

Issue Number 46 - Autumn 2011

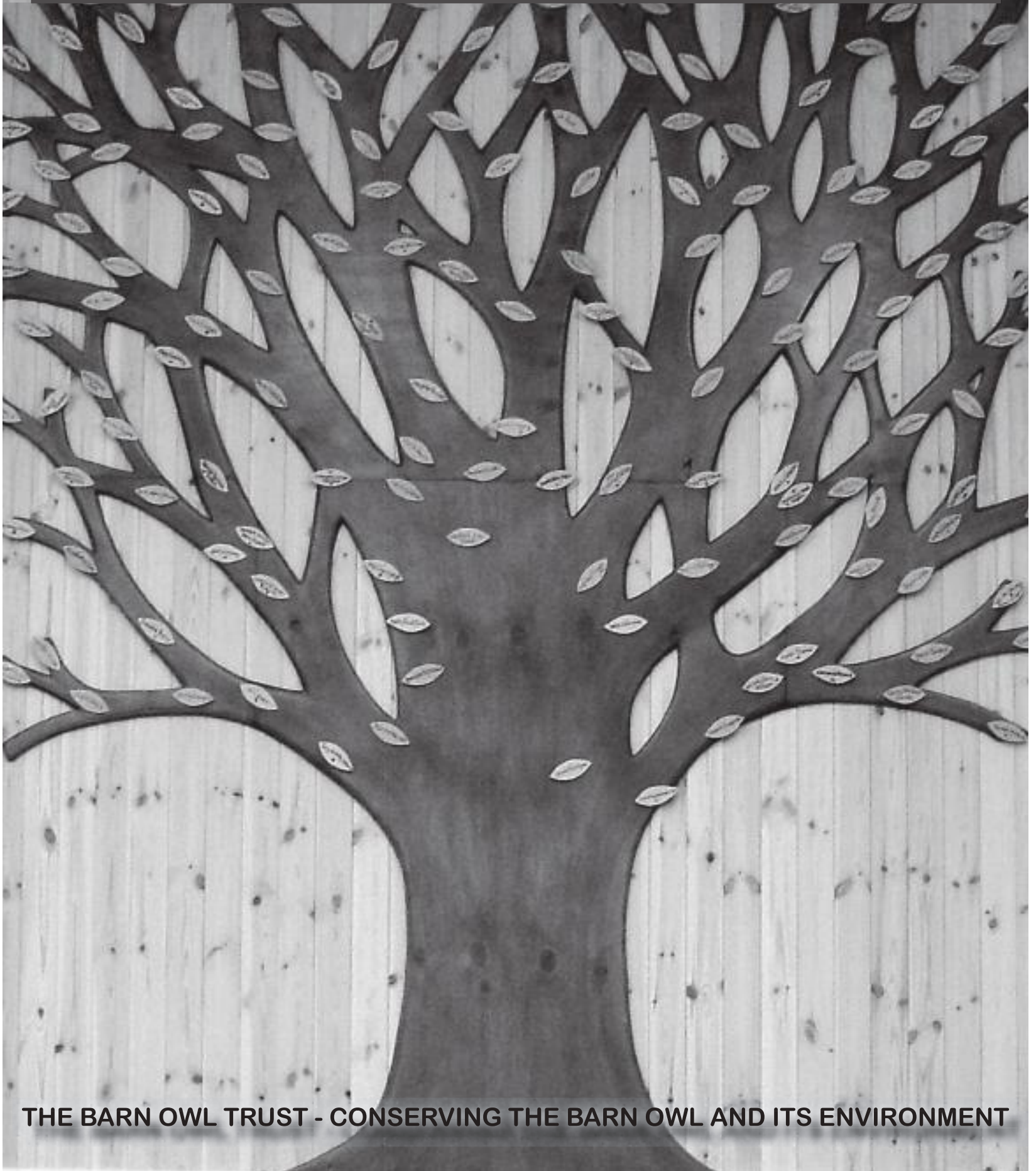


FEEDBACK



WATERLEAT, ASHBURTON, DEVON TQ13 7HU - (01364) 653026 - www.barnowltrust.org.uk

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

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*Cover Photo: Frances Ramsden
The Memory Tree - page 3*

*Feedback is produced for Friends of the Barn Owl Trust
by staff and volunteers.*

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

*Editorial team: Frances Ramsden and Marianne Bryan
Proofing by Sandra Reardon and the BOT team*

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*Send your contributions - news, letters, pictures
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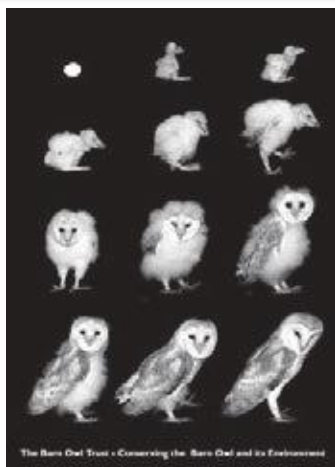
*Feedback, Barn Owl Trust, Waterleat, Ashburton,
Devon TQ13 7HU*

*Email: feedback@barnowltrust.org.uk
Website: www.barnowltrust.org.uk*

Baley the Barn Owl is the star of this new colour A5 card produced by the Trust. From an egg to an adult, the pictures highlight Baley's development. His age at different stages are listed on the back of the card.

The card is blank for your own message and is supplied with a recycled envelope at £1.10 each or four for £4 plus p&p.

*p&p rates are listed on page 15
with our new Christmas cards. **



Welcome to Feedback. It's been another really busy six months here, with all the staff changes - page 5, and the **Book**, pages 8 & 9, we've all been feeling the pressure. However the Barn Owl Conservation Handbook is almost ready to hand over to the publisher and it will make a great Christmas present for anyone that wants really practical advice on Barn Owl conservation. We even have a contingency plan and will send out really nice tokens to people buying it as a gift just in case it isn't back from the printers until next year!

We have lots of exciting news for you from the Lennon Legacy Project, a tour of our new Meeting Room and feedback from our events earlier this year. Thank you to everyone who sponsored Whisky's Walk; he did really well for the Trust.

As you will see from the front cover and page 3 our Memory Tree is now a reality. The idea was originally conceived many years ago as a way of honouring gifts in memoriam and legacies, but until we had the Meeting Room there was nowhere for it to grow. Now with some nurturing from Jasmin it is well rooted and looks perfectly at home. It is a wonderful example of how an idea can become reality.

Those of you who have been supporters of the Trust for several years can probably remember when Baley the Barn Owl was hatched - April 2006. We photographed him every day as he was growing and at long last we have found a way to use some of those pictures. When our new Christmas cards were printed this year we took the opportunity to get a collage of Baley's growth done too - bottom left of page. It's quite amazing seeing all the different stages at one time.

In this issue we have tried to make it practical for everyone and anyone to get directly involved with the Trust wherever they live. We realise that you all have busy lives, lots of interests and are bombarded with information but as a 'grass roots' organisation we want to provide our supporters with opportunities to do more than just read about our work. We have been delighted to meet some of you this year at events and we have included a list of Diary Dates for LLP events on page 6 so that more of you can come and see this wonderful place for yourselves. For those too far away we have a poetry competition and the opportunity to design a slogan for a new T-shirt.

Given the country's economic situation, fund-raising is generally difficult for charities and quite frankly, we've never been that good at it. Low interest rates have meant that both individuals and grant giving charities have less money to distribute to good causes and more demands on their resources. But we have been delighted, and very grateful, for some of the ways our supporters have raised funds, one of the most novel was a raffle at a wedding - thank you Christian & Suzanne, we wish you many happy, healthy years together. Believe it or not there have even been owl cupcakes made and to prove it there is a picture on page 12.

We were disappointed that we didn't have more four-legged walkers during the 'Walk a Woof Week', hopefully there will be more if we do it again in 2012. With so many demands on people's pockets we think that it was the idea of collecting sponsorship for their canine companions that put folk off participating. We are thinking of ways we can get more people and their pets involved next year and would appreciate any ideas.

Thank you for supporting the Trust since our last issue of Feedback. Once again, we hope you enjoy reading our news and that this will inspire you to keep on helping us to *Conserve the Barn Owl and its Environment*, after all we couldn't do it without you. Bless you. *

Frances Ramsden and Marianne Bryan

BOT News



The Memory Tree

Jasmin paints the tree before it goes into the Meeting Room Photo: Marianne Bryan

Featured on the front cover of this issue is our long awaited 'Memory Tree'. The tree is made of 18mm FSC softwood ply and the leaves (100mm x 40mm) are made of 6mm birch ply. It was designed and made here by Jasmin (one of our handy 'men'). Each leaf is unique and carries the name of someone who remembered the Barn Owl Trust in their will, or whose family or friends made a donation in their memory.

When we looked back through our records we were amazed to find that there were almost one hundred and fifty leaves to make. Nearly one hundred people have had donations made for them and forty-six kind folk remembered the Trust in their wills and made legacies.

It is these legacies that have enabled the Trust to grow and to undertake projects like the purchase of the field, the creation of the ponds and now the Meeting Room. Since 2003 they have also made the difference between the Trust ending the year with a positive balance sheet or a deficit. The Memory Tree is our way of remembering these people and saying thank you for their thoughtfulness. It also looks lovely and has been much admired by our visitors. *

News Bites

Solar Activity

The Trust is currently investigating the practicalities of investing in solar panels to generate some of its own electricity. This would enable us to reduce our overheads and generate some income by taking advantage of the current 'feed in' tariffs offered by the government.

Planning Ahead

Planning for the Devon County Survey in 2013 and the Cornwall County Survey in 2014 is underway. If funding allows we would also like to take on a Dorset Barn Owl Survey in 2015.

Dinky Toy Sale

A collection of vintage Dinky toys donated to the Trust by our Friend Rob Hamar goes to auction at Dreweatts in Bristol on 8th November to raise funds. Contact the office if you want to know more.

Grand Draw

This year's Grand Draw will be held in the new Meeting Room on 7th December. There is still time to buy your tickets to support the Trust and have a chance to win one of the wonderful prizes, including a day out with the Conservation Team - see page 10 for news from last year's winner.

Winter Work Party

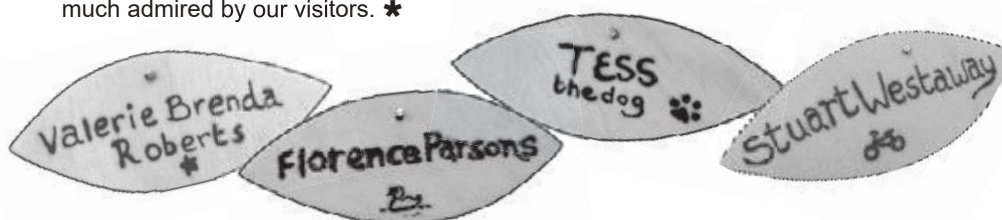
There will be an opportunity to join the Conservation Team on 18th of January 2012 for a day of practical work on the Lennon Legacy Project land. If you are interested in joining us please contact the office.

Overseas Visitors

Following a visit in the spring from Akos Klein, director of the Hungarian Barn Owl Foundation, this autumn we are expecting a group of volunteers selected by the Foundation to visit the Trust as part of an EU funded conservation project. Professor Jim Belthoff and his Raptor Biology graduate student Micah Scholer from Boise State University, Idaho, USA visited us in April. See Jim's article on page 11.

Scarce Bird Sighting

In September, a Wryneck was seen briefly disappearing into cover in Kiln Close. This largely European species is a sparrow-sized member of the Picidae family (Wrynecks and Woodpeckers). They are a regular, albeit fairly scarce autumn migrant, particularly in August and September on the south and east coasts. Estimated UK breeding numbers 0-1 pair. *



Latest from the LLP

The unseasonable weather in the spring started early and by mid-March 2 Small Tortoiseshell, 1 Peacock and 1 Brimstone were on the wing. Before the month's end you might have been forgiven for thinking it was the summer already as 8 Small Tortoiseshell and 2 Peacock were recorded during one of the early UK Butterfly Monitoring Scheme (UKBMS) transects. Later the same day 2 male Orange-tip, 4-5 male Brimstone, 3-4 Small Tortoiseshell and 2-3 Peacock were seen along Pennsland Lane. Other notable butterfly species in the LLP included 2 Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary on the 20th May, followed closely by a Dingy Skipper and the LLP's first ever Green Hairstreak, all on the 24th May. A Small Heath was seen a week later on the 31st as were 2 Wall Brown, with yet another Small Heath on the 6th June. July 4th, Week 14 of the UKBMS, revealed a record-breaking 189 Marbled White, with clouds of them coming up at the surveyor's feet. This smashes the previous record of 95 from 7th July 2010.

The Wildlife Tower continued to provide surprises and excitement in equal measure. A visit in May by Dr. David Fee of Ambios Ecology resulted in an Anabat detector being left for a couple of nights in the hedgerow facing the tower, in an attempt to get a better idea of the different species of bat that were already in the area. Any bats that were flying past calling (echolocating) would be recorded, allowing retrospective analysis on collection of the detector. Knowing what species were around, and therefore which ones were more likely to use the tower, would inform what enhancement measures to take for each of the three different types of bat provision in the tower. Much to our surprise, the list of bats recorded on site in such a brief period included;

- Greater Horseshoe
- Lesser Horseshoe
- Soprano Pipistrelle
- Long-eared
- Common Pipistrelle
- A *Myotis* species
- Noctule

Amazing! Now all we needed was for them to find the tower . . .

. . . In July, Julia Clark, a licensed bat ecologist with Green Ecology was at Waterleat, having volunteered to help with some Barn Owl nest inspections with the Conservation Team. On visiting the tower to give advice on bat provision enhancements she immediately found bat droppings in the central area (ironically not in any of the bat spaces!) and, after showing them to colleagues the next day, suggested that they were most probably from a Lesser Horseshoe, which may have used the space as a feeding perch. Fabulous!!!! On the 5th August, three pieces of Small Tortoiseshell wing were found on the floor of the lower (large) void, again possibly evidence of a feeding bat (although predation by mice or birds has not been entirely ruled out).

Birds recorded in the LLP included a couple of migrant Tree Pipits in the middle of April, most easily identified by their rasping calls as they flushed from ground cover. At about the same time, a pair of Mandarin ducks were in the Ashburn and around the ponds intermittently over a couple of weeks but unfortunately they didn't appear to hang around to breed. The first Cuckoo for many years was seen to fly out of the Holly hedge on the 29th April. Throughout this time a Barn Owl was often heard flying around screeching, leading to the inevitable conclusion that we had only one unpaired resident this year. Alas, this was borne out in June when the breeding site was checked and no nest discovered! A Nightjar was heard churring just outside the LLP for one night only in May. A juvenile Dipper was recorded in the Ashburn in late June, and a presumed-dispersing Kingfisher was seen and heard on and off for a week in mid-July. A juvenile Stonechat was photographed balancing on grass stems, also in July. Some days later, the LLP's first ever Skylark, possibly



Gatekeeper butterfly on Yarrow Photo: David Ramsden
a dispersing juvenile, was flushed from the top field. Kestrels have been seen hunting over the field for the whole summer and are presumably breeding nearby. House Martins, Swallows and Swifts continue to benefit from the rich invertebrate fauna above the grassland. A flock of vocal Ravens overheard on August 3rd heralded the arrival of a juvenile Hobby, which thermalled over the field before moving off south, as a Kestrel looked on from the cut-off telegraph pole.

Visitors have included members of the Mid-Devon Natural History Society, who came for an LLP Walk & Talk in June and those who came for the Midsummer Evening Walk also in June and the Butterfly Walk in August, when good numbers of Gatekeeper, Meadow Brown, Common Blue and Silver-washed Fritillary were seen.

The Conservation Team have typically been busy with management tasks. The usual scrub control involved cutting bramble back and out of various hedgerows. The orchard fruit trees got some TLC in April when their support posts and ties were checked, and bases were re-mulched. Not one tree has been lost despite two incredibly dry springs! The emerging Docks and Creeping Thistle were pulled in May. Two plastic dustbins with mesh lids were filled with water and put in the lower section of the Wildlife Tower in July to increase humidity for bats. A week later, the Bracken in Kiln Close and along the lane hedge was topped mechanically. On August 3rd a work party tackled a couple of Ragwort plants in Kiln Close, some more Bracken and Creeping Thistle. In mid-August the brushcutter was dusted off and put to work on the slope by Corner Wood. The area around the tower is being left to scrub up in order to maximise its attractiveness to bats. Undergrowth close to roosts may be beneficial by providing some cover from potential predators as the bats emerge from roosting. ★

Matthew Twiggs
Conservation Officer



This Wood Mouse was found under one of the sheets of corrugated metal in the LLP Photo: David Ramsden

More BOT News

2011 Breeding Season

After last year's below-average breeding season (see *Feedback* 33, page 3), hopes were high for a better 2011. However, another cold winter and dry spring caused us to speculate on what we would find as we started checking our Annual Monitoring Sites once again. Would the extreme cold and prolonged snow cover in some parts of the Southwest have resulted in increased adult mortality? Would the lack of rainfall impact on grass growth, thereby suppressing Field Vole population increases? Would those that had survived the winter therefore be underweight and would the nesting season be late in consequence?

Most of the eighty or so sites we check annually are in Devon with a handful in east Cornwall and one in Somerset. Visits are conducted with the landowners' permission in June to avoid the most sensitive stage of the breeding cycle. Young birds are ringed at this time if they are between the optimum ages of 3-8 weeks of age. Return visits are arranged if the owlets are too young at the initial visit. In some years this may even necessitate returning in August for later broods.

Of those sites that were checked or from which we received reports, approximately 39% had nesting, with broods varying from 1 to a maximum of 4 owlets, average 2.6. There was regular roosting at 15% of sites and occasional roosting at 3%.

However at 42% of sites Barn Owls were absent. Although First-Egg Laid Date (FED) was not calculated, almost all the broods were ringed in June with a few returns in July but no returns in August, suggesting that FED was near-average this year (around mid-April).

As is evident from the table, regular and occasional roosts were about average but nesting occupancy was well below average. This was mirrored by an increase in sites without Barn Owls. In answer to our initial questions, these site absences may best be explained by increased adult mortality as a result of the extreme winter weather, in combination with a poor breeding season in 2010. On a more positive note, brood size showed an improvement on recent years, but was still below the average.

Year	Nesting (%)	Mean brood	Regular roost (%)	Occasional roost (%)	Absent (%)
Average 1990-2006	51	2.9	16	4	29
2008	52	2.1	19	3	25
2009	53	2.0	16	4	27
2010	50	2.3	15	10	25
2011	39	2.6	15	3	42

Annual Monitoring Site occupancy rates in 2008-2011, compared with the average 1990-2006 (figures have been rounded down and may therefore not total 100%)

Small mammal populations fluctuate cyclically from year to year, with a run of poor years often followed by a peak in small mammal densities. Brood size is largely determined by food availability; a female at a good weight in the late winter period will be in better bodily condition and will consequently lay a larger clutch of eggs, and early nestlings are more likely to survive to fledging. The earlier she lays the first clutch, the greater the chances of double brooding. Small mammal populations peak in the later summer and autumn period, just

as young Barn Owls are dispersing, so in a good small mammal year more juveniles are going to survive.

It's currently thought that a brood size of 3 is required for a population to be self-sustaining and if the trend for sub-3 brood size continues then it's almost inevitable that the population level will decline, particularly if poor breeding seasons are combined with poor winter weather conditions. Barn Owls are not especially good at conserving energy and low temperatures may not only have a detrimental effect on Barn Owl survival, but may also suppress small mammal activity. Prolonged low temperatures, especially when associated with standing snow cover, can have a catastrophic effect on local Barn Owl populations, as has been shown over the last couple of winters.

In the grand scheme of things, annual fluctuations in Barn Owl productivity associated with environmental factors such as weather conditions and small mammal availability are quite natural and have been occurring for millennia. However, what is uncertain is how climate change will affect the species in the future, particularly in terms of extreme weather events, and this is something which our annual monitoring work may help us to better understand. ★

Changing Faces

Staff changes are always significant for a small organisation and we have had quite a few since the spring. Our core team is now eleven: six full-time and five part-time. This time last year it was thirteen but funding concerns have forced us to shrink.

Admin Assistant Teresa Patmore left us in June shortly after our Easter Eggstravaganza which she organised for the Trust. Lack of funding meant that Assistant Conservation Officer (ACO) Stuart Baker's contract ended in May after two and a quarter years here; this significantly reduced the size of the Conservation Team. In August Sarah Nelms P.A. to the Head of Conservation, left to go travelling; she writes about her plans on Page 11. Finally, ACO Maxine Chavner left in September after almost three years at the Trust, she is going back to university to undertake a Masters degree in Applied Marine Science.

On a more positive note, in September Stuart stepped into the breach when he returned for another three month contract and we have been joined by Louise Alexander who takes on the P.A. role and the educational visits. Louise lived in France for 10 years where she ran her own business. On returning to England in 2003, she completed a degree in Wildlife Conservation at Plymouth University and then did a PGCE in Secondary Geography.

Louise was born and grew up in the Tamar Valley in Cornwall. Her hobbies include sea kayaking, gardening, cooking and walking. She lives with her partner and two children in a small village on the edge of Bodmin moor.



Louise - new P.A. Photo: Pete Webb

We are currently advertising for someone to take on Maxine's ACO role which includes responsibility for resident birds and Health & Safety. Interviews are planned for November. ★

Visit our Meeting Room

In the last issue of Feedback we told you that the building of the new office extension - a meeting room - was underway. Well, we are delighted to tell you that it was finished just in time for our Midsummer Evening Walk. In fact we used it before it was completely finished when we had our American visitors and needed somewhere for presentations and for our monthly staff meetings.

By June we had the flooring down and were able to provide somewhere comfortable for our visitors to sit and have a cup of tea after a very pleasant tour of the LLP. So far it's been used for meetings, interviews, training, presentations and events and this year we plan to hold our Annual General Celebration here to share the space with Friends who attend.



Photos: Frances Ramsden

The internal walls are clad in pine panelling giving the room a warm and rustic feel. One wall provides a home for our 'Memory Tree'. The balcony gives us a sheltered outdoor space to chat or have lunch and also adds character to the building.

Our first Advanced Barn Owl Surveys and Mitigation (ABOSM) course was held here in July giving easy access to the LLP and ideal Barn Owl habitat; the next course is planned for November. Those of you who attend LLP events will be able to see the Meeting Room, but for those of you who can't, we'd like to show you around.

The official name of the building is the Norman Alderson Meeting Room after the gentleman whose legacy to the Trust made the project possible. The main access to the building is up two steps to the door on the right. This takes you into the lobby.



Here there is space for hanging coats and leaving muddy footwear. A staircase (out of sight) on the right connects to the office allowing easy access for staff and volunteers.



In the far corner of the room is the door to the lobby, the glass door on the right goes out onto the balcony. The sideboard provides some storage space and we have a built-in cupboard for folding tables and stacking chairs to make the space as versatile as possible. The vinyl flooring looks like wood and most people think it is, but we chose vinyl as it is easier to clean.



Photo: David Ramsden

Above, Matthew is talking to the attendees of our ABOSM course. They are facing the rear wall of the building and on the right you can see the Memory Tree (before all of the leaves were attached). As you can see the Meeting Room is a wonderful resource for the Trust. We hope you enjoyed your tour. ★

LLP Diary Dates 2012

18th January Wednesday - Practical work day

18th April Wednesday - Dawn Chorus Walk and Breakfast - *very early start*

9th May Wednesday - Spring Flowers in the LLP fields and woodland

20th June Wednesday - Midsummer Evening Walk

11th July Wednesday - Butterfly Walk 2pm

15th August Wednesday - See the LLP at dusk

Please contact the office for more details or to book a place at any event. Booking is essential as places are strictly limited. Check out Forthcoming Events on our website for dates of other LLP events: www.barnowltrust.org.uk

Bird News



Dusty Photo: Melanie Lindenthall

Let's start where we left off in Issue 45 – we had just received our first casualty of 2011 and it was “*yet another Tawny Owl that had become tangled in pond netting*”. Luckily he hadn't sustained any injuries and just needed a few days to recover from his ordeal. A week after he arrived, we took him back to where he was found and the site owners released him that evening and it all went well.

In mid-May we received our next Tawny Owl, this time the result of being hit by a car on the A38. He was taken to the vets, where they checked him over and x-rayed him. Although there were no obvious injuries, his symptoms pointed towards brain damage. We kept him in our Owl Hospital for a week, hand feeding him daily, as he was not able to feed himself or even stand up. After this long with no improvement, the decision was made to euthanase. Exactly a month later, a juvenile Tawny was brought to us that had also been hit by a car and unfortunately the outcome was the same; his injuries were so severe that we were advised by the vet to have him put to sleep.

The next two Tawnies had happier outcomes. The first was a young Tawny Owlet about five weeks old and had been found on the ground in woodland. As it is quite usual to find young Tawnies on the floor at this age, we checked him over, gave him some food and then advised the finder to return him to exactly where they found him. We recommended rigging up a basket part way up the tree where they found him and placing him in it. The finder contacted us the next day and sent photos showing the young Tawny back with his family. The most recent Tawny we've had in is a young male with a disarticulated ulna, which the vets at Estover surgically replaced, strapped up and sent on to us for rehabilitation. He has made a quick recovery, and is currently in one of our mobile aviaries, close to where he was found, awaiting release.

As we are the *Barn Owl* Trust, we do occasionally get the odd one of those too! Between late June and mid-August we had five Barn Owls brought in – one adult and four owlets. The first two owlets to arrive were from the same nest and were five and six weeks old. Unfortunately the older of the two was very underweight and although we managed to feed it, it died the following day. Its younger sibling responded very well though and is now awaiting release, along with two other Barn Owls

that came in as owlets. These two came to the Trust within three days of each other – one fell out of a nest and could not be replaced, the other was brought into the finder's house by their dog!

The adult Barn Owl arrived here in mid-July, it was a severely emaciated female and died within 15 minutes of arriving here, despite efforts to give her fluid and food. Her breastbone was very pronounced and her stomach completely empty. It was likely she hadn't eaten for several days and so would have already been in organ failure resulting from dehydration.

A number of our owls here at the sanctuary have passed away since the last issue of Feedback. First was Buffy the Barn Owl, who was a captive-bred owl hatched in 1997 and came to the Trust in 2000 from Bournemouth RSPCA. They had rescued her after feeling that her owner was looking after her inappropriately. In March, we noticed she had developed an unusual abscess inside her beak which had been making eating difficult and probably quite painful. If we had the abscess removed she would have lost most of one side of her face and so the decision was made to put her to sleep rather than put her through a stressful operation, which given her age, she may not have survived anyway.

Last year a juvenile Tawny Owl arrived at the Trust with a broken right humerus which had been pinned by the vets at Estover. After several months in Rehab it was clear he was never going to be able to be released back into the wild, so he was placed in our aviary for less-able birds. In April we noticed his right wing looked unusual. On inspection we found that his humerus had broken again just above where it had previously been pinned. It may have been that he had a genetic quirk that meant his bones were very susceptible to fracturing. The kindest option was to put him to sleep.

Since their arrival in October 2010 four of the forty-three Tawny Owls from the closing Three Owls Sanctuary have died of old age. The owls were all thought to be between nineteen and thirty-five years old when they arrived here. The remaining 39 Tawnies and two Barn Owls are all quite elderly but doing well.

Paula, one of our long-term resident Barn Owls had to be put to sleep after spending several weeks in our Owl Hospital. Her health had been deteriorating and she didn't respond very well to treatment. She was an old girl, having come to the Trust as an adult bird from West Hatch RSPCA in 1996.

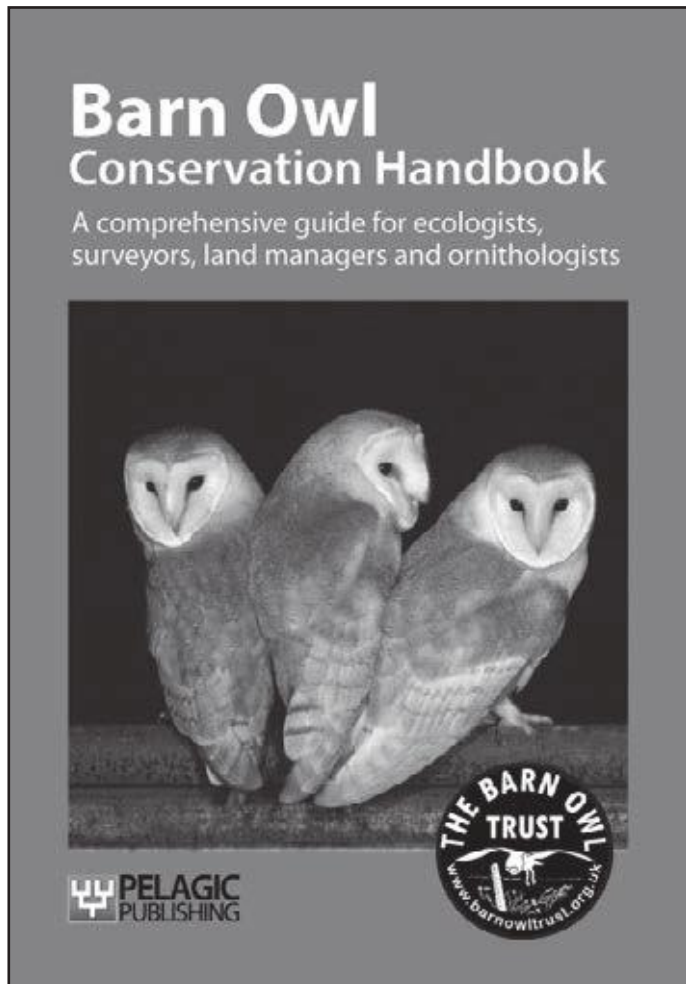
Although both Buffy and Paula were of a good age, neither of them made it to the grand old age that Dusty did. Dusty was our Owl Education Assistant from 1999 until she was retired in 2006, when Baley took over the job. Dusty arrived at the Trust in 1999 as a seven-year old bird, from a gentleman called Stephen Pope, whose wife Heather, used to take Dusty into schools to tell children about Barn Owls. When Heather passed away in 1999, Stephen contacted the Trust to ask if we could take Dusty. As she was already used to going out and about and into schools, it made sense to use her for our educational work. Dusty was a lovely owl and although she could be grumpy at times (as can we all!), she always enjoyed a good scratch around her facial disk when I went in to feed her in the afternoon. She died in her aviary just a few months short of her 20th birthday.

All the sanctuary owls are due to have their annual health check next month so you'll be able to read about how they all are in the next issue. *

Maxine Chavner
Assistant Conservation Officer

We'd like to take this opportunity to say a big **Thank you** to The Veterinary Hospital Group at Estover, Plymouth who treat all our casualty owls that need to see a vet.

The Barn Owl



In late October of 2009, completely out of the blue, Dr Nigel Massen Director of Pelagic Publishing and MD of the Natural History Book Service asked if we'd be interested in writing a *Barn Owl Conservation Handbook*. We were of course extremely interested (!), but first we had to make sure that our idea of what the book would be matched Pelagic Publishing's vision. A period of meetings and discussions followed, and by the beginning of December, an agreement was reached: Pelagic Publishing would publish and the Barn Owl Trust would write the first-ever ***Barn Owl Conservation Handbook!***

The book was to be written as a joint effort by five members of the Conservation Team, with individuals taking responsibility for writing the first drafts of different chapters. We planned to finish all of the first drafts by the end of May 2010. As it turned out we were being far too optimistic. All of our day-to-day work still needed doing. Nestboxes still needed to be erected, owls still needed to be rehabilitated and enquiries still needed to be answered. On top of all that the Westmoor Barn Owl Scheme was still in full swing. Things didn't stop just because we had a book to write. Nobody managed to get their chapters finished by the May deadline and we started to realise the enormity of the undertaking. Fortunately Nigel at Pelagic Publishing was very supportive. Everyone agreed that it was far better that the book be given the time it needed to be as good as it could be; a rushed, sub-standard publication would benefit no one, least of all the Barn Owls.

Slowly but surely things started to come together. After many hours of research and discussion, sentence by sentence, chapter by chapter, the book started to take shape. As each draft was finished, a second member of the Conservation Team read through the chapter and made comments, David Ramsden,

our Head of Conservation and principal author worked through them and Frances Ramsden provided further amendments. In this way a consistent tone and style was maintained and we were able to draw on 27 years of knowledge and first-hand experience.

Finally, after 18 months the last chapter was ready! However, this was far from the end. All of the chapters were then sent to two of our long-standing supporters, Professor Graham and Marie-Anne Martin. Graham, who is the editor of *Bird Study*, the scientific journal of the British Trust for Ornithology, and Marie-Anne who is a professional copy editor kindly agreed to lend us their expertise. At the time of writing, final copy editing is well underway but we still have all the diagrams to produce, the photographs to finalise and picture captions to write.

The Handbook aims to be as user-friendly as possible. Each chapter starts with a 'quick guide': a bullet-list of the main topics, and ends with a 'European perspective' section highlighting the extent to which the book can be used abroad. Subjects covered include all the practical stuff you'd expect from a grass-roots organisation plus plenty of information on safer rodent control and reducing road mortality. The book confronts these issues head-on presenting solutions that range from practical conservation work and sympathetic land management through to fundamental policy changes and environmental campaigning.

Chapter 1: Introduction

This introduces the reader to the British owl species and enables accurate identification. Barn Owl population decline, the history and evidence for this, as well as current distribution and conservation work are covered.

Chapter 2: Ecological issues

Gives an in-depth insight into all aspects of the Barn Owl's life including adaptations, diet, range, annual lifecycle and population dynamics. The ecology of the main prey species and how to encourage them is included.

Chapter 3: Legal considerations

This sets out the acts of parliament that affect Barn Owls and Barn Owl conservation, as well as dealing with the issues surrounding licensing, disturbance, photography, and the legal duties of planning authorities.

Chapter 4: Surveys

Deals with all aspects of Barn Owl surveying. It explains which methods work and which don't, as well as teaching the reader



The difference between nesting fluff and fluffy feathers from adults is illustrated for the benefit of survey workers

Photo: Kevin Keatley

Conservation Handbook



Topping alternate strips is described in Chapter 5 - Foraging habitat – creation and management Photo: David Ramsden

how to interpret the field signs they encounter. It also outlines how best to record and report the data obtained and stresses the importance of including recommendations in site-survey reports.

Chapter 5: Foraging habitat – creation and management

This chapter explains the habitat requirements of the Barn Owl. It also covers the importance and practicalities of creating and managing suitable foraging habitat, and the benefits to other species. How the various agri-environment grant schemes can be used to benefit Barn Owls is also addressed.



Chapter 6 features the work carried out by organisations like the Shropshire Barn Owl Group Photo: David Ramsden

Chapter 6: Nestboxes and other ways of accommodating Barn Owls

Introduces the reader to the various types of Barn Owl accommodation as well as explaining how to build the most appropriate kind. Advice includes where and when to erect nestboxes to maximise the chances of them being used. Most importantly, safe nestbox design and the problems associated with poor designs are highlighted.

Chapter 7: Mortality and the scope for its reduction

This examines the variety of ways in which wild Barn Owls die, both naturally and unnaturally. The relative importance of each is addressed, along with practical advice on what can be done to minimise mortality. In particular, the 'roles' played by both the rodenticide industry and the Highways Agency are assessed.

Chapter 8: Planning issues, mitigation and enhancement

As well as identifying the pitfalls associated with poor planning decisions, practical advice is provided to ensure that Barn Owls

are protected during developments. Relevant planning policies and legal duties are explained, as well as the importance of adequate protection, mitigation and enhancement at Barn Owl sites.

Chapter 9: Casualty assessment, short-term care and the principles of rehabilitation

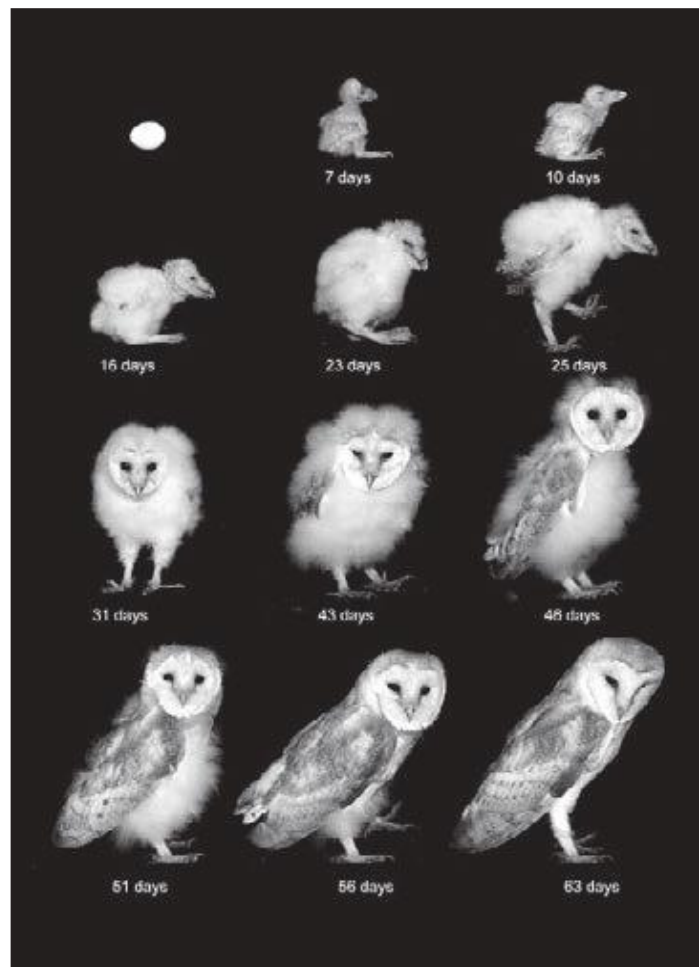
The final chapter deals with aspects of the care and rehabilitation of injured wild Barn Owls, including assessment, treatment and release. This includes practical guides, legal information and suggestions of organisations that may be able to help.

The Barn Owl Conservation Handbook will be lavishly illustrated with over 300 photographs, many of which have been taken by Trustee Kevin Keatley (of Wildlife Watching Supplies), another long-standing supporter of the Trust who kindly agreed to provide his skills and experience.

The book is available for pre-order now at £39.99. The first 100 copies bought via the Barn Owl Trust will be signed by as many of the team as we can muster, bearing in mind that some of them have moved on now - see page 5, so pre-order your copy now!

There is a small chance that it will be available by Christmas so we'd better stop writing this and get on with it! *

Stuart Baker & David Ramsden



Barn Owl ecology is covered in detail in Chapter 2 including the development of nestlings

This image is available as an A5 colour card (with envelope). See page 2 or our website for more details

People News

Winning Ticket

Last year's Grand Draw prize winner collected his prize this summer. Mike North explains what a 'Day out with the Conservation Team' meant for him. Eds.

This spring Margaret and I received a letter informing us that the winners of the BOT Grand Draw could not travel to Devon to claim their prize of a day out with the Conservation Team and we were the first reserves. When we started to make the arrangements for the visit to Waterleat Margaret realised she could not manage to walk on the uneven ground at the sites we would be visiting and a friend who was going to accompany me in her place was taken ill just before the visit so I went on my own. The chosen day was the 6th July.



Mike meets an owlet

Photo: David Ramsden

It was a dry morning with a little sun and rain forecast for later. I arrived at the arranged time and met David, the Head of Conservation and the conservation and office teams.

David and I set off on a long drive to the first site at a barn in the yard of a working farm where we met the farmer Francis who is very keen on wildlife conservation. The nest box was accessed by ladder from the first floor of the barn. Francis brought four owlets down for David to ring, weigh and measure.

With the second owlet David let me hold it whilst he put the ring on its leg, I felt very privileged to hold the owlet. When they had been returned to the nest box we headed off to the next site; at this barn there were also four owlets. I helped by recording the data in David's note book and also collecting owl pellets which are sent out to schools for science lessons.

By now it was lunch time so off to the pub for a bite to eat before heading off to the third barn.

This time there were only two owlets in the nest box. The last visit of the day was to a barn out in the fields which had been out of use for a long time. The timbers on the first floor had collapsed except where David needed to place the ladder to reach the nest box. Unfortunately this box was empty but there were lots of pellets including some fresh ones around so we knew an owl was roosting in the barn, it had probably lost its partner in the winter.

By this time the rain had arrived so on our return to Waterleat we cancelled our planned walk around the Lennon Legacy Project. All in all it was a grand day out, thank you. Buy lots of draw tickets this year and you may also be able to enjoy an excellent first prize. *

Mike North
2010 Prize Draw winner



A Fond Farewell

Joyce Blake had been a supporter of the Trust since 1990 when she and her husband Harry began holding an annual Coffee Morning in Galmpton to raise funds. Over the years they also organised talks and other events in the Village Hall with their team of helpers and raised over two thousand pounds for the Barn Owl Trust.

Harry died in 1998 but Joyce continued with her fundraising Coffee Mornings until 2003. She passed away in April 2011. Her final fundraising act was to arrange for money to be collected for the Trust at her funeral. Both Joyce and Harry are remembered fondly by the longer-standing members of the Barn Owl Trust team. *

Working the Dream



During her week's Work Experience with the Trust this summer Poppy accompanied staff on visits to annual monitoring sites where she met young owlets. Photo: Frances Ramsden

Working in conservation or something to do with wildlife is a dream for me. So, experiencing what it is like to work with owls and how a conservation organisation functions really helped me towards my goal. The staff welcomed me straight away and made me feel right at home. Everyone

helped me when it came to learning and the owls never stopped impressing me.

In my week with the Trust I spent time with most of the people who work here, which gave me a real understanding of the need to work as a team. I experienced bird ringing, I helped make owl nestboxes, helped with the day-to-day needs of the owls in their care and much more. Working with the Trust has really opened my eyes to the world of conservation and has encouraged me to fulfil my dreams even more. *

Poppy Collins
Work Experience Student

From Over the Ocean



Professor Jim Belthoff (left) David Ramsden & Micah Scholer
Photo: BOT

In April we were visited by folk from the USA who were in the UK to find out more about Barn Owl road deaths. Having read our 'Barn Owls and Major Roads Report' they had arranged to spend some time with us. They spent four days here in the week before Easter and then after a quick trip to Wales returned to help at our Easter Eggstravaganza. Eds.

Roadway mortality of Barn Owls is not isolated to the United Kingdom! In fact, we at Boise State University, located in Idaho in the northwestern United States, are documenting some of the world's highest rates of Barn Owl roadway mortality.

Seeking solutions to this problem led me, Boise State University Professor Jim Belthoff and my Raptor Biology graduate student Micah Scholer to the Barn Owl Trust in April 2011. This was as part of a sabbatical leave for me and with a US National Science Foundation grant to provide an international owl research and teaching experience for Micah. We had the opportunity to learn first-hand from the BOT Conservation Team about Barn Owl biology and conservation in the UK and to work with the BOT Conservation Team in the field.

There were seminars on Barn Owls and other owls presented by Belthoff, Scholer, and BOT Head of Conservation David Ramsden in the soon-to-be-completed Meeting Room, roundtable discussions about owl biology, habitat, prey, and conservation, and owl education activities. Micah, who was being supported by a US National Science Foundation teaching fellowship, offered lessons on owl biology to local children that focused on interesting owl adaptations and conservation.

We were even treated to a bird's eye view of owl habitat, barns



Micah with Matthew (BOT) on a field trip
Photo: Jim Belthoff

with nesting owls, and local roadways where Barn Owls are known to be killed, while flying in a microlight aircraft piloted by David Ramsden. Micah and I were impressed by the breadth of activities of the BOT and the reach it has in Barn Owl conservation throughout the UK.

We express sincere gratitude to the Barn Owl Trust for facilitating our visit and are applying the knowledge we gained toward reducing Barn Owl roadway mortality in the United States. Both of us will cherish the friendships that we made during our visit and look forward to continuing collaborations with the BOT. ★

Professor Jim Belthoff
Boise State University

Heading Abroad

After nearly two years at the Trust, I have decided to leave in pursuit of my dream to visit Central America. I have always loved travelling and a university fieldtrip to southern Mexico sparked my interest in the collection of small countries wedged between the Pacific and Atlantic oceans. Countries such as Belize and Costa Rica have long held a reputation for being a nature lover's paradise and the promise of parrots, butterflies and turtles has finally got the better of me. ➔



Photo: Maz

The first month of my trip will be spent volunteering for Belize Bird Rescue who conserve and rehabilitate native birds including endangered Yellow-Headed Amazon parrots, Araçaris, Toucans and.....BARN OWLS! Belizean Barn Owls are bigger and darker than our subspecies but I'm looking forward to sharing and comparing my experiences of British owls with those in Belize. I'm also expecting to learn a lot, not just in terms of rehabilitation techniques, but about the differences in local attitudes too. Interestingly, the Mayan god of the dead was often depicted with a Barn Owl so many Central American cultures view them as a symbol of death and destruction – a stark contrast to the modern British attitude towards Barn Owls!

Aside from this, Belize has a big problem with people taking parrots from the wild and keeping them as pets, often in tiny cages. Belize Bird Rescue aim to rehabilitate and release as many of these previously free-living birds as possible. They also work with schools and local community groups to teach people about looking after their native fauna. I'm hoping that the experience I've gained through my educational role at the Trust will help spread the word and conserve Barn Owls (and other wildlife) of the Belizean kind. After a month in Belize, a friend is joining me and we will be travelling south through Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua, ending up in Costa Rica.

Of course, I'm sad to leave the Trust as I've had so many fantastic experiences since I started in 2009. I will miss the team and the owls, especially my friend Baley, who has accompanied me on all my school talks.

So it just remains for me to say.....Adios - ¡Viva América Central! ★

Sarah Nelms

Conservation Assistant and PA to Head of Conservation

In Memoriam

The Trust has received a legacy from the estate of the late Peggy May Fullman and donations in memory of Joyce Blake William Alfred Huzzey Dorrie Shaw Christopher Pringle Jean Pretious Karen Maria Davis and Steve Wheeler



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

They all now have a leaf on our Memory Tree

You Can Join In

Hopefully along with our LLP Diary Dates (page 6) offering practical work and walks for those of you living in or visiting Devon, this page will give all of you the opportunity to participate in a Barn Owl Trust event wherever you live.

From the comfort of your armchair you can write a poem or design a slogan for our latest T-shirt. Maybe you could join in our Walk a Woof for Wildlife Week next year, hold a coffee morning or bake some cupcakes? There should be something for everyone here. You can help to raise awareness of the Barn Owl and support the Trust whilst having fun. **Enjoy! ***

Poetry Competition

You are cordially invited to enter our first ever **Open Poetry Competition** and to write a poem on "Wildlife/Conservation", the brainchild of ex-trustee Heather Buswell. All profits from the competition will provide care for casualty birds and we hope for enough entries to produce a Barn Owl Trust Anthology in 2012.

There will be first, second and third prizes and six runners-up will receive a certificate of commendation. Poets Rebecca Gethin and Miranda Egan have kindly agreed to be judges. The closing date is 16th January 2012.

- * The competition is open to all writers and there is no entry form required or limit to the number of entries. The topic is Wildlife/Conservation.
- * Forty lines maximum, any style - it must not exceed 40 lines.
- * Each entry to be accompanied by £2.50 (a minimum) entrance fee. Writers can submit more than one poem each.
- * Poems must be the writer's original work, previously unpublished and not currently entered for any other competition.
- * Entries should be in English, typed or neatly hand written on one side only of A4 or emailed in the body of an email rather than as an attachment.
- * Entrants should include their name and address on a separate sheet with the title of their poem if posted, there should not be any identifying marks on the poem. If emailed the name and address should be included in the body of the email to allow it to be separated from the poem(s).
- * BOT cannot make corrections or alterations once typescript is submitted.
- * Cheques should be made payable to Barn Owl Trust or pay on-line (see instructions below).
- * The closing date is Monday 16th January and the judges' decision is final. Winners will be announced in the Spring 2012 issue of Feedback where the winning poems will be printed.
- * Send entries to "Poetry Competition" Barn Owl Trust, Waterleat, Ashburton, Devon TQ13 7HU and enclose an SAE if you wish to receive a printed copy of the results.
- * Poems can be submitted by email to info@barnowltrust.org.uk with the entry fee of £2.50 per poem being made on our 'Giving a donation' page at www.barnowltrust.org.uk stating "Poem" as reason for donation. Don't forget to include your name and contact details - Good luck. *

Good Enough to Eat



Hello Barn Owl Trust folks!

Today I baked some cupcakes (picture attached) to raise money for the Barn Owl Trust. My husband has taken them into work and his workmates have kindly been giving a donation in exchange for a cupcake.

Some of the cakes are decorated with sugar owls which I made myself, and the others are decorated with green frosting and green glitter, to represent the precious environment that Barn Owls need to survive. I printed out a load of information from your website and gave my 'welcome pack' to my husband to take in to show everyone.

I hope that you like the cupcakes and hope that the money we have raised will help the Barn Owls in your care. With very best wishes.

Michelle Poynter
Norfolk

*Thank you Michelle, they look wonderful. We really appreciate the money you raised and that you are spreading awareness of Barn Owls - what a great way to raise funds. Eds. **

Write a Slogan

Following on from the success of our 'Rough Grassland' T-shirts and hoodies, Office Manager Jackie has come up with the idea of a new children's T-shirt design for 2012.



We are inviting you to create a slogan, a maximum of eight words, suitable for the younger generation, to accompany our friendly Owlet.

The closing date for the competition is Friday 6th January 2012 and the winner will receive a printed T-shirt. For the rest of us, the T-shirts will be available to order next year. *

Owl Movers and Cleaners Please

We are looking for volunteers to move casualty owls. If you live in Devon, Cornwall, West Somerset or West Dorset, have a car and are happy to be asked occasionally to drive an injured bird either to the Trust or to the Veterinary Hospital in Plymouth please let us know.

We never know when or where casualties will turn up and it may never happen in your area, but if it does your help could really make a difference to the individual bird.

We are also looking for volunteer aviary cleaners here at the Trust. If you live within easy travelling distance, are physically fit, have a few hours to spare on a regular basis - between Monday and Friday 9am - 5pm and would like to do something really practical to help our resident birds, do get in touch. Training and regular cups of tea will be provided.

If you are interested in helping with either task please call 01364- 653026 to talk to someone in the Conservation Team. *

Whisky's Walk for Owls



This year Whisky the Westie walked to raise funds for the Trust. Thanks to your generous sponsorship he raised an amazing £1,380 to support the Trust. Well done Whisky. His owner has written to tell you about his walk. Photo: Sarah Dimmock

On an unusually sunny Spring Bank Holiday this year, Whisky the Westie, his humans and two friends did a sponsored walk in West Devon in aid of the Trust. It's one of Whisky's favourite walks, as we usually end up with lunch at the Plume of Feathers pub in Princetown, whose owners have Westies themselves and love to make a fuss of him. The other great attraction for Whisky is that they sell small bowls of doggy sausages and cold cuts!

However, this time we decided to do the walk in reverse, from Princetown back to our home in Dousland. We set off after lunch in the direction of South Hessary Tor, southwards on the path from behind the pub. This is typical open moorland, with the granite outcrops - tors, for which Dartmoor is famous. Soon we caught up with a group of Army recruits, all practising their orienteering skills. They stopped to check where they were, ↗

The only other dog to participate in our Walk a Woof Week was Jess. Hopefully next year more dogs will talk their owners into participating!



We walked about 5 miles on the Heritage Trail circular walk from Stover Country Park which includes a very small section

of the Templar Way, taking in the Sand Martin colony on the Teign. I walked alone with Jess, as is my custom, and it was a warm, dry day - perfect walking weather for a very old dog - she is about 14 or 15!

I think the Trust does a really marvellous job and I have been a supporter for many years taking part in many sponsored walks with my favourite venue being down at Flete.

I am an enthusiastic birder and in addition to supporting the Barn Owl Trust I take part in surveys for the BTO and also volunteer for the RSPB locally. ★

Linda Chorlton
Devon

Thank you Jess & Linda for taking part.

(we could have told them that!) and we overtook them. As we passed South Hessary, they yomped past us and headed off onto the open moor. Further on, we turned right to follow the path west towards Leather Tor. Whisky and the two men took a detour off to see Crazy Well Pool. The area contains a lot of tin workings and everywhere there are remains of settlements, hut circles, cairns and cists from prehistoric times. Ponies, cows and sheep roam freely on Dartmoor, many under ancient grazing rights on the moor.

Leaving the open moor, we continued west on a shady lane through plantations of trees and over Leather Tor Bridge. This takes the path over the River Meavy, which in turn flows down through our neighbouring village of Meavy, which has Whisky's other favourite pub, the Royal Oak Inn. The wild flowers in the hedgerows were still in abundance. The harsher winters we have had for the last two years have really increased the number of spring flowers, especially the bluebells, red campion and foxgloves.

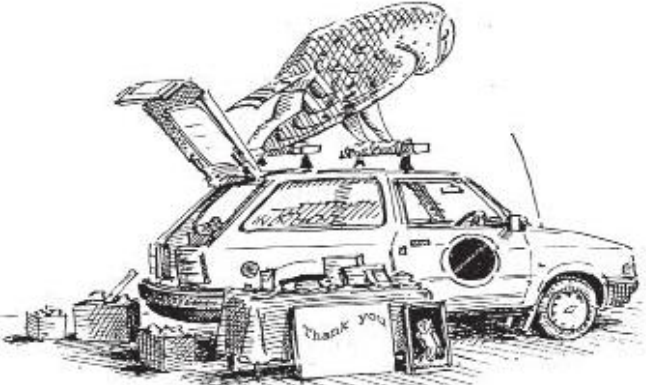
Below Leather Tor itself, for several hundred yards we followed the course of Devonport Leat, which brings water from Dartmoor down to Burrator Reservoir, providing water for the city of Plymouth. Whisky loves to cool off by jumping into the leat for a swim. Before entering the reservoir, some of the water is channelled off to provide our water in Dousland, via a small treatment works in our village.

After a short uphill walk on the lane, we came out onto Yennadon Down, where Whisky has his daily walk. We passed Lowery Cross and headed downhill towards home. Altogether, the walk is about 8 miles and has taken us about 2 and ¾ hours, with lots of stops to admire the views! Whisky has probably done about twice that distance, as he runs ahead of us and back, and rounds us all up, to keep his pack together!

Thank you to everyone who sponsored Whisky, he had a lovely time and is really pleased with the amount raised to help the work of the Trust. ★

Sarah Dimmock

Giveacar



Since registering the Trust with Giveacar earlier this year the Trust has received two donations from kind folk who chose us to benefit from their old bangers.

If you have an old car fit for the scrap-yard Giveacar will arrange its collection and donate the proceeds to the charity you nominate.

Visit the News page on our website for a link or call the office for details. We've created this special card to say thank you to those who choose the Barn Owl Trust. ★

Our Easter Eggstravaganza

Luckily for us this year Easter Sunday was a wonderful sunny day. Our amazing Easter Eggstravaganza was organised by our then admin assistant Teresa Patmore who galvanised a huge number of people into giving up their time or make donations to support the Trust.



The Edgemoor Hotel from the garden

Photos: Jim Belthoff

The event took place at the Edgemoor Hotel at Bovey Tracey, a stunning venue. We took over their gardens for the afternoon with a non-stop programme of events. As well as an Easter owl hunt, egg painting and mask making, magician Simon Croft from Sicro Magic, storyteller Clive Pig and wandering poet Jackie Juno joined us for the day to provide entertainment for the steady stream of families that came along.



Above: Magician Simon Croft enthralls the audience with his tricks
Below: Micah from the USA helps with mask making



Children modelling their Easter masks

Lots of volunteers, including our new friends from the USA, see page 11, provided support with events, car parking and manning the Barn Owl Trust stalls, including one for donated bric-a-brac.

With a quick break to clear up the garden the eggstravaganza moved to an indoor function room for the evening. There was music from the legendary Noel Harrison (of 'Windmills of your mind' fame) supported by Old Noley's Owl Stars and local bands Broken Biscuit and Owl House.

It was a great day thanks to Teresa, her right hand man (and partner) Simon King and everyone else who participated. Well done all of you. *



Noel Harrison and Old Noley's Owl Stars - Teresa far right

Photo: David Ramsden

Secret Auction

Artist Linda Wilkes, who provided the Christmas card image Winter Whispers, see opposite, has donated this framed print called Moonrise to raise funds for the Trust.

The picture 470mm x 575mm can be seen in full colour on the News Page of our website. We would be delighted to receive bids in excess of £65 up to 7th December. Please contact the office by phone, post or email to make your bid. Thank you. *



Other Bits of News

Recycling Update

Thank you to all our supporters who have provided items for recycling. We have received all kinds of 'Goodies' including a collection of Dinky Toys which are going to be auctioned in November.

Over the years we have received several collections of 'Owl Memorabilia', ornaments, pictures etc. We sold some of these at our Easter Eggstravaganza, some of the smaller items make great Lucky Dip prizes and we are also putting donated items up for auction on Ebay on a regular basis - put "Barn Owl Trust" in Ebay search to see the items for sale.

Whenever possible we use recycled packaging for posting out our sales items and we continue to use recycled envelopes for much of our general mailing. We have just had more re-use labels printed for envelopes; we use these ourselves and they are very popular with our supporters (and reasonably priced).

We can use or raise funds from all kinds of things including old cars, so please look through our Wants List before you consign things to landfill and keep sending us your used stamps, mobile phones, padded envelopes, bubble wrap, jewellery & watches, old or foreign coins & notes, medals, old postcards, empty ink cartridges, etc. Our website has Links to several organisations including Giveacar Ltd. who make a donation for your unwanted items, please mention the Barn Owl Trust to ensure we benefit. *

Pete Webb
Recycling/Admin

Send Some Cards



Barn Owl in Snow

With the festive season looming the Trust has printed four new A6 card designs. Each has the message 'With best wishes for Christmas and the New Year'.

The cards are available with envelopes, singly at 60p each or in mixed packs of twelve - £4.90 or twenty four- £8.40 plus p&p.



Snow Flight

UK postage & packing is £2 per order up to £10 and £3.50 per order up to £25. Check out our website for overseas p&p, colour images and more buying options.

The images for these cards were all supplied free by the artists.

You can also buy cards to support the Trust from professional wildlife and landscape photographer Mike Read.

He has a wide range of greetings cards, Christmas cards, fine art prints and canvas prints. He also holds landscape photography workshops.

Mike will donate 10% of sales of the above products to the Barn Owl Trust (providing you mention the Trust when you order). See his website at www.mikeread.co.uk for details, subjects and prices. *



Evening Shadows



Winter Whispers



This amazing photograph of two Buzzards locked together on the ground was snapped by John Doswell earlier this year. John explains what happened.

It was back in the spring, I was indoors doing something when I heard my hens and cockerel playing up. I also noticed a couple of Crows and a pair of Ravens mobbing something in the garden. I ran outside thinking that it was a fox after the hens and there on the lawn were the two Buzzards locked together with two Ravens pecking away at them.

I frightened the Ravens off and walked over to the Buzzards who were more intent on fighting each other than worrying about me or the Ravens. I picked them up and put them in a pig house to calm down and hopefully let go of each other as I could not get them apart. I then took the photos because I'd never seen anything like that before.

I went indoors to get a towel, thinking if I put it over them they might calm down. As I came back with the towel and was just going to put it over them they released each other and flew out of the door, apparently none the worse for their experience - amazing. *

John and Caroline Doswell
Cornwall



The Blunderbus Theatre will be performing an adaptation of Jill Tomlinson's "The Owl who was afraid of the Dark" over the next 18 months. This is a story about a baby Barn Owl and because of this, they will be displaying our Barn Owls Need Friends leaflets to promote the Trust and its work as well as offering our 'cuddly owlets' for sale.

Blunderbus is a professional theatre company that aims to create magical theatrical experiences for children and their families using an irresistible blend of live music, puppetry and storytelling. *

Thanks and Things

A big **Thank You** to all of our Friends and supporters who have sent us items for fund-raising or recycling over the last six months; Mr & Mrs Bird, Tracey Morris, Jane Vaughan, Staveley Johnson & Procter Solicitors, Alison Lawrence & Pat Wright, Torc Ecology, Janet Kneeshaw (My Devon), Rob Hamer, June Welsh, Rachel Edwards, Melanie White, Francis Camp, Kim & Ed McNeil, Emma Haworth (Marsh Christian Trust), Mr & Mrs Budgell, Laura Hill (Jackson Parton Solicitors), Phil & Eileen Webb, Mr & Mrs Chorlton, Elaine Underhill, the Parish family, Louise Anquetil, Michael North, David Hughes, Brian & Elizabeth Stone, Reg & Beryl Welsh, Lesley McIlroy and One Stop Sealing. See Pete's Recycling update on page 15 for a list of some of the things we can use or sell to raise funds.

From our **Wants List** we received items for the Ladies Lucky Dip from Lesley McIlroy and Beryl Welsh, bird food and tools from Rob Hamer who also gave us the Dinky Toy collection, A4 paper from One Stop Sealing, owl pellets from Mark Tatam, Nicola Pearce and Anna Milner, rakes from Helen & Stephen Scarisbrick and buckets of nails from Francis Camp and Mr & Mrs Budgell – Thank you very much to all of you and anyone else we have forgotten to mention – we are really grateful for your support.

The following groups and individuals have all sent us the proceeds from their fund-raising; Christian & Suzanne Wilkin raised funds for us with a raffle at their wedding – congratulations you two. We received a cheque from Axe Valley Runners, part of proceeds of the Grizzly run they organise. Michelle Poynter sold cupcakes, they looked great, see the picture on page 12. Porthleven Junior School in Cornwall raised funds to pay for a nestbox. Primary 3 of Burnside School in Lanarkshire sent us a donation raised by decorating and selling biscuits, games and hand painting. Margaret and Derrick

Crocker sold plants and jam. Well done all of you, you not only raised funds you also raised awareness of the Barn Owl Trust and its work.

As always we have a Wants List. Please have a look and see if you have any of these things lying around that you are not using and we could:

- * Copy of "A Manual for Wildlife Radio Tagging" by Kenward & Walls (2001) ISBN 10: 0124042422
- * Wild bird food - black sunflower seeds, 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 both coloured and white
- * Box trailer in good working order
- * New inkjet cartridges for HP Deskjet 930C or Epson R300
- * Metal detector
- * 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
- * Emulsion paint (pale colour) sufficient to paint an office
- * Bird watching telescope
- * Anabat detector
- * Hand held heterodyne bat detector
- * Waders – for working in the ponds
- * Large towels
- * Night vision binoculars – generation 2
- * Carpet suitable for office flooring
- * Petrol leaf blower

Thank you for thinking of us. *



Tail piece ...

A couple of years ago I was given a silver fairy on a chain. She was called the 'Fairy of Reflection' and came with a tiny piece of paper suggesting that first thing in the morning, before you lurch into 'busy mode', you think about nice things you are going to do that day; meet a friend, cook or eat a good meal, finish a good book or, whatever brings a smile to your face. At the end of the day you reflect on the good things that have happened, you count your blessings. Although my fairy has been with me constantly, I must admit that first thing in the morning, or last thing at night when I'm tired, I'm not very good at doing this, but, having her around does remind me to stop and think about the good things in my life.

In a survey published in 2006 the UK was ranked 41st on a 'world map of happiness'. Not great for a country where people are generally, materially much better-off than their forefathers. Why, with a shorter working week, a national health service and all of the opportunities for travel, education and leisure activities are we not at least as content with 'our lot' as our grandparents? Could it be that we have greater expectations, the more we have the more we want? Could it be that this is constantly reinforced by advertising telling us that we need certain products for our lives to have value? Or is it the constant stream of bickering politicians telling us *they* have all the answers and *everyone else* is wrong?

We human beings are constantly bombarded with information from television, the internet, the papers. So much of it is negative; the news is filled with horrors, the T.V soaps with angst and trauma. Is it any wonder that people are being conditioned to think that life would be better if only..... ?

To go back to my fairy, she has the same effect as a walk in the country or sitting quietly by an open fire, she reminds me to reflect on the positive. If we all make the time to think nice thoughts and acknowledge the good things in our lives regularly, then surely the negative things will assume less importance.

Happiness is infectious, happier people are nicer to be around and more productive than unhappy folk. They can look at the world and see the benefits of positive action, like wildlife conservation, community projects, litter picking or just smiling and saying hello to strangers. We all want to be happy and often things happen and affect us that are way beyond our control, but if we take the time to try to identify just a few good things from every day, then that will help to balance out the darker times and make the best use of the time we have on this magical planet.

Enclosed with this issue of Feedback is a small fairy for you. If you feel so inclined, pin her up and use her to remind you to look forward to three positive things in your day and to thank the universe for three good things that have happened.

Well I've done it again, I've managed to get almost to the end of the tail piece without mentioning Barn Owls, but somehow it is all connected. If we are going to change our world and conserve the precious creatures that share it, we have to feel empowered. We have to believe that the time we spend making ethical choices, the money we give to charity and the efforts we make to sort our recycling are worthwhile. To do this we need to feel positive. So whether or not you believe in fairies, do believe that:

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

Frances Ramsden