales to eat.

This 'Feedback' cover photo shows the female presenting food to an owlet at the box.

Within a couple of days of the owlets fledging the Stock Doves started to carry straw into the nestbox for a new nest.

Kevin Keatley
near Tiverton

Conserving Barn Owls in the Exeter District

The Barn Owl Trust and Exeter City Council have formed a partnership to help encourage Barn Owls in the Exeter City area. We're not talking of erecting boxes on shop buildings, but encouraging Barn Owls on the fringes of the city.

The scheme, started in 98/99, has proved successful with two breeding sites on the edge of the city producing five owlets in '99. No breeding has taken place this year, both nest sites have been deserted after initial scrapes and pellets were found in early March. Another two new boxes nearby have evidence of breeding preparation both with fresh pellets and scrapes, possibly a second attempt halted by wet weather in the spring.

Of the 40 boxes erected around the edge of the city, six have seen

regular roosting and two occasional roosting. All this activity is more than likely by the two pairs who bred in 1999 and their offspring.

Exeter is not the greenest of cities, it doesn't have that many parks but is split down the middle by the rivers Exe and Clyst, which provide good habitat at the north east and south of the city where most of the Barn Owl activity takes place. The east side of the city is flanked by the M5 motorway which attracts Barn Owls on the rough grass verges and this is where most of the local Barn Owl road casualties have been found over the years.

We visited a farmer in 1998 to put up a nestbox and the following year to his surprise he had a breeding pair of Barn Owls with three young. Two successfully fledged but one fell

from the box and eventually died. The farmer whose land is on the east side of the city near to the river Clyst, has some superb Barn Owl habitat, plenty of rough grass and ditches and dikes. In 2000, we put up two new deep style boxes on the farm; both have had fresh pellets in them and the old breeding box had just a few pellets. The farmer still sees a Barn Owl, but unfortunately he is pretty close to the M5 motorway and a dual carriage way - maybe one of the pair has become a road casualty. Across the river from the farm we erected more new boxes earlier this year and both have had lots of Barn Owl activity - masses of pellets in both boxes and definite scrapes, but no eggs. So maybe the birds have flown across the river. The plot thickens.

Simon Bishop
BOT Conservation Volunteer

Barn Owl Scheme Updates

Since 1997 the Trust has been operating Barn Owl schemes in a number of districts in Devon. The aim of these schemes is to secure the future of the area's remaining wild Barn Owl population through a combination of practical and advisory work. The schemes all have three stages. Most of the work is carried out during the first winter while over the following two summers stage two and three visits monitor the breeding success of Barn Owls, continue the advisory work and create new potential sites nearby. So far 57 Barn Owl sites have participated in these schemes.

Here's the latest progress of the three schemes currently running...

Fantastic News in the South Hams

In the South Hams when the first scheme started Barn Owls were extremely rare. We began the implementation of our conservation measures in the district and since then the number of known breeding pairs has increased by 47%. In 1997 only 15 of the 32 recorded breeding sites had nesting birds. In '99 we heard about 1 new nest site and this year have recorded another 6. 5 of the nests are in new sites and 2 are abandoned traditional nesting sites which have been reoccupied. Unfortunately, due to the wet spring weather, the average brood size in the district fell from 3 in '99 to 2 this year.

The scheme has been completed at 19 sites since 1999 but funding from Devon Bird Watching and Preservation Society and the Trust's core funds has allowed us to continue monitoring this year.

As a result of the new breeding sites a final four South Hams scheme sites have now been identified and stage one conservation work will be carried out at these locations shortly, bringing the total number of participating sites in the district to 32.

North Devon

Stage two monitoring visits were carried out at the 19 participating sites. This year some results were a bit disappointing. Barn Owls failed to breed at 4 sites and the average brood size has fallen from 4 last year, to 3 this year. This can mainly be attributed to the poor weather conditions during the spring (see article on page 3).

Fortunately a new site has been found near the coast in the Ilfracombe area. The landowner erected a nestbox 14 years ago but has only observed Barn Owls using it this year. He called in the Trust to investigate and was thrilled to discover that a pair of Barn Owls had in fact bred in the box and produced a brood of 5 young!



A local farmer meets an owlet during a ringing visit. Photo: Simon Bishop

Teignbridge

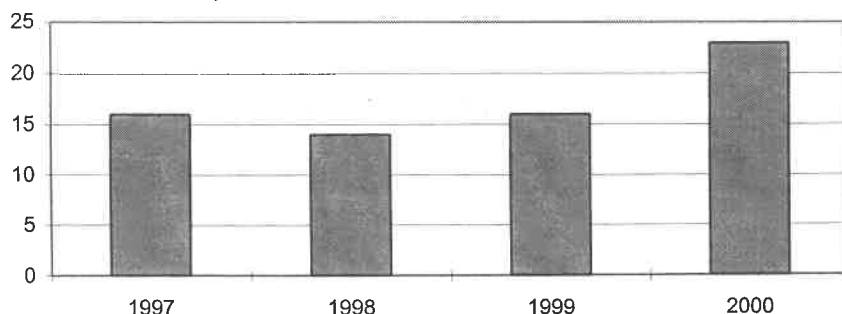
Breeding occurred at 5 of the scheme sites, as it did last year. Surprisingly, given the results in the other districts, the average brood size increased from 2 in 1999 to 3 in 2000. Hopefully this will mean more young making it through the winter to breed next spring at sites which are currently unoccupied. The breeding season visits brought the scheme to a close at 8 of the 9 participating sites. However, the improvements (such as safer nest sites) will continue to benefit the owls for many years to come.

East Devon

The Trust is now preparing to launch a Barn Owl Site Enhancement Scheme in East Devon district. It is hoped that up to 42 sites will participate in the scheme which is being funded by East Devon District Council, the Barn Owl Trust, Devon Bird Watching and Preservation Society and Clinton Devon Estates.

The conservation team are busy identifying potential sites and it is hoped that stage one work will have been completed at the first 22 sites by next spring. □

Total number of recorded breeding sites in the South Hams



Misconceptions and Musings

Popular Misconceptions

This is a relatively new Feedback feature where we explode some of the myths that surround the Barn Owl.

No 2.

Woods are ideal Barn Owl habitat - wrong!

The phone rings, "Hello, Barn Owl Trust". "Hello, I wonder if you can help me. I would really like to encourage Barn Owls. I haven't seen one for years, I'm sure this would be a good area for them:- we've got plenty of woodland behind our house."

Woods are lovely to look at - especially deciduous woodlands and often provide good habitat for a very wide range of suitably adapted species. Raptors adapted for hunting in woodland (such as Sparrowhawks and Tawny Owls) have relatively short wings which help them manoeuvre

through a maze of trunks, branches and twigs. They also spend a lot of their time perched in trees.

Barn Owls, on the other hand, spend most of their time in a hole or a building and they hunt mainly from the air. Their relatively long wings are adapted for open habitats where they float around and around with ease.

Barn Owls will not normally enter dense woodland - that's the Tawny Owl's domain. They may nest in a big tree hollow but not usually one within a dense stand of trees. No, the Barn Owl is not a woodland bird. Only woodlands with large clearings, wide rides, fire-breaks, or young tree plantations are likely to attract them.

(For more information send an SAE for our leaflet No 1, "Habitat for Barn Owls"). □



(Continued from page 10)

very happy student and you don't find many of them. We then had many other sites to visit. My first day was a busy one!

Monday, Wednesday and Friday I would be going on fieldwork with either David, Mark or Paula. Tuesday and Thursday I would be working in the office.

So then came Tuesday, I was going to meet everyone else who worked at the Trust. I was extremely nervous, but when I arrived and everyone was so friendly, I was made to feel welcome. My week continued to be very enjoyable and also very educational. By the second week I was all settled in and looked forward

to coming in every day. I certainly improved and gained new skills for example team work, map reading and also sawing wood which before my work experience I had never done in my life! During my last week at the Trust my dream came true, I got to hold the most beautiful ball of fluff anyone could ever see. I will never forget this amazing experience!

After my first eye-opening work experience block I left to carry out six weeks at the Veterinary Hospital in Estover. While I was there I was amazed to see a Barn Owl brought in with a badly injured wing. After reading its records I saw it had been rescued by The Barn Owl Trust, so I took a keen interest in the treatment it was to receive. Sadly the wing had

The Muse

Inspired by a debate at a Trustees' meeting Heather writes:

I'm the trustee who doesn't like computers
I love beauty, music and the spoken word
Butterflies, moonlight and the song of a bird,
Pre-Raphaelite maidens with gallant suitors,
But computers - no!

Does the world wide web have a great black spider
hanging in wait to catch me and suck me dry?

Fishermen with a net to enmesh - not I.

Where is the handsome prince, the white horse rider.

At the Play Station?

Would logging on turn me into two short planks
For dotty comedy, or one forward slash
Of the robot's axe, render me corned beef hash?
I'll live the hard way, the old, long (wrong?) way thanks
But computers - no!

Heather Buswell

⇨ Photo: Paula Carrier

to be amputated. I watched the whole operation, there was a slight complication in that there was not enough tissue to sew the wound up neatly. But the vet managed to close the wound and now the bird is living on site at the Barn Owl Trust.

Having enjoyed my first three weeks at the Trust so much I couldn't wait for my second three week block to start. This is my second day back and I am settled already. I would like to take this opportunity to thank every member of staff at the Barn Owl Trust for putting up with me for so long and for giving me this unique experience.

Felicity Sedgeman
Duchy College

Around and About

Around and about is a regular Feedback feature taking a look at Barn Owl conservation work carried out by individuals around the UK. The last issue featured Gill Gaylor on the Isle of Wight. This time we turn our attention to Midhurst in Sussex and Peter Waters who delivers his nest boxes by tricycle.

Beautiful, ethereal - that's a Barn Owl. I have always been fascinated with Barn Owls. As a child growing up before and during the war I watched those "Big White Moths" with wonder. My favourite book was that by Eric Hosking and Cyril Newberry. When I took a disabled friend to the dentist, a Country Life with a Barn Owl on the front was the magazine I picked up. I recall writing that evening to the Barn Owl Trust.

Ten years ago I had to retire due to cancer and was looking for something interesting and worthwhile to get absorbed in. I advertised for tea chests and had them delivered to our local Community Centre, The Grange, here in Midhurst. Over the next months I mended, patched, soaked in preservative and made landing platforms for 80 boxes.

I wrote articles for all the local papers in the district and each time got replies from interested people, some wanting boxes, others just expressing their interest. All 80 boxes are now up in West Sussex within a radius of 20 miles. I deliver the boxes by tricycle, the Barn Owl picture on the rear is attached to a wire basket, the boxes are lashed onto the basket. The 'L' plate was put on after I got had up for speeding. 37 mph going downhill and loaded - the basket, not me.

West Sussex County Council have been most helpful and encouraging. Nobody will get planning permission to convert any barns or other agricultural building unless they agree to put up owl boxes. I got rung up once by some rather hoity-toity woman from London. "My dear man, you have got to help me. I have got to

keep owls, otherwise the council won't give me planning permission." She had got a letter from Chichester District Council telling her that she would not get approval to convert some agricultural buildings unless she undertook to put up some owl boxes. "I have got to look after owls before they let me live here". She had got it a bit wrong, but let's face it if every planning authority took that line up and down the country there would be no shortage of sites for the birds.

I know of only two pairs within a few miles. One is known as the racecourse pair and is well known in the district. The male sits on a signpost below Goodwood race course.

I might be sentimental, but I think "my" owls know me. It was just dusk, a lovely autumn evening. I was tricycling on the main road past our golf course. Suddenly I was aware of being escorted. There, one on each verge, keeping pace with me, were two lovely silent Barn Owls. I know it is something I will never forget.

One of my neighbours is a doctor. Since we have a Tawny Owl round here which hunts our local pond 200' away we decided to put up an owl box. The Doc is some 20 years younger than me so he goes up the tree. About 20' up there is a nice bole and fork which we can use to wedge the box in. The Doc pulls up the box which I am pushing up with the clothes line prop. Finally he gets it in position, so I throw him up some flex with which to lash it in position.

The Doc's wife comes down the garden with a tray so that we can be



Photo: Michael Chevis

civilised and have a picnic at the bottom of the garden. She and I are busy with the cake, biscuits and tea. "Hugh Dear", she calls, "Aren't you coming for your tea?" There is muttering and swearing - then more swearing. We proceed to the tree and look up. You will never guess who has lashed himself, owl box and tree all together. Mrs Dr and I withdraw gracefully to the lawn and our tea.

The Doc eventually got down and a Tawny does use the box from time to time to roost in.

With such a low Barn Owl population we still have a long way to go. I am of the opinion that very few people realise how bad the situation is. I have an opening gambit at a cocktail party: "How are you? Have you seen a Barn Owl today? This week? This month? This year?" Try it yourself and see what response you get.

Peter Waters
Midhurst, Sussex

Focus on Friends



Don Woodman first contacted the Trust in the mid 80's and expressed an interest in the release of captive bred Barn Owls. Don lives with his wife Daph at Challacombe near Barnstaple in north Devon. David Ramsden visited them to assess the suitability of their site. However, because of the demands of running a guest house and the presence of their 10 cats, they decided not to pursue the idea of release. They did however become Friends of the Trust and in 1994 to support our work they began selling between £80-£100 of draw tickets each year to their visitors and friends.

Don says "By selling tickets we make people aware of Barn Owls, not least the local farming fraternity who like to see, and are very

knowledgeable about, owls, skylarks, buzzards and other wildlife. Our visitors are happy to buy the tickets, especially when we explain that the Trust is a relatively small 'Devon based' national charity, and does not possess a million clerical staff.

Our solitary visit to Waterleat confirmed this and we were given a warm welcome plus tea and coffee - always a good sign. We particularly admire the educational work of the Trust, as we feel this is the best method of making people aware."

We would like to thank Don, and of course Daph, for their support over the years and for doing their bit to help Barn Owl conservation. Well done, we do appreciate you. □

Green Insurance

Naturesave Policies is a green insurance intermediary established to provide insurance with an environmental conscience. The company offers buildings, contents and travel insurance through Lloyd's of London. 10% of all premiums goes into a fund to support environmental organisations and conservation projects. BOT has received grants from this fund.

Naturesave aims to encourage the adoption of more environmentally aware trading practices in the business community. The company believes that this process begins in the home.

Special offer

Naturesave Policies have agreed a special deal with the Barn Owl Trust. There's a leaflet included with this issue of Feedback; when you take out a Naturesave insurance policy using this leaflet, 10% of that premium will go directly to the Barn Owl Trust. If you call or e-mail Naturesave, don't forget to mention the Barn Owl Trust.

Call Naturesave on (01803) 864390 for further information. □

Your Letters

Dear BOT

Thank you for your advice this summer re our problems with the development of a local barn.

Excellent news - three owlets reached independence two weeks ago. Our pair has bred for three consecutive years now - but with the forthcoming development we have to work quickly to limit the damage.

With great support from the ecologist at N E Lincs. planning department the barn conversion will include provision for Barn Owls. To add to this, nestboxes will be erected in the autumn whilst the development takes place. Finally negotiations are taking place to create a permanent damp grassland area close to the barn/ housing development to aid drainage for the site but also to preserve the Barn Owl's habitat.

I am only an amateur bird watcher but the contacts/knowledge I have gained through this process has encouraged me to look beyond our pair's dilemma to other Barn Owls in the area. I am planning to carry out a survey to find out how many and

where other pairs are in NE Lincolnshire. Following this I wish to do a risk assessment for individual birds to determine appropriate measures to help them. With my new contacts hopefully we can repeat the success that we have recently experienced. Thanks again.

Craig Sinclair
Grimsby

Dear BOT

I raised some funds for you by selling a recipe sheet for a new dish I invented and served to local WI members and their guests. Friends of the Trust might like to have a copy of the recipe for "Althorne Birthday Chicken Roll" which serves 14 people. I hope it might raise some extra funds for you.

I wish I didn't live so far away I'd be a great aviary cleaner.

Di Paterson
Althorne, Essex

Please send a stamped addressed envelope to the Trust if you would like a copy of Di's recipe, any donation included would be welcome.

Thanks and Things

Thank you very much to everyone who has supported the Trust in the last few months. For items on our wants list we are grateful to: Spike and Maddie Rycroft for the microwave oven; Jenny and Pat Ford for numerous goodies including a spade, crowbars, a saw, other tools, gloves and edible goodies for staff and volunteers. Paul Rendell for the video player.

Harvey Davis gave us a colour printer. Graham Lawes a work station and Robert Constantine a fax machine. Thanks to Green Events who advertise BOT events and also to everyone who has kindly sent envelopes for re-use, especially Jeannie Stevens at Creative Technology. Judy has asked if you can use them yourselves for a while as she is in danger of not being able to get to her desk. We do a nice line in re-use labels, if you haven't already tried them do ask for a free sample!

We'd also like to say a special thank you to some of our wonderful volunteers who toil away quietly

making things happen. Davina Brown - aviary cleaning, Sylvia Marshall - owl food collection, Margaret and John Rhodes - casualty collection and vet runs, Jan Clutterbuck - book-keeping and general admin, Barbara Webb - Friends scheme co-ordinator, Margaret and Derrick Crocker - fund-raising events. To our owl foster homes - thank you all and to everyone who helps the Barn Owl Trust to function efficiently, we couldn't do it without you.

A big welcome to our two newest volunteers at the Trust. Jenny Ford from Exeter and Lesley Ford from Broadhempston joined us for the day to mail out the annual report and to put together Friends packs. They have both said they'll come back again so it must have been good!

Our wants list has proved to be a very popular way of supporting the Trust. We are always grateful to receive any of the items listed below either new or recycled. If you feel you can help and have any queries please ring the office.

Lightweight (tough plastic) wheelbarrow
Adjustable spanner
Post driver
Big rechargeable torches
12 volt rechargeable drill
Ladder clamps for roof racks
New white hard hats (BSS)
Maglite torches (size C bright colours)
Rechargeable batteries LR20 or D size
Office sundries: *ink cartridges, note pads - please talk to Judy to find out just what we need*
Nails: 2", 3", 4" round wire, also 1.5", 2", 3", 4" galvanised
A4 lever arch files

We are also still looking for funds for the following fairly expensive items so would be delighted if you have any of the following surplus to requirements:

Digital camera
Video camera
Good quality printer
Photocopier

Thank you for reading through the list and for any help you can give. □

Tail Piece



I've been pondering on the experience theme..... Life itself is an amazing experience and here in the 21st century in the western world we are privileged to have the resources to do more than just survive. We have the freedom to make choices, to travel, to read, to experience things our grandparents never dreamt of, to take up hobbies and if we so choose to contribute to the well-being of our families, friends, our community and even our planet.

We all have the power to affect things, to make them better or to make them worse. We can all make a difference. If you feel impotent when you think about global pollution, over population and natural disasters you are not alone. But there are things that can be done to help, whilst you may not want to radically change

your lifestyle you can make a difference albeit on a local scale. Buy local produce and help to cut down on transportation of goods, if possible walk instead of using your car, write to your MP and ask him to lobby for a better public transport system, cut down and recycle your rubbish and if you want to feel like you're doing something really positive take up volunteering.

Whether you give up two hours or two days of your time, volunteering is great for you, your community and the organisations you help. Local schools, old peoples homes, charities and voluntary agencies all depend on voluntary effort to function effectively and you can really make a difference. Some people regularly help in charity shops, clean kennels, keep accounts

or clear footpaths. It may be these things don't appeal to you or you don't feel able to make a regular commitment, but think about the skills you have and the time you could share and try a new experience.

Wherever you live, if you are interested in voluntary work contact your local Volunteer Bureau (find them in your phone book) and tell them what you want to do and how much time you can give. They will be able to put you in touch with a suitable community group. If you live locally do contact us, we'll be glad to hear from you.

Volunteering can be a very positive experience for everyone.

Together we can make a world of difference.