

Issue Number 44 - Autumn 2010



# FEEDBACK

Waterleat, Ashburton, Devon TQ13 7HU - (01364) 653026 - [www.barnowltrust.org.uk](http://www.barnowltrust.org.uk)

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**One Man Went To Mow !**  
**Our Own Wildlife Tower**  
**The Tale of the Tawny Trio**  
**and much, much more**

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

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#### Cover Photo:

September moon rise over the Lennon Legacy Project  
Frances Ramsden

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by staff and volunteers.

Many thanks to everyone who provided  
words and pictures for this issue.

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**Welcome to Feedback** - It's been another busy summer here at the Trust. In addition to our day-to-day work there have been lots of other things going on that you can read about in this issue.

This is the first issue since 1998 without Sandra Reardon on the editorial team so we'd like to take this opportunity to thank her for all her hard work over the years and to say we miss her. No doubt she will "feedback" to us when we see her next month!

Those of you that receive our annual report will have seen that we ended the last financial year with a surplus rather than the huge deficit we expected. This was due entirely to a significant legacy which we have ring fenced for the meeting room, an insurance payout for the pond problems and grants and donations from charitable trusts. However, probably due to the recession, donations from individuals dropped by 31% and we also saw a decline in our fundraising and sales income. Because of this we are particularly delighted that during this year we have received some significant donations from folk undertaking fundraising events for us. We are really grateful for all your support.

In October we are taking delivery of 42 Tawny and 2 Barn Owls from a sanctuary in Lancashire that is having to close. The owls, all between 19 and 35 years old, have been "in sanctuary" for years and are all used to living together, so we have demolished our two old Tawny Owl release aviaries (built in the late '80's) to make a purpose built home for the birds to live out the rest of their days.

We are a step nearer to having our new meeting room with the ground works being carried out during August and September. We now have the building quotes which not surprisingly, are more than expected. However, we have faith that the additional money will materialise and allow this exciting building project to start before Christmas. When we have this new space it will make a huge difference to our staff, volunteers and visitors as we are currently unable to get everyone together in one room.

The planned meeting room is a separate wooden building, attached to the office, and has been designed to blend into the landscape and to be as energy efficient as possible. One feature of this new project will be our Memory Tree which will dominate one wall. Each leaf on the tree will carry the name of one of the kind folk that have remembered the Trust in their wills or those whose friends and relatives have made a donation in their memory. Hopefully we will have more news of this projects progress in the next issue.

A weekend in September saw Chris Packham and a BBC film crew arrive at the Trust to film for a new series called 'Animals Guide to Britain' to be broadcast on BBC2 in April 2011. Look out for the piece about Barn Owls.

Postal deliveries have been disrupted this summer as hornets decided to build a nest in the Trusts post box. Rather than disturb these huge but amiable insects, we wired up the entrance to allow the hornets access but not the letters. It's been a great year for them here as we've had nests in the barn and two of the mobile aviaries too. Hornets are quite a rare species in the UK and we can only suppose that the rough grass and wildlife in the LLP field is providing an abundant supply of fruit and nectar for the adults and insects for the larvae to feed on.

We hope you enjoy reading our latest news and will take some time to look at the many different ways you can help to support the Trust; wear a hooded sweatshirt promoting rough grassland, save your postage stamp labels or hold a coffee morning for your friends. Knitters will be pleased to find details of our latest project on page 14. Parents looking for birthday party inspiration will be interested to read we have created a new Barn Owl party pack. There are so many different ways, big or small, that you can help the Trust and your support really does make a difference. Thank you. Ø **Eds: Frances & Caroline**

#### LAST MINUTE NEWS

The Wildlife Tower roof is going on Ø Caroline is leaving to go off to university Ø The Trusts workhorse (the Ford Ranger that we have been trying to raise the funds to replace) has broken down and it doesn't sound good! Ø Kingfisher spotted by the ponds Ø

# Barn Owl Trust News

## A Towering Success

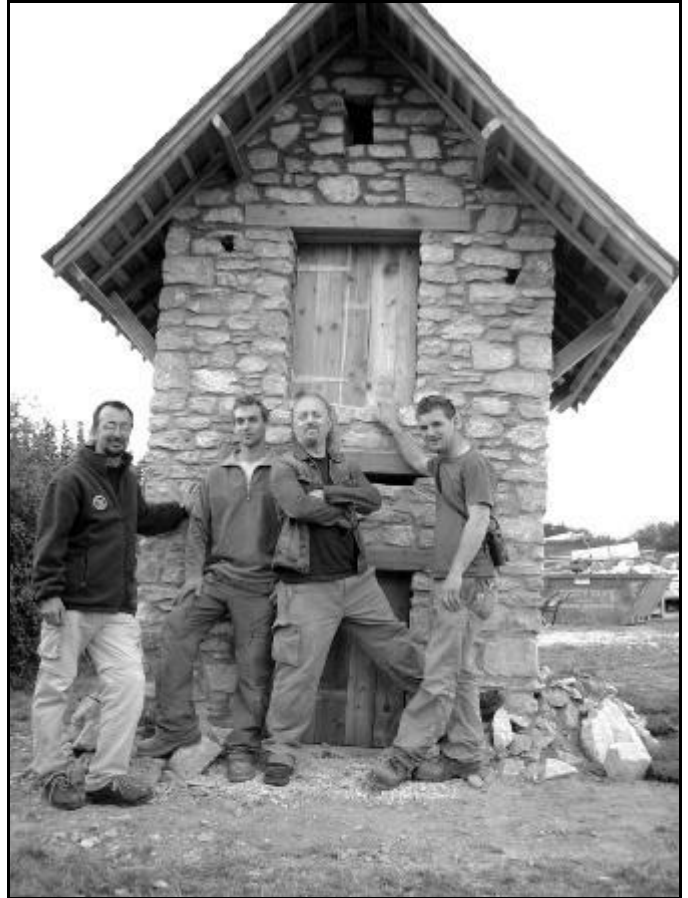
Great news - the "Owl Tower", designed by the Trust for the "Wild thing I Love You" TV programme presented by Bill Bailey in 2006, has had breeding Barn Owls and Kestrels for the first time this year.

The "Owl Tower" was primarily designed to provide an alternative site for wild Barn Owls as the building housing their nest site was in severe decay. However we decided that it should provide opportunities for as many other species of wildlife as possible too, so provision was made for Bats, Little Owls, Kestrels, Stock Doves, small birds, insects and amphibians.

By December of 2006 Barn Owls were regularly roosting in the tower, but until this year they returned to their old site to breed. Little Owl feathers and pellets and Kestrel pellets had previously been found in their respective boxes, as well as bat droppings and overwintering butterflies.

During this summers nest inspections it was discovered that both Barn Owls and Kestrels had chosen to breed in the Tower for the first time - wow! This is particularly good news because we are now in the process of building our very own Wildlife Tower - Mark II - here in North Park - part of the Lennon Legacy Project. More news and photos of this on page 8.

From the enquiries we have received since the TV programme it seems likely that there could be several of these buildings springing up around the UK. Anyone thinking of building their own stone Wildlife Tower can obtain full copies of the plans from the Trust for a reasonable donation. Ø



*The first BOT Owl Tower has worked - pictured below the owl hole in 2006 when the building was almost complete are (left to right) David (BOT) and presenters Jem, Bill and Dusty*

## 2010 Breeding Season

Part of the Trust's work involves the annual monitoring of some 84 sites across the West Country, the vast majority being in Devon with a handful in south east Cornwall and one in Somerset.

Of the sites checked, forty had reports of nesting, roughly equating to a nesting occupancy rate of 50%. The average for these sites in the period 1987 to 2006 was 51% so this year's season is surprisingly good after the severity of last winter's weather, which was characterised by freezing temperatures and snow cover in many areas.

Twelve sites, or nearly 15% had regular roosting (average 16%, 1986-2007), and an additional 8 sites, or just under 10%, had occasional roosting (average 4%, 1986-2007). Approximately 21 sites reported an absence of Barn Owl occupation, equating to roughly 25%, the average being 29% 1987-2006.

Of those nesting, brood sizes at time of ringing varied from only 1 owlet (6 sites) to a maximum of four owlets (only 2 sites), with the average brood size coming in at 2.3. This compares with an average at these sites for the period 1990-2006 of 2.9. It is probably worth pointing out that brood size is taken at time of ringing (when owlets can be as young as 3 weeks old) and does not reflect fledging success.

It is difficult to be sure exactly why this breeding season has resulted in below average brood sizes but one may speculate that it could have been the result of the driest start to the year for 80 years. This certainly inhibited grass growth and since this is the Field Vole's source of food, may have affected their breeding cycle, in turn impacting on Barn Owl productivity. Ø

## Community Project

The new intake of Western Power apprentices will get an insight into the work of the Trust in September when David (our Head of Conservation) visits their training centre in Taunton to give a presentation about our work. He will have about an hour to tell them about the decline of the Barn Owl, why it needs our help, the activities of the Trust and the Lennon Legacy Project (LLP) as a prelude to their Community Project which is happening here the following week.

Over 30 apprentices aged between 16 and 26 and their trainers will arrive here for an intensive project which will include replacing an aviary and creating a new walk for LLP visitors. Previous Western Power apprentice projects have included work on an RSPB reserve, at schools for the handicapped and last year in the Brecon Beacons National Park.

The apprentices from South Wales and the South West will stay overnight in Exeter and arrive here on Monday morning to begin their tasks which are designed as a team building exercise and to challenge them physically and mentally.

Preparations have been underway for some months with plans being drawn up and project materials arriving (funded by Western Power - thank you very much folks). Now we just have to erect our marquee for use as a cook house and move the porta loos into position and we'll be ready to welcome them. There will be more news and photos of the project in the next issue. Ø

# More Barn Owl Trust News



Our new hoodie with a conservation message goes on sale  
Photo: Pete Webb

## Wear the Message

Here at the Barn Owl Trust we are always keen to get the conservation message across. Our latest venture is a new Hoodie and T-shirt design bearing the message "I like a bit of rough... grassland for Barn Owls". The first batch of hoodies and t-shirts were printed and despatched in August and we are now taking orders for the next batch to be printed and despatched in time for Christmas (order by 22nd November).

The hoodies (£22) and t-shirts (£14) plus p&p are available in classic olive with white print and our small flying Barn Owl print on the sleeve. Available in unisex sizes S, M, L, XL and XXL (sizes do come up quite large so a lady ordering a size large might find medium size a better fit). You can place orders on-line via our website shop or fill in the order form enclosed with this issue of Feedback. ☺

## Throwing Money Away

We can raise money from the postal codings on your used envelopes. People have been literally just throwing money for charities away by not recycling these. You may already collect stamps for us, now you can also send in codes (pictured right) to aid our fundraising, there are many different ones sought by collectors. To date there are approx 160+ available.

For the last few years they have been on plain white labels, however following a successful trial in London at the end of last year and in Wales in early April this year the Gold label has now been released nationally. These are now turning up all the time.

The Special Delivery and Recorded Delivery Labels that are sometimes attached to these are worth more but only when still on the same piece as the label. If they are still on a ☺

## Radio Tracking update

Regular readers may recall that we've been collaborating with Ambios (see ambios.net) and the Hungarian Barn Owl Foundation in two radio tracking projects: investigating the foraging behaviour of nesting adult Barn Owls and investigating the post-natal dispersal behaviour of juveniles.

This year we radio tagged a nesting pair in the UK, the nocturnal tracking went pretty much as planned and the young in the nest fledged successfully showing once again that the tags had no effect on the adults' nesting success. Unfortunately the females' radio tag stopped transmitting half way through the six-week tracking period. The cause of this is unknown but we know for sure that the bird was fine and the tag was still attached.

Our colleagues in Hungary had an 'interesting' year and ended up tracking a non-breeding male and a female which had abandoned her first clutch earlier in the spring and started laying a second (replacement) clutch while she was being tracked. In the period between the two clutches she was tracked to the nest site of another Barn Owl pair (!) and was actually seen in the other pairs' nest with a live owlet! We don't think that this behaviour has ever been recorded before (in Barn Owls).

Recording the birds' behaviour has been both rewarding and challenging. Even with two teams in radio contact, tracking a moving object in the dark is no easy task, particularly as the birds' activity has been surprisingly irregular. Breeding adults have been venturing as far as 6km away from the nest quite regularly for no obvious reason and dispersing juveniles have been roosting in trees far more than we expected.

This phase of our ongoing radio tracking study is now drawing to a close and preliminary data analysis is underway. Latest news is that Matt Cooke from Nottingham Trent University is going to be writing up the project as part of his Master of Science course. We are hoping to include data collected during the radio tracking we did in collaboration with Spanish students way back in 1998/99. This will increase our sample size to eight breeding adults, two non-breeding adults, and twelve dispersing juveniles. ☺



complete envelope, please leave them on. Remember, the more we have, the more funds we can raise. As with all other modern stamps please leave approx 5 – 8 mm around stamps / label.

Since sending out Stamps N All flyers with the last two issues of Feedback we have received almost £1,125 from them. Keep the items coming. Thank you for your support. ☺

Pete Webb, Recycling/Admin

# One Man Went To Mow !



*Mathew and "The Beast" tackle the slope in North Park  
Photo: Caroline Lewis*

Since purchasing the LLP, the Trust has worked extremely hard to maximise the site's attractiveness to Barn Owls. As many of you will know, rough grassland with a deep litter layer is the optimum habitat for Field Voles, the Barn Owl's main prey. Management prescriptions have consequently included the creation and maintenance of this important aspect of Barn Owl conservation.

However, the maintenance of rough grassland is not necessarily as straightforward as it sounds. Ecological succession is the term given to the more or less predictable changes that occur within an ecological community over time. With grassland this often results first in scrub encroachment, with species such as bramble and gorse gradually out-competing the grasses. The first few colonising tree species such as birch and ash then arrive, slowly shading out the scrub that first took hold. After many years, the end result is woodland – no good for Barn Owls!

For the vast majority of the LLP, scrub encroachment can be controlled relatively easily, either naturally with the annual grazing regime, mechanically by tractor or manually (by staff and volunteers). However, in order to assist in the maintenance of the more problematic areas, such as the slopes by Corner Wood and in Forde Orchard, funding was sought and obtained for a dedicated machine for this purpose.

On the 2<sup>nd</sup> July, a Field and Brush Mower was delivered by Grahams Garden Machinery, based in Truro, Cornwall, and immediately put to work. The mower, now known as "The Beast", has four forward and one reverse gear, a cutting blade that can handle vegetation widths up to 2.5" thick and a differential lock, which means that the wheels can be locked to drive on slopes for added safety.

This summer the slope by Corner Wood was cut in the equivalent of only one working day where previously it had taken 5 days, saving a huge amount of time and effort. We're therefore confident that the machine will pay for itself in next to no time. Forde Orchard will be cut next, once all the wild flowers have finished and gone to seed.

Join us for our annual Winter Task in the field on Saturday 4th December and see the LLP for yourself. Ø

**Matthew Twigg**  
Conservation Officer

## In Memoriam

The Trust has received a legacy  
from the estate of the late  
Douglas John Darlington  
and  
donations in memory of  
Ivy Brock, Ailene Buxton  
Kenneth Raymond Mann  
James Morison Bourne  
Sheila Price, Myra Erica Bosbury  
and  
Simon Gregory

Our grateful thanks and sincere sympathies  
go to their families and friends

# LLP Update

In mid-February, Land & Waterscapes Ltd., a company based in Somerset, started pumping the water out of the big pond as restoration works finally commenced. As much wildlife as possible was rescued as the water level dropped, including several barrels of frogs and frogspawn. More unexpected was the presence of about half a dozen Brown Trout, which must have found their way into the pond as eggs or fry and these were repatriated back into the river Ashburn.

The works included the removal of the old pond liner and then the construction of a mud and Bentonite (clay powder) slurry trench. Finally, the bottom of the pond was sealed with more Bentonite, the site was tidied up and the contractors left, all within the week. Despite one or two on-going minor problems with the abstraction, the big pond has settled beautifully and by mid-August it was crystal clear and teeming with wildlife.

The pair of Mallard ducks turned up in March but sadly didn't stay to breed. In May, Pond Skater *Gerris lacustris*, Water Measurer *Hydrometra stagnorum* and Water Boatman nymphs *Corixa sp.* were recorded in good numbers and by June, seven male Broad-bodied Chasers *Libellula depressa* (with a male and female copulating and 4 *exuviae* in the water) were patrolling the area. Common Backswimmer *Notonecta glauca*, Common Blue Damselfly *Enallagma cyathigerum*, and either Azure or Variable Damselfly *Coenagrion sp.* were also in attendance. By July a male and female Beautiful Demoiselle graced the ponds, a living testament to their now-excellent water quality.

Elsewhere in the orchard, all of the fruit trees were covered in leaf buds by early April and blossom a month later. Due to the extremely dry start to the year, all the trees were in need of watering, a process necessarily repeated on several

subsequent occasions as the dry spell continued. Two types of apple even fruited this year, which was something of an unexpected bonus.

The field again proved attractive to a variety of fauna and flora. A male House Sparrow was in song in trees behind the barn and in nearby hedgerows from March through the early part of the spring, but breeding is yet to be confirmed. A fortunately vocal Tree Pipit spent a couple of days with us in May until disappearing, presumably up onto Dartmoor, to breed. A site record of 95 Marbled White was recorded in July along with 41 Meadow Brown, 12 Small Skipper, 19 Small Tortoiseshell, 6 Comma, 40 Ringlet, 3 Gatekeeper and 22 Six-spot Burnet.

The monthly Conservation Team work parties tackled various scrub patches, including bracken, bramble, nettle and creeping thistle. Maintaining the grassland is clearly working however, as our resident Barn Owls were seen out hunting regularly in the early evening throughout most of June.

Other happenings in the LLP included the Grand Draw Prize Winners visiting at the beginning of July and assisting in the ringing of the brood of 2 owlets, see item below and the start of the LLP's very own Wildlife Tower (page 9).

After originally inviting four contractors to visit to quote for the contract to build the Tower in February, the successful applicant eventually started work towards the end of July, sorting and transporting the local stone stored on site, and putting in the footings. It is hoped that this long-awaited project in memory of our Friend John Woodland will be completed by the end of September. ☺

**Matthew Twigg**  
Conservation Officer

## A Grand Prize

Every year I buy tickets for the BOT Grand Draw and every year I view this purchase as a donation to the Trust and not as a chance to win a prize, so it was with considerable surprise and delight that I received a letter in December 2009 informing me that I was a winner. The prize was a day out for two with the conservation team at the Barn Owl Trust. It was suggested that we arrange a date during the breeding season the following summer when we would be able to visit a wild Barn Owl site as part of a ringing visit.

The date was set and on a sunny July 1<sup>st</sup> my husband and I met David Ramsden, Head of Conservation and the conservation and office teams at Waterleat. Having been Friends of the Barn Owl Trust since December 1999 we were not unaware of the work of the Trust but the day was a true insight into its workings, the wealth of knowledge, commitment and energy that those who work there have and the desire to educate and inspire others.

We set off with David and Sarah almost immediately to view two wild sites which sadly for us did not have nestlings but we took the opportunity to pick David's brains on the journeys there and back. Following a picnic lunch with all the staff at Waterleat we set off with Matt and Sarah to walk around the Lennon Legacy Project.

What a wonderful resource it is and I would encourage everyone to consider leaving a legacy however large or small in their will as this is how valuable conservation projects can be funded and maintained. Finally we made our way with David, Sarah and Matt to a third wild site and for us the expression



**Richard and Lynn meet the two owlets hatched in the valley this year Photo: Sarah Nelms**

'third time lucky' held true. We were both very privileged to see and hold two baby barn owls during the process of ringing, weighing and sexing them – they are one of the most beautiful creatures and we must endeavor through the Trust to support and maintain the habitats in which they live. In summary - a brilliant day out – so buy lots of draw tickets this year and you may also be able to enjoy an excellent first prize! ☺

**Lynn (and Richard) Turner**



## Bird News

*The three young female Barn Owls will be ready for release this autumn Photo: Sarah Nelms*

In mid – April we received an extremely young Tawny Owl, just a few days old with its eyes still shut, which was brought in by an RSPCA officer. A week or so later a further two young Tawny Owls were brought in. To read their full story, please see the article on page 10.

In July we picked up an adult Barn Owl from the Veterinary Hospital Group at Estover in Plymouth. The bird was taken there after a member of the public found it with a break to its left wing. However, the vets found that the bone had started to mend itself so it was brought to the Trust to recuperate for eventual release. It has been making good progress and has been seen making short flights around its aviary.

Two young female Barn Owls were brought to us in as many days at the end of July. They had both fallen from their nests. Neither of them had any injuries but one was slightly underweight. After a short spell in the Bird Room they were strong enough to be moved to one of the hospital aviaries where they had room to fly. They are now doing well and we hope to release them in autumn before the wet weather sets in.

At the beginning of August, a juvenile Tawny Owl was brought to us by a member of the public who found it at the side of the road. It had severe flesh wounds to both legs as though it had been trapped or tethered. Unfortunately, after consultation with the vet it was decided to euthanase the bird, as it was unlikely to ever recover from its injuries.

A third young female Barn Owl originally found in the South Hams was mistakenly taken to West Hatch by the RSPCA. After its trip up to Somerset, the owl was picked up by David who brought it back to the Barn Owl Trust for specialist rehabilitation. It is now co-habiting with the other two young Barn Owls and will be released at the same time.

All of our resident captive owls have recently undergone their annual health checks, which involves weighing, worming, spraying them with mite spay and clipping their beaks and talons. We are pleased to say that all of the birds passed with flying colours.

On behalf of all of the owls we'd like to say a big thank you to all of those people who have collected and delivered owls for us and also to the Veterinary Hospital Group in Plymouth and the other veterinary practices that have treated birds. Ø

## Provide a Foster Home

We are looking for people who can foster an owl or two. If you are interested you need to live within 50 miles of Ashburton and be able to provide a suitably sized aviary (6ft x 12ft absolute minimum but ideally 10ft x 20ft, the bigger the better) with perches and a roosting box.

You don't need any bird keeping knowledge but you must have a freezer, be prepared to feed the owls once a day on dead day old chicks (purchased by the fosterer but can be supplied by BOT). You will be responsible for the day-to-day welfare of the bird(s) and keeping the aviary clean. A member of BOT staff will visit to check your facilities and to carry out annual health inspections.

Please remember that these birds are not pets and cannot be flown, released or displayed to the public. If you are considering taking on a few owls, please clear it with your neighbours first. If you are interested, please get in touch by calling us on 01364 653026 or sending us an email to [info@barnowltrust.org.uk](mailto:info@barnowltrust.org.uk) Ø

**Sarah Nelms**  
Conservation Assistant

# Inspiring Young People

One of the most important things we can do to further the aims of the Trust is to inspire other people about Barn Owl conservation. As well as our educational school talks and training courses for ecologists, the Trust regularly gives young people the opportunity of work experience. This summer we had three young people with us; Christ who comes from China and is currently attending South Dartmoor Community College in Ashburton, Sophie who came to us from Kingsbridge Community College in South Devon and Ashleigh who wants to study for a veterinary degree and travelled from Surrey to spend three days here.

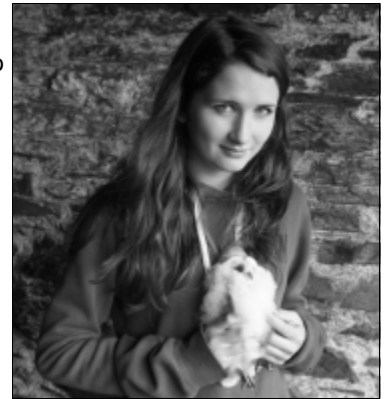


"I come from China and I am currently living in the UK and studying at the local Community College. It has been really interesting for me working here and seeing how the administration of the Barn Owl Trust works and it has given me a real insight into working life and also about how people in the UK think of wildlife."  
**Christ, Paignton.**



"I intend to do a veterinary degree at University next year and it's a very competitive course, even more so than medicine, so it's vital to get as much work experience as possible from a diversity of organisations. I had a great three days at the Trust and would love to come back and stay for longer. How can the owl not be everyone's favourite bird!"  
**Ashleigh, Surrey.**

"I am really interested in conservation and so chose to spend a week at the Barn Owl Trust. I helped with owl health check ups and got to hold an injured owl. I was also lucky enough to see Owlets being ringed. I am so grateful to have had the opportunity to have spent a week at the Trust."  
**Sophie, Kingsbridge. Ø**



Photos: David Ramsden and Caroline Lewis

## Nestcam Ups and Downs

If you were watching Nestcam this summer you will have witnessed the sad death of the youngest owlet due to starvation. Unfortunately, nestling deaths associated with food shortages are common amongst Barn Owls often due to a shortage of their main prey item, the Field Vole.

Modern farming practices and human population expansion have resulted in a lack of prey rich rough grassland. Prey availability is the main factor controlling the survival of young Barn Owls. Between 1990 – 2006 the average brood size recorded by the Trust was 2.9 compared to 2.3 this year. This figure comes from observations made by the conservation team who carried out annual monitoring visits to nest sites this summer. A number of the sites visited initially contained three owlets but when the team returned to ring the young, only two were present – starvation being the most likely cause.

Of course the chaotic weather is also playing a part in the Barn Owls demise. The early spring 'drought' meant that the grass, on which Field Voles feed failed to grow delaying their breeding season and thus impacting on Barn Owl nesting success. The mid-summer rain made it even harder for the parents to hunt and provide enough food for the owlets to grow and survive.

Nestcam viewers will have noticed that the owlets persistently managed to fall from the nestbox. Hungry nestlings will often stand right on the edge of the nestbox tray waiting for a prey delivery and if the whole brood are hungry the pushing and shoving caused by the excitement can mean that owlets are accidentally bumped off. Our deep indoor nestboxes are specifically designed to reduce the likelihood of fallen owlets as the high entrance hole makes it difficult for the owlets to get out before they're nearly ready to fly and the tray provides a platform on which to stretch their wings. However, the owlets' hunger seems to have driven them to desperate measures as they tried to be the first in line when the adults arrived with food.

Luckily the site owner was on hand to place the owlets back in the nestbox. Many owlets are not as fortunate and often starve to death right beneath the nest as the parents generally don't feed them once they have fallen.

When the youngest owlet fell she was placed back in the nestbox but unfortunately somehow caught her talon on the edge of the entrance hole. This meant that she was left hanging upside down for a short while before she freed herself. As soon as we were informed, one of our assistant conservation officers made the journey down to Cornwall to check the owlet over for injuries. On arrival it was clear that the owlet was severely underweight. The decision was made to bring her back to the Trust where she would be given fluids and fed and have the opportunity to regain her strength. Sadly the little owlet was too weak to survive and she passed away en route.

Unfortunately, this unhappy event highlights the plight of the Barn Owl and one of the problems they regularly face. On a brighter note, the two surviving owlets appeared to be doing well. There have been no confirmed sightings since the end of August so we can assume that they have now dispersed to find their own home ranges. We hope that they survive their first winter and go on to produce young of their own.

Aside from the loss of nest sites, habitat loss and therefore lack of food is one of the main causes of Barn Owl decline. If you own any land please consider turning over just a small portion to rough grassland and do your bit to help secure the future of the Barn Owl.

For more information on managing habitat for Barn Owls please see our website or get in touch and we will be happy to send you information and advise you. Please see page 3 for a full update on the 2010 breeding season. Ø

**Sarah Nelms**  
Conservation Assistant



# Our Very Own Wildlife Tower

In 2008 when Friend of the Trust John Woodland was terminally ill he talked to us about making a donation to the Trust . We had several ideas and the one that John liked best was helping the Trust to build its very own Wildlife Tower on our own land. As with the ponds and indeed the purchase of the LLP initially, we always try to use a legacy for something tangible.

As you will see from the photos, the construction of the Tower began in July and despite hold ups with the weather we expect it to be finished before the 2nd anniversary of Johns death in December. Although he won't be physically present when the wildlife moves in, we know that John would be delighted to know that he is still helping Devon's wildlife, just as he did during his lifetime.



Obtaining planning consent and finding the right builder took some time. After getting several quotes we chose local stonemason Ashley Major to undertake the work. The project began in July with the collection of the building stone from the field and the Towers footprint being outlined (above). There is an earth floor to keep the lower chamber damp and cold.

The interior is constructed of breeze blocks (to keep the cost down) faced with natural stone, with the gap between the two walls filled with rubble. The timbers for the roof and lintels are locally sourced oak and the roof will be clad with Welsh slate. Once the stone walls were underway David started poking small holes in the mortar (above) to create spaces for insects to live and hibernate. Higher up larger holes have been left between the stones (left) to provide different shape cavities for nesting birds such as sparrows, tits and flycatchers.



The Wildlife Tower is situated in the top corner of the field known as North Park looking down to Riverbank Wood and overlooking the Forde Orchard stone faced hedge bank. By the 17th August the ground floor walls were going up (see top right picture). Behind the Tower you can see the North Park hedge bank created in March 2008.



On the 1st September the scaffolding was up and the upper storey underway and by the 3rd the Kestrel and Stock Dove entrance hole can be seen in the top of the back wall (below).

The last picture shows the front of the building on the 17th September. You can see the Barn Owl hole in the apex above the doorway into the upper storey. Over the lower doorway is one of the 3 access holes made for Bats.



Future visitors to the LLP will be able to see the Wildlife Tower on their walks around the site. Feedback 45 will have photos of the completed building and news of any wildlife that moves in will be available in the monthly LLP News updates on the website and in future issues of Feedback. Bless you John. Ø



Photos: Matthew Twiggs and Frances Ramsden

# The Tale of the Tawny Trio



*Winkin the youngest of the Tawny Owlets soon after arrival  
Photo: Sarah Nelms*

One afternoon back in April we received a very special delivery from the RSPCA. We knew that it was a bird of prey but it was so young it was almost unidentifiable. Its eyes were closed and it still had the egg tooth on its beak. It was covered in soft white down and made faint chirping sounds. It was a Tawny Owl barely 48 hours old. We admitted it to our purpose built Owl Hospital bird room, where it was kept under a heat lamp and fed small pieces of raw meat every 3 hours. It was touch and go for a while, as it was such a young bird.

We were keen that the young owlet did not imprint on us humans when it first opened its eyes so we were relieved when a few days later, another (older) Tawny Owlet was brought in. This way the first thing the little owlet would see when it opened its eyes was another Tawny Owl.

Imprinting is a common problem in cases where birds have been hand-reared and can often make release difficult and sometimes impossible. This is mainly due to the fact that many birds and animals identify with the first moving object they see (including humans) and as a result do not behave naturally.

The second Tawny Owlet was quite a bit bigger so could not be put in the same box as the first owlet. To overcome this Jasmin, our handywoman, quickly knocked up a contraption to allow the owlets to see each other but not come into physical contact.

About a week or so later, a third Tawny Owlet was brought in. It was the sibling of the second owlet and so was of a similar age – about 4 weeks old. At first we needed to hand feed it but it soon began to feed itself.

When the two older owlets were too big to stay in boxes in the bird room, they were moved into one of our small sheltered hospital aviaries outside. Here they had space to start flapping their newly feathered wings. Although the little one was still too small to be out in the aviary with the other two, we were eager to keep them all together. We put its box (with a heat pad so it didn't get cold,) in the aviary with a mesh lid on. Then, as soon as the little one was big enough we took it out of the box to join its adopted siblings.

After spending over a month in the hospital aviary the owlets experienced their first taste of the big wide world when we moved them to a larger aviary close to woodland. Here we were hoping that they would hear wild Tawny Owls and become

accustomed to the area in which they would eventually be released. The aviary floor is natural so we were also hoping that they might even practice hunting for worms and insects although we never witnessed them doing so.

We then moved the juvenile owls to one of our mobile release aviaries where they spent a couple of weeks adjusting to their surroundings. We were waiting for a spell of good weather so that we could lift the roof of the aviary, allowing the birds to fly free. The big day came on 17th August.

We continued to leave food in the aviary until the owls stopped returning and we hope that they have now become independent. If all goes to plan, they will hang around for a bit and then disperse to find their own territories in autumn.

So now our Tawny trio has flown the nest (so to speak) and hopefully they are enjoying their newly found freedom.

Whilst the owlets were with us we ran a competition to give them names. We are pleased to announce that the winner is Claire Wells - Brown from Torquay.

We loved her suggestion of Winkin, Blinkin and Nod. A Barn Owl adoption pack is winging its way to you! Thank you to everyone who entered. ☺

**Sarah Nelms**  
Conservation Assistant



*Winkin and Blinkin are on top of the roosting box and  
Nod can be seen inside peering out  
Photo: Sarah Nelms*



# Knowledge is Power!

*Sarah in the classroom Photo: David Ramsden*

*We are delighted to announce that Sarah Nelms has taken on telling the Wings of Change story and making school visits this year. Here Sarah explains why she wanted the role and how she feels about it. Eds*

I've always thought that education is one of the most powerful tools we have for conservation. You can throw all the money in the world at a problem but without knowledge and understanding, the problem is likely to remain.

From a very young age I have been fascinated by animals and the natural world. I believe that this was in part due to my parents, but also because I was lucky enough to have enthusiastic, 'nature friendly' primary school teachers who encouraged my (and my fellow pupils') interest in the subject.

Before joining the Barn Owl Trust, I spent six months working as an Education Ranger and really enjoyed teaching school children about the creatures that fascinated me so much when I was their age. That's why when our Conservation Officer, Julie, left in March I volunteered to take on the school talks. The 'Wings of Change' story explains how Barn Owls have been affected by changes in the countryside since the Second World War and what the Barn Owl Trust is doing to help. It is followed by an appearance from a very special guest – Baley, our captive-bred Barn Owl.

I was really keen to play an educational role at the Barn Owl Trust, where my main role as PA to the Head of Conservation is largely office bound. By giving the school talks I feel that I can get out and about a bit more and really contribute to the long-term future of Barn Owls

I must admit, when the time came for me to give my first solo talk I was a little nervous – the responsibility of instilling

enthusiasm that will eventually save the earth weighs heavy on your shoulders – but to my (and David's) relief it went really well (apart from a minor mishap with an upside down photo). Since then, I have grown more confident and feel like I know the 'Wings of Change' story inside out.

The reaction from the children when they see Baley for the first time is fantastic and is often followed by a gasp and excited giggles. Baley always remains nonchalant and seems unaware of his adoring fans. I love working with him and feel extremely privileged that it is part of my job.

I hope that at least some of the children who hear the story will later choose a career in conservation as I did. As a result of this I hope that the knowledge they gain not only enhances their quality of life but helps the natural environment too. ☺



## Prize Request

Do you have any **new** unwanted small gifts that would make good lucky dip prizes? A pack of notelets, a set of men's handkerchiefs, toiletries etc?

It would be great to have enough prizes for grown ups (male & female) to enjoy the lucky dip during the 2011 season and it would help us to raise funds. We will charge £1 for an adult dip.

Post your donations to the Trust  
Thank you for your support. ☺

# Westmoor BO Scheme Update

As you read this the Westmoor Barn Owl Scheme will (hopefully) be long completed, but as I write, we are still rushing around, speaking to land owners, checking sites and putting up the last few nestboxes. We have achieved a huge amount since the Scheme started in February 2009. The current situation is:

Targets	Planned	Achieved
Identification visits	92	177
Stage 1 visits	23	23
Stage 2 visits	23	45
Stage 3 visits	23	61
Additional nestbox erections	50	46
Additional advisory visits	50	42
Indoor nestboxes erected	119	90
Outdoor nestboxes erected	5	15
Polebox erected	1	1

Some of these figures may seem a bit strange at first glance. For example, it would appear that we have carried out far too many identification visits; this was to enable us to find suitable target sites for the conservation work. The plans for the Westmoor Scheme were drawn up more than two years ago, before we joined the Trust, and at the time nobody knew what we would find once the scheme was underway. We have been learning as we go along, and both Biffaward, who are generously funding almost all of the project, and ourselves here at the Trust, have had to retain some flexibility when it comes to targets. At the end of the day we need to ensure our work is providing what is best for the owls.

As you will see from the table, the Scheme included the cost of erecting a polebox, a very substantial two-chambered nestbox, fixed to the top of a disused electricity (telegraph) pole. The nestbox alone costs £450 and the used electricity poles cost anything between £30 and £150. The erection of a pole box is quite an undertaking, and it was deliberately left until the Scheme was drawing to a close to ensure that it went in the best possible location.

During the course of the Scheme, we have approached many farmers, tenants and landowners to ask whether they have seen Barn Owls around. The response we were usually met with was along the lines of "used to see them around years ago but nothing recently". However, when Stuart visited properties to the northwest of Tavistock near to the Tamar, it was a different story.

Literally every person he spoke to said they saw Barn Owls regularly. Unfortunately they were all tenants of the same landlord, who "wanted nothing to do with conservationists!". However, we did manage to make contact with some lovely people, Dave & Lynne, right in the middle of the area who were more than happy to work with us. They own a small pocket of land consisting of a house and garden, with no large outbuildings or trees. This seemed like the perfect place to erect our pole box. Lynne has her own blog and has written a piece about providing a home for a polebox on page 13.

Western Power Distribution (WPD) have very kindly done some work for us before both here at the Trust and at wild Barn Owl sites so we asked them for assistance with the polebox erection! After a few phone calls back and forth we received an email from Kevin Stephens at the WPD Tavistock depot to say that they would help.

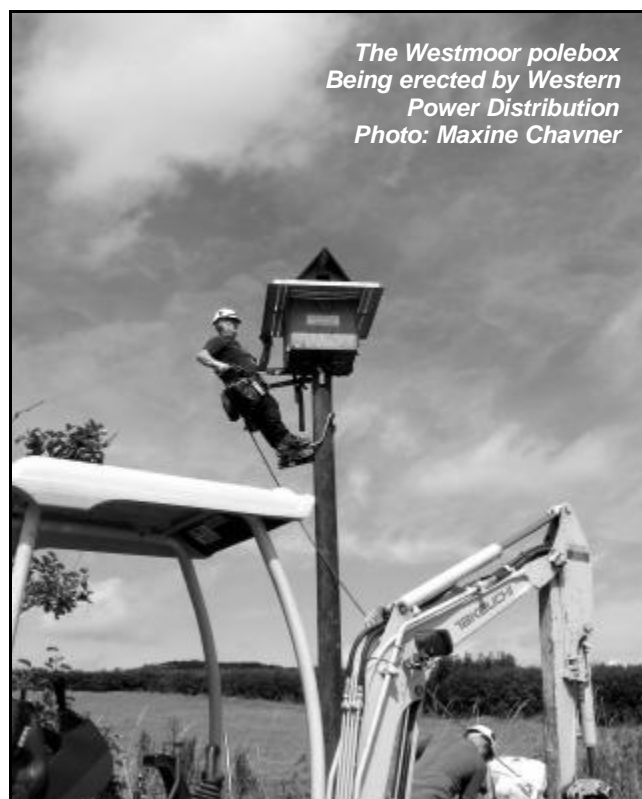
On the 28<sup>th</sup> July, a lovely warm sunny afternoon, Maxine met the lads from Western Power Distribution on-site. It was somewhere they were already familiar with, having visited recently to remove an electricity pole and bury the power lines. Now they were back to re-erect an electricity pole but this time with a Barn Owl nestbox on top of it! The site is ideal for Barn Owls - a hay meadow behind the pole, lots of hedgerows and a valley full of small fields sweeping away to the front of it with pockets of rough grassland. All we need now is for the Barn Owls that are regularly seen flying around to take up this very special des res!

Although it is still too early to be sure what impact the Scheme has had on the Barn Owl population in the Westmoor area, the early signs are encouraging. We have found Barn Owl pellets in many of the boxes we have put up, and it is always nice when a box we erected is used by Barn Owls. We all like our work to be appreciated!

There have also been instances of the owls moving from an existing box to the one we erected. This is important because our boxes are of a deep design with the entrance hole at the top of the box, and a distance of 45cm or 18" between the bottom of the hole and the floor of the box. This improves the safety of any owlets that may be hatched in the box, as it forces them to stay inside the box for longer. Young Barn Owls that fall from the nest are unlikely to be fed by their parents, and will therefore starve, if they are not predated first. The idea is that by the time the owlets are old enough to reach the hole of a deep box, they are almost ready to fly. Best of all, we have also had reports from landowners of breeding Barn Owls at some of our Westmoor sites. So far these are all from sites with a history of breeding, but it is early days yet. It will be great when we finally hear about breeding at a new site that has come about through the Westmoor Barn Owl Scheme.

Although we are always very busy we are hoping to find the time to check all of the boxes next year and ask the landowners about their owl sightings. Watch this space. Ø

**Maxine Chavner & Stuart Baker**  
Assistant Conservation Officers



*The Westmoor polebox  
Being erected by Western  
Power Distribution  
Photo: Maxine Chavner*

# Other News

## Web Wonders

For those of you that don't like computers or the internet we've included this email so that you can see why we believe they can be really good for conservation. Eds

I'm writing to commend you on your incredible website. It was so informative and to be quite honest I haven't seen another site as well put together and informative yet easy to read and follow than your site ANYWHERE on the Internet!! Impressive and a joy to read!! Good Job.

What had led me to your site was "Ollie" one of the fledgling Barn Owls we have watched from a distance, come into this world, grow and now start to fly! However "Ollie" wasn't quite ready and landed face first into a metal building. All is well, but had I not found your site, who knows what would have become of him. I say this because the very people you expect to help in this type of situation won't tell you anything other than "put him in a box and call us immediately". When the rehabilitator doesn't show up to retrieve the bird, well that is at the very least unprofessional and it's definitely a life threatening situation for the owl.

If I hadn't found your site not only would I have never attempted to put him back after checking him but, I would not have understood the needs of these birds and realised that they needed a place to exercise those wings, so they will not end up in "Ollies" situation. We are currently constructing a platform outside their hole so they will have somewhere to stretch and practice!!! Thank you again for your obvious love and concern for these magnificent and beautiful feathered brothers of ours. Thanks again.

**Randi Johnston**  
California, USA

## Our Polebox

Backalong (as we says down y'ere in Devon) the Barn Owl Trust came to visit us as part of a conservation project they were doing locally. They asked us lots of questions and had a good look around. Well just imagine the excitement when a letter arrived earlier this year to say they had funding for one deluxe polebox in the area and having decided to place it in the Tamar Valley would we mind having it in our garden. Would we mind.....It's like being chosen to be parents for adoption honestly we were that excited. Out came our ancient copy of Eric Hosking's Owls, the Barn Owl information file was opened and the diary started.

Anyway, then there was the all-important final meeting with site survey to decide where best to place the guest accommodation, a 4m high telegraph pole with a luxury chalet (with veranda) on the top, and then figure out the access for the big machinery to do it. It's all a bit technical and there was much discussion about visibility of the entrance to the box and me apparently saying 'Be nice if we could see it from the house...' far more than was necessary which I don't believe for one minute. In the end a spot was agreed on, in fact the exact same spot where the 4m high electricity pole with paraphernalia used to be, but we had it moved and the cable sunk underground because it was an eyesore....and we could see it from the house!

In contrast a Barn Owl box is a thing of beauty and a joy forever and even better...well we'll be able to see it from the house. So now we're out on Barn Owl-watching duty every night and whispering 'Come live with us...we'll be able to see you from the house' as they sweep by on their nightly hunting rounds. We're brushing up on our owl facts ready to become owl bores and getting very excited because who knows, perhaps we'll be able to announce we have Barn Owls in our polebox. In anticipation.

**Lynne Hatfield**

## The End of an Era

Herbert Vallance passed away peacefully at Torbay Hospital on Monday June 21st, after a short illness, aged 81 years. 'Herbie', as he was known to his family and friends, was the previous owner of the Trusts' land, adjacent to our base here in Devon. In the midst of the Foot and Mouth Crisis back in 2001 I bumped into Herbert and found out that he was intending to sell 'the field'. Only a few weeks earlier we had received news of Vivienne Lennon's wonderful legacy – the first major bequest to the Barn Owl Trust. To cut a long story short, these two chance events were the very beginning of what became *The Lennon Legacy Project – Transforming 26 acres of intensively grazed sheep pasture into 26 acres of Barn Owl heaven*.



Herbert had originally purchased the field, as an extension to his farm, back in 1956. His knowledge of farming and the history of the area was tremendous and he took great delight in chatting about it. I always enjoyed listening to Herbert. Life according to Herbert depended on farming, fishing, and mining – "those are the real industries" he told me. When I expressed the view that life depended on wildlife – that wildlife provides the oxygen we breath – he simply smiled. A close friend of the family speaking at his funeral recalled that "you never needed to ask Herbie's opinion about anything 'cause you knew you were going to get it anyway!"

In the '70's Herbert obtained a government grant to 'improve' the field by grubbing out all the internal hedges making what was eight small fields into one big one. He eradicated the bracken with persistent mowing and demolished the last derelict stone barn which stood on the site of an old farmstead. By intensively grazing the land with sheep and cattle, and through the application of artificial fertilizer, Herbert transformed those rough old fields into 'good' grassland (good for lamb and beef production). It's important to remember that Herbert's generation of farmers had lived through the food shortages of World War II. If only Britain could become self-sufficient in food production we'd be less vulnerable to attack. The overriding aim of post-war farming was to increase food production year-on-year and Herbert certainly played his part not only through the use of modern farming methods but also through his own agricultural machinery inventions.

When we started recreating the hedges he'd removed and letting his 'good grassland' go back to rough grassland for the sake of wildlife he probably thought we were mad. It certainly seems crazy that in 1970 the government paid to have hedges removed and thirty five years later they were paying to put them back! Land management should be long term, chopping and changing is costly and inefficient not to mention the damage to wildlife.

Herbert certainly had a wonderfully historical perspective and a great affection for the land. I like to think that he enjoyed seeing hundreds of butterflies where his sheep used to graze and watching a Barn Owl hunting at dusk – quite possibly the first one he'd seen since here 1960. He was a great character and is certain to live on in the fond memories of so many local folk as well as the farming community.

**David Ramsden**  
Head of Conservation

# Supporters News

Putting up nestboxes, answering enquiries about Barn Owls and giving conservation advice and information is all in a days work for the team at the Barn Owl Trust. A request to supply party bags in a hurry is not quite so usual!

Inspired mum, Natasha from Reading came up with a different kind of party bag for her daughter Korina's birthday when she ordered 12 soft cuddly owlets from the Barn Owl Trust. Natasha explained she was keen to reduce the amount of plastic and packaging that traditionally go into children's party bags. She wanted to give children one long lasting party memento, rather than lots of small items that could end up in a landfill site a few weeks later.



*Birthday girl Korina shows off her 'party bag' owlet*  
Photo: Natasha Pearce

Natasha said "I realised that by the time I had bought lots of little 'throwaway' items to go into party bags, I could buy a cuddly owlet in it's own nestbox for the same amount. I found the owlets by googling 'owl related gifts' on the internet and thought they would be just perfect. The owlet was such a surprise for the children and they really enjoyed choosing a name and writing it on the label of the nestbox. The colouring sheets and information about Barn Owls was a thoughtful added touch too."

David Ramsden MBE, Head of Conservation at the Trust said "A key message from the Barn Owl Trust is that in order to help our wildlife, we need to conserve our environment. Reducing packaging and waste plays an important part in achieving this. It's great to hear people are addressing this in daily life; including children's parties! It's just fantastic to see parents are really thinking about the natural world when they make choices. The message they give their children, that we can all do our bit for the environment is so important – even at party time!"

Other enterprising parents have created their own Barn Owl parties by buying the Trusts "Wings of Change" DVD to entertain their children and our bargain A3 colour owl and owlets posters (£3 for 2 posters). The DVD presented by Nick Baker uses animation, graphics and wonderful characters to tell the story of the decline of the Barn Owl from the 1940's to the present day. This, along with our new pellet analysis pack (just £4.99) and our new stationary pack (£4.00) can provide hours of fun and entertainment for children. The pellet analysis pack contains everything you need to dissect a Barn Owl Pellet; tweezers, magnifier, wooden probe, gloves, information leaflet and a pellet. Our new stationary pack has re-use labels, ink pad and unique 'owlet' rubber stamp to decorate cards, letters & envelopes.

We have put together our own Barn Owl party pack for 6 children aged between 6 and 12 which includes one Wings of Change DVD with colouring-in sheets, a poster, pellet analysis and stationary packs for each child (£75 plus p&p). Ø



Have you ever noticed how good it feels to give your home a good clear out and get rid of unwanted clutter? Now you can add to the 'feel good factor' by selling your old junk to someone who can make use of it - and donating some of the proceeds to the Barn Owl Trust. So you help the environment, not only by supporting our work, but also by recycling things you no longer need.

eBay for Charity is a way for buyers and sellers on eBay.co.uk to support their favourite charities. Buyers can shop for items knowing they're supporting a good cause. Sellers, whether they're individuals or businesses, can donate a percentage from any sale to the Barn Owl Trust and add Gift Aid to their donations. The Barn Owl Trust is selling items kindly donated by supporters, as well as some items from the on-line shop. All the profits from Barn Owl Trust sales go directly to support our work.

To buy, sell or make a donation to the Barn Owl Trust through eBay, go to <http://pages.ebay.co.uk/ebayforcharity/> See where it says 'Find your Favourite Charity' – and Click on 'Get Searching' – and search for 'The Barn Owl Trust' or go to: [http://donations.ebay.co.uk/charity/charity.jsp?NP\\_ID=36642](http://donations.ebay.co.uk/charity/charity.jsp?NP_ID=36642) Once you've found us – remember to save us as a favourite! If you decide to sell an item in aid of charity it will be marked with a blue and yellow charity ribbon in search results and in the item listing title. Within the listing, buyers will see the name of the benefiting charity and the percentage of the final sale price the seller is donating. The charity receives 95% of the donation. Ø

## Calling all Knitters!

Thank you to everyone who kindly responded to our last request and knitted leg warmers for us. We received lots of packages of brightly coloured leg warmers and these have helped us to raise funds for the Trust.

This year we are keeping to the 'woolly' theme and asking you to make mobile phone/ipod pouches. We have a pattern for you to follow. Happy knitting!

### Materials for Mobile Phone/ipod pouch:

DK Wool (Small quantity in Barn Owl colours)  
One Pair 4mm knitting needles (UK size 8)

### Measurements of strip including flap:

Width 7.5 cms (2.5 inches),  
Length 27cms (10.5 inches)

**Method:** Cast on 16 stitches using thumb method if possible. Work in stocking stitch for four rows (one row plain, one row purl).

### Make Buttonhole:

Next Row Knit 7, cast off 2, knit to end of row  
Next Row Purl 7, cast on 2, purl to end of row

Continue in stocking stitch until work measures 27cms (10.5 inches) ending with a wrong side row. Cast off.

### To Make Up:

Press work on wrong side. Measure 22cms of length (8.5 inches) from the cast off edge. Put right sides together and bring the cast off edge upwards to this point leaving remainder of strip with buttonhole for flap. Join side seams using back stitch. Turn inside out and bring flap to the front of the cover Ø



## Sponsored Walk

The rain held off on Saturday 8th May allowing everyone taking part in the sponsored walk to enjoy the beautiful lush green surroundings of Canonteign Falls situated on the edge of Dartmoor National Park in the beautiful Teign Valley.

Primroses and bluebells were found nestled in woodland areas providing splashes of colour, whilst the Fern Garden nurtured tightly curled up ferns waiting to reveal their full glory over the coming weeks. It was then onto a picturesque wooden bridge that provided a welcome resting place. There was a chance to admire the stunning waterfalls cascading down ancient rock formations to the lakes below and contemplate climbing the ninety Victorian steps to reach the summit of the 220ft falls. The climb was rewarded with the most spectacular panoramic views across the Teign Valley and beyond.

A gently sloping descent through beautiful woodland held hidden sculpture surprises along the way, finally leading back down to the tranquil lakes below. A warm drink in front of a cosy wood burning stove and a picnic lunch rounded off the walk perfectly. Everyone went home with memories of stunning scenery and the knowledge they had 'done their bit' towards helping Barn Owl Conservation. We must also say a huge thank you to Canonteign Falls for kindly letting us enjoy this beautiful venue for the benefit of the Trust and for hosting our Annual General Celebration this year at Canonteign House on Friday October 15th.

Sponsorship for the walk raised a total of £1,623.15. Thanks to everybody who took part and everybody who sponsored Hugo the Cocker Spaniel to walk on their behalf - Thank you so much! ☺



*Hugo is caught eyeing up a mug of hot chocolate after completing the sponsored walk at Canonteign Falls  
Photo: Caroline Lewis*

## Wilder than Wild Day

**Thank you to Woodlands Leisure Park** in South Devon for inviting us to their 'Wilder than Wild' day in June. We had great fun handing out Barn Owl colouring sheets, stickers and information to children visiting the park.

A big thank you to Jasmin Ramsden our handy person and volunteer Teresa Patmore for helping us to raise money with her creative face painting skills. She came up with some great designs, including an Owl! It was also a good opportunity for us to meet other wildlife and conservation charities and learn a little bit more about each other and share ideas. ☺



*Hugo was very keen to set off at the start of the sponsored walk Photo: Caroline Lewis*

## Lucky Dip Success

A big blue barrel filled with shredded paper and milk bottle tops provides fun year after year for children who visit the Barn Owl Trust stand at County Shows and events. In a world where children can seem to be most impressed and engaged by technology, there is something very magical about seeing the excitement in a child's face as they hand over their 50p to allow them to 'plunge their hands into a barrel of shredded paper' in the hope of finding a milk bottle top! We've always noticed how keen some of the adults are to 'have a go' too!

This year Jackie, our Office Manager had the great idea of a ladies lucky dip for £1 a go to give the older girls a chance to enjoy finding a prize too - it was a great success with over 100 ladies taking part. See page 11 for how you can help with our prize request. ☺

## Web News

Since our last article in Feedback 43 announcing we are on Facebook and Twitter, we are delighted to report some great figures in relation to our worldwide web presence. Our fans on Facebook currently stand at 521 over an 8 month period. That's an average of 65 people every month becoming fans of the Barn Owl Trust! We currently have over 1,000 followers on Twitter and by the time you read this there are certain to be even more. The Barn Owl Trust website achieved it's highest ever recorded viewings this July at 81,433 daily average hits.

So why do we get so excited about these numbers? Because the worldwide web allows us to communicate about Barn Owls with thousands of people across the world at relatively minimum cost. That's an amazing facility for a charity trying to make the most of every penny! In the financial year 1st April 2009 - 31st March 2010, practical work accounted for 64% of the Barn Owl Trust total spend and our information and advice service accounted for 28%. That's 92% of our total spend going directly on conservation, information and advice. Fundraising, including advertising, accounts for just 5% of our total spend. It's minimal and that's why the worldwide web is so valuable to us helping us to spread the word about Barn Owl conservation. ☺

# Thanks and things

Thank you to everyone that has supported the Trust since the last issue of Feedback by being a Friend, adopting an owl or making a donation to our funds. A big thank you too to those folk who have raised money for us, especially Charlotte Clough who did a sponsored walk and raised £750 in memory of her friend Simon Pitt, Stuart Westaway sent us £166.50 from his sponsored Dartmoor Cycle ride, the Axe Valley running club who organise "The Grizzly" donated £150, Jenny Chapman sent us £90 from interview fees. Burnside primary School in Glasgow held an Ugly Bug Ball and gave us £170, Andy & Jennifer Muir sent us £92.80 from a coffee morning, Matt Hallet donated £225 from fundraising at a party and Kornel Kossuth sent us £116.20 from a fundraising event at school. Well done and thank you all for thinking of the Barn Owl Trust.

Thank you to Hazel Baldwin for donating lots of used tools, some to be used by us, some sold on ebay & some passed on to Tools for Africa, also thank you Hazel for allowing us to have a large box for donated items in Ashburton Post Office which has collected lots of goodies for recycling; to Three Owls Sanctuary for stacking chairs and freezers, Mr & Mrs Carey for boxes of day old chicks for feeding the owls and to Helen Shaw, Anna Milner and Sue Goddard for owl pellets.

We are grateful to everyone that has sent us items for recycling, these include mobile phones, used stamps, stamp albums and collections, 1st day covers, padded envelopes, jewellery and watches, film pots, foreign coins, postcards, old trophies, tankards, used and unused ink cartridges. Thank you Neil Bannell, Jasmin Ramsden, John Reynolds, Ann Green, Jack Swift. Mrs Hughes, Christine Martin, Brenda & Michael Hooton, Ruth Samways, Mark Pountney, Ada & Dennis Birbeck, Rachel Edwards, Melanie White, Mrs N Bell, Carol Langstone, Simon, Peter & Shirley Gregory, Jo & Simon Roper, Beryl & Reg Welsh, Alan Bedbrook, John Webber & Rachel Edwards, Robert Hamer, Dennis & Barbara Madge, Brenda Thom, the Cadwell Centre Buckfast and all those that have supported us in this way.

We are always delighted (and grateful) when we receive support, it helps to fund our work and it's really great to know

there are so many people out there wanting to lend a hand. You can now support us when you sell things on ebay too (page 14). We can provide leaflets and posters if you want to hold a coffee morning or run a fund-raising event for the Trust, you can of course raise funds for us by recycling an increasing range of items and you can check out our Wants List to see if you have any of the following items that we could use. Thank you for your help.

- \* Copy of 'A Manual for Wildlife Radio Tagging' by Kenward & Walls (2001) ISBN 10: 0124042422
- \* Empty film canisters to hold a single owl pellet
- \* Foreign change and notes (please enclose a note of the type of currency)
- \* Wild bird food - mainly sacks of black sunflower seeds, also peanuts & plain canary seed
- \* Wood for making outdoor nestboxes - sheets of 9 or 12mm tanalised softwood ply and lengths of 25x 50mm tanalised batten
- \* A4 and A3 recycled paper and card any colour
- \* Box trailer in good working order
- \* Inkjet cartridges for HP Deskjet 3820
- \* More garden rakes
- \* Stackable office chairs
- \* Postage stamps (both new and used - especially commemorative and foreign)
- \* Metal detector
- \* Wildlife rehab group looking for somewhere to release house sparrows (we have the perfect release site)
- \* Good quality Barn Owl winter scenes either photographic or illustrative for Christmas card images
- \* Empty inkjet cartridges and old mobile phones for recycling
- \* Wild Barn Owl pellets (we can never have too many)
- \* Anyone in the Ashburton area who could occasionally provide temporary lodging for a Barn Owl Trust volunteer, at a reasonable rate
- \* Small Plate Compactor
- \* Roller suitable for towing with a tractor
- \* Padded envelopes - all sizes Ø

## Tail piece...



It's autumn here in the valley, the mornings have a damp crispness and the nights are drawing in. Traditionally it's a time for harvesting nature's bounty and the Lennon Legacy Project has a bumper crop of nuts and berries this year. The parasol mushrooms, one graced the front cover of Feedback 38 in 2007, have been amazing. There are so many of them now, they have popped up in lots of different places through the rough tussocky grass. The Rowan berries have been stripped from the trees by the birds but there are plenty of blackberries, elderberries and sloes for them to move on to.

The summer, such as it was, sped past in a flurry of activity. We've been working towards the new meeting room, the Wildlife Tower and the apprentices community project which happens next week and will be completed by the time this hits your doorsteps. For months now we've been meeting with the trainers from Western Power Distribution, drawing up plans, ordering materials and getting everything ready for a huge influx of effort and enthusiasm, it's really exciting. We hope that the lads who are taking part will enjoy the opportunity to be in such a beautiful place, although their trainers assure us they will be working too hard to notice.....

In amongst the hustle and bustle of daily life we try to have a walk in the LLP most days. Whatever the weather it is always a joy and there is always something different to see. Sometimes there is the most amazing view down the valley and at other times we're walking in a mist of low cloud. On a clear night the sky is infinite and filled with so many stars, when a rainbow reaches across the horizon it's a touch of magic in the landscape and the crystals of dew hanging from the tall grass stems glitter like diamonds in the sunshine.

The natural world is a marvel and we are a part of it. We are so lucky to have the luxury to enjoy it. The freedom from the day-to-day rigors of survival that affect so many of our fellow humans on this planet. Whilst people in other parts of the world struggle with the consequences of earthquakes, floods, droughts and wars, we can, if we choose to, walk in the countryside and refresh our spirits. In our fast paced, consumerist, technology based society where we are pressured by deadlines and overloaded with information, what is really important can easily be overwhelmed. Spending time looking out of a window at a garden, sitting in a park or really listening to a river or the wind in the trees can give you the mental space and peace of mind that shopping and television never can.

If we make and take the time to appreciate Mother Nature and do what we can to protect our planet and the other creatures that share it, we can help to restore a natural balance. The little things we do, recycling, reducing our waste and our energy consumption, making ethical choices when we spend, are not really big deals for us, but when thousands of people do them together it does change things, politicians, bureaucrats and big companies will listen if enough of us act. We all have a responsibility to hear the message that the changing weather patterns across the World are giving and to ensure that the "powers-that-be" listen to them too. Take the time to enjoy our wonderful environment and do what you can to protect it, remember we do not own the Earth we hold it in trust for future generations.

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

**Frances Ramsden**

