

Issue Number 48 - Autumn 2012

FEEDBACK



WATERLEAT, ASHBURTON, DEVON TQ13 7HU - (01364) 653026 - www.barnowltrust.org.uk Reg Charity No: 299 835

Barn Owl Conservation Handbook

A comprehensive guide for ecologists,
surveyors, land managers and ornithologists



 PELAGIC
PUBLISHING



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*Cover Photo: David Ramsden
Barn Owl Conservation Handbook- page 3*

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by staff and volunteers.*

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words and pictures for this issue.*

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

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*Send your contributions - news, letters, pictures
and information to:*

*Feedback, Barn Owl Trust, Waterleat, Ashburton,
Devon TQ13 7HU*

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

Welcome to Feedback. Over 100 people have elected to receive this issue by email and for the first time those of you who get our Annual Report will find it enclosed with this issue of Feedback instead of a month apart. Both of these changes were instigated to reduce postage costs and we estimate the savings will be several hundred pounds. Personally I prefer a paper copy and, like most of you, would have chosen to continue to get mine through the mail, but if you can pass it on when you have finished with it then you can more than double the readership and hopefully increase support for the Trust. Funding Facts on page 13 explains why we are making these changes.

The really exciting news over the last few months is the arrival of the *Barn Owl Conservation Handbook*; a stellar achievement. Well done to our conservation team who wrote it and to everyone who supported this immense project. Fortunately it has turned out to be well worth the effort.

We hope that the programme of events we have planned (page 10) will more than compensate for the decision to end our Annual Meeting in October. Hopefully most people that would have come along, or who want to know more about the Trust, will find at least one date convenient for a visit here.

As you will see from the 2012 Breeding Season report on page 5, this was the best for some years here in the South West. It would probably have been a brilliant year if not for the wettest June ever recorded! Most Barn Owl workers around the UK have reported similar findings, early breeding and high mortality in June. With record breaking weather events being reported almost constantly there can be no doubt that Climate Change is really happening! It makes you wonder what is going to happen next.

This June was also the 2nd dullest on record as reflected by the amount of electricity generated by our solar panels. As the month with the longest days we expected our output to peak in June. However during March, April, May and July we produced more electricity!

We were so pleased with the number of entries to our Open Poetry competition last year and the resulting anthology *Wildlife Words* that we have decided to do it again, page 11. If you are inspired by wildlife or conservation do put pen to paper, or fingers to keyboard and join in.

Those of you with a tool shed might feel inspired to have a spring clean/sort out when you read the Tools for Life item on page 12. This inspirational project provides a perfect opportunity to help empower people who are materially, far poorer than us.

We hope that you enjoy this issue of Feedback and that it encourages you to continue to support the Trust and its work. Even more importantly, that you can find something here that inspires you to do your bit to conserve and protect this wonderful planet. "We do not inherit the Earth from our Ancestors, we borrow it from our Children." Let's all do our very best to hand it on in better condition than we found it. ★

Frances Ramsden & Marianne Bryan

Paul and Kirstie Stenning have kindly donated this prize to raise funds for the Trust. Only 250 tickets will be issued at £5 each on a first come first served basis.

Set in 54 acres of countryside The Old Shippon has three bedrooms, sleeping six people. It has its own private entrance and garden and your pets are also welcome for a small fee. Checkout their website www.dunsdonfarm.co.uk .

To purchase your tickets on-line go to our website *Supporting the Trust / Giving a donation* enter £5 per ticket, and Holiday Cottage Lottery in *Reason for donation* - with the number of tickets you would like. We will then e-mail you the ticket number(s). Or, send a cheque for the required number of tickets to the office, we will post your ticket(s) to you. The draw will take place on Wednesday the 5th December 2012 and the winner will be notified within 28 days. Good luck! ★



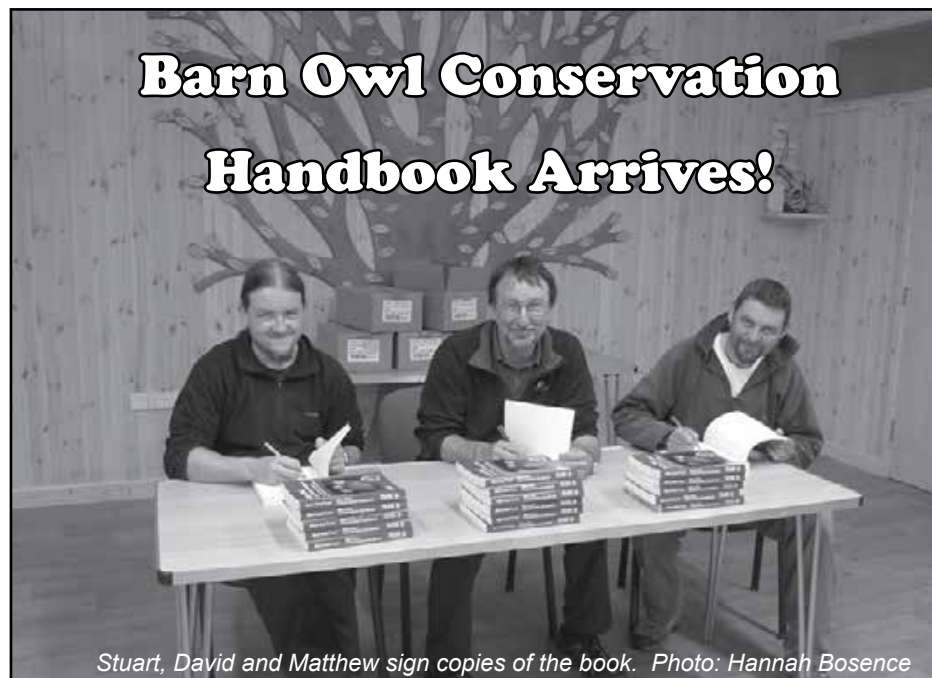
Win a fantastic weekend or 2-3 night mid-week self-catering break for up to six people (subject to availability) at The Old Shippon, Dunsdon Farm, Holsworthy, North Devon. ➔

The Killing of Britain's Barn Owls!

Barn Owls are stunningly beautiful and to see one hunting at dusk, is a magnificent sight. However most of the wild Barn Owls people see these days are dead on the roadside. If you're really lucky and see a live Barn Owl the chances are that it will already be poisoned. Government research has shown that the vast majority of Britain's Barn Owls contain highly toxic rat poison. Overall, the population has declined by at least 70% since the 1930's and researchers have identified trunk roads and rat poisons as two of the most likely causes.

- ❑ Barn Owls are Britain's most popular farmland bird but the last national survey estimated that there are only 4000 pairs left. (*Toms et al, 2000*).
- ❑ One third of all the young Barn Owls produced annually (3000 birds) end up dead on trunk roads. At least 1000 adult Barn Owls are also killed annually.
- ❑ The Highways Agency has ignored recommendations made in 2003 and has singularly failed to do anything to reduce mortality. 3000 more young Barn Owls will die this Autumn. Trunk roads kill 450 times more Barn Owls (per mile) than other roads.
- ❑ Latest government figures show that a staggering 91% of Barn Owls contain rat/mouse poison (rodenticide). Some die as a direct result. Most contain sub-lethal doses and this could be reducing the owls' hunting ability and nesting success.
- ❑ The use of rodenticides is largely uncontrolled and the information on containers is both misleading and inadequate; most people who use rodenticides have no idea that they are poisoning Barn Owls and other wildlife.

The first-ever Barn Owl Conservation Handbook, published in July, exposes these critical issues and suggests ways to significantly reduce these deaths. It is a highly critical wake-up call for the Highways Agency, the rodenticide manufacturers and the Health and Safety Executive's Chemicals Regulation Directorate. ★



Stuart, David and Matthew sign copies of the book. Photo: Hannah Bosence

There was great excitement in the office in July when copies of the long-awaited handbook arrived. Copies are selling well and far afield - six went off to Hungary in August and the reviews on Amazon are great.

After two years of writing, with over 400 pages and more than 300 pictures, we are keen to see the information reach conservationists and Barn Owl lovers everywhere. This is the ultimate Christmas gift this year for anyone with an interest in Barn Owls.

Copies sent out by the Trust are signed and include a special BOCH bookmark. If the book is being sent as a gift we can also include a card with your own message. ★

News Bites

Poisoned Owls

As you will see from the item on the left a staggering 91% of Barn Owls contain rodenticide. The Health & Safety Executive are currently reviewing the (almost non-existent) restrictions on the use of rodenticides and asking for comments from "interested parties" - that's you! To voice your concern, go to <http://www.hse.gov.uk/biocides/news.htm> and scroll down to 'UK Stakeholder Engagement - Environmental measures for rodenticides' before 2nd November 2012.

Camera Capture

With released Barn Owls returning for food and Badgers regularly crossing the bridge in the LLP it was disappointing to discover that the Trust's motion sensor camera wasn't working. We were delighted when trustee Kevin, owner of www.wildlifewatchingsupplies.co.uk donated a Bushnell Trophy Trail camera and kit to the Trust. To see just what these cameras can do follow the link to flickr from Kevin's website. Thank you so much Kevin, we can't wait to set it up and capture our own images.

Book Review

We met Chris Packham, the well known television presenter and conservationist, when he was filmed here for part of the *Grassland* episode of the BBC's *Animals Guide to Britain*. Chris has kindly agreed to review the new "Barn Owl Conservation Handbook" for us.

Solar Success

Since our solar panels went live in February we have generated over 50% of the electricity we use reducing our bill by more than half. We are also being paid for the power we generate and export to the national grid. We know that output will drop over the winter period but given the appalling summer we've just had it's been a great success!

Home Page Changes

Our website Home Page changed dramatically this summer making it easier to find the most requested information. The new Popular Topic links help guide visitors directly to the information they require. With so much information on the site finding just what you want is much easier now.

Looking Ahead

2013 is not only the year of the Devon Barn Owl Survey, it is also the year of the Trust's 25th Birthday. Whoever you are and wherever you live - see page 14 for ways you can join in, help support our work and celebrate. We need your support. ★

More BOT News

Bees kill Owlets



The five owlets had been dead between 2 and 4 days.

We received an urgent call mid-May from the owners of a nest site near Taunton in west Somerset to say a swarm of bees had moved into the owls' nest in the end of a barn conversion. Via a small camera in the nest, the owners reported that they thought two owlets might already be dead although their view was partially obscured by the bees.

Having decided to visit the site without delay we set off with all of the usual nest inspection equipment knowing that this wasn't going to be enough. Fortunately we met local beekeepers Milns Priscott and Tony Hoyle on site and after dressing up, head to toe in bee-keepers kit, we opened the nestbox from inside the loft with some trepidation! Through a small opening, and in spite of the many hundreds of bees flying out we could see a brood of five - sadly all dead. ➔



BOT goes to Birdfair

David (centre) explores Barn Owl pellets with fascinated children. Photo: Nigel Massen

Described as the birdwatcher's Glastonbury, The British Birdwatching Fair held annually at Rutland Water encompasses the whole spectrum of the birdwatching industry whilst at the same time supporting global bird conservation.

This year was a first for the Trust, with David, our Head of Conservation, giving a presentation - "Stop Killing Barn Owls" (see page 3). He also helped out with pellet analysis on the Natural History Book Service stand and had the opportunity to chat with some of the people purchasing our *Barn Owl Conservation Handbook*.

It was also a chance to catch up with 'old' friends – Mike Toms from the British Trust for Ornithology and Milan Ruzic from Serbia who have both spent time at the Trust in the past. Mike built our original database back in 1998. Luckily for us, we also met up with BOT trustee Kevin, a regular at the fair, who took the time to attend David's presentation and show us around. ★



Dressed up to remove the swarm. Photos: David Ramsden

After taking the bodies outside we could see that the owlets had died between 2 and 4 days ago. We found some of the stings still in their skin. Apparently bees will always sting any creatures that move in close proximity to their nest – the owlets didn't stand a chance.

Milns said that this was a small swarm – only a few thousand! Tony managed to attach a temporary box to the wall just outside the owls' entrance into which the bees obligingly moved. This box was removed the next day and the swarm relocated. Within 48 hours all of the bees had gone.

The Barn Owls must have moved back inside very quickly because within three weeks they were on eggs again!

A phone call in mid September confirmed the owls had laid four eggs and had three young in the nest about to fledge.

Note: Fortunately this is not a usual occurrence. In over 25 years of Barn Owl conservation, this was the first case we've come across. ★

Wanted Wheels for Owls!

Here at the Barn Owl Trust, the care and rehabilitation of injured birds is an important part of the work we do. We try to help injured owls from across Cornwall, Devon and wherever possible, from Dorset and Somerset too. We often receive phone calls from people who have found an injured owl, but who are not able to bring it to us.

Fortunately, the staff at the Veterinary Hospital in Plymouth generously treat wild owls whenever we ask and they are always willing for us to take severely injured birds to them. This involves a round trip of fifty miles. Unfortunately some of the birds that we receive are too severely injured for us to be able to help so die en-route or have to be euthanased, but many are given the chance for a full recovery and eventual release.

We are fortunate to have a small number of 'live bird transport volunteers' who help to support us by collecting owls and/or delivering them to where they need to go. This can mean picking birds up from us here in Ashburton and taking them to a vet or a release site, or collecting birds from sites across the region and delivering them to a vet or to the Trust. Whilst these volunteers do a fantastic job, they are not always available, and cannot be expected to cover all of the Southwest - can you help?

If you are based in one of the four counties mentioned above and would like to help with the occasional transporting of live owls please get in touch. Thank you. ★

2012 Breeding Season

With an average First Egg-laid Date (FED) of mid-April for the southwest region and a 31-33 day incubation period, reports of nestlings don't usually start coming in until May or June. But this year we started receiving anecdotal reports of Barn Owl nestlings in April!

Moreover, as the spring progressed, reports of occupation from sites with no previous Barn Owl history became increasingly common; one site in Somerset had a pair of Barn Owls for the first time since a nestbox was erected there 20 years ago! What was going on? We had to find out . . .

We decided to start our Annual Monitoring Site (AMSITE) checks a month earlier than usual, in response to what potentially appeared to be an early year. The majority of our AMSITES are widely distributed throughout Devon but we also check a handful in southeast Cornwall. Seventy-seven sites were checked in total with the results shown in the table opposite.

The vast majority of Barn Owl chicks encountered were of ringable age at first visit (between 3-8 weeks old), suggesting an FED of late March, more than two weeks earlier than average. In fact, only 3 sites required return visits into July.

Brood size at some sites was also impressive, with a well-feathered and well-fed brood of 7 ringed on 29th May in East Devon, and a brood of 6 on 1st June in Torridge. An analysis of productivity at the first 20 sites to be checked between 24th May and 1st June showed an average brood size of 3.68, we were headed for a bumper year!

Suddenly in early June it all went horribly wrong. Analysis of 20 sites from 4th June onwards showed that the average brood size had dropped to 2.75.

The wettest 2nd quarter (April to June) and the wettest June on record caused massive mortality. Barn Owls simply struggle to forage when the weather is inclement. ↗



*Jasmin uses the new tools to make nestboxes
Photos: Marianne Bryan*

In January a supporter of the Trust from across the pond (Maryland, USA) got in touch via e-mail. Fred Sterns was offering a donation towards something on our wish list.

We went back to Fred with the idea of a donation towards a Mitre Saw which would speed up the production of nestboxes and be a valuable asset when it came to rebuilding our older aviaries.

Year	Nesting (%)	Mean brood size	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
2012	58	3.2 (n=40)	11	0	31

Nevertheless, a notably high proportion of pairs may breed again so 2012 could still be a good year for the species.

We can only speculate as to why so many previously unoccupied sites had breeding for the first time this year, particularly after last year's poor breeding season. However, it may be the result of second/late broods last summer that we don't systematically check for and increased juvenile survival during a comparatively kind winter. We'll probably never know. Although the 'bumper year' was not to be, there's some cause for optimism this year. ★

Matthew Twiggs
Conservation Officer

Looking back through the data between 1990 and this year, it was in '96 we recorded the largest mean brood size of 3.67 at our AMSITES. There were only three other years where it exceeded 2012. These were '91, '92 and 2005. Eds

*Please get in touch if you would like to donate an item on our Wants List
- page 16*

Fred was more than happy to donate towards this; in fact he had, up until recently, owned one himself and could vouch for its usefulness! So Fred gave us over half of the amount needed to purchase our Mitre Saw and with some other funding we were able to purchase it at the end of February.

In June Fred kindly gave us another donation towards; "a practical item that would directly contribute to the Barn Owls quality of life". On this occasion the item we most needed was a new, and good quality, drill.

Using our new saw and drill is great, nestbox production time has been cut almost in half thanks to the generosity of Fred - pictured here in his photograph with a European Eagle Owl. Thank you Fred! ★



LLP Update



Mike Cooke (Ambios) and Matthew with Hungarian volunteers having fenced the solar panels Photo: David Ramsden

Organised by Ambios (a not for profit company promoting environmental understanding for all) a cohort of Hungarian volunteers arrived at the beginning of March for three days with us. After presentations and a tour on day 1, day 2 was spent building outdoor nestboxes for our conservation work. On their last day, they helped cut back brambles in the orchard as well as extending the path by the cattle drink. Various areas of scrub and invasive species, including the nettle bed on the dung heap, were topped with the tractor at the end of the month. By June, more invasive species control had taken place, with Creeping Thistle, Nettle, Bracken, Dock and Ragwort all receiving some attention.

Four 10m. x 10m. permanent quadrats were measured out and removable fence posts erected in order to monitor vole activity in the field; this facility has already proved useful during July's training course for ecological consultants. Another group of Hungarian trainees visited at the end of June and helped erect a stock-proof fence around the solar arrays, ready for our annual grazing regime. This commenced during the first week of July with 15 calves and one cow being brought in to knock back the impressive growth of grass we've experienced this year.

Early Spring saw the spawning of hundreds of Frogs in and around the ponds, with at least half a dozen Palmate Newts in both ponds. Two were seen 'interacting', which may have been courtship activity. A Common Lizard was seen under one of the corrugate sheets by the remnant hedge at the top of the field at the beginning of May, and another was watched in the orchard at the end of June. These observations are the first in the orchard and the first outside of April and hopefully constitute an increase in numbers. A dead Slow Worm outside the bird hospital in July was probably the result of our appalling summer weather.

A male Stonechat was photographed feeding in the field in March, no doubt on its way back up onto the Moor for the breeding season. By mid-month, Flo pond held a pair of both Mandarin and Mallard ducks. The Mandarin seemed to have moved on by month's end but did put in a brief appearance when they flew over the offices at the end of May.

By the beginning of April, the female Mallard had started sitting on the end of the island in the Flo pond (our largest pond named after Florence Parsons). Four eggs were counted there by mid-month. These, and later additions had clearly hatched by the first week of May, as the female and her eight ducklings were seen leaving the pond and disappearing into nearby woodland.

Typical breeding species were in evidence around the field as the season progressed, with several territorial male Blackcap in song, as well as a singing Grey Wagtail, Song and Mistle Thrush. A pair of Green Woodpeckers were around, and a Kestrel, a Sparrowhawk and two Hobbies also put in the odd appearance. A Cuckoo was heard in May, sadly an increasingly rare sound these days. Three juvenile Grey Wagtails were on the island in May, constituting evidence of successful breeding nearby.

The late appearance of a Pied Flycatcher in song along Riverbank Walk at the end of May probably meant it was only a non-breeding 1st summer bird but was nevertheless a welcome sight after an absence of a couple of years. Small flocks of Crossbills flew over the LLP at the end of June and again about a week later, perhaps part of the irruption the rest of the country has been enjoying in recent weeks. A pair of migrant Green Sandpipers were accidentally flushed from the muddy fringe of Flo pond at the end of July - another first!

Regular sightings of Barn Owls started in May when an individual was seen post hopping along the lane hedge, before flying down the field in the late afternoon in bright sunshine. By June, one or possibly two Barn Owls were seen foraging at about 7am on several mornings after heavy overnight rain. A healthy and well-fed brood of three was ringed nearby around the same time as the sightings. We were delighted when during mid-September a second brood of three, five weeks old was discovered and ringed.

An early butterfly transect in March yielded 3 Orange-tip, 6 Peacock, 3 Small Tortoiseshell and 1 Comma. Despite the weather reducing total numbers of the commoner species throughout the recording period, we still managed to see Red Admiral, Holly Blue, Common Blue, Small Copper, Large and Small Skipper, Large, Small and Green-veined White, Gatekeeper, and Silver-washed Fritillary.

One of the best weeks occurred in mid-July, when a total of 100+ Marbled White and Meadow Brown, as well as 20+ Ringlet were seen, although numbers of our commonest butterfly, the Meadow Brown, went on to peak at over 220 by the end of July. The ponds hosted both Large Red and Common Blue Damselflies, whilst a female Beautiful Demoiselle graced Corner Wood in mid-June.

All this despite the record breaking cold, wet summer we've just experienced! ★

Matthew Twiggs
Conservation Officer

Bird News



Miracle was with us for seven years Photo: Susan Young

We had a quiet start to 2012 with nothing to report for almost three full months. Our first casualty of the year was not brought to us until after the middle of March; a Tawny Owl that had flown into a barbed wire fence and become entangled. It was treated by a vet but lost most of the flight feathers on its left wing. We kept it for a number of months in the hope that the feathers would grow back, but unfortunately this wasn't to be. After four months with us and despite appearing to make good progress, the bird eventually succumbed to an infection.

The 2012 breeding season was marked by the arrival of a young Tawny owlet that had fallen from the nest. We would normally recommend that Tawny owlets are left alone, but all was not well with this one. The bird arrived in the middle of May with a closed eye and some blood around its beak. Unfortunately it didn't pull through and died a short time later. Shortly afterwards we received another Tawny Owl, this time an adult with a broken wing that was found by the side of the road. Fortunately the break wasn't too bad and we were able to release the bird back into the wild a month later.

After waiting until the beginning of June for our first Barn Owl, two came along at once; a pair of fallen owlets from a barn conversion in north Devon. These were reared in a standard nestbox in the rafters of the Trust's barn and were free to leave as soon as they had fledged. They are no longer using the box, but at the time of writing, are still returning most nights for food. Towards the end of June, we had another fallen owlet that was close to fledging, but was malnourished. We have fed him up and are now simply waiting for a period of good weather in which to release him. The summer has not been very obliging so far.

Our next Barn Owl was a fallen owlet that arrived in a very bad way. It was extremely malnourished, and despite our efforts to re-hydrate and force feed it, it just wasn't strong enough to last more than forty-eight hours. Next up was a Tawny Owl that was found by South West Water workers in early July, in a slurry pit at a sewage treatment works in Torrridge, north-west Devon. After being collected and cleaned up by one of our volunteers (thanks Cathy!), the bird was treated at the Trust for a slight eye infection and released after spending three weeks in captivity.

At the end of August, we lost one of our sanctuary birds, a Barn Owl named Miracle. Miracle was originally brought to us as an injured wild bird from Guernsey. Although she made a full recovery, it was over two years before her flight returned to normal and it was decided that she had spent too long in captivity to be released. Miracle had been with us for seven years. As with the majority of the casualties we receive, we cannot be sure how old she was when she arrived.

Currently in our bird hospital, we have a Barn Owl found by the road with a badly broken wing, a Barn Owl with a less severe break and yet another Tawny Owl that was tangled up in a barbed wire fence. The Veterinary Hospital treated all three birds and we are expecting them all to survive. The Barn Owl with the badly broken wing will not be releasable and will spend the rest of its days in our sanctuary. The news on the other two owls is better. Despite our worst fears when it was brought in, the Tawny is looking very much better and the second Barn Owl just needs some time to rest and recuperate. We are anticipating being able to release both birds and hopefully they will be back in the wild by the time you read this.

We have also received four Barn Owls from the RSPCA at West Hatch. These were all treated by the RSPCA, but as they don't have the facilities to provide supported release for all of the Barn Owls they receive, we agreed to take them and we will be releasing them as soon as possible. More details of this in the next edition of Bird News.



The second Tawny with barbed wire still attached before going to the Veterinary Hospital Photo: David Ramsden

You may remember the 'hitchhiking' Barn Owl received by the Trust back in December 2011. The owl had been found in the back of a lorry that had been travelling all over the country so there was no way of finding out where it originally came from.

It was covered in oil and after being cleaned up it spent the winter recuperating here at the Trust. We appealed to the public for a release site and found the perfect spot near Tavistock with an outdoor nestbox ready and waiting. The owl was released at the beginning of April using one of our mobile aviaries with food provided in the aviary after release.

Later that month we received an e-mail from the land owner to say that he had seen a pair of Barn Owls leaving the box directly opposite the release aviary. We're not sure whether this is the same owl but as the released bird didn't come back for food, it is likely that she paired up with a local male and was being fed by him in preparation for breeding.

Once again we would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone at the Veterinary Hospital Group at Estover in Plymouth for all their help and support. ★

Stuart Baker
Assistant Conservation Officer

A Guide to the Short -

This article follows on from "*What to do if you find an owl*", featured in the last issue of *Feedback*.

Administering fluid to owls in care

It is important to recognise that Barn Owls rarely drink water and gain virtually all the fluid they require from their food. Therefore, when an owl has not fed for more than a few days it becomes susceptible to dehydration, which can rapidly lead to organ failure and death. If the owl is severely emaciated it will need re-hydrating before any attempt is made to feed it solid food. There is little point in putting a small bowl of water in the bird's box, as the chances of it drinking are extremely slim. When faced with a dehydrated bird, the experienced vet or rehabilitator will waste no time in re-hydrating it using a syringe and straight semi-rigid tube of exactly the right length. This technique should not be attempted by anyone who has not been shown exactly how to do it or does not have the right type of tube.

Although the process is slow and requires considerable patience, birds can be re-hydrated using an artist's small soft paintbrush or a dropper. One teaspoon of glucose powder (or sugar in an emergency) should be dissolved in half a cup of boiling water and then left to cool until it reaches blood temperature or slightly higher (38–40 °C). Dip the paintbrush in the glucose solution and wipe it up and down the side of the owl's beak. Some birds will respond by swallowing, although most will not. Plan B is to hold the beak open (no more than 25 mm) with one hand and touch the saturated brush on the back of the gape with the other hand, just beside the back of the tongue. Immediately let go of the beak and allow the bird to stop swallowing before opening the beak again. With care, fluid can be placed at the same spot using a dropper but never more than a few drops at a time (see photo).



Administering a few drops of fluid at a time

Ideally, 10 ml of fluid should be given. However, with a paintbrush or dropper this requires considerable patience, as 10ml of fluid is the equivalent of around 150 drops. Continue with either method, administering as much fluid as possible. Leave the bird for a couple of hours then administer another 10 ml of fluid, followed by a few pieces of wetted food. To start with, food morsels can be dipped in the glucose solution immediately prior to being given to the owl; this helps to stimulate swallowing and increases the fluid intake.

Occasionally a vet will recommend giving an emaciated owl liquid food such as Brand's Essence or a soupy mixture of Hill's Prescription Diet A/D mixed with slightly warm water. If you happen to have either of these, they may be given by paintbrush

in addition to the glucose solution. Give up to 5 ml daily as a supplement. Giving fluid is far easier if you have a helper to hold the bird. The most practical way to do it single-handed is to wrap the owl first in a towel - the next issue of *Feedback* will provide an illustrated guide to towel wrapping.

Feeding owls in care

First and foremost, do not ever expect a newly arrived wild adult owl to eat voluntarily. Virtually all injured owls require a period of force-feeding before moving on to hand feeding or eating voluntarily. In short-term care (i.e. up to 10 days) many adult birds will need to be force-fed throughout, whereas others, particularly nestlings, may be eating voluntarily within 12 hours. A casualty or starving adult owl that picks up white or yellow colour food items straight away and eats them voluntarily is almost certainly a bird that has escaped or been released from captivity. The best possible food for a casualty owl is that which most closely resembles its diet in the wild. Dead small mammals such as mice and young rats are ideal food, although they are rather expensive and for this reason the staple diet of most owls in captivity is dead day-old poultry chicks. In emergencies it is acceptable to use small pieces of raw chicken or raw lean beef but not lamb or pork. Do not give pure lean meat without roughage (such as fur or feathers) for more than two days at a time and never give bone without roughage. This is because the acidity of the stomach is not strong enough to dissolve bone and so the bones are regurgitated in pellets. If the bones are regurgitated without being bound in fur or feathers, they may obstruct or puncture the oesophagus. Never use cooked meat, canned pet food or any non-meat food (other than certain liquid feeds which may be prescribed by a vet).

Dead day-old poultry chicks and mice are available frozen from many pet shops and must be thoroughly defrosted before use, though not by using a microwave as this can make the bones brittle. Adult Barn Owls, Long-eared Owls or Short-eared Owls should consume approximately 2 chicks or 4 mice per 24 hours; a Tawny Owl should have 3 chicks or 6 mice and a Little Owl 1–2 chicks or 2–3 mice.

A wild owl is unlikely to recognise white mice or yellow chicks as food straight away and grey-brown food items may be eaten more readily. White or yellow-coloured food items should be cut up into 3–4 pieces and placed on a piece of wood or an upturned bowl in the box close to the owl, preferably with the innards of the food item facing up. Do not put the food in a dish otherwise a single dropping can easily contaminate all of it.

Force-feeding is carried out using the following procedure:

1. Prepare the food. If using lean chicken or beef to feed a Barn Owl more than 6 weeks old, the total amount you should prepare for 24 hours is around 70 grams (this is about enough to fill two small matchboxes) or use 4 average-sized mice.

When first feeding a new casualty, you probably will not use more than a few morsels. Make sure the meat is fresh, at room temperature, and not dried. Cut up into pieces about the size of your thumbnail. If using two day-old poultry chicks, discard the yolk sacs and the featherless part of the legs. Cut each chick into 6 pieces of roughly equal size. Holding the day-old chick above newspaper and using scissors is a practical method.

Term Care of a Barn Owl

2. Position the owl. Either ask a helper to hold the owl in a vertical position or wrap the owl (as shown on our website), then sit on a stool and place the wrapped owl vertically between your thighs, facing either to the left or right, depending on whether you are left or right handed.



The beak is held open with one hand as the food is gently pushed to the back of the open gape. Photos: Kevin Keatley

3. Open the beak. Calmly bring one hand from behind the owl, just over the head, and take hold of the upper mandible between your thumb and index finger. Open the beak with the thumbnail of your free hand (max 25 mm) and hold it open with the 2nd or 3rd finger of your beak-holding hand (see photo above).

4. Feed one piece at a time. Now with your free hand take a piece of meat/mouse or chick, briefly dip it in tepid fluid and then put it on the tongue and gently push it into the back of the open gape, so that it is in the throat just behind the windpipe opening (at the back of the tongue). Immediately release the beak and with any luck the owl will swallow within roughly a minute. If it does not, gently push the food a little further down the throat and



Boxes should be the correct size, safe and easy to clean. Photo: David Ramsden

release the beak again. Eventually it should swallow. Wait 30–60 seconds after the swallowing has stopped and then repeat the procedure. Even if the feeding is easy, always wait before giving the next morsel. This gives time for the previous one to move down the neck and reduces the chance of regurgitation.

5. Watch the owl's response. Always be sensitive to the bird's response. If it has swallowed several morsels quite easily and then becomes reluctant, leave it for about 10 minutes and try again. If it is still reluctant, leave it for 8 hours. Also take account of the bird's condition; if it is in the process of drying out or warming up and starts to shiver, stop the feeding and return it to a warm position. If it is very thin, remember that for the first 24 hours, fluid is a higher priority than food.

Suitable containers for owls in short-term care

Solid-sided plastic pet carrier boxes are good, but can be hard to clean out unless they come apart easily. If you are only keeping the owl for a short time and have an ample supply of cardboard boxes, there is no reason why you should not keep the bird in a cardboard box and simply replace the box every day, recycling the old one in your kerbside collection. Alternatively, use an open-topped plastic storage box with a fridge shelf or a piece of weld mesh weighted down on top. Whatever container you use, it only needs to be slightly taller than the owl, at least the same width as the height, and twice as long. The best thing to place in the bottom of the box is a thick towel wrapped around a newspaper folded to size. This aids checking for any change in the colouration of droppings and makes it easy to spot uneaten food items and pellets. Once the owl is eating well, the box lining is usually changed to a thick layer of heavily compressed shredded paper (c. 200 mm of shredded office waste trampled down to 30 mm). The use of straw, hay, woodflakes, sawdust, sand or gravel is not recommended.

The next issue of **Feedback** will feature an article on how to towel-wrap an owl for single-handed rehydration and force-feeding. We've just added this information to our website along with six brand new pages covering the care of casualties – there is a link from the Home Page (Found an owl) please do take a look! ★

In Memoriam

The Trust has received legacies from the estates of the late
Kathleen Margaret Tennant

and

John Roper

and

donations in memory of

Phyliss Sarah Gardiner, Win Dear,

Joan Fowler, Marjorie Roper,

Vera Haselden, Robert Goronwy Williams

and Nora Lee

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

They all now have a leaf on our Memory Tree

Visit the LLP

Our LLP programme of events was severely disrupted this year by the appalling weather. Several walks were cancelled and our midsummer evening walk attracted just two brave souls who, like us, were drenched by the time we'd finished. However it was on this walk that we identified another "first" for the LLP. Thank you to Linda who identified our mystery plant as Bristly Ox-tongue (*Helminthotheca echioides*).

We were pleased however that we did have relatively rain-free evenings for three groups that joined us for the LLP tour, two from the Kingsbridge Natural History Society and the Parke WI.



It was dry for this Kingsbridge group Photo: David Ramsden

Mike Hitch from the Kingsbridge Natural History Society wrote about his visit. Thank you to the Kingsbridge Gazette for permission to publish this article:

"This summer, one of the destinations for our group was the Barn Owl Trust in Ashburton, not to hunt for Barn Owls, but to see their Legacy Field which until ten years ago was 26 acres of heavily grazed rye grass, but now has newly planted hedges, long grass and wild flowers. We had had a dry day in Slapton but, in Ashburton, the lanes were cascading with water and, as we parked the car, the trees were dripping and the roar from the river which passes immediately behind Waterleat was deafening.

However, as we set off up the hill to explore, an evening sun started to shine. The grass in the field was knee high and a diversity of seed heads waved and dripped in the sunlight. The only rye grass to be seen was on the mown path, bordered ↗

with the blue of speedwell. As we paused where the path steepened, through the long grass, there shone the pink of Rest Harrow and the yellow of Birds-foot Trefoil. Ringlet butterflies and Meadow Browns ventured out into the late sun, the gold of a pair of Small Skippers glittered in the grass, but the sun was not strong enough to entice them into flight.

We picked out the dappled grey of Marbled White butterflies clinging to the dripping grass, wings clamped tightly shut. This evening, as we continued our walk, we were to see many more, but none in flight; it was too wet to entice them from their grassy shelter. Last year, two thousand of these increasingly rare butterflies were observed flying here. The text-books claim that they require red fescue grass to succeed. Interestingly, there were many different types of grass in this field but no Red Fescue to be seen!

Along the recently-planted hedge at the top of the hill stood the tall yellow flowers of Common, Dark and Slender Mullein. It is truly amazing how long the seeds of wild flowers can survive in the soil, just waiting to be disturbed and have the opportunity to flourish in the absence of herbicides.

On the way down to the river, we passed the newly constructed stone wildlife tower, built as a memorial and designed to attract Barn Owls, Kestrels and Bats. As we walked along the river bank, the water pounded and swirled. It was magic, even if there were no Kingfishers or Dippers to be seen. Leaving the water, we climbed to the reserve's highest point. In the far distance, Stanborough was just visible whilst, in a neighbouring field just below us, two adult Roe Deer appeared with two fawns. The adults wandered and grazed, whilst the fawns pranced in the grass one minute and then rushed for the protection of their mother the next. We left them to frolic in the lengthening shadows as the sun dipped behind the trees, and made our way back to our cars and thence home".

Mike Hitch

If you would like to book a tour of the Lennon Legacy Project for your group please contact the office.

We can also organise practical work or Team Building events for groups/companies on request. Eds. ★

Diary Dates 2012 - 2013

24th October Wednesday - LLP Walk 'See the Autumn colours' - 2pm

14th November Wednesday - Conservation Team Work Party - New Hedge Planting 9:30am

5th December Wednesday - Annual Prize Draw & Holiday Cottage Lottery Draw

11th December Tuesday - Christmas wreath making workshop - 2pm & 7pm

9th January Wednesday - Conservation Team Work Party - 9:30am

13th February Wednesday - LLP Talk - 2pm

20th March Wednesday - LLP Spring Walk - 2pm

18th April Thursday - Spring Garland Workshop - 2pm

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



Join us at 2pm on December 11th to create your own festive wreath. During the afternoon take a winter walk around the LLP to collect your own holly followed by hot drinks and a wreath making workshop - basic materials provided (willow, holly and ivy). The birds will have probably eaten all the holly berries so we will have red ribbon and other decorations available to purchase or you can bring your own. Booking essential. Alternatively book the evening workshop as above but without the walk. ★

Around & About



Photos: Provided by Karen

Karen is a Barn Owl worker in East Yorkshire. We met up with her again in June at a very wet Royal Cornwall Show and she said she would let us know how her Barn Owl work was going:

I'm sure you will agree that seeing a Barn Owl for the first time is a sight you will never forget. The vision of this ghostly looking bird silently and meticulously quartering a field looking for its prey before hovering and swooping for the kill is truly life changing.

That first sight several years ago had me hooked. I began to research as much as I could about this beautiful bird. Some of what I researched didn't make for good reading. The statistics were worrying. Why were Barn Owls declining? Surely there was something I could do?

Educating people in how to manage their land in a Barn Owl friendly way was a starting point but providing nest boxes, would I found, prove to be the way in which I could make a difference. After contacting the Barn Owl Trust who put me in touch with

people involved in Barn Owl conservation in my area I began training to be a BTO ringer. During my training I set about visiting sites and along with my partner Tony, building and placing boxes in areas of suitable habitat. That first box has now turned into over 100 boxes and I now have my BTO 'A' ringing permit too!

In addition to my Barn Owl work, I am a full time science technician in a school and a busy mother to a 10 year old whose social calendar is far more hectic than mine! Juggling Barn Owls, work, home and football training is now down to a fine art!

This year has been a particularly difficult time after losing my dear, brave mother to a brain tumour in January but work with Barn Owls is great therapy. Getting out there and holding a Barn Owl again was the best medicine for me.

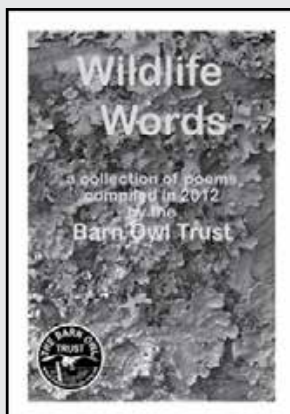


So far this year it's been a bit mixed. Boxes that are usually occupied every year are empty and boxes which haven't ever had any Barn Owls have finally got breeding. I've also got boxes where owlets are at 8 weeks old and some still on eggs. I also had one box where an owlet looked to be freshly dead at about 5 weeks and there was lots of food for the other two owlets in the box. Most boxes have had plenty of voles in them. To date I have ringed 51 owlets and 8 Kestrels with more boxes to return to. I love the work that I do and nothing gives me greater pleasure than knowing that the small bit I do for Barn Owls is hopefully helping to ensure that this iconic bird stays with us for a long time to come. ★

Karen Chelsey

More Wildlife Words

After the success of last year's Open Poetry Competition and the publication of our first issue of *Wildlife Words* we cordially invite you to enter our second Open Poetry Competition and to write a poem on "Wildlife/Conservation". All profits from the competition will provide care for casualty birds and depending on the number of entries to produce a second Barn Owl Trust Anthology in 2013. Copies of *Wildlife Words* are available from the Trust for £5 plus £2.50 p&p.



Once again there will be first, second and third prizes and six runners-up will receive a certificate of commendation. The winner of last year's competition Isobel Thrilling has kindly agreed to be the judge of this year's competition. The closing date is Wednesday 16th January 2013. 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.
- Each entry to be accompanied by £3 per poem (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 Wednesday 16th January and the judge's decision is final. Winners will be announced in the Spring 2013 issue of Feedback where the winning poem(s) 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 £3 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.** ★

Items of Interest



At the beginning of May, we received an email from Steve Colledge, who was at the time working on board an oil and gas industry construction vessel, the 'Lewek Champion', offshore in the Gulf of Thailand. The email asked whether we'd be interested in receiving photographs of a Barn Owl, which was at roost on top of one of the vessel's searchlights. 'Yes please!' Steve sent through a number of photos, one of which is reproduced above. ↗

Volunteering

Some of the Trust's volunteers come for a fixed period and others (thankfully) stay for years. Most years we have students from local schools on work experience this year we had two, Bethany Smith writes about her week at the BOT.



I chose the Barn Owl Trust for my work experience because all my life I've wanted to work with animals, whether it's wildlife or with domestic animals, so the idea of working in a place that is local, and is full of such beautiful and elegant birds, seemed excellent. Being at the Trust for a week lived up to my expectations and it showed me what working at a place like this is like. The people are friendly, and they are very funny, so you never really have to worry about being bored, especially if you're easily entertained like me.

There were many tasks throughout the week, and it was exactly what I wanted, a balance of office work and practical work. I was even lucky enough to go and watch a couple of owlets being ringed, and I also helped put up nestboxes, feed the owls and I learned a lot more about owls from asking questions, and reading the book which the Barn Owl Trust have just published.

I wish to study animal care once I leave school, and working at the Trust gave me a rough idea of what I want to do. I enjoyed this week, I am happy that I chose the Trust for my work experience and I would happily do it for another week or two if I was given the opportunity. ★

Bethany Smith

"We often see birds of prey around oil fields and platforms but not often owls" said Steve. "We are presently located around 120Nm east of Koh Samui, in the Gulf of Thailand. The vessel has made a few visits to ports in the last couple of years, namely Singapore, and Kemaman in Malaysia and has worked within sight of land quite a few times. I assume the owl came aboard during one of those times".

He went on: "I recall seeing an owl residing on board this vessel last year too. It tended to live in the pedestal of our 800-ton crane. The pedestal is quite large. I saw it last year perched on a light fitting. We don't have, to my knowledge, too many rodents scurrying around on deck. We do however get many small birds. Sparrows etc. We assume the owl has been living off them."

It is most probable that this individual, of the Asian sub-species *Tyto alba javanica*, the largest *Tyto* sub-species in the world, was a dispersing juvenile that had simply taken a wrong turn. Steve kept an eye open for the bird in the days after the photographs were taken but didn't see it again. Perhaps it carried on travelling?

Interested readers might like to have a look at the article entitled 'Barn Owls at sea' in 'Feedback' 43 (Spring 2010), which details records of Barn Owls at sea off the UK received by the Trust over the years. ★



In August we visited an amazing and inspirational project in Bristol staffed by volunteers to collect a donation of tools. The Bristol group are part of Tools for Self Reliance a small UK based charity working to help relieve poverty in Africa. Their approach is to empower people and help rural communities to build viable and sustainable livelihoods through the delivery of technical, business and life skills training and through the provision of tools for their trades. In Bristol they collect and refurbish tools to provide tool kits suitable for carpenters, builders, blacksmiths, tailors and mechanics. Anything they can't send is recycled or sold to raise funds towards shipment costs.

BOT supporters Tracey Morris & Shelley Wright are involved with the Bristol project and they asked us to let them know if there were any tools that might be useful for the Trust. Power tools are not sent abroad, so amongst other things, we collected an electric planer and a jigsaw. We also had the opportunity to hear about their project. By donating tool kits the project is working to reduce poverty, enabling people to secure employment and generate an income to look after themselves and their families.

If you have tools or time you would like to donate to this project you can visit their website for your nearest local group <http://www.tfsr.org> If you don't have access to the internet contact the Trust and we'll give you their details. ★

Funding Facts

Those of you who have the Annual Report included with this issue of Feedback will know that we ended our last financial year with a significant deficit (-£33,281). This was not unexpected, hence the difficult decision to reduce our conservation team by one post during the year despite the ever increasing workload. The Barn Owl Trust now has 11 staff, 6 full-time, 5 part-time; it does not have a fund-raising team; this would use money that we would rather spend on conservation work.

The general economic situation over the last few years has affected the Trust. Grant giving trusts have less money available and are receiving more applications. Like most other charities the grant income we receive has significantly dropped. Unfortunately the donations and other income we receive from fund-raising etc. does not cover our regular expenditure. This is fine in the years we have significant grants or substantial legacies, however we do like to try to use legacies for specific projects – the purchase of the LLP, the Wildlife Tower, the ponds and the Meeting Room are examples of this.

We really need to increase our regular income or reduce our overheads. Luckily the Solar Project (funded by a legacy) is helping us to do this, albeit in a small way, but the biggest area of expenditure for the Trust, like most organisations, is staff. We are incredibly fortunate to have a great team and their experience is something we can't really put a price on, so downsizing anymore is not something we want to consider at the moment. Therefore we really need to generate more income.

Wouldn't it be great if we could find a company prepared to pay one of our staff salaries for a year or two? Finding a sponsor for the two county surveys planned for 2013 and '14 would be wonderful, but hasn't happened yet! We'd be delighted to hear from anyone in a position to help us do either of these things or to generate significant funds.

Meanwhile we are tightening our belts and looking at everything to see what we can do to reduce the difference between our income and expenditure. Our Adoption Scheme has been running since 1989, that's 23 years and it's been £30 a year since then (£35 overseas) despite significant increases in postage costs. We think it's time to put the price up and so from 1st January 2013 the cost of adopting an owl will be £35 for UK residents and £40 for overseas. Hopefully this increase, which equates to less than 10p a week, won't discourage too many of our supporters. ➔

We did increase the suggested annual donation to our Friends scheme in 2008 because of the escalation in servicing costs. We now plan to do the same again.

From 1st January 2013 we will be asking individual new Friends to donate £25 per year (48p a week) and new family Friends £30 (58p), with an additional £5 per year for overseas Friends to cover higher postage costs.

We are aware that a large number of Friends pay well over the minimum donation for which we are extremely thankful. For existing Friends donating less than the new amounts, when your reminder is due we will ask you to consider increasing your support, but if you are unable to, or choose not to, we will still appreciate your continuing support at your existing rate.

Anyone currently giving us an annual donation might like to consider making it monthly. The minimum amount we can process efficiently is £3, equivalent to less than 70p a week, or less than 10p per day. If you felt that you could afford £1 a week (15p a day) this would cost you £4.33 a month and give us £52 a year, £65 if you are a UK tax payer who has given us a Gift Aid certificate.

In addition to suggesting an increase to donations we are asking you to consider other ways you can help us. See Looking Ahead (page 14). Maybe your employer has a Give as You Earn Scheme that you could promote to your colleagues or you could set up a recycling point to collect used ink cartridges and mobile phones in aid of the Trust? Leaving your copy of Feedback in a dentist or doctor's waiting room or finding a home for a leaflet dispenser would help to spread the word.

We really appreciate your current support for our work. Please keep it up and if you are able to help us anymore we **thank you** on behalf of Barn Owls and their supporters everywhere. ★



New Owly Gift Wrap Pack Photo: Frances Ramsden



Photo: Helen Lisk photography

Congratulations to Jacob Ramsden and Alison Blackler who got married on one of the rare sunny days in May this year. Jacob grew up alongside the Trust and did his first sponsored walk for us when he was about six. Jake & Ali met in 2004 and in 2006 Ali had a work experience placement with the Trust when she helped with the 'Bill Bailey wildlife tower' project. We wish them good health and much happiness together. ★

Ideas for Xmas

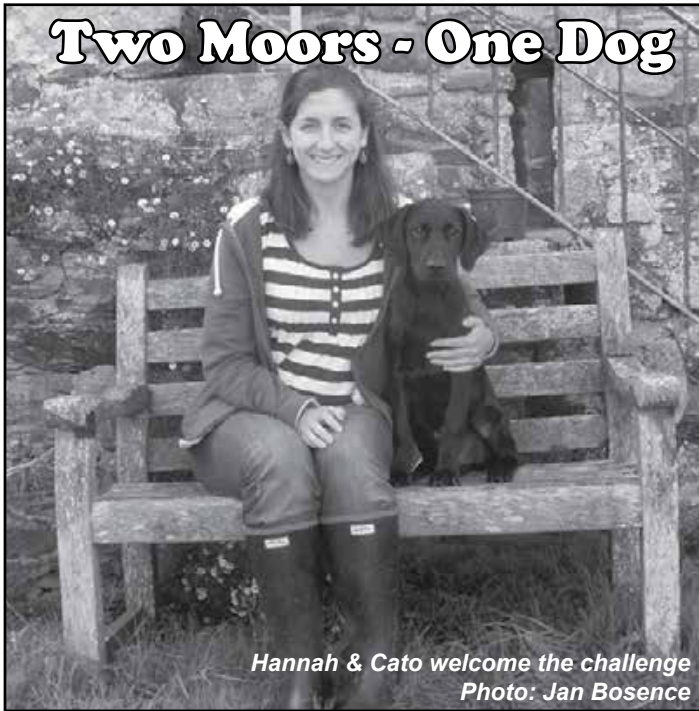
For Christmas this year we have 4 new cards plus the recently introduced Bumper Packs for those that love a bargain and of course our old favourites. The new Barn Owl Conservation Handbook, full of pictures and practical information will make a great gift for anyone that loves Barn Owls and everyone should have a cuddly owlet in its own nestbox.

How about our yummy Xmas puds, both traditional and chocolate? We have also found a supplier of really great recycled string to tie those awkward parcels and to wrap it all up we have just introduced our very own Owly Gift Wrap Pack – 20 sheets of coloured tissue paper (72 Square feet), 6 colour BOT owly gift tags and 4 metres of owly ribbon.

Visit our website www.barnowltrust.org.uk to see it all in glorious colour or call the office for more information. ★

Fund-raising News

Two Moors - One Dog

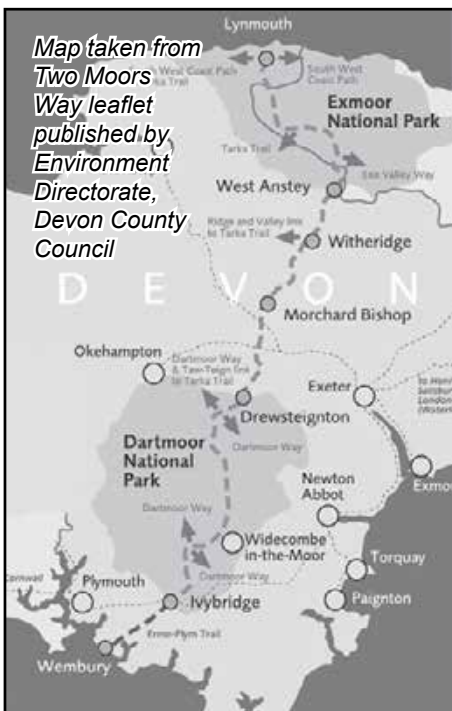


Hannah & Cato welcome the challenge
Photo: Jan Bosence

A new challenge has been set! The first week of April 2013 will see one girl and her dog crossing the county to raise funds for the Barn Owl Trust!

This adventure will take Cato (one young Black Labrador x Flat Coat Retriever) and Hannah (one not-quite so young person!) 116 miles across Devon. It will be the longest walk either of them has ever done, and is set to be quite an ordeal! However hopefully, with the support and generosity of friends and sponsors, it will be well worth it - it is, after all, for a very good cause!

The Two Moors Way was opened in 1976. It crosses Devon North to South, and you guessed it - includes Exmoor and Dartmoor! The original route went between Lynmouth and Ivybridge, but has since been extended with the Erm-Plym trail to make it a true coast to coast journey. The full 116 miles will take Hannah and Cato a week to walk. (An average of 16.5 miles per day). The route is shown on this map below.



Map taken from
*Two Moors
Way* leaflet
published by
Environment
Directorate,
Devon County
Council

We would be extremely grateful for any support for this mission! If you are able to donate there are several ways of doing so. Either by cheque made payable to The Barn Owl Trust, via the donation page on the Barn Owl Trust's website giving Two Moors as reason for donation, or through the "Everyclick" website (www.everyclick.com/hannah-two-moors-walk)

Thank you! ★
Cato &
Hannah Bosence
Conservation Assistant

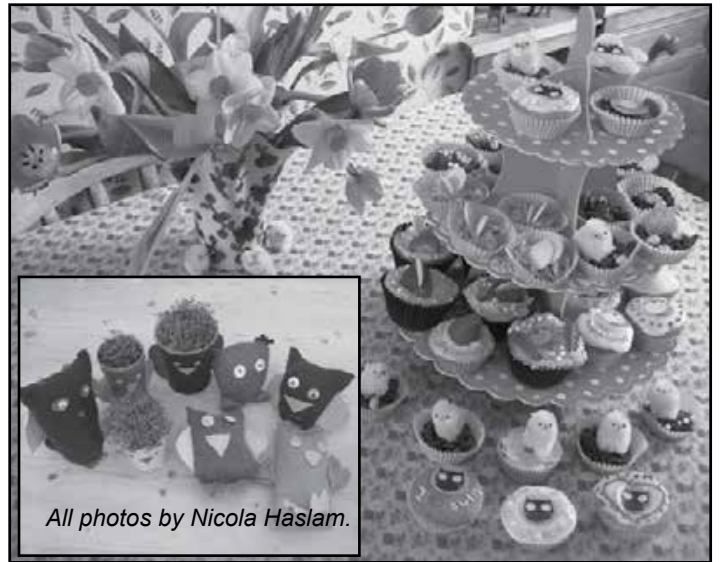
Fund-raising Star

Leonna Walters became a Junior Friend of the Barn Owl Trust, a.k.a an Owlet, on Christmas Day 2011 and in just 6 months she used her love of baking and arts and crafts to raise a smashing £50 for her other love - owls!



Leonna baked 42 cakes over the Easter weekend as well as a batch of cupcakes for her mum, Nicola, to sell at her workplace. She created the owl 'cress heads' shown below and featured in the last edition of our Owlets newsletter, 'The Flyer' and sold them along with her handmade sock owls at a local Diamond Jubilee Event in June.

We felt so inspired and encouraged by Leonna's enthusiasm and passion to help Barn Owls that we wanted to say a special **thank you**. Keep up the good work Leonna! ★



All photos by Nicola Haslam.

Looking Ahead

It's almost impossible to believe that next year the Trust will be 25 years old! Please help to support our work and to celebrate our 25th birthday next year in 2013 by promoting the Trust, recruiting new Friends or holding a fund-raising event.

A coffee morning for your friends, a car boot sale, a draw, plant stall, a sponsored 'something' or baking cakes for your work mates can all help to raise awareness and funds, best of all they can be fun too.

We can supply leaflets and posters to help you advertise, we can also add your event to our Forthcoming Events page on our website if you would like us to.

Whoever you are and wherever you live you can join in. Help support our work and celebrate 25 years of Barn Owl conservation.

If you live in the South West or are visiting Devon do look at our Diary Dates (page 10). Come along to an event, meet the team and see how your support really does help. We'd love to see you.

Individuals, groups, schools and business can all get involved. We need your support and *together we really can make a difference.* ★

Poppy SPRINGS into action!



All photos: Marianne Bryan

Poppy the Springer Spaniel is 15½ months old and lives with me at Waterleat, where the Trust is based. I had always wanted a dog and a companion to come to work with me where I build nestboxes for the Barn Owl Trust. When we met in May 2011 Poppy was just 8 weeks old. We immediately fell in love and decided to join forces.

A year on, Poppy has made a fantastic addition to the Trust's team, bringing laughter and fun to the office. Not only this but she has acquired a questionable taste for Matthew's (BOT Conservation Officer) socks, a love for the vital 2" by 1" nestbox baton and is always on hand for the opening of a new packet of biscuits. As you can imagine, she was more than happy to follow in the footsteps of Megan, Hugo and Whiskey and take on the challenge of a walk for wildlife!

Living in a beautiful valley, Poppy usually walks (actually runs!) through the open countryside, starting each day with a walk around the Barn Owl Trust's Lennon Legacy Project field. For her sponsored walk it was decided that we would walk to Redmount Residential Care Home to visit BOT's oldest and longest serving volunteer and fund-raiser, Ida Ramsden, my Granny. This could be achieved by walking 5 miles, starting at the BOT office, down through our local town of Ashburton and all the way to the neighbouring town of Buckfastleigh.

The first part of the walk Poppy knew well, it was one of our local woods known as Whiddon Scrubs or Bluebell Woods. For this leg of the journey she was off the lead and bounding up and down hills so vigorously I wondered whether she would tire herself out too early on!

It was, unusually for this year, a scorching hot day and by the time we got into town she seemed grateful for a bit of down-time on the lead. She sported her special BOT t-shirt in the hope of

raising some last minute sponsorship. We stopped off en-route at The Dartmoor Lodge for a cool refreshing bowl of water. This was where she collected that last minute sponsorship, we then set forth to Buckfastleigh and her next stop, Redmount.

By now we had completed over half of our journey and stopped to enjoy a nice cup of tea and a chat with Ida (pictured above). After all this time walking so well on the lead I thought Poppy deserved a good old fashioned run in the countryside, so rather than walk back the way we came, along the roads, we hitched a quick lift up to Buckland Beacon on Dartmoor.

As we stepped out onto the sunny moor I wondered if after all this Poppy might be tired and there was still 2 miles left to go, but it soon became apparent I had nothing to worry about! she charged off to explore; leaping and springing over heather and gorse in true Springer Spaniel style.

We soon found the River Ashburn and followed it all the way down off the moor through beautiful woodland ending up back in familiar territory, the Lennon Legacy Project field. Poppy enjoyed a quick dip in the River Ashburn to cool off before heading home.

As you can imagine, we were glad to rest our weary feet and paws. To my surprise, after a quick nap and a bite to eat, Poppy was up with a long stretch, a wag of the tail and a playful look in her eye that seemed to say...Again? ★

Jasmin Ramsden
BOT Handyman & Nestbox Builder

Poppy walked (ran) over seven miles and raised a grand total of £1105.43 for the Barn Owl Trust and is eager to take up the challenge again next year with a longer walk and with hopes of an even bigger total. Thank you to all who sponsored her. Eds

Thanks and Things

Thank you to everyone who sent us items from our Wants List, Barn Owl pellets for schools and goodies for recycling. We are very grateful for your support;

Hazel at Ashburton Post Office, Mr & Mrs Underhill, Church's of Ashburton, Barbara Moran, Kim & Ed McNeil, Mrs R Hooper, Melanie White, Cheryl Crichton, Ann & Peter Stansell, Muriel Childs, Marsh Christian Trust, Cassie (4 Paws), Henry & Lucy Nuttall, Ms R Bowen, St Agnes Museum, Keith Dickinson, Wendy Shaw, Truro CAB office, Dave & Gwyneth Parish, Mark Pountney, Mrs Lynne Green, Paul Dix, John Webber, One Stop Sealing, Mark Tatam, Cedwyn Davies, Anna Milner, Anne Meeghan, Mike & Margaret North, Mrs Margaret Taylor, Jackie Golding, Melanie & Mike Benwell, Paul Rendell (Dartmoor News), Lesley Tompkins, Tracey Morris & Shelley Wright and Tools for Self Reliance. Mrs E Hammett, Fred Sterns, Richard and Leigh-Anne Boucher and Reg and Beryl Welsh.

We'd also like to thank Rob Hamar whose Dinky Toy collection raised a total of £477 at auction, the Axe Valley Runners for their donation from "The Grizzly" race (Seaton), Margaret & Derrick Crocker and Shelley Wright & Tracey Morris for funds raised from plant sales, Leonna Walters (featured on page 14) and her Mum Nicola, Jeremy Hepworth for donations from his Open Garden, staff and pupils from Coningsby St Michael C of E Primary School in Lincolnshire who had various events to raise funds for the Trust – well done and thank you all.

Thanks to all those who returned the readers survey with the last issue. We have saved a lot of postage on this issue & the comments were also helpful (including those from people who prefer their Feedback as a printed magazine). Over 160 people are now sent Feedback by email.

In true Barn Owl Trust tradition we have a Wants List. If you have any of the following items, surplus to your requirements, we can put them to good use. There is a list on our website of our latest Wants and as you will see from page 5 we'll be delighted if you would like to donate towards a particular item:

- ◇ Large quantity of used roofing sheets, (steel, box profile)
- ◇ Foreign change and notes (please enclose a note of the type of currency if known)
- ◇ Good quality pencils - 2B/HB/B
- ◇ Chinagraph pencil
- ◇ 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 / lengths of 25x 50mm tanalised batten
- ◇ A4 and A3 recycled paper and card both coloured and white
- ◇ Box trailer in good working order
- ◇ Inkjet cartridges for HP Deskjet 930C/HP Officejet Pro 8100
- ◇ Padded envelopes & bubble wrap
- ◇ Postage stamps (both new and used - especially commemorative and foreign). Used includes larger gold and white "stamps" on parcels.
- ◇ Anabat detector
- ◇ Hand held hetrodyne bat detector
- ◇ Pair of waders - for working in the ponds
- ◇ Night vision binoculars - generation 2
- ◇ Petrol leaf blower
- ◇ Carpet suitable for the office
- ◇ Metal detector
- ◇ 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
- ◇ Emulsion Paint (pale colour) sufficient to paint an office
- ◇ Brown parcel tape 50mm x 66mm
- ◇ A3 Rotary Trimmer for paper and card
- ◇ New or nearly new wood chisels, particularly wide/rounded
- ◇ Large magnifying glass
- ◇ Small DAB radio

Thank you for thinking of us ★

Tail piece ...



The nip in the air confirms that autumn has arrived with Christmas galloping towards us at a frightening rate. But the seasons this year have been really confused with many plants and birds, like Barn Owls, having a second go at reproduction. We have a Marsh Marigold flowering in the pond right now which is lovely; normally we see them just in late spring and early summer.

As we said in the 'welcome' there really can be no doubt that Climate Change is happening. Who knows what extraordinary events will be next, we just know that they are coming and that humans and wildlife will be affected.

It is great to be able to say that this year has been better for Barn Owls. The mild winter undoubtedly helped, but the unprecedented summer rainfall meant that what could have been a brilliant season for the birds was simply 'better'. I've never seen the river Ashburn, here in our valley, as high in August and the Marbled White butterflies and many other species of insect really didn't have a great summer!

The thing about Climate Change is that it's such a huge and daunting problem that individuals feel powerless and governments lack the political will to tackle it. There is so much conflicting information 'out there' and the planet's climate does go through 'natural' fluctuations anyway, so why should we do anything? Well, the difference this time is that human activity is contributing to the speed of the change and the way that we humans are using the Earth is having a detrimental effect on the natural environment and other species. Even today, with

everything we know about the delicate balance of life on our planet, indigenous tribes like the Kayapo People of the Amazon Rainforest are being threatened by development in the interest of 'economic growth'.

We all want the benefits of 'civilisation' but consumerism and celebrity status have become the 'new religion' of the developed world and in its wake it brings us individuals who are so out of touch with virtuous values that they feel justified to kill and destroy. If those same individuals had grown up with respect for life and the beauty of the natural world then many of the horrific murders that make the news might never have occurred.

Surely as a species, human beings are bright enough to know that there is no such thing as constant economic growth? We need leaders who appreciate that truly sustainable development is a much healthier alternative for us and for our planet. Any gardener can tell you that if you don't feed your soil your future crops will suffer. Maybe it really will be: "only when the last tree has gone and the last river poisoned, will we realise, we cannot eat money".

Personally I want to believe that we can learn and, that if enough of us do our bit to make a better world it will have a positive effect. Make each day count, appreciate today rather than yearning for tomorrow or yesterday, live life as if you will die tomorrow but treat the earth as though you will live forever. If we think globally and act locally we can inspire and help each other and work *together to make a world of difference.* ★

Frances Ramsden