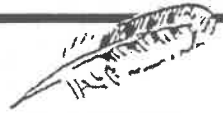




Issue Number 25 - Spring 2001



FEEDBACK

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



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www.barnowltrust.org.uk

THE BARN OWL TRUST - CONSERVING THE BARN OWL AND ITS ENVIRONMENT

Barn Owl Trust News

Foot & Mouth Halts Conservation Work

The Foot & Mouth outbreak is very bad news for Barn Owl conservation and for the Trust's current projects.

During late winter many sites were due to have nestboxes erected and water troughs made safe before the start of the breeding season. However, in February the Barn Owl Trust stopped all fieldwork because of the disease. The 1967 epidemic lasted for eight months.

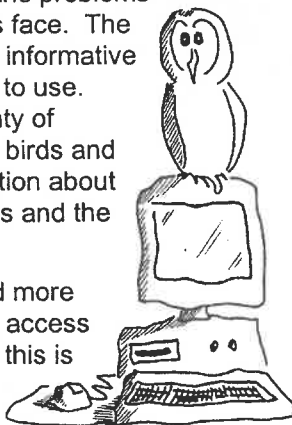
www.barnowltrust.org.uk

The Barn Owl Trust has taken to the world wide web with the launch of our very own internet site. A winking cartoon owl greets visitors to www.barnowltrust.org.uk.

The site was designed and constructed by student Caroline Meekins and finished by Dave Thomas, senior graphic designer with The Source in Sheffield. Dave, who adopts one of our resident owls, contacted the Trust and offered to help get the web-site up and running. It went on-line on 9th February 2001.

"The web-site will support the Trust's free national information and advice service," said Philip Knowling, the Trust's Information Officer. "The aim of the new site is to reach a wider audience and raise awareness of the problems that Barn Owls face. The site is friendly, informative and very easy to use. There are plenty of pictures of the birds and lots of information about both Barn Owls and the Trust."

With more and more people having access to the Internet this is an important step for the Trust. If you have the opportunity, visit the web-site and let us know what you think. You can also e-mail the Trust at: info@barnowltrust.org.uk. ☺



Given the current situation it now looks unlikely that we will be able to do the monitoring planned for the summer months and the back-log of practical work just keeps growing.

Much of our funding is project based so we are also concerned about the financial implications for the Trust. We will only resume farm visits and fieldwork when the crisis is over.

Farmers and landowners make a huge contribution to Barn Owl conservation in the UK. We extend our heartfelt sympathies to them and all of the animals affected. We are praying for a quick resolution to the crisis.

We are continuing to provide information and advice by telephone, post and e-mail. ☺



New Trustee Simon Wilson Photo: David Ramsden

Changing Faces

In November we had a change of Trustees when Simon Roper stepped down. Simon had been involved in the promotional work of the Trust since 1990 and became a Trustee in 1992. He will continue to advise on our Heritage Lottery Fund project.

Trustees, staff and volunteers are all very grateful to Simon for his hard work and support over the years and send their best wishes for the future. Thank you, Simon.

Our new Trustee is also a Simon - this could be confusing...

Simon Wilson practised law in the South East of England for nearly twenty years before moving to Devon. He is a partner in Kitson Hutchings Solicitors and runs their

Ashburton office. He has been the Trust's Honorary Solicitor since 1999.

Simon has a keen interest in and respect for the environment and has been a member of Friends of the Earth and Greenpeace for many years.

Approximately ten years ago he was involved in the creation of GASP, a local environmental pressure group in Greenwich. Working with this group in its campaign against power generation and waste incineration along the Thames Corridor increased Simon's interest in ways he could, as a lawyer, help the environment.

Simon took an MA in Environmental Law and is an active member of both

(Continued on page 4)

Project News

New Initiative in Cornwall

The Barn Owl Trust and Imerys Plc, operators of an extensive china clay works near St Austell, are launching a new initiative to increase the number of Barn Owls in Mid Cornwall.

Imerys initially approached the Trust at the Royal Cornwall Show last year and expressed an interest in encouraging Barn Owls on their 20,000 acre site, a large area of which is currently undergoing landscape reclamation. The Trust put forward some ideas which met with the company's approval and the Imerys Barn Owl Initiative was born.

The project will run over a four year period. The first step, starting this spring, will be to survey the area to determine the existing Barn Owl population and to identify areas where Barn Owl habitat could be improved or created. During step two in the autumn we will erect over

30 nestboxes in trees, buildings and on poles in areas of good habitat. These nestboxes, and other Barn Owl sites recorded during the course of the project, will be monitored over the following three years. If all goes to plan the combination of nestbox provision and habitat enhancement should lead to an increase in the number of Barn Owls in the area by the end of the project.

We are looking forward to working with Imerys managers and employees, local farmers and residents, whose help, particularly with reporting Barn Owl sightings, will be essential to the success of the initiative. We will also be liaising closely with English Nature to ensure that our conservation efforts complement their existing heathland restoration programme. Look out for progress reports in future issues of Feedback. ☺

Leaflet Project

Over the winter we have tackled the considerable task of revising and updating all of the Trust's free information and advice leaflets.

Changes to the law, new statistics and developments in conservation practice in recent years have all been incorporated. We have also given the leaflets a new look. The revision is a target of the "Barn Owl Country" project supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund.

Conservation, admin. and promotional staff have been busy re-writing, re-designing and revamping. The main benefits are:

- updated information and contact details
- improved titling, making it easier to tell the leaflets apart
- logical subdivisions, grouping leaflets by subject
- the amalgamation of some leaflets, making the range more concise
- a two-column layout, making them easier to read
- the inclusion of all our various leaflets on the Information sheet, making it comprehensive

New leaflets will be available from 1st May 2001. If you would like to receive copies, please send us an SAE. ☺

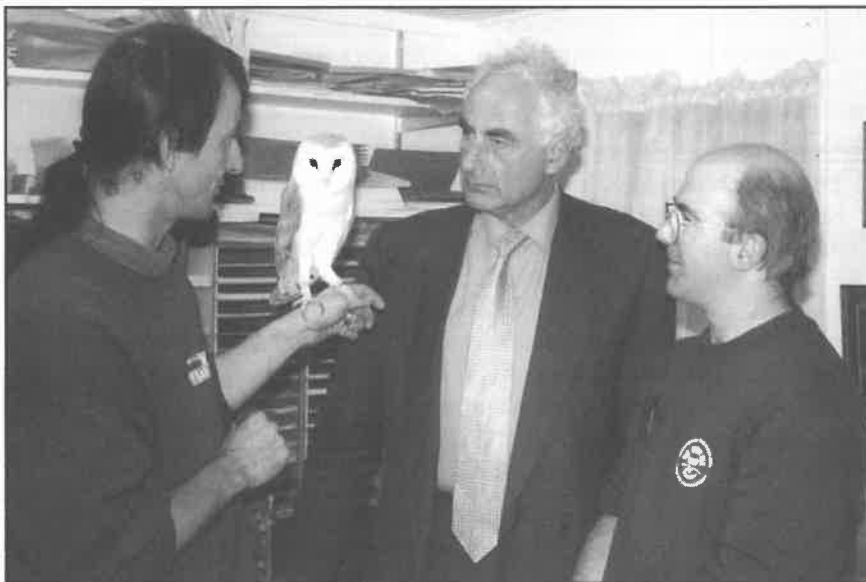


Photo: Frances Ramsden

Dusty Meets her First MP

Conservative MP Anthony Steen visited the Trust on a fact-finding mission in September 2000.

He met Dusty the Barn Owl and Trust staff David Ramsden and Philip Knowling. As a result of the visit a question was asked in the

House in January to raise awareness of secondary poisoning caused by the use of modern rodenticides.

We also received a visit in January from Liberal Democrat PPC Rachel Oliver. ☺

Don't forget to borrow a copy of our video.

The video takes 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. It includes footage of radio tracking, nestboxing and pole box erection.

Please ask if you'd like us to send you one.

An Owl's Eye View of the BOT

Pilgrim is a captive-bred male Barn Owl who came to the Trust as a stray in 1997 and now lives in our Pond Aviary. From there he has a clear view of the entrance to our office. This is his week:

Monday

8.30am: I open one eye and peer out sleepily as Phil arrives with David, Paula and Mark not far behind. After a while Paula and Mark reappear and begin loading equipment into vehicles (I didn't see them studying work schedules and filling in log sheets to say where they'd go and how long they'd be, but I know they do this). I hear the phone ringing but it doesn't ring for long before I hear Sonia's voice – which is odd, because Sonia is never here on Mondays. Rave the Raven hops about during the day, sometimes landing with a thump on the roof of the roosting boxes hiding the dozing owls. It's late afternoon before Mark and Paula return, unloading equipment and putting it away. It's quiet for a while, then a sudden flurry of activity, usually from 5.30pm-ish: Heather a Trustee looks in for a while; Phil gets into his car and disappears and the others are not too far behind. Soon someone will come round with dinner and then it's time for a fly around and a screech with the other owls.

Tuesday

There's Phil again, David, Mark and Paula ... and droves of other people! Frances, Barbara, Jan, Sandra, Lesley and Gavin! Sonia too. Sonia is taking all the messages off the answerphone. The conservation team are mainly office based today, with at least one of them on hand for telephone enquiries. All morning I hear people talking on the 'phone, lots more noise from all that machinery I've seen being carried in over the years (and sometimes carried out again). Every so often someone comes out and visits the little room with the green door. Rosie comes in. I watch her taking birdseed to the bird tables and then, later, carrying a big bag of envelopes and heading for town. Judy arrives in the afternoon, together with Coozie her gentle black labrador. Judy always seems so busy – rumour has

it she puts together all the outgoing post, while Coozie mostly hangs around and looks endearing. Clearly it's a team effort - everyone has their specific roles, they all work together to run the organisation.

Wednesday

Those full-timers are here again. Frances, Sonia, Sandra and Rosie too. Sometimes volunteers Pat and Jenny, bearing cakes and feeding Rave their sandwich crusts at lunch-time. It sounds as if Sonia is intercepting the phone again – but wait, there she is going out on site, so she must have left the answerphone on. Paula, Mark and David all go out as well. Two splendid women arrive with a noisy suction machine and turn everyone out of their way while they give the whole office a good clean.

Thursday

It's Tuesday all over again! And Spike is in today too, you hear him hammering away, perhaps building nestboxes out in the workshop. He carries out all sorts of essential maintenance tasks around the aviaries, bird room and buildings.

Friday

The full-timers are here of course, and Spike again. He likes to be here in the evening so that he can watch us all wake up and fly around as the sun goes down. It's altogether quieter on the admin. front. Sandra is in, and if there's an event to organise it's quite likely that Frances and whoever else is involved will appear too.

Saturday and Sunday

On these days the office is closed. The staff and volunteers are mainly in from Monday to Friday. However, sometimes someone comes in to finish off a task, perhaps Judy drops in to bring in some stock on her way to somewhere else. Perhaps there's a talk to be given or there's an event. Sometimes, especially in the summer, our humans come and pack things into vehicles and then later unpack them all again. Maybe Mark has to visit a landowner who can only see him at weekends or Paula is visiting a children's group. It's a fair bet that Divena and her



Photo: David Ramsden

team will be along to clean our 'aviaries and of course we all need feeding even at weekends.

All of this coming and going is on behalf of our wild cousins, but we can stretch our wings, relax and preen, sure in the knowledge of enough to eat and somewhere to roost. Sure also that people will keep visiting the office, arriving and leaving with nestboxes, ladders and post ... and mysteriously visiting that little room with the green door.

Pilgrim

☺ with help from Rosie Waite

Buzzard Buzz

In 1990 an amazing thing happened in Dartmouth. A growing crowd of bystanders watched a flock of sea-gulls mobbing two buzzards above the estuary next to the town centre. This went on for about fifteen minutes culminating in the gulls driving both buzzards into the water.

By the time a small boat arrived one was drowned, the other was brought to the Trust. After a two week recovery period we BTO ringed the bird and released it on a hilltop overlooking Dartmouth. In March 2001 we received news of a ring recovery - the same buzzard in the same place over ten years later!

☺

A Moving Story

In Stirlingshire a pair of Barn Owls took up residence in a hollow sycamore tree in a quarry. There was plenty of rough grass around with a good supply of voles.

Unfortunately the tree was slap bang in the middle of a worked out section of quarry. The tree had been identified as a breeding site some ten years earlier and preserved when the quarry was developed. The owls had been quite unperturbed by quarrying operations going on around them for years. However, plans to use the old quarry for landfill meant the tree had to be removed.

I contacted the Barn Owl Trust for advice and, in consultation with Scottish Natural Heritage, the quarry and landfill operators - Shanks Avondale - conceived a plan to cut part of the trunk of the sycamore and move it to a platform constructed in an oak tree about 100 metres away.

The section of tree trunk, weighing several tonnes, was transported upright and successfully re-positioned by crane and secured on the platform. The work cost the landfill operators £2,800.

The nest site was not disturbed during the breeding season and the good news is that the Barn Owls have continued to use their old home - even at a different height and position!

**Chris Staples
Stirlingshire**

☺



The section of sycamore containing the nest cavity is lifted onto the platform built in the oak tree

Photos: Chris Staples

Nestbox Workshop

We recently ran a nestbox workshop in partnership with East Devon District Council. One of the participants - Lesley Strong - gives her impressions of the day.

I can thoroughly recommend attending one of these courses if you get the opportunity. East Devon has very few pairs of Barn Owls, so every nestbox we made on the day could be vital.

After a welcoming drink and biscuits the day kicked off with an illustrated talk. This gave us a fascinating insight into Barn Owls, the work of the Trust and some of the issues surrounding the survival of the species. Following an excellent organic ploughman's lunch our attention turned to transforming tea-chests into desirable residences for owls. Everyone had the chance to make their own nestbox - there were 34 of us and we made 18 boxes altogether.

The design of the box is important but the siting is absolutely crucial. After the carpentry session and the team photo (with boxes) it was time to head for a local farm. Here we heard about all the things to consider when erecting a box - and how to do this safely. I must say that it takes a steady head for heights to climb up a ladder with a large nestbox in one hand! Two boxes were put up on the farm - hopefully they will be appreciated by the owls and adopted in the very near future.

That concluded a very successful and very enjoyable day - I highly recommend going along. The cost is very reasonable at £9 (plus lunch) - nestbox workshops take place in different locations each February and November.

Well, I'm now off to find a suitable site for my box. However, I might have to find someone else to climb up the ladder to fix it.

**Lesley Strong
Noth Devon**

☺



Photo: David Ramsden

Misconceptions and Musings

Popular Misconceptions

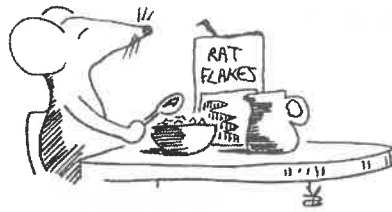
A regular Feedback feature where we explode the myths that surround this beautiful bird.

No. 3

"My Barn Owls are safe - we keep our rat poison covered up" - wrong!

Go into your nearest agricultural merchant or garden centre, find a bucket of mouse and rat poison and read the label. The chances are it says: "keep bait covered to avoid harming non-target species". About 70% of farms use modern rodenticides and many people assume that, by putting bait under or behind something or by using small packs of bait inside stacks of straw bales, they will keep all other creatures safe. Sadly, this is not the case.

Covering certainly reduces the chances of chickens, wild birds, dogs or children eating the bait, but it



does nothing to safeguard Barn Owls, Red Kites or other creatures that eat mice or rats. If the poison caused instant death the victim's bodies would be covered - but it takes 4-10 days for a poisoned rodent to die.

The rodents carry the poison in their bodies. If they go out into the open and get caught by a Barn Owl, the poison in the rodent is ingested by the owl and - bingo! - "secondary poisoning".

It's a serious problem AND it's not even mentioned on the product! Call us to find out more. ☺

Tales from the Reception Desk

As receptionist, part of my job is to deal with enquiries which come in by phone, e-mail and post. The huge variation means you can never quite tell what sort of day you are going to have. Lots of people contact us because they want to help Barn Owls or they want specific information. Most enquiries are quite straightforward - and then there are the others...

One day a lady phoned us to ask for information concerning Blue Tit nestboxes. I explained that we were the Barn Owl Trust and we only had information on owl nestboxes. She said that these were too big as she wanted something smaller to put on her garden fence!

We sometimes receive mail that the Post Office hasn't delivered and which comes back to us because the sender used one of our re-use labels. We've received all sorts of things including cheques to pay BT phone bills. We always send these on.

People often leave messages on our

answer phone asking us to call them back. Strangely, on occasions I have returned calls to people who say they haven't left a message at all and do not know what the Barn Owl Trust is. Sometimes messages are incomplete, without a contact number or address.

I especially enjoy dealing with letters from children. As with adults, each one gets a personal reply. One particular child had been saving up his pocket money for weeks so that he could buy a poster. Lots of letters we receive are from schools and youth groups. Pupils from a primary school in Norfolk sent us letters as part of their literacy class. They had tried very hard with their writing but I was glad to see that the teacher had made notes on the letters before sending them on to me.

Some of the nicest calls are when people ring to tell us that they have seen their first Barn Owl. They are always really pleased and you can hear their excitement. ⇨

Tyto vs Buteo

Earlier this year Mark and Paula were erecting a nestbox in East Devon when a farm worker stopped his tractor to have a chat with them.

He told them he had seen a First World War style aerial dog fight between a Buzzard and a Barn Owl. Apparently, the Buzzard is an old resident at the farm, and it looks like it took exception to the Barn Owl entering its patch. After a mammoth struggle in the air, the Buzzard brought the Barn Owl down to the ground! The Barn Owl however managed to free itself and gingerly flew back to a nestbox in a tree it uses to roost in. The Buzzard was having none of this and flew in to the same tree and sat in an intimidating manner above the box!

Several years ago we received a report from Friend of the Trust Roger Pole who was looking out of his window and saw a Buzzard grab a Barn Owl as it flew across his garden in daylight. Roger ran into the garden shouting and waving his arms. This surprised the Buzzard, which dropped the owl. Seemingly unaffected by the experience the owl, one of a pair that breeds in Roger's attic, flew off to a nearby barn and later in the year reared a brood of young.

Buzzards are not generally a threat to Barn Owls as they hunt in daylight when the Owls are usually roosting. Birds also form a very small part of the Buzzard's diet - they eat small mammals, rabbits and even worms. ☺

One of my favourite letters was from a little girl who wrote to thank us for the work which we do. Her exact words were: "Thank you for looking after the Barn Owls so that I may be able to see one in the future". This kind of letter makes me realise how important our work is and how vital it is that we continue.

☺

Sonia Seldon

Around and About

Around and about is a regular Feedback feature taking a look at Barn Owl conservation carried out by individuals around the UK. Mike Toms, a Research Officer for the British Trust for Ornithology, lives in Norfolk with partner Lyn and Springer pups Meg and Cassie. Between 1996 and 1998 Mike co-ordinated Project Barn Owl, the national survey. In 1998 he spent six weeks in Devon working for the Barn Owl Trust building our database before returning to Norfolk to take up a permanent position with the BTO.

Born and brought up in southern England, my interest in Barn Owls came about as the result of my Ph.D. studies at Cambridge University. I was studying small mammal species and Barn Owls were their predators. I examined hundreds of Barn Owl pellets collected over a three-year period in order to understand which small mammal species were being taken and how this related to the small mammal populations in the wider environment.

The ultimate aim this of work was to develop a prescription for the management of grassland that would benefit Barn Owls.

I moved to Norfolk in the early 90s to carry out the fieldwork for my Ph.D. Any field-worker who studies Barn Owls in Norfolk is very fortunate indeed. The county still holds a population of some 150-300 breeding pairs, although in truth this number is substantially lower than that thought to have been present in the early 1800s. Breeding pairs are widely distributed across the county, with the highest breeding densities in the Broads and along the north Norfolk coast. There has also been a great deal of work carried out looking at the



*A disused cottage provides a Barn Owl Site
Photo: Mike Toms*

ecology and conservation of Barn Owls in Norfolk and this provides a fantastic background for any study.

Many of the Barn Owls breeding in Norfolk can be found on the large country estates that make a valuable contribution to the character and wildlife value of the region. These estates hold areas of rough pasture and suitable nesting cavities in mature oaks and traditional farm buildings, important components of a Barn Owl's habitat that are missing from many other areas.

The work of Paul Johnson (formerly of the Hawk and Owl Trust) in north-west Norfolk has shown that even on these estates, nest sites have been lost in the process of agricultural intensification. His work, together with the findings of the national Barn Owl survey that took place in the mid-1980s, has resulted in conservation efforts largely directed towards the erection of nestboxes, and to a lesser extent the maintenance of suitable hunting habitat.

Of course, there are other important factors that need to be addressed. Collision with vehicles (including trains) can be a major source of Barn Owl mortality in some parts of Norfolk. This is one of several mortality agents whose impact can be studied through ongoing monitoring of nesting attempts and the subsequent dispersal of young birds.

Various groups and individuals monitor nest sites across the county, gathering information on productivity and fitting British Trust for Ornithology rings to both young and adult Barn Owls. These local efforts are part of a wider network of monitoring currently helping us to understand why the Barn Owl population has been in decline and how this decline can best be addressed.

The monitoring work in Norfolk has had its ups and downs. Years when productivity has been low as a result of bad weather (summer droughts or late spring rains) have been balanced by years when the number of successful pairs in study areas has been remarkable. Some five



Photo: Barn Owl Trust 1998

years ago I had birds from three pairs hunting together over a field that usually only supported one pair, such was the availability of prey during that season. There has also been the excitement of discovering new sites, and the sadness of sites being lost to development or passing into unsympathetic ownership.

The important thing about the work taking place in Norfolk - and the groups involved - is that although there are no specific research projects taking place in the county, the work is part of a wider study being conducted at national level. Individual nest sites are important, as is the work that takes place at them, but it is also important because it is part of a wider picture.

We have sites that are always productive and always the earliest to produce young, a result of the quality of the surrounding habitat, yet on their own these are unrepresentative and they need to be balanced by those sites that are only occupied in the best of years and which only produce a few young. Understanding the factors that influence Barn Owls comes from studying a range of sites. This is something that we have learnt from our work in Norfolk and it is something that has set the scene for our future efforts.

**Mike Toms
Norfolk**



Spiders - For those of you interested in the identification and ecology of spiders a two day course is available in South Wales in July. For details phone Tim Orrel at Glyncoel Environmental Centre on 01443 431727 ☺

Focus on Friends

Divena Brown lives in Dawlish, on the South Devon coast, and teaches at a primary school in Exeter. She was brought up on an isolated farm in Wiltshire and has always had an interest in wildlife. In the mid 1970s she moved to Brentor in West Devon where there were Barn Owls.

Divena came to a Barn Owl Trust nestbox workshop in 1996 and decided that - when she could make some time in her life - she would volunteer for the Trust. In 1999 she became a Friend and attended a second workshop. After putting up her nestbox she said: "It was wonderful to be able to go back to a farm within half a mile of where I used to live and provide a home for a Barn Owl."

In December 1999 Divena became a volunteer aviary cleaner for the Trust. Once a month on a Saturday - whatever the weather - she puts on

her waterproofs and gets out the buckets and pressure washer and clears up poo and pellets. In August 2000 teenager Jamie Routledge began working with Divena and at the end of the year they were joined by Cathy Franks.

In the classroom Divena has drawn on her experiences with the Trust to encourage her pupils. When she took pellets into school the response from the children was: "You mean the birds have to be sick after eating? Ugh!"

When she's not working or volunteering, Divena - who has two grown-up children - is interested in gardening, concert-going, walking and ceramics. She makes plant containers which she decorates with coloured glass; this melts during firing and flows across the clay to create wonderful patterns.



Divena has recently attended her third nestbox workshop - something of a record - and has agreed to become part of the Trust's education working group. She says she is looking forward to retirement in the not too distant future and hopes that she will then be able to devote more time to the BOT - we hope so too.

Thank you for all your help
Divena! ☺

Environmental Transport Association

The Environmental Transport Association (ETA) was established 10 years ago as an ethical organisation and actively campaigns for sustainable solutions to Britain's transport crisis. They are responsible for both Green Transport Week and European Car Free Day.

Friends of the Barn Owl Trust can now become members of the ETA with an introductory discount of 50%. This makes the cost £12.50 instead of £25. There's a renewal discount of 45%. The BOT will receive 10% and 5% commission respectively when Friends of the Trust become ETA members or renew. So, consider joining the ETA and do your bit for the environment and for Barn Owls.

ETA is one of Britain's fastest growing motoring organisations. It offers a wide range of road rescue and insurance services throughout Europe to motorists who want to reduce their impact on the environment. They also provide services for cyclists. Many people want breakdown cover but don't want to support the road lobby and its calls for more roads and parking spaces.

ETA offers both a Rapid Response Pledge to its members - with an average response time of just 35 minutes - and a no claims discount. 80% of breakdowns are repaired at the roadside and 98% of ETA members would recommend the ETA to friends or relatives. The Barn Owl Trust has comprehensive cover for all its vehicles with ETA for several years and has found the service to be both economical and efficient.

The cost of insurance and breakdown cover with the ETA is not discounted and varies with the kind of cover required but is comparative with that of other motoring organisations.

To take advantage of this offer you will need a unique BOT reference number. Please contact the Trust for this. Phone 01364-653026 on a Tuesday or Thursday, e-mail us at info.barnowltrust.org.uk or write. ☺

Call ETA today on
0800 212 810
and quote reference number:
17382001
and your BOT ID no.

How Untypical

I recently received a report of a Barn Owl roosting in a conifer tree. As it is unusual to hear of Barn Owls using these trees, I went to investigate.

Under a bushy conifer I found some pellets and noticed a small gap in the foliage of the tree, about seven feet above the ground, where the owl was obviously gaining access to the inner branches. What was particularly surprising was that the conifer was growing right next to a complex of stone barns which appeared to be ideal roosts for a Barn Owl. There was no evidence at all that the resident owl had used any of the barns.

The tenant at the property had analysed a number of pellets he had collected. Amongst the usual small mammal bones he had found remains from several small birds, probably finches. Our Barn Owl had again displayed uncharacteristic behaviour - it is very unusual for Barn Owls to prey on birds.

I erected nestboxes in both the tree and one of the barns and discussed with the tenant how the habitat could be improved for the benefit of Barn Owls and other wildlife. I'm looking forward to further news from the site. ☺

Mark Green

Thanks and Things

Thank you to everyone who has supported the Trust since the last issue of Feedback.

A heartfelt thank you to our wonderful team of volunteers. For items on our wants list we are grateful to Debbie Hicks for hard hats, Jenny and Pat Ford for folding boxes, an adjustable spanner set, a rechargeable drill, fluorescent hammers (very useful in dark buildings), biscuits, numerous cakes and much, much more. Christine Mercer gave us £500 towards our all singing, all dancing new photocopier. Gavin Needes, a new volunteer, gave us a computer, a printer, a photocopier (so the conservation team now have their own), a microwave for the bird-room and a scanner.

We also want to thank the two anonymous donors who sent us £80 and £600 and Mrs Brown for donating some 300 owly items collected by her late husband. Pete, Kate and Martha Dommatt sent us a generous "thanks for the memories" donation and Miss Martin raised £300 from car boot sales.

Our wants list has proved to be a very popular way for people to support the Trust with specific items. We are always pleased to receive any of the items listed, either new or recycled. If you feel you can help or if you have any queries please phone the office.

We can make good use of:
A lightweight (tough plastic) wheelbarrow

A fence post driver
Rechargeable torches
Ladder clamps for roof racks
G clamps for wood working
Letter trays
Rechargeable batteries LR20 or D size
Office sundries - ink cartridges etc. - *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 looking for funds to buy a digital camera and a video camera so if you have either item surplus to your requirements please give us a call.

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

Tail Piece



It's official - according to Met Office figures the year 2000 was the wettest year across England and Wales since 1872. April was the wettest since records began in 1766. This is when Barn Owls in the South West usually lay their eggs. It certainly had an effect on the breeding season here and many ornithologists from other parts of the country had similar reports. Barn Owls cannot hunt efficiently in rain and as a result many birds failed to breed or were unable to rear their young successfully. Others bred late and if they were able to rear their young to fledging these owlets reached independence just in time for the wettest Autumn on record. During the year in districts where site enhancement work had been completed it was heart breaking for conservation staff to visit newly established breeding sites and find owlets that had evidently starved.

Global warming is now acknowledged as a fact. The current trend of very warm years continues. 2000 was the fifth warmest year since the recording of global mean temperatures began in 1860. The Central England mean

temperature for the year was 10.5°C, 1°C above the 1961/90 norm. According to new forecasting techniques, 2001 is expected to be even warmer. These changes are already having a significant effect on British wildlife - plants, insects and animals. Have you noticed the trees coming into bud much earlier?

The floods last year increased public awareness of global warming but unfortunately as yet there is little evidence that individuals are changing their lifestyles to minimise their own effects on the environment. Too many people feel that it is not their responsibility or, even, anything to do with them.

My sixteen year old son recently visited the Eden Project in Cornwall. He came home mightily impressed with an innovative animatronic display which illustrated very clearly the role of plants in modern society. Even if we humans can somehow adapt and survive global warming, many of the animals and plants that we share our world with will not be so lucky. Barn Owls in Britain are at the northern edge of the species'

world distribution. They are, along with many other creatures, already being affected by changes in the weather.

We all want a high standard of living and a good quality of life but we do need to maintain a balance. If we want to leave a rich, diverse environment for our descendants we need to look at what we as individuals take from our planet and think about what we can give back. It is only by making an effort that things will change. If enough of us make an effort, reduce our energy consumption, purchase sustainably and recycle our waste we can have a measurable affect.

The Trust is working with farmers, landowners, local authorities, conservationists and individuals to try to restore the balance for Barn Owls. Thank you for supporting us and helping to make our work possible.

We hope that you have enjoyed reading this issue of Feedback and that it will encourage you to continue to do whatever you can to help.

Together we can make a world of difference.