

Issue Number 50 - Autumn 2013



FEEDBACK



& the

Barn  Owl Trust Annual Report 2012 - 2013

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



25th Anniversary Edition



Conserving the Barn Owl and its Environment

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Mountain Horizon Photography*

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and information to:*

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Diary Dates 2013 - 2014

Sept. 11th Weds - LLP Talk & Ploughmans Supper 7pm
Oct. 24th Thurs - Autumn Colours Walk & refreshments 2pm
Nov. 15th Thurs - Autumn Colours Walk & refreshments 3pm
Dec. 12th Thurs - LLP Walk & Festive Wreath making 2pm
2014 - Jan 15th Weds - Conservation Team Day 10am
Feb 13th Thurs - Barn Owl Ecology Talk & refreshments 3pm
Mar. 26th Weds - Conservation Team Day 10am
Apr 25th Thurs - Dawn Chorus Walk & refreshments 5am

Contact the office for more details or to book a place at an event - booking is essential as places are strictly limited. There may be a charge for some of the events. Check out Forthcoming Events on our website for dates of other LLP events: www.barnowltrust.org.uk ★

Welcome to a very unusual issue of Feedback. We said last time we wanted to make No. 50 a slightly larger issue and include some colour in the printed version to celebrate our 50th edition and our 25th anniversary - those of you that receive it by email have previously had full-colour versions. This copy does have a colour cover and it is bigger because it also contains our Annual Report 2012 -2013. We've produced it like this as a compromise, to allow us to have a 'special issue' and to reduce our printing costs at a time when we are having to 'tighten our belts'.

When a group of volunteers got together back in the early 1980's to conserve the Barn Owl and its Environment none of us had any idea that it would develop into the organisation it is today. Back then when we talked about conserving the environment to protect the Barn Owl people thought we were a bit wacky. These days almost everyone acknowledges that human activity is affecting our native species. This is a disastrous year for our wild Barn Owls, see page 3. They have been badly affected by our 'record breaking' weather over recent years, as have many other kinds of wildlife and humans.

The Barn Owl Trust's work; our practical conservation, the provision of information and our education and research work are more vital than ever given the problems the birds are facing both in the UK and abroad. However given our current financial situation the trustees are wrestling with priorities and are having to look at everything we do and work out how to increase income and reduce expenditure - see page 15 for more information on how we hope to do this.

This issue is not all doom and gloom. Our new website: barnowlsurvey.org.uk got off to a great start in May and we've had reports of sightings from all over the UK. Unfortunately very few reports of nesting so far though. If you see a Barn Owl, alive or dead, or know of a Barn Owl site do report it. You can return to the website and see your records at any time. More on this in the next issue.

The Devon Barn Owl Survey is well underway although the field-work started much later than planned. Those Barn Owls that are breeding are much later than usual. Although it's too early to be completely sure, early indications are that there are fewer Barn Owls than in 2003. Luke Sutton joined us as a Survey Officer in April - page 8.

We celebrated our 25th Anniversary with a brilliant Acoustic Music Evening on the 2nd August - see page 12 - and raised almost £900. Everyone had a great time and those of you that have been to a BOT event may spot a few familiar faces in the photographs. On page 13 you can see how other folk have helped to raise funds and awareness of the Trust and its work during our anniversary year. It's not too late to hold a coffee morning or bake some cakes to support our work! Be inspired, we can help with posters and leaflets. Talking of support, we are immensely proud of our Conservation Assistant Hannah. She completed her challenge - see page 4 - in April and raised an amazing amount of money for the Trust. Thank you to all of you that sponsored her.

There was a very unusual event in July which we've shared with you. The Conservation Team had a day out - page 6. This was the '2nd' CT outing in twenty-five years, so not a frequent happening and we were blessed with wonderful weather.

We continue to have students on work experience and placements - page 8 and in March we provided an internship for a Bulgarian naturalist. On page 14 he explains something of the country's history and its Barn Owls.

On the left we have our Diary Dates for the next few months. If you live in Devon or are visiting we'd love you to come and join us. The events will give you an opportunity to see the Lennon Legacy Project land first-hand and how we manage it for wildlife. If you are not able to come along and meet us we hope that Feedback will give you an insight into the work and the folk at the Trust. For those of you with internet access our website www.barnowltrust.org.uk is not only full of information on Barn Owls there are numerous slideshows and even some videos showing our work There is also a monthly LLP Diary - see page 5 - to keep you up to date with the latest happenings on our land.

This year has been challenging so far for both Barn Owls and the Trust. However we are certain that with your continued support we can go on Conserving the Barn Owl and its Environment. Thank you all.

Frances Ramsden & Marianne Bryan ★



News Bites

New Survey Website

Our new website went live on 1st May this year - www.barnowlsurvey.org.uk It is now really easy for people to report Barn Owl sightings, roosts and nest sites and even dead Barn Owls on-line and then log in to see their previous reports. Receiving reports from the public is an important part of population monitoring and allows the targeting of conservation work where it is most needed.

BOT's 25th Birthday

This year the Barn Owl Trust is celebrating twenty-five years as a registered charity. See page 13 to get some idea how you can get involved.

Rodenticide Campaign

In May our Head of Conservation, David Ramsden MBE, gave a presentation at the HSE (Health & Safety Executive) Seminar on the future for Second Generation Anti-coagulant Rodenticides in Britain. See more on page 4.

Devon Barn Owl Survey

Site visits for the Devon survey were delayed due to the late start to the breeding season. However they are now well underway and a volunteer training day was held in August.

East Yorkshire

Rob Salter who has been in touch with the BOT since 2004 reports, "It's very bad here in East Yorkshire. We usually ring over 350 Barn Owls but will be lucky to ring 60 this year. Three bad winters have done so much damage to the most amazing bird on earth".

Mouse Meets Owlets

In August a live mouse moved in with the owlets in our nestcam. This fascinating footage was captured on video by 'scyllabub' and there is a link in our August Nestcam Diary.

A Book to Save a Species

We are delighted to announce that TV wildlife presenter Chris Packham has reviewed our Barn Owl Conservation Handbook on his blog. Chris says: "Its detail is impressive to say the least. Each aspect of the Barn Owl's care is meticulously outlined and the latest practical and applied methods of conservation are clearly analysed and presented. If ever there was a handbook which could save a species then this is it".

Cornwall County Survey

The 2014 Cornwall Barn Owl Survey to update records collected by the Trust in 1994 and 2004 and review the county population estimate has been put on indefinite hold. BOT trustees have reluctantly decided that it cannot go ahead unless we can raise the funds needed to cover the costs. "It would be over-stretching the charity at a time when we need to conserve our resources to ensure we can continue core work" said Chair of Trustees Keith Grant. "Of course we would be delighted to hear from anyone interested in sponsoring the county survey." ★

280% more Barn Owls were recorded dead in March this year than other years - a high proportion have been found emaciated Photo: David Ramsden

"The worst Barn Owl breeding season for over thirty years" is how 2013 is being described by conservationists throughout the UK and beyond. Voted Britain's most popular farmland bird, this icon of the countryside is now in very serious trouble.

The Barn Owl Trust issued a press release in August to highlight the situation. A run of extreme weather events since 2009 has devastated not only people and property but Barn Owls and other wildlife. The final blow was March 2013. Barn Owl mortality usually peaks in February and then things improve but in March this year mortality just kept increasing and by the end of the month huge numbers were dead. At a time when Barn Owls should have been thinking of breeding the British Trust for Ornithology recorded a 280% increase in reports of dead birds, many of which had starved.

Numbers were already low due to the bitterly cold winters of 2009/10 and 2010/11 and the extremely wet 'English summers' of 2010 and 2011. "In 2012 our hopes were high" said David, our Head of Conservation here at the BOT. "Fantastic summer weather in March 2012 meant that the owls started breeding earlier and by late May we were finding nests with as many as 7 well-grown owlets. Then in June it all went horribly wrong. The rain started and just didn't stop. This prevented the adults hunting and many young birds starved. In some cases, we found entire broods of beautiful owlets dead in the nest".

This year's round of 73 Annual Monitoring Site visits by the Barn Owl Trust has now revealed the extent of the devastation. On average nesting occurs at 51% of sites; this year's figure is a mere 12% and 47% of nest sites are completely unoccupied. At the 12% of sites where pairs have managed to survive and breed, the average number of young in the nest is just 2 rather than the 4 or 5 that are needed for population recovery. Britain's biggest regular Barn Owl survey carried out every 10 years in Devon is checking 1,234 sites this year. Out of 276 sites checked so far, Barn Owls are nesting at just 7. Of these 7, only 4 have young in the box and 2 have abandoned their eggs.

Figures from independent Barn Owl groups around the country are all painting a similar picture. The Shropshire Barn Owl Group has 120 sites where they usually have 36 nests; this year they have found only 4. The West Sussex group has 90 sites that normally have up to 55 nests, this year there are only 5. And it's not only the UK that is affected. Dr Akos Klein from the Hungarian Barn Owl Foundation has found similar results, "Out of 30 regular nest sites we found 1 active nest and 1 solitary bird. This is pretty much the case all over Hungary. Our March was like January."

A hundred years ago the Barn Owl was a common farmland bird, if this year is anything to go by this beautiful bird is now far more scarce than it was in the 1980's when it was estimated to have declined by 70% since 1932.

If you see a Barn Owl, dead or alive you can record your sighting on-line at our new Survey Website www.barnowlsurvey.org.uk ★

A Long Way to Go!

A great many EU member states are opposed to the use of Second Generation Anti-coagulant Rodenticides (SGARs) and the prospect of an EU-wide ban has recently sent a shock wave through the Rodenticide and Rodent Control industries; particularly because there are no new rodent poisons on the horizon and rats are clearly a threat to human health. Their colonisation of some small UK islands and the devastating consequences for ground nesting seabirds shows that they can do real damage to some of our native wildlife too. It is an inescapable fact that rats need to be controlled. Despite the fact that poisoning is NOT the only way to deal with many infestations, the use of poisons is set to continue. Indeed the EU has now allowed member states to continue licensing the use of SGARs for periods of up to 5 years provided that certain criteria are met including the minimisation of environmental risks through mitigation measures.

To date, mitigation measures such as use-restriction regulations and statutory safety notices on SGAR products have failed to prevent: 1) increases in wildlife contamination and; 2) increases in resistance to SGARs in some parts of the UK. The extent to which rodenticides have contaminated small-mammal predators is shocking. Latest results from the Predatory Bird Monitoring Scheme show that ALL of the Kestrels they examined in 2011 were contaminated along with 94% of Red Kites. The proportion of Barn Owls contaminated reached its highest level in 2010: 91%! And we are not just talking about a restricted area. The analysed corpses were sent in by the public from across England, Scotland and Wales. In other words, virtually the entire populations of these three sentinel species have been feeding on rodents that contain rat poison.

Resistance to SGARs is an increasing problem. This is where rats are feeding on SGARs and surviving. In the worst-affected area (South Midlands down to Berkshire) Local Authorities and other Pest Control Operators have been seeking special permission from the Health & Safety Executive (HSE) to use the strongest SGARs (those only licensed for indoor use) to control rats around buildings and in open areas accessed by the public. So far, none of these applications have been granted and Authorities have been unable to discharge their responsibilities for protecting public health.

Against a background of EU pressure, increasing wildlife contamination, and rising resistance to SGARs amongst rats, a major shake-up of SGAR use (licencing, mitigation) was due. It's happening now. The process started with a "stakeholder engagement process" that invited responses from all interest groups on an HSE-selected set of questions. We were delighted that the RSPB, Wildlife Trusts' and the Hawk & Owl Trust supported our response to the consultation. We sent our Head of Conservation David on a 600-mile round trip to attend a meeting and give a presentation at the HSE Seminar on the future for Second Generation Anti-coagulant Rodenticides in Britain.

Was it worth it? YES. The rodenticide manufacturers, the user groups including Pest Control Officers and Gamekeepers, the Trade Associations, the Chartered Institute of Environmental Health, the Health and Safety Executive's Pesticide Regulation Directorate, and the Environmental Scientists that provide vital evidence-base for the discussions (particularly the Centre for Ecology and Hydrology's Predatory Bird Monitoring Scheme) are now much more aware of the need to reduce secondary poisoning, particularly of Kestrels, Red Kites, and of course Barn Owls. As a result of the presentation the Trust was invited by the Chartered Institute of Environmental Health to submit an article to their newsletter; see Pest Control News - PCN Issue 95. ★



RSPB office staff at the BOT Photo: Hannah Boscence

RSPB Visits BOT

At the beginning of July, seven lovely ladies from the offices of the South West branch of the RSPB left their desks and came to visit us. They spent half a day here hearing about the work of the Trust, looking at the LLP and meeting the staff. The day was arranged in order that they can see what we do and what advice we give, so that they could do the same - maintaining standards across the South West. ★

Didn't She do Well



She did it! Hannah at Wembury Photo: David Ramsden

Our intrepid Conservation Assistant, Hannah completed her marathon walk, the Two Moors Way, Lynmouth to Wembury - 117 miles in April 2013. "After some time off to recuperate, and a week or so of collecting the remaining sponsorship, we had a grand total. An astonishing £3,490. It's 5 months on and I am still overwhelmed by this. Three and a half times more than the initial target! Thank you very much to all who donated money to the cause, supported me along the way (especially my mum!) and cheered me on. It makes every last blister worth it!"

Well done Hannah. You were amazing as was the amount of money you raised to support the Trust.

Hannah's daily diary and photos are available on our website - search for Two Moors - One Girl. ★

LLP Update



The spring began slowly with a terribly cold and wet March. The mean temperature here was 3.8°C compared with 8.7°C in 2012 and 11.5°C in 2011 and we had 156mm of rain (23.4mm in 2012 and 20mm in 2011). Despite this a Small Tortoiseshell and a Peacock managed to put in an appearance on the 5th. A month later, the UK Butterfly Monitoring Scheme should have started but temperatures were still too low. Nevertheless, a further two Small Tortoiseshells and another Peacock braved the biting northerly wind to bask on some bramble. By the end of April, things had improved sufficiently for Orange-tip and Brimstone to be on the wing, with numbers of Small Tortoiseshell into double figures. Numbers continued to build through the spring and into the summer as a high pressure established itself. By the end of June, temperatures were consistently above 25°C and our butterflies thrived; 63 Marbled Whites were recorded in early July, whilst 260 Meadow Browns, 36 Small Skippers and 6 Small Coppers had been seen by mid-month, along with the first Gatekeepers of the year.



The Mandarin drake on the 'Flo Pond' Photo: Marianne Bryan

The bird breeding season was also late, although the first signs were there in March despite the cold. An over-wintering Woodcock was still in the woods adjacent to the LLP. A Mistle Thrush and Bullfinch flew over east mid-month as House Sparrow, Blue Tit and Robin were all watched carrying nesting material in and around the barn. A pair of Mallard were on the Flo pond about the same time, and a pair of Dippers became increasingly noisier as the month progressed. A Siskin was also collecting nesting material by the start of April, and by mid-month two Chiffchaff, a Blackcap and a Song Thrush were on territory and in song. By late April, a Barn Owl was heard screeching over the field after dark. A pair of Swallows were feeding over the ponds and checking out the new implement shelter, whilst a pair of Nuthatches packed mud around the access hole of one of the small bird boxes. A Green Woodpecker yaffled away in the background. In the first week of May several Chiffchaff and Blackcap were in song all around the hedgerows, and the first Kestrel for several months was seen hovering above the solar panels. By mid-month, a pair of Mandarin were seen either on the ponds or nearby River Ashburn, and were around together for a couple of weeks before the female disappeared. We had erected a couple of duck boxes especially for the Mandarins, however the female was nowhere to be found. The male was still being seen intermittently throughout May and was spotted sitting next to a Mallard Duck and her ducklings on the island!

Broods of Blue Tit, Great Tit, House Sparrow and Nuthatch were all ringed in our nestboxes. Most remarkably a brood of three Dippers were found in the nestbox we'd placed under one of our



Matthew, Gill & Sarah mulching fruit trees in the orchard Photo: David Ramsden

bridges and these were ringed too. A female Mallard appeared from nowhere on the Flo pond with 4 ducklings at this time, but these slowly dwindled so that by the second week of June only one remained. A migrant Red Kite tracked southwards over neighbouring high ground in early June, and the brood of Dippers had clearly fledged going by the noise; constant food begging and contact calls coming from the Ashburn. The rough grassland must have had some impressive invertebrate interest as a Sand Martin and up to hundred Swift, Swallow and House Martin foraged low over the field in the glorious summer weather.

Common Toads reappeared at the start of March. The ponds were already alive with frog tadpoles at this time and throughout the spring. By June, two adult Slow Worms and later five (two adults, three young ones) were found under one of the corrugated metal sheets.

Field Voles also made an appearance under the corrugated sheets, with a single vole at the end of May and a nest and food store there by mid-June. By early July a Weasel had clearly found the nest as it was seen under the corrugate with two dead voles, one of which had been decapitated.

Conservation work in the field started in late winter and tackled some overhanging branches along the holly hedge. In April, a group from Exeter University Business Team visited for a day's volunteering. In the morning, the Alders on the island were coppiced and a duck bivouac built for cover in the hope that the Mallards would reappear later in the spring. After a wonderful lunch in the Meeting Room, a huge mass of bramble was cut out of North Park; a task that had been on the long-list of things to do for some time. It's amazing what can be achieved by a small group of focussed people. By May the abstraction pipes in the river had partially blocked so these were set upon. Only one was successfully unblocked at this time; the other had to wait until the water had warmed up a bit in July. Also in May, Sarah Williams selected the LLP as a venue for one of her 150 fund-raising challenges (see page 9 and photo left). She helped tidy up bramble in the orchard and then spent the rest of the day weeding the mulch around the fruit trees. This inspirational woman then presented us with a cheque for £150! Fabulous...

Matthew Twiggs
Conservation Officer

Our website has a Lennon Legacy Project News page which is updated monthly to bring you the latest from the LLP. Go to: www.barnowltrust.org.uk select the 'About the Trust' tab then 'News and Events' and select 'Lennon Legacy Project News'. ★

Conservation Team Day Out



Faith & Philip (left) with the Conservation Team; David, Jasmin, Hannah, Matt, Luke & Stuart Photo: Frances Ramsden

In July this year the Conservation Team had a 'day out'. Philip and Faith Hambly have been in touch with the Barn Owl Trust for nearly 10 years, being regular visitors to our stand at the Royal Cornwall Show each June. Philip is Chairman of the Cornwall branch of Butterfly Conservation and Philip and Faith have 50+ acres which they manage primarily for butterflies. This year, Philip and David, our Head of Conservation ended up chatting at length about habitat management, resulting in an invitation to visit them and see how they managed their land.

David thought that this would be a nice opportunity for the whole Conservation Team, and Philip was more than happy to have us and so the 2nd staff day out in 25 years was set!



Above: Some areas are ploughed and seeded with an annual flower mix Photos: Philip Hambly & Frances Ramsden

Although the initial agreed date was postponed due to torrential rain, the re-arranged date turned out to be an absolute corker. And what a place! On arrival, cups of tea and Faith's homemade cheesy biscuits (food is always a sure fire way to win us over!). We were then guided around their beautiful property. Their enthusiasm for wildlife was obvious and was truly infectious! The Hambly's neighbours inspired by what they had begun, had also started managing some of their land with wildlife in mind, and it was on the neighbours' land that we began our guided walk.

Philip explained that he has always done a small amount of farming, never anything intensive, and as he reached retirement he began to think more about how various techniques affected wildlife. Although managed in a very different way from our 'litter-layer', it was very impressive. There were butterflies everywhere, Broad-bodied Chasers and Damselflies by the ponds. We then walked through Yellow Rattle as far as the eye could see, interspersed with Burdocks and Ragged-Robin. As we reached a wooded pathway, Philip explained how it had been reclaimed from bog and undergrowth; he stopped to show us the Oak tree where the Purple Hairstreak Butterflies were to be found.

This truly is a very special site, and there were so many types of habitat we were astonished at how much work it must have taken to create and care for. As we were busy marvelling at the Bog Pimpernel in a wooded clearing, we were asked to go through an unassuming break in the hedgerow to what Philip referred to as "his bit of theatre!", and it certainly had the wow factor! The lakes were teeming with life, Lilies of various colours were blooming, Rudd occasionally breaking the water's surface and Swallows practiced their acrobatics whilst coming down to drink. We were shown to the summerhouse where there were photos Philip had taken of all the various visitors to the site. Some human, but those were few and far between in comparison to those of Kingfishers, Stoats, Hedgehogs and (much to Matt's - our resident birder's envy) even a visiting Squacco Heron!

We want to say a big thank you to Philip and Faith, for the marvellous lunch, for being so generous with their time and allowing us to visit their stunning and inspiring sanctuary. ★

Hannah Bosence
Conservation Assistant

In Memoriam

The Trust has received a legacy
from the estate of the late
Avril Stainton

and
donations in memory of

Kevin Moseley,
Shirley Anne Ball,
Barbara Angela Chisholm,
Rita Gargrave,
Gavin John Robertson
and Olwen Hunt



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

They all now have a leaf on our Memory Tree

Bird News



2013 has been very quiet for Barn Owl casualties so far; probably due to the low number of birds in the wild. The only Barn Owl we have received this year arrived in March, in very poor condition. It was found on somebody's lawn, severely emaciated. It was almost certainly a victim of the exceptionally harsh weather. Unfortunately it was found far too late and there was nothing we could do.

We have had a busier year as far as Tawny Owls are concerned. In April we had a bird brought to us that was underweight with a severe mouth infection. Despite the vet prescribing strong antibiotics, the damage had been done and the bird did not pull through. In May, we had a Tawny brought to our stand at the Devon County Show. The bird was found injured by the side of the road. It was underweight, indicating that it may have been injured for a while and it had fluid leaking from its ears. This one also didn't survive. Fortunately there was some happy news in May. We had a Tawny that was found in a boiler room at a local college. It had been accidentally shut in and was starved and dehydrated. After being fed and looked after for a week or so, we released the bird back into the wild.

Our most recent arrival is a male Tawny that was found extremely underweight and missing his tail feathers. He only weighed around 260g. A healthy weight would be over 450g! We didn't hold out much hope for him, but he is fighting fit again, and once he has regrown his tail feathers, he should go back to the wild.

Our live owl line and enquiry service have reflected the low Barn Owl population with far fewer calls and emails than usual. However we do have one story with a happy ending on the right.

Unfortunately, we have lost a few of our resident birds this year. We lost Mandy, one of our Tawnies in February. She arrived with only one eye many years ago, and due to an infection, went blind completely. She didn't manage to adapt and was put to sleep. In April, Olivia, one of our Barn Owls became ill. Unfortunately she didn't respond to treatment and died sometime later.

In April, another of our Tawnies picked up an eye infection, but after a course of antibiotics, went back to its aviary.

In May, we had a third Tawny, Summer, with an eye infection. Summer also came in many years ago with an eye injury. Despite now being completely blind, she has adapted well to her condition, and is now living in an aviary by herself, to ensure that she does not have to compete for food.

We took in nine new residents in July: two Barn Owls and seven Tawnies. They came from another sanctuary where they had been for several years. This was because of the ill health of their carer. They will live out the rest of their days with the other owls here.

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 and of course the volunteers that collect and deliver casualties for us.

Stuart Baker
Assistant Conservation Officer

Answers to 'Name These Birds'	
14.	Raw Spor - Sparrow
15.	Where Rota Sold - Shorteared Owl
16.	Ripe Green - Peregrine
17.	Bald Brick - Blackbird
18.	Pip Red - Dipper
19.	Pride Span - Sandpiper
20.	Wit Paid Poem - Meadow Pipit
21.	Smith Hurles - Mistle Thrush
22.	Shout Alrmen - House Martin
23.	Start Him - Marsh Tit
24.	Trail Way Egg - Grey Wagtail
25.	Dear Filler - Fieldfare
13.	Go Pine - Pigeon
12.	Lob Warn - Barn Owl
11.	Lite Tub - Bluett
10.	Hello May Mew - Yellowhammer
9.	Last Grin - Starling
8.	Hunt Chat - Nuthatch
7.	Peg Alm - Magpie
6.	New Grid - Redwing
5.	Elk Rest - Kestrel
4.	Racy Fletch - Flycatcher
3.	Keep Rod Cow - Woodpecker
2.	Torn Armco - Cormorant
1.	Lug Sale - Seagull



*The soggy guest, whilst waiting for advice from the BOT
Photo: Fiona Davies*

Wet Weather Woes

Fiona Davies from Cambridge got in touch one morning after one of our summer downpours, when her cats alerted her to a soggy visitor in the garden. Having put the bedraggled Barn Owl in a cat box to keep it from harm, she gave us a call to find out how to help it. Fiona's proactive approach proved to be a wonderful success. Here's what happened:

"Dear Hannah / Barn Owl Trust,
Thank you so much for all your advice and the brilliant information on your web pages. Our soggy guest had dried out by about 3.00 pm (that took a lot longer than I thought!!) but seemed reluctant to eat. So, I read your fantastic pages and chopped up a day old chick, (newly purchased from our very helpful pet store for a huge 15p) with my sewing scissors(!) soaked them in tepid water and with the help of my daughter fed our owl (wrapped in a towel) soggy chick chunks a couple at a time until a whole chick had been consumed over a 4 hour period. Then to our delight sitting on the patio at about 9.15 we heard a Barn Owl screeching. We think whoever it was, was searching for our guest. So, after checking the weather forecast, which was favourable, we took it out into the garden and released it.

"It was the most magical moment ever. Our Barn Owl flew beautifully, majestically and more importantly strongly over the fields out the back of our house for quite some distance before disappearing around a field corner. Absolutely wonderful. My 15 year old daughter was speechless. Thank you – for providing a great service. Without your help I have no doubt that a fox would have cleared up the poor soggy creature, if my cats had not alerted me to its plight.

"An added bonus is that we have builders in at the moment and have had a very busy house today with tradesmen coming and going, so we have probably educated 15 people in how to help a soggy owl. Brilliant – everyone was fascinated.

Fiona Davies

"PS Am keeping a chick in the freezer for emergencies – just in case this ever happens again!!" ★



Team Talk

Luke Sutton started work with the Trust in April 2013 on a fixed-term contract as a Survey Officer. His main role is the coordination and fieldwork for the Devon Barn Owl Survey 2013. He spends his time making appointments with landowners and checking Barn Owl sites in the county recorded since the last survey in 2003.



Luke Photo: Marianne Bryan

Luke is currently studying part-time for a BSc in Ecology with The Open University and is also involved with other raptor research in the South West in his spare time.

Before joining the Trust Luke worked as a structural carpenter for 5 years for a local timber frame company but originally trained as a boat builder in Cornwall. He served his apprenticeship at Gweek Quay on the Helford river, building traditional boats and worked in the industry for 10 years before making the move to Devon. He also spent a year at sea working on inshore fishing boats in North Cornwall, where he was also a volunteer Lifeboatman with the RNLI.

Luke enjoys climbing and hill walking and generally being outdoors. He has travelled to South East Asia, Australia and New Zealand, as well as exploring the UK, particularly coastal and upland areas. He is interested in wildland conservation. ★

Farley Lapenna spent a week here this summer:

"I chose the Barn Owl Trust for my Work Experience because I have always been interested in the conservation of owls; when I saw the Barn Owl Trust on my work experience options, the idea really appealed to me and I haven't regretted my decision since arriving.



Farley & Baley Photo: Hannah Bosence

"Every day has been filled with new experiences, and I can guarantee that this week I have seen more owls and wildlife than many people will in a lifetime. It's a great place to be and you really feel welcomed by all when you arrive.

"Each day of the week I was given a variety of tasks that I never thought I would do in my life, for instance, I hadn't realised that leaflet folding was an actual job until I was doing it! On two days I thoroughly enjoyed driving around Devon with other volunteers and members of staff doing the Barn Owl Survey. I helped feed the owls, and I cleaned out the owl aviaries with my newfound friends.

"I learned so much over the course of this week, and I am hoping to come back here next summer or spring to do some volunteer work for them. I am as artistic as they come, and after this experience I have decided to do a mixture of animal conservation work and artwork over the next few years, possibly illustration work to do with the animals I wish to conserve. I enjoyed this week, and would suggest this place as work experience to many others, so they can see the work and the passion that is put into conserving Barn Owls for themselves." ★

Farley Lapenna

Bethany Smith was one of our two 2012 Work Experience placements.



Bethany Photo: Hannah Bosence

She has returned to volunteer for several days during each school holiday since her placement and is currently helping with aviary cleaning and accompanying staff on Devon Barn Owl Survey site visits. Bethany wants to study animal care when she completes her schooling.

We have also been joined by Charlie Eccles a student from Nottingham Trent University, where she is studying animal biology. She is on a three month placement with us.

"I am currently between my second and third year at university. During this summer I have been volunteering with the Trust assisting Matt, Stu, and Luke with the 2013 Devon Barn Owl survey and collecting data for my dissertation on Barn Owls, primarily focusing on their diet. This involves dissecting and analysing a lot of owl pellets. I have a great love of all animals, especially owls. In my spare time I enjoy walking, reading and socialising. I hope to pass my degree and later pursue a career in teaching".



Charlie Photo: Stuart Baker

When our part-time Handyman, Tim Gove, heard about the Trust's financial situation he handed in his notice! However, thankfully, he said he would stay on as a volunteer.

Tim began as a volunteer in June 2005 and was employed in January 06. Tim is a great member of the team and we are delighted that he wants this to continue - thanks Tim, we are so glad you are staying on. ★



Tim Photo: Frances Ramsden

Sad News

We were greatly saddened to receive news that Marie-Anne Martin had passed away in June this year. A professional copy editor with a fantastic knowledge of birds, Marie-Anne had been a wonderful Barn Owl Trust supporter and a personal friend since March 1990 when she visited Waterleat with a T.V. film crew. She voluntarily copy-edited our Barn Owls and Major Roads Report in 2003 and the Barn Owl Conservation Handbook in 2012. In her professional capacity she made a fantastic contribution to ornithology through editing innumerable publications.

We lost another good Friend in May this year when Peter Gregory died. We met Peter and his family in 1992 and they had been staunch supporters of the Trust ever since, even attending our AGM's. In 2007 Peter won our draw - a day out with the conservation team and he and Shirley (his wife) visited the Trust as part of the prize in June 2008. A leaf put up on our Memory Tree in 2010 remembers the donation made in memory of their son Simon. In December last year Peter and Shirley made a 25th anniversary donation to the Trust. ★



The collapsed barn with the nestbox just visible Photo: provided

A Very Sorry Story

This sad tale came to us via the Shropshire Barn Owl Group, Eds

“About four years ago we were asked by John Lightfoot of the Shropshire Barn Owl Group if he could put an owl box in our hay barn and we agreed. Over the years the box remained unused by any owls until January 2013 when a pair of Barn Owls decided to set up home in it and we could see the pair flying around the barn. Over the last few months we watched the owls busy hunting over the land and flying around the farmyard, all was going well for the pair and we were looking forward to the Owls nesting in their owl box and raising their young, however disaster struck on the 23rd March 2013 as twelve inches of snow arrived causing the barn to collapse under the extra weight.

The barn was crumpled by the snow and the owl box was thrown to the ground buried under the remains of the barn and one of the owl's was found dead on the floor killed by the snow storm. After the barn had collapsed we saw the surviving Barn Owl flying around the farm calling for its mate and patrolling the areas they used to hunt trying in vain to find the mate that was now dead.

On the 26th March at 9:30 am we saw the owl flying nearby as we were taking feed to our sheep in the fields due to the snow being too deep for them to eat the grass. However this was to be the final flight for the Owl as a buzzard suddenly swooped down from above and claimed the life of the lonely bird. We have watched the pair of buzzards that have lived on our farm over the years, but this was the first time we have seen them attack an owl and so we no longer have any Barn Owls living on our farm”. ★

Glyn and Delia Jones



Hannah and Baley meet Sarah (right) Photo: Pete Webb

What! An Otter

Having recently begun helping out with the 2013 Devon Barn Owl Survey as a volunteer I decided to do a small survey of my own close to the BOT site. I set out to look for signs of another creature that has always fascinated me: the wild otter.

Otters face many of the same challenges as Barn Owls. Both species have to deal with human encroachments; like the Barn Owl, otters must learn to avoid the dangers presented by roads as well as cope with increasing habitat degradation, and otters can be as vulnerable as Barn Owls when it comes to finding the prey they need. So it was with great excitement that I discovered signs of an otter visiting the river Ashburn. The finding of a spraint (the otter's droppings) beside the river indicates recent otter presence, but it is not yet clear whether it is a regular visitor or a young male that might be prospecting as it disperses from its family to find a range of its own.

Otters are solitary and secretive and they need quiet as well as a clean, healthy aquatic ecosystem. I was not surprised to find evidence of otters as Dartmoor has always been an otter stronghold, but it is always thrilling to find signs. We must not forget that, like Barn Owls, otters are protected and they must not be disturbed.

Miriam Darlington



Miriam is author of 'Otter Country, In Search of the Wild Otter' published by Granta. She is currently researching for a new book on owls. ★

Photo: Jayne Pooley

Charity Challenge

We had a visit in May from 'Charity Challenge' veteran Sarah Williams from Bristol with her helper Gill. Sarah is doing 150 challenges for 150 charities and raising £150 for each one.

Sarah, 45, was born with Marfan Syndrome which affects the connective tissue and has resulted in her having heart problems, deformed feet and a visual impairment. Gradually her sight deteriorated and Sarah was registered blind. Her sight has improved recently after an operation with the result that her guide dog, Oz, has retired and is now a pet. Sarah founded the charity Smiling Eyes International. She is also the voice of Pickles the guide dog in 'Creature Comforts'.

Sarah found out about BOT on a visit to Ashburton's Cookery School for another challenge. BOT was her 134th, she does one a week. She helped the Conservation Team with bramble clearing in our 26 acre Lennon Legacy Field (see LLP update page 5). The previous week it was a charity connected with St Paul's Cathedral and the next week's event was being presented with the Lord Mayor's Medal in Bristol. Her varied plucky endeavours over the last few years have included climbing Ben Nevis and Snowdon, flying a helicopter and a Tiger Moth plane, an Arctic Trek, walking part of the Cotswold Way, cycling up Box Hill like Bradley Wiggins and climbing Glastonbury Tor.

Well done Sarah, you are truly inspirational. Thank you for choosing to support the Barn Owl Trust. ★



Vancouver Airport & Barn Owls

What do our conservation team do all day? Well a major part of their workload is dealing with enquiries. Many can be directed straight to relevant pages on our website; others are a bit more complex. Here is an example of an email received:

I am a wildlife biologist working on contract for the Vancouver International Airport in British Columbia, Canada. One of our major wildlife hazards to aircraft is raptors, and a significant percentage of raptor strikes with aircraft involve barn owls. As a result, for the past 3 years I have been capturing raptors and relocating them 100 km east of the airport in an endeavour to reduce strikes and reduce raptor mortality. While I know this approach works for buteos, I am less sure of the approach of simply taking an owl, especially a Barn Owl, from the airport and dropping it off 100 km away. Since most of our translocations take place during winter, climate is also a factor. Our coastal climate is much like England's coastal climate, but 100 km east, while still relatively mild, it can experience more frequent and lasting snowfalls.

Therefore, I would like to adopt a different approach for Barn Owls. First of all, I would only release Barn Owls when the ground is free of snow even if that means holding them in our mews for several extra days. There are two interested amateurs who have put up many barn owl nest boxes in the "release area". My question is how do I maximize the likelihood of a released owl taking up residence in a nest box. I believe that the bird is at high risk of mortality shortly after release until it settles. Do you have a method to encourage birds to settle faster? If so, would you be willing to share it with me?

If the birds remain at the airport they are almost certain to be struck by aircraft and killed eventually. Therefore, there is no option of leaving them either from an air safety perspective or from a conservation perspective. I am exploring options for translocating the birds to another coastal environment, but this means either moving them to a different administrative region of the Province (red tape) or to the US (mega red tape). In the meantime, I am hoping to find a way to release birds at suitable sites with vacant nest boxes where they will be likely to remain and survive. If you have any advice for me as to how to maximize this likelihood, I would be very grateful for the sharing of your experience.

Gary Searing

BOT's reply

Hi Gary,

This is very interesting as we have been releasing Barn Owls from captivity since 1984. Initially these were captive bred individuals but these days they are all rehabilitated wild ones. Last year we published the Barn Owl Conservation Handbook in which we set out the Principals of Releasing inexperienced Barn Owls and the Principals of Releasing experienced (adult) Barn Owls (p359 - 360).

Translocation presents essentially the same challenges as releasing inexperienced Barn Owls (i.e. they do not have a Memorised Home Range to be returned to). Before proceeding, it is important to understand how Barn Owls live and what maximises their chances of survival. Barn Owls are very highly sedentary. They occupy vast undefended Home Ranges which in the UK are about 5,000 Ha (12,500 acres). When they are breeding they concentrate most of their activity within 1km (350 Ha or about 900 acres). Their sedentary lifestyle is required in order to build up a highly detailed 'memory-map' - this is how they are able to fly about in the dark without constantly flying into things - they remember where the clear flight paths are. The sedentary habitat also affords them the ability to use their range as efficiently as possible. In any given conditions, an experienced adult will know where and when to hunt in order to maximise

the chances of easy prey capture. It will fly from its roost in the optimum direction and know exactly where to start hunting, the best way to get there, perhaps some hazards to avoid en-route, and possibly even knows what prey it will be listening for.

Efficient use of the home range is especially important for birds on the northern edge of the species range as they evolved in much warmer climates and rapidly lose heat energy when hunting in cold air. They will also know the most thermo-efficient roost places. For individuals, a detailed knowledge of their Home Range is most important when attempting to survive periods of severe weather and/or periodic prey shortages. It not only maximises their chances of survival but also helps determine their productivity (nesting success).

A Barn Owl that is liberated in an unfamiliar area is at a huge disadvantage and it is likely that many of the birds you have released are dead. This is not your fault (because of airspace safety considerations). However, I do believe that translocated Barn Owls should only be released using a 'soft' (aka 'supported') release method:

- The birds need time to adapt to living in a new area
- In order to adapt they need time.
- In order to have time, they must not starve.
- In order to not starve they must be provided with food after they have been released.
- In order to take that food they must establish a pattern of return for food.

The first priority is to establish a pattern of return for food. This priority determines everything about how and where they are housed, every detail of the design of the release aviaries (including the size of the opening top, the opening mechanism, and prevention of access by cats etc.), how they are fed, exactly where in the aviary the food is placed, how they are released, and exactly when they are released (time of evening, time of year, visibility/weather, and weather forecast).

Much of the information you need is in Chapters 2 and 9 of the Barn Owl Conservation Handbook. http://www.barnowltrust.org.uk/product_details.html?id=163 I suggest you read this and then contact me again if you need further information.

David - BOT

Gary's reply

Thank you for your detailed and considered response to my inquiry. I have ordered your book and await its delivery. It sounds like I will have to build some portable aviaries from which to release Barn Owls so that they are held in the release location for a period of time before eventual release into the wild. Clearly I will also need someone to feed them during this period as they will be 100 km away from the airport and airport staff could not undertake this. A bit of a logistical hurdle to jump for sure. However, I trust there are many capable volunteers I could enlist and rely on to help out. I hope you do not mind if I contact you again after reading your book and getting further down the road to developing a soft release method that will work for us.

Gary

Final comment from BOT

Hi Gary,

Mobile release aviaries are a great asset and you'll see several pictures of them in the book. The design details are important so I suggest you hold-fire on your portable aviary plans for a while. Also bear in mind that *Tyto furcata* is bigger than *Tyto alba* so your aviaries will need to be a bit bigger than ours. I look forward to hearing from you in due course.

David - BOT

We are waiting to hear what happened next. ★

A Very Brief History of the BOT



Back in the 1980's a small group of volunteers got together in South Devon and began working to conserve Barn Owls - the birds had declined by about 70% since the 1930's. What made our group unique was that we wanted to conserve the 'Barn Owl and its Environment' and we felt that everyone, whether or not they had land and buildings, could still do their bit to help the species. Encouraging environmental awareness was, and still is, an important part of the Trust's work. Sending out handwritten leaflets on how to make a Barn Owl box and visiting landowners that wanted the birds around, was funded in the early days by an annual jumble sale and the collection of newspapers for recycling.

In 1988 the Barn Owl Trust became a registered charity. A range of information leaflets on all aspects of Barn Owl conservation were written and posted out free-of-charge to anyone that who wanted them and we started working on a report to assess the effectiveness of Barn Owl breeding and release projects. We published this in 1990 and it led to the Trust being invited to join the national Barn Owl Liaison Group co-ordinated by the Joint Nature Conservation Committee and the Department of the Environment Barn Owl Working Group.

This was also the year that grants from charitable trusts and local authorities enabled us to employ our first member of staff to carry out a research project on the effects of barn conversions on Barn Owls. Published in 1995 along with a 32-page booklet which went to every planning department in the UK, the 'Barn Conversion Research Project Report' not only quantified the extent of the problem, it also recommended solutions. These two reports launched the Barn Owl Trust as a nationally recognised organisation.

It was at the end of 1992 when the Trust employed its second member of staff (two days a week). We now have twelve: seven full-time and five part-time. In the early '90's we also began having university students on placement. More research projects followed, with county surveys in Devon and Cornwall in '93 and '94 respectively and again ten years later, making these counties unique in Britain. We looked at the effects of major roads on Barn Owls, identified priority areas for Barn Owl conservation in the UK and investigated the effectiveness of the rehabilitation of casualties.

However, research was only one aspect of the Trust's work; the others took up far more time. Practical conservation involves visiting farmers and landowners, giving advice on habitat and hazards, identifying suitable sites and erecting nestboxes. In the early days the telephone was answered just two days a week; this changed to five in 2002, when the provision of information was mainly by post and phone. The arrival of the internet and email changed this dramatically. The launch of our website in 2006 was a major project for the whole team with a massive effort to create a site that could provide all of the information we had accumulated. These days we have about 1,000 visitors a day to the site and most of our enquiries are by email. Our live 'nestcam' has had up to 53,000 hits a day.

Our educational work began in 1989 with a visit to a local school. Rather than just show the children a Barn Owl, we used a blackboard and drew a picture of a farm and told the children a story about the owls that lived there. This way we could show them how changes in the countryside had affected the birds and other wildlife. We still use the 'Wings of Change' story today and for schools too far away to visit the story is available on DVD, narrated by wildlife TV presenter Nick Baker.

Of course education is so much more than talking to children. We provide talks with slides for adults and have given these throughout Devon, Cornwall and beyond to all sorts of groups. We have also given specialist presentations to planning officers, wildlife inspectors, students and conservationists. In 2005 we

began running training courses three times a year for professional ecologists and have attracted participants from throughout the UK.

From the very beginning the Trust has cared for casualty owls and provided a private sanctuary for birds not able to be returned to the wild. Our permanently resident owls live out their lives in large aviaries and over the past few years we have taken in birds from other sanctuaries. In 2010 forty-five owls arrived from the Three Owls Sanctuary in Rochdale. Since 1989 we have run an Adoption Scheme to help support our work.

We aim to get every owl we can back into the wild. Every bird that is released is fitted with a unique ring so that it can be identified if ever recovered and in 1997 we designed and built the first ever Mobile Rehabilitation and Release Aviary to make wild owl releases more effective; the idea has since been adopted by other groups.

Since 1990 we have had visitors from overseas and we continue to develop international links. In 2007 our Head of Conservation David Ramsden was presented with an MBE by HM Queen Elizabeth which he accepted on behalf of the Trust, its staff and volunteers.

A major change for the Trust came in 2001, the year of Foot & Mouth, with the arrival of an unexpected legacy. By the end of the year the Trust owned a piece of land, 26-acres of intensively grazed pasture. Now with the 'Lennon Legacy Project' (LLP), we had an opportunity to practise what we'd been preaching! We photographed and recorded what was there, or rather wasn't. We radically changed the grassland management, allowing the grass to grow with minimal grazing to create a 'litter layer', ideal habitat for Field Voles, the Barn Owl's main prey species.

We have continued to take pictures every month and now have a unique record of the creation of incredible habitat, teeming with wildlife. We have seen new species of birds, butterflies, insects, plants and animals all take advantage of the opportunities provided and it has been an honour for all of us here to have been part of the project. The icing on this particular cake is that Barn Owls, absent from the valley since the 1960's, have been present and bred most years since 2005. There is a monthly LLP diary on our website and lots of slideshows showing the transformation and we also hold regular events to enable others to share the LLP experience.

In 2012 the culmination of two years work for the conservation team was the publication of 'The Barn Owl Conservation Handbook' described by Chris Packham as "the most complete and concise catalogue of techniques, methods and practices used to protect the Barn Owl, both in captivity and in the wild". This year we have launched a new website to record Barn Owls throughout the UK so if you see one, dead or alive, please record it at www.barnowlsurvey.org.uk

To most people's surprise, the Trust does not receive any government funding to support its work. It is dependent on donations from individuals, grants from businesses and other charitable trusts and of course legacies, to support its vast range of work. The last two years have been financially difficult for the Trust. Despite this we continue to achieve a tremendous amount.

In this, the year of the Trust's 25th anniversary and the Devon Barn Owl Survey, the record breaking weather conditions of the twenty-first century have resulted in the worst breeding results for Barn Owls we've ever known. Because we want to be sure that there are Barn Owls in our countryside for future generations, we plan to keep on
Conserving the Barn Owl and its Environment. ★



Acoustic Music Evening

Our Acoustic Music Evening event held on 2nd August to celebrate the Trust's 25th anniversary was a great success. Everyone had a really great time and we raised almost £900.

The evening opened with a set by Alistair J Pearson, a singer and songwriter from Doncaster who travelled a long way to join us for the evening with his partner Julie. She was quite taken with our cuddly owls and owlets and went home with a family of four of them!



Alistair J Pearson

Next up was our very own Jasmin Ramsden. Jasmin works for the Trust two days a week building our nestboxes and writes and performs all her own songs. She has just produced her first CD.



Jasmin Ramsden

Our third performer was Owly Dave, alias David Ramsden our Head of Conservation. David's set included a fund-raising song about chocolate, a rural protest song and a memorial of World War 1 all written by him, and some audience participation. For one of his songs, 'A Little Romance', he was accompanied by Marianne Bryan. Marianne deals with enquiries for the Trust and runs our Friends and Adoption schemes. In addition she has a magical voice.



Marianne Bryan with Owly Dave alias David Ramsden

Rebecca Maze is a singer songwriter who lives in the neighbouring town of Totnes. She has appeared on Radio 1, Radio 2, Six Music and was asked to play at the London Olympics 2012. She has recently been performing in Europe so we were delighted when she told us she loves owls and agreed to come and play for us.



Rebecca Maze

Last but not least, our final performance of the evening was by Tee Marcheur. Since the early 1960s he has been playing music with many of the world's most iconic talents. Active in Britain and America, they include former band members of the Byrds, Naaz, Neil Young, CSN, Fleetwood Mac, Leon Russell.....and many, many more. Luckily for us he lives locally.



Tee Marcheur

Tee deserves a special mention for providing the PA equipment and managing the 'sound' all night, he was a star. We also need to thank the Dartmoor Lodge for providing the venue free of charge, everyone who donated raffle prizes and of course the great audience for helping to make the evening such a success. A really big Thank You to all of our wonderful performers who gave their time and talent to support the Trust.



*We had a great audience All photos: Neil Lindsay
We plan to post some videos of the evening - check out the News Page on our website for links www.barnowltrust.org.uk*

B.O.T. 25th Anniversary



We were delighted that so many of you have got involved in our 25th Anniversary celebrations. Thank you to those of you who came along to the Acoustic Music evening or supported it in some way and those who sent a donation of £25 to the Trust (sometimes more) - thank you all. It's not too late for anyone to do something.....

Extra big thanks must go to those who made a special effort:

Chloe Lord from London raised £484.14 with her Chilli Challenge!



"We had a range of 6 increasingly spicy sauces and 5 volunteers who had to try a dollop either straight off a spoon or some pitta bread and go 30 seconds without drinking anything to counteract the sauce. All 5 made it to the final round, cheered on by an enthusiastic crowd.



We advertised the event as 'Red Hoot', I think everyone had a good time and the unusual fund-raising method helped to sell it!

Anyway it was an absolute pleasure to do it".

Chloe Lord



Photo: Alex Walton - Archant South West

The Grizzly Run, otherwise known as Grime and Punishment, is an annual event held in East Devon. The run is about 21mils with as much climb as run and entry is by lottery. The Axe Valley Runners have donated £550 to the Trust from the run over the last four years - thank you, you hardy folk.



The Barn Owl Trust was the charity chosen by the 1st Barton Le Clay brownies (Bedfordshire) at their 'endangered animals' pack holiday, they sent us £30 and this great picture.

My name is Leonna. I'm twelve years old and my nickname is 'Little Miss Know it Owl'. I have just got home from being Chief Bridesmaid at my Dad and Step-Mum's Wedding where I read a poem as part of the service. I think their first dance should have been to 'Owl Always Love You' by Whitney Houston!



Leonna
Photos: Provided

I've loved Barn Owls since I first held one a few years ago, so we became 'Family Friends' of the Barn Owl Trust. I wanted to do something to help the charity raise money to look after the birds, so last Summer I did a cake-bake and made sock owls to sell to family and friends. I made £50 for the Barn Owl Trust and received a thank you card from the staff along with a certificate that's framed on my bedroom wall. I was really excited when the Barn Owl Trust asked for help to raise funds for their 25th anniversary in 2013. I have set myself the target of raising £250 and so far I have:

- ☺ Run a Grand National Sweepstake to win tickets donated by Southwell Racecourse. This made £45
- ☺ Auctioned tickets to watch a Sheffield Wednesday FC match (their nickname is the Owls!) This raised £30
- ☺ Collected around £30 in donations in an official collection tin provided by the Trust

I am running a Guess the Name of the Owlet competition to win one of the snuggly owlets sold on the BOT website and I have made lots of owl themed greetings cards which I am selling for £1 each. Next I am going to wash some cars, bake more cakes and maybe even do a sponsored silence (my teachers will be pleased if it's a school day!)



I'm having a 'screech' fund-raising for the Barn Owl Trust. I hope that one day I can go to Devon to meet Marianne and everyone else who does an amazing job running the charity.

Leonna Walters

Thank you All

Thank you to all our intrepid fund-raisers. We should have mentioned Grace, Amy & Charlie Steele in the last issue of Feedback (oops sorry!), they raised £60 from an Xmas fayre - where they sold wild bird seed, knitted owls, bird boxes and had a chocolate tombola - thank you folks. The 1st Hordle Brownies in Hampshire raised enough to adopt a Barn Owl as did the Owl Class at Brundall Primary School in Norfolk by selling owl biscuits they had made. St Davids C of E Primary School in Exeter also raised money to adopt an owl by holding a colouring competition, making barn owl badges to sell, making and selling cakes, selling bird feeders and publishing a book that three of the children have written! Margaret Crocker sells plants and jam at her gate and makes regular donations from these sales. Phoenix Ladies Circle at Winkleigh raised £300 for the Trust. Nina at Owlies Jewellery donated 10% of her sales for the month of April and the Barleysheaf at Gorran, made a donation from their Pub Quiz account.

Thank you all very much. Fund-raising is great because it not only helps to support the Trust; it also spreads the word about our work, so well done all of you. ★



Bulgaria & Barn Owls

Earlier this year we provided a 4-week internship for Dzhaner Emin from Bulgaria.



Bulgaria lies on the western coast of the black sea, north from Greece and south from the Danube River, which serves as a border between Bulgaria and Romania. It is a relatively new country on the map of Europe. It gained its independence after the Russian Ottoman war in 1876, after being part

of the Ottoman Empire for almost 500 years. During that period Bulgarian population was mostly living in small villages, cultivating small parts of land in the two big plains – The Danube plain to the north and Thrace plane to the south. After the independence the country went through steady development with the help of the western specialist and by the WWII had a prospective economy. At that time there are no records of Barn Owls, but one might suggest that they benefited from the land use, lack of pesticides and abundant nest sites.

After WWII Bulgaria adopted the communist model. Farming was nationalised and all the boundaries between small fields were destroyed. In every village there was a co-operative which was given machinery in return for goods. Farming became intensive and pesticides were introduced. Cities expanded rapidly with the help of the new building method using premade concrete elements called panels. The plan was to develop a heavy industry with the help of USSR oil which was sold at half price. New cities emerged around these industries.

First records of Barn Owls in Bulgaria date back to that period. In the 1950's some authors stated that the Barn Owl is very rare and perhaps breeds in southern Bulgaria but with no actual sites recorded. In the 1980's it was recorded as a rare breeding species in the country with just 6 known breeding sites. Most probably that is likely given the agricultural model during that period. The Barn Owl must have been pushed to the most remote places.

After the democratic changes 25 years ago Bulgaria had a difficult time in adapting to the new economy. Denationalisation went really fast and most of the co-operative structures representing the old model were abandoned or poorly maintained by the new owners. Military complexes, summer school camps, old factories and other buildings around the country were abandoned due to crisis in the economy. Such isolated man-made structures at the end of the villages or out in the fields became the perfect nesting sites for the Barn Owls. Most of the arable land was also abandoned which gave the Barn Owl plenty of foraging habitats.

Over the last 25 years several studies have given an insight into its diet and contributed to the known breeding range. Now it is believed that the species inhabits the lowlands of Bulgaria where there is enough good habitat present. Most of these studies give just a snapshot of species local distribution within relatively small areas.

Present time knowledge

The species is categorized as vulnerable in the new 2012 edition of Bulgarian Red List. It is also stated that the species is understudied and that more actions are needed such as study of the distribution and the biology of the species in the country in order to have insight of its behaviour and preferences. Perhaps

this is the reason for such different population estimations during the last fifteen years. Estimates of the numbers vary from 100 - 500 pairs even to 1,300 – 1,700. According to BSPB there are 200-700 pairs countrywide. All of the estimates are based on expert opinion and no actual study has been made to evaluate these assessments. However Miitshev *et al.* suggest that because of its nocturnal and secretive biology only a systematic inventory survey can contribute to knowledge about the status of the Barn Owl in Bulgaria.

I was involved in a study about the Barn Owl breeding distribution last year. In 16 days during June and September I visited the co-operatives of more than 65 villages and abandoned remote structures or building complexes, looking for signs of Barn Owls. We found them on ventilation shafts, unused silage pipes, on metal constructions, on modern agricultural building, on concrete beams and on wooden beams in traditional farm buildings.

Overall it seems that conditions are favourable for the Barn Owl at present time. However, I encountered several problems. The lack of maintenance will eventually lead to decay of the buildings. On several sites the buildings were starting to collapse and on one occasion I found relatively fresh pellets under big slabs of what used to be a concrete platform inside of an old building. On the other hand, new EU grants schemes are available now and more farmers and landowners start to repair and maintain their properties. At one site we observed so many Barn Owl droppings on the walls of a warehouse that one might suggest that the site was occupied for many, many years. Yet when we went inside the floor was so clean as if it was just newly built. The next time we went all the broken windows where we entered and most probably the Barn Owls might have been flying in for years were replaced with new ones.

In conclusion, I can suggest that Barn Owl population in Bulgaria went through big fluctuation in the last 150 years following the big changes happened since its independence. Now it seems that the conditions are favourable for the species. But will it be so in the future?

What is next? As stated earlier, only comprehensive and long term studies can give an insight of the population state and its trends in Bulgaria. Furthermore awareness must be raised among the farmers about the Barn Owl and its role as small mammal specialist in the agricultural ecosystems. Next step will be undertaking a nest box scheme in potential areas in coordination with local and national authorities and also encouraging local farmers to restore rough grass and shrub boundaries within the big fields pointing out the broader benefit from such actions. Annual monitoring programs and ringing schemes will contribute knowledge to the species behaviour and population trends.

Dzhaner Emin
Sofia, Bulgaria

Answers to 'Found in the LLP' Feedback 49

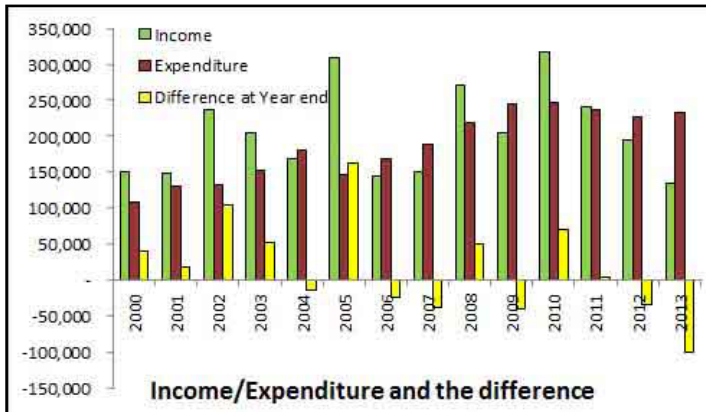
1. Female Flier - Ladybird
2. A sad finger - Bluebell
3. He is close to the edge - Hedge
4. Large colour scrub with teams of eleven - Great Green Bush Cucklets
5. A climbing girl's name - Ivy
6. No buckets or spades for this one - Beech
7. Fire breathing insect - Dragonfly
8. Tanned Samonid - Brown Trout
9. Very proper flower - Primrose
10. Bodies of water - Ponds
11. Grassland with love - Field vole
12. The taming of the plentiful - Common Shrew
13. Male species of grass - Timothy
14. Regal gatherer of aquatic life - Kingfisher
15. Umbrella with pulp in part of a building - Parasol Mushroom
16. Creamy spread mug - Buttercup
17. Gulp - Swallow
18. Stormy existence - Wildfife
19. Agricultural building with some nocturnal wisdom - Barn Owl
20. Angry medicinal plant - Crosswort
21. A tunnel boring machine - Mole
22. Pester - Badger
23. This one can outwit you - Fox
24. A light brown nut - Hazel
25. Got up trendy - Rosehip

Trying to Make Ends Meet



The Annual Report on pages 16 - 22 has our Balance Sheet and Statement of Financial Activity for the last financial year as well as a 'who's who' and a summary of achievements to the end of March 2013.

We are not planning to repeat this here but just to explain the current situation and how the Trustees, staff and volunteers are planning to deal with it.



As you can see from the chart above BOT income is highly variable. In the last two years the Trust has made significant deficits, almost wiping out our cash reserves. Because in the great scheme of things we are not a big charity, a large donation, grant or legacy can make a huge difference to our income. Way back in 2000 grants for specific projects accounted for almost a third of our income and in 2001 it was 56% of total income. But by 2004 restricted grant income had dropped to 24% and never recovered, going as low as 5% in 2005 and 10% last year. Legacies meanwhile became a significant part of our income for many years from 2002 when they were 34%, peaking at 61% in 2005.

These legacies enabled us to buy the LLP land, build the meeting room, install the solar panels and undertake other capital projects like the wildlife ponds. They also helped to support the Trust as grant funding lessened and give us cash reserves.

We think these reserves affected our applications to grant giving charitable trusts many of whom give relatively small grants. They have a huge number of charities asking them for funds, in most cases far more than they can possibly support. These days applying for grant funding is very competitive with many charities employing designated staff, or even teams of staff, whereas we 'fit-it-in' amongst other tasks. In addition, the current economic situation and the low interest rates of the last few years means that the grant givers have less money to give and government cuts mean more organisations need help. So to use an analogy from our 'Wings of Change Story' the cake is getting smaller and there are more organisations wanting a slice!

We should just point out here that other than some grant funding for specific projects the Barn Owl Trust does not have, and has never had any government funding to support its general work.

Our expenditure has crept up over the years as our workload has increased peaking in 2010. Running costs continually increase and staff are our biggest expense. We now have a really good team of twelve staff, seven full-time and five part-time and volunteers, with a huge amount of experience between them. Salaries account for 65% of our total spend and unfortunately salaries are one of the hardest things to get grant funding for. But without the staff, who would deal with enquiries, put up nestboxes, organise the volunteers, update the website, feed the owls and do the 101 other things that take up their working days?

The Trustees have known for several years that we need to increase our 'regular' income or reduce our expenditure. Back in 2010 we took the unprecedented step of making one staff member redundant to reduce out-goings. Luckily when someone else left we were able to re-employ them and still have the benefit of their experience. Last year with our eye on the purse, we invited Friends and Supporters to have Feedback and the Annual Report by email to reduce printing and postage costs. We also invested legacy income in the solar panels to generate regular revenue (£3,336) and we underwrote the Devon Barn Owl Survey with funds ring-fenced for the LLP to ensure that it would happen.

We have some outstanding legacies, but unfortunately no idea when they will arrive or exactly how much they are likely to be. With a budget for the current financial year that predicts another significant deficit the Trustees have had to make some difficult decisions.

In August BOT trustees reluctantly decided that the Cornwall Barn Owl Survey to update records collected by the Trust since January 2004 and review the county population estimate had to be put on indefinite hold. It cannot go ahead unless we can raise the funds needed to cover the costs. This is a great shame as the survey is an important population health check. We still hope there might be someone out there interested in sponsoring it.

We plan to sell one of our four vehicles to reduce expenses and we have told the Conservation Team they need to ask people to cover costs for all non-essential field-work. We can no longer afford to put up a nestbox free of charge or for a £10 donation unless there is a high priority conservation need.

The Trustees are committed to continuing the work of the Trust and if at all possible maintaining our wonderful team, there is after all far more than enough work for them to do. However the small savings we can make will not fill the gap between income and expenditure. To this end we have charged everyone here with the task of looking for ways to raise our profile and to encourage more regular supporters and Friends of the Trust.

To do this we need more people to know about our work, what we do and why we do it. If you are reading this you almost certainly support the BOT already. We are really grateful for your support and we hope it will continue.

We are not asking you for more. What we would like is your help to spread the word about the Trust and encourage others to support us too. With this being such a bad year for Barn Owls we need to be doing more than ever instead of having to consider doing less.

Please help us to recruit more support. If just 1.800 new supporters gave us 20p a day we could maintain our team and our current workload. Thank you. ★

Is this worth 20p a day ?

2013 is a really bad year for Barn Owls in Britain and further afield.

For less than 20p a day you can help the Barn Owl Trust to continue its practical conservation and provision of information to support these wonderful birds.

Make a donation of just £6 a month - we need your help to continue to Conserve the Barn Owl and its Environment

www.barnowltrust.org.uk

Registered Charity: 299 835
1980-2013

The Barn Owl Trust - Conserving the Barn Owl and its Environment



Charity Information

Barn Owl Trust

Waterleat Ashburton Devon TQ13 7HU
01364 653026 info@barnowltrust.org.uk
www.barnowltrust.org.uk

Registered Charity number 299 835 BOT Environmental Enrolment Number 203 178

Trustees:	Keith Grant (1990)	Frances Ramsden (1988)	Chris Robinson (2007)
	Simon Wilson (2000)	Kevin Keatley (2010)	Hon Treasurer: Mark Pountney (2002)
Secretary:	Jackie Atkinson	Minutes: Marianne Bryan	Hannah Bosence
Management Team:	David Ramsden - Head of Conservation Jackie Atkinson - Office Manager		

Independent Examiners:
Francis Clark LLP
Chartered Accountants
Sigma House, Oak View Close
Edginswell Park
Torquay, Devon TQ2 7FF

Solicitors:
Wollen Mitchelmore LLP
Carlton House
30 The Terrace
Torquay, Devon TQ1 1BS

Bankers:
CAF Bank Ltd Lloyds TSB
Kings Hill 2 East Street
West Malling Ashburton
Kent ME19 4TA Devon TQ13 7AH

The stated objective of the Trust 'is to advance the conservation of wildlife, especially the Barn Owl and other endangered species, to provide them with a safe breeding environment, with the object of encouraging the re-creation and preservation of appropriate ecological conditions that they may be provided with the means to continue and flourish in as natural an environment as possible'.

The main areas of the Trust's work are practical conservation, education, provision of information and research. The Trust also provides a live owl emergency service; a sanctuary and rehabilitation facility for injured owls. The Trust became a registered charity in 1988 and 2013 is its 25th anniversary.

Practical conservation and rehabilitation work takes place in South West England (mainly Devon and Cornwall), but all other areas of work have national (and international) significance: e.g. the free information and advice service is available by post, telephone and via the worldwide web. Our research work is relevant throughout the UK and beyond.

The Trust also owns 26 acres of land known as the Lennon Legacy Project which is managed entirely for wildlife. What was once intensively grazed pasture has become a haven for birds, butterflies, flowers and insects under BOT management. Monitoring and recording the ever increasing biodiversity is a significant part of the Trust's work.

TRUST STAFF

TRUST VOLUNTEERS

OFFICE MANAGER	:	Jackie Atkinson
HEAD OF CONSERVATION	:	David Ramsden MBE
CONSERVATION OFFICER	:	Matthew Twiggs
ASSISTANT CONS OFFICER	:	Stuart Baker
PA to HoC	:	Hannah Bosence
ADMIN ASSISTANTS	:	Pete Webb Marianne Bryan Vanessa Owen
LEGACY PROJECT	:	Karen Smerdon
PRACTICAL SUPPORT	:	Tim Gove Jasmin Ramsden
SCHOOL VISITS/TALKS	:	Hannah Bosence Stuart Baker
ACCOUNTS	:	Frances Ramsden
COMPUTER/IT SUPPORT	:	Alan Lewis

HONORARY SOLICITORS	:	Wollen Mitchelmore LLP
BTO RINGING COORDINATOR	:	Keith Grant
EDUCATION VOLUNTEER	:	Baley the Barn Owl
LIVE OWL EMERGENCY HELP & OWL TRANSPORTATION	:	Cathy Pitt Greg & Carol King Margaret Rhodes Bill Bishop Kim McNeil
STUDENT PLACEMENT	:	Chris Batey,* Dzhaner Emin
WORK EXPERIENCE	:	Bethany Smith, Oliver Mant
PRACTICAL SUPPORT	:	Kim Baker
FEEDBACK	:	Frances Ramsden
FRIENDS ADMIN	:	Sarah Dimmock*
GENERAL ASSISTANCE	:	Beryl Welsh Marion Perriss Margaret Crocker Hungarian Volunteers University of Plymouth Volunteers
	:	Margaret Rhodes Sylvia Marshall Sandra Reardon

* Indicates those leaving during the period of this report.

Barn Owl Trust staff and volunteers often have several roles, only their main areas of work are listed here. Conservation task helpers are not included but not forgotten.

BOT Environmental

BOT Environmental is an Enrolled Body under the Landfill Tax Credit Scheme. It was set up in 1998 to allow the Trust to apply for grants from landfill operators who can give money to community or environmental projects rather than pay tax to central government. There was no BOT Environmental activity in the year and both the opening and the closing balance of the fund at the year end was £0.

Annual Report 2012 - 2013



Welcome to our Annual Review of the financial year 2012-2013. Given that we spend so much time looking ahead and planning for the future, it is interesting to look back and see what we have achieved during the twelve month period.

As you will see from the Conservation Report on pages 18 & 19 it was yet another poor year for Barn Owls but a very busy year for the Trust. With a smaller team than during the previous financial year we were hard pushed to keep pace with the workload, but thanks to our excellent staff and volunteers we managed. The publication of the Barn Owl Conservation Handbook was greeted with immense pride and great relief that the long awaited project was at last complete. However there was no room for complacency with the Devon Barn Owl Survey looming, the new Survey website (see page 18) in progress and a review of the Planners Guide to do alongside the general work.

During the year the Trust provided public benefit by carrying out practical conservation and educational work within South West England. Further afield we provided information and advice by email, post, telephone and via our website which continues to develop and grow. We implemented changes to the 'home page' and website navigation system to make the massive amount of information available more easily accessible. Dealing with enquiries takes a huge amount of our Conservation Team's time and although we try to provide the answers to most questions on-line there are always people who don't have internet access, those that can't find what they want and those with really unusual queries.

We have made good use of our wonderful meeting room, completed in June 2011. It has provided a great space for meetings, talks, workshops and training sessions. Our unique 'Memory Tree' continues to grow as we add leaves to remember those folk that have left us legacies and for whom we have received donations in memoriam.

As Trustees the biggest headache of the year for us was, and continues to be, the financial situation which you can read about in our Financial Report on pages 20-22. The very significant deficit at the end of the financial year was not a surprise to us given the current economic situation. As a very small national charity, we are quite unusual in that we don't have a fund-raising team, preferring to use our funds to employ staff who can deliver our aims and objectives. Hence we are very dependent on grants, donations from charitable trusts and legacies to cover our running costs. Unfortunately for the last two years this hasn't happened. Funding has become more difficult to secure and consequently

Management Information

The Barn Owl Trust was constituted in December 1987 and became a national registered charity in July 1988, it is governed by a Trust Deed. The objectives of the Trust, as stated in our Deed, are 'the conservation of wildlife, especially the Barn Owl and the preservation and re-creation of appropriate ecological conditions to provide a natural environment for wildlife to flourish'.

The Trust has five Trustees. The year of their appointment is listed next to their names in the Charity Information. New Trustees are chosen by the existing Trustees, when required, on the basis of their relevant expertise.

The number of Trustees is required to be between three and five, and in the event of the number falling below three the remaining Trustees may only act for the purpose of appointing additional Trustees and for no other purpose.

The Trustees have full and unrestricted powers of investing monies as decided by a majority. The Trustees have adopted a formal policy on general financial reserves (see page 20).

Day-to-day running of the Trust is the responsibility of the Management Team (Senior Staff) who are line-managed by and liaise regularly with individual Trustees and report at quarterly Trustees meetings.

our reserves have taken a significant hit. We are aware of the situation and constantly monitoring it. With the Devon Barn Owl Survey on the horizon and only a proportion of the funds needed secured we decided to use some of the funds ring-fenced for the Lennon Legacy Project to ensure we could 'get the job done' by creating a new 12-month Survey Officer post for the new financial year.

The generally poor weather was not only bad for wildlife, it also meant that between April 2012 and March 2013 we generated just 9,116 kwh of solar electricity which was disappointing after the amazing start in March 2012 when the system first went on-line and generated over 1,000 kwh of electricity in a month. We hope for better weather and improved results this year.

The Lennon Legacy Project (LLP) continues to be an inspiration, providing a habitat not only for Barn Owls but for a myriad of other wildlife too. Many bird species, mammals, insects and flora have benefited from the management regime and we have continued to provide opportunities for volunteer groups to become involved in practical tasks in the field. Recording the increasing biodiversity is ongoing with monthly monitoring photographs from 12 locations, a butterfly transect and an on-line LLP diary. At the end of May a Mallard duck and her eight ducklings left the island on the 'Flo Pond'. A hunting Barn Owl was regularly sighted from May onwards and two broods of three owlets were ringed during the year. Despite the record-breaking cold and wet summer we recorded 100+ Marbled White butterflies in mid-July and 220 Meadow Brown by the end of that month. Flooding in November caused some damage to the 'Riverbank Walk' and in January we lost the largest tree in Corner Wood.

We have not recruited any new members of staff during the year and the six full-time and five part-time staff in post have been with us for between 1+ and 23 years. Volunteers have received training and work experience on both long and short-term placements with the Trust.

We continue to give environmental and ethical consideration to all our activities and to the purchase of resources. Examples of this include the continued use of recycled paper and envelopes, organic tea, coffee and milk are purchased for office use. Our recycling scheme, which collects a vast range of items including used ink cartridges, stamps, mobile phones and jewellery continues to generate funds albeit less than in previous years as more organisations begin their own schemes.

Looking ahead, in addition to our practical conservation, education and research work, we will continue to develop the website, thus providing information whilst reducing staff time spent dealing with enquiries. We will also continue to lobby for the implementation of recommendations from research projects. The launch of our new nationwide Barn Owl Survey website is planned for 2013 as is the county surveys in Devon in 2013 and Cornwall in 2014 if funding can be found.

The County Shows in Devon, Cornwall and Dorset provide an opportunity for us to increase awareness of Barn Owls and their conservation, as do the Lennon Legacy Project events planned for the year. Our annual monitoring site visits will enable us to assess how the birds in the South West have fared over yet another year of unpredictable and unseasonable weather.

We will continue to work with other groups both in the UK and abroad. In July we will be running our next training courses for ecological consultants, the Barn Owl Ecology, Surveys and Signs (BOESS) courses we have been running since 2005 and the Advanced Barn Owl Surveying and Mitigation (ABOSM) course we started in 2011.

On behalf of all of the Trustees, I would like to thank everyone who has supported us during the last year. We have achieved a huge amount, some of which is recorded in this report. I also want to thank all of our dedicated staff, our volunteers and our Friends for all of their help. The Lennon Legacy Project is a great example of how *together we can make a world of difference - thank you all.*

Keith Grant
Chairman of Trustees, July 2013



Conservation Report

“Herculean effort”

There can be no doubt that the most outstanding event for BOT's conservation team in the 2012/13 financial year was the publication on 2nd July of our Barn Owl Conservation Handbook; the culmination of over two years work by the team: Matt Twiggs, Stu Baker, Maxine Chavner, Sarah Nelms and me. Pre-ordered copies were quickly dispatched although the 'official' launch did not take place until August 19th at the annual Birdfair in Rutland – Europe's biggest birding event. Instead of using my 20-minute presentation to simply promote the book I spoke about the most pressing issues that Barn Owls face including road deaths and rodenticide poisoning. The statistics were (and still are) so appalling that the presentation must have thrown some of the attendees into a mild state of shock. Finally of course, the Handbook was recommended as the best and most up-to-date source of further information.

Eight reviews of the book appeared in publications ranging from the scientific journal *British Birds* to the newsletter of the Hawk and Owl Trust. James Robertson's review which appeared in the winter edition of *Natur Cymru* included; "... *It is full of case studies and practical examples of barn owl conservation in action. For me this is one of the most winning aspects of this book: it keeps the practicalities of barn owl conservation in view at all times*".

One of the 'grandfathers' of Barn Owl conservation Tony Warberton (World Owl Trust) wrote; "*How I wish this book had been on my shelves when I first began my study of Barn Owls 47 years ago. If it had been, countless hours of lost sleep and many millions of midge bites could have been avoided, for it answers virtually every question a Barn Owl researcher needs to ask. It is a magnificent work and must have taken a herculean effort to put together...*". Finally, BBC Springwatch presenter Chris Packham wrote; "*Its detail is impressive to say the least. Each aspect of the Barn Owls care is meticulously outlined and the latest practical and applied methods of conservation are clearly analysed and presented. If ever there was a handbook which could save a species then this is it.*"

Devon Barn Owl Survey 2013

As 2012 drew to a close, plans were well under-way for the biggest county Barn Owl Survey in Britain. Following on from surveys in 1993 and 2003, the 2013 Devon Survey looked set to be yet another mammoth undertaking. We estimated that well over 1,000 sites would need to be checked ("help!") and advertised a 12-month Survey Officer post. From the sixty-nine applications we selected six for interview (never an easy task) and in the end chose Luke Sutton, a local chap with bags of enthusiasm, a good head for heights, and experience in surveying Peregrines. Because the survey's priority is to record active nests, fieldwork couldn't get into full swing until June. This allowed plenty of time to prepare the Master List of sites to be checked and get Luke fully trained after he took up his position on 2nd April.

New survey website

The Devon Barn Owl Survey prompted us to pursue the idea of collecting Barn Owl sightings and site updates on the internet. Given that our website barnowltrust.org.uk was already such a huge site, we decided to create a separate Online Survey website. After putting our specification out to tender, the job was awarded to MapMate, a web design company that specialises in wildlife-recording. Following an agreeable project meeting in February 2013, construction of the new site was well under-way as the financial year drew to a close.

Getting our message across

Our educational visits to schools continued with a further 12 visits bringing the total number of children we have talked to a staggering 33,240. During the year we gave 8 presentations to groups of adults bringing their grand total to 27,680. In July/August, November, and again in February we ran our 'Barn Owl

Ecology Surveys and Signs' one-day training course on four occasions. In August, we also ran our one-day course entitled 'Advanced Barn Owl Surveys and Mitigation' twice. All these were a great success attracting ecologists and conservationists from across the UK.

My Personal Assistant Hannah Bosence, is a real star! She does virtually all our school visits and attends unusual one-off events for us. She also spent much of her own time organising a pub quiz and planning her very own sponsored walk from coast-to-coast across Devon. She set off from Lynmouth on April 1st and walked the entire 117 miles raising £3,465(!) for the Trust.

After winning BBC Travel Writer of the Year competition in 2012, Pete Dommert who worked for us back in 1998/99 got in touch to research an article he'd been asked to write as part of a Barn Owl feature planned for the April 2013 issue of BBC Wildlife Magazine. Pete consequently visited us in December and the eventual 11-page article included mention of the Trust, the Handbook, and our website.

Our online web cams (Nestcam and Barncam) proved popular once again drawing attention to Barn Owls from viewers in various parts of the world – particularly the USA. The owls obligingly nested in the original nestcam box providing the best possible views of their activity. They laid 7 eggs, five hatched, and three fledged – not bad considering the appalling weather from early June onwards. The cams, hosted by Wildlife TV, encourage visits to our main website where in July we improved the navigation system by adding Popular Topic links to the Home Page.

As usual, we attended the Devon County Show, Royal Cornwall Show, and Dorset Show answering numerous enquiries and recording sightings of Barn Owls. Keeping our information up to date is a never-ending task and in August we started our first major re-working of our Guide for Planners which we originally produced in 2009 with support from Natural England.

Visitors from abroad

In June, November and February three separate 'cohorts' of Hungarian volunteers each spent a week at the Trust to find out about our work and carry out a variety of conservation tasks such as nestbox building, hedgerow management and they also helped to build a stock-proof fence around the new solar panels that have been supplying some of our electricity since March 2012. These visits are part of our collaboration with The Barn Owl Foundation (Hungary) and Ambios.net. In March we were delighted to provide a 4-week internship for Dzhanev Emin from Bulgaria who turned out to be a whizz with IT and helped the development of our new survey website (see www.barnowlsurvey.org.uk). Dzhanev has a keen interest in Barn Owls and hopes to carry out bird surveys in Bulgaria on completion of his studies.

Research

At the start of the year, Chris Batey our Wildlife Conservation Degree student on placement from Plymouth University was already six months into his study investigating the distribution of 1,549 Barn Owl nest sites in relation to land altitude. Chris used nest site data we have been collecting since the 1980's, land-altitude data provided by Devon Biodiversity Records Centre and the Environmental Records Centre for Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly. Chris left us on 11th May 2012 and finished his report in November.

Training

Ambios.net provided two free places for the Trust on their EU-funded training course entitled "Euro GIS-GPS" (hardly a self-explanatory title!). The course taught us how to record tracks and waypoints using a hand-held Global Positioning System (GPS) unit. GIS, or Geographical Information System, is a way of plotting tracks and waypoints on multiple layers of mapped information.



David (centre) explores owl pellets with families at the Birdfair in Rutland Photo: Nigel Massen

Such facilities are useful for accurate habitat mapping, plotting the positions of individual birds/animals, and comparing one's data with other mapped information such as landform, weather, or altitude. Thankfully, Ambios arranged for the European Union to pay for it all including the GPS units for us to keep! We were not quite so lucky with funding for the 'Ladder Use' training course that six of our staff and volunteers attended, essential in these days of Health and Safety culture but unfortunately, not externally funded.

Lennon Legacy Project progress

The Lennon Legacy Project (LLP) is our 26-acre agricultural holding, named after the lady whose legacy enabled the land to be purchased. During the year many LLP land-management tasks were carried out by volunteers; either from Plymouth University or from Hungary. These included a wide range of activities from dam-building to maintaining our pond water abstraction system, hedgelaying, fencing, and thistle-pulling. Additionally, 14 volunteer cows kindly grazed our 25 acres for 12 weeks courtesy of our friendly local farmer. BOT staff were also involved on-site, supervising volunteers, as well as carrying out activities such as brush-cutting in the orchard and tractor driving. Our good friend Di Smurthwaite provided professional hedgelaying and gave the Hungarians an insight into the art.

As well as the annual show of flowers and butterflies, wildlife on-site included Lesser Horseshoe bats in the John Woodland Memorial Wildlife Tower, Dippers along the river, and a pair of Green Sandpiper that visited the Flo pond. Butterfly numbers were down due to the weather but our new House Sparrow colony continued to grow. Foraging Barn Owls continued to frequent the site and in 2012 they bred twice nearby. The site was enjoyed by two visiting-groups from Kingsbridge Natural History Society and one from Parke WI from Bovey Tracey.

In spite of obstacles from the local Planning Authority resulting in us writing two letters of complaint (and wasting valuable time), we eventually obtained planning consent for an Implement Shelter. This fairly modest timber and sheet metal structure was eventually built in the orchard during extremely challenging weather in January, again with cut-price professional help; this time from Richleigh Carpenters from Gloucester. Future plans include the creation of artificial Kingfisher nesting chambers adjacent to our pond where a Kingfisher was spotted on six occasions between 2008 and 2011.

Owl casualties

We continued to receive and treat owl casualties throughout the year. A total of 23 owls arrived (8 Tawny Owls and 15 Barn Owls), of which 6 died or were euthanased. One was permanently disabled and joined the 52 permanent residents in our sanctuary. All

the remaining 16 were released: 6 using our special mobile release aviaries, 7 were 'cold' released, the remaining three were released from static aviaries at Waterleat. Our special thanks go to The Veterinary Hospital Group in Plymouth who treat all our owls free of charge. The figure of 70% released is unusually high partly because six of the birds we received were releasable Barn Owls that came directly from the RSPCA Wildlife Unit at West Hatch.



Practical work

A further 34 Barn Owl nestboxes were erected during the year (29 in buildings and 5 on trees) and rather unusually we erected two nestboxes for Mandarin Ducks, for the pair that have turned up on the Trust's land for the past two springs. We also advised on a forthcoming nestbox project for South Downs National Park which straddles Hampshire and Sussex. The Hampshire-based charity 'Tools for Self Reliance' kindly donated hand tools for our conservation work and back at base we replaced our old recycling shed with a purpose-made new tool store shed.

Another poor year for Barn Owls

After two bitterly cold winters and wet summers, March 2012 was a very pleasant (warm and sunny) surprise and we entered the financial year full of optimism for the forthcoming breeding season. Indeed, most pairs did nest early and laid above average clutches of eggs. Unfortunately it all went horribly wrong around the 5th June when yet another 'English Summer' took hold. The horribly cold, wet and windy weather coincided with the nestlings' peak food demand and the result was heartbreaking. Virtually all nests contained dead or emaciated young. In some cases just the youngest and in some the whole brood died. However, somewhat better weather in August-October meant that some birds tried again and in the end 2012 turned out to be yet another averagely-poor year. In all, it took 12 fieldwork trips to visit our 79 Annual Monitoring Sites and we are grateful to Trustee Keith Grant for helping out as he does each year. Visits were also undertaken by independent BTO-ringers Nik Ward and Mark Grantham who have started voluntarily monitoring additional sites on behalf of the Trust and providing us with the results of their visits. Thank you guys.

Where did that year go?

Is it just me, or is every year getting shorter? Seems like Christmas was only a few weeks ago but soon the evenings will be drawing in once again. Given that time flies past so very quickly, it's amazing that we manage to get so much done! Mind you, none of this would have been possible without the support of countless volunteers and supporters – from grant-giving charities to children making cakes. You know who you are and we take our hats off to all of you.

It's great to think that together we can make a world of difference but there is no room for complacency. Farmland birds have declined by 50% since 1970 and farmland butterflies by 50% since 1990. Despite the best efforts of the conservation movement, wildlife is still in long-term decline. Small charities are also disappearing. Please help us.

I owe sincere gratitude to my little team. A really BIG thank you to my Handbook co-authors: Maxine and Sarah who have since moved on, Matthew and Stuart who are still here and to the amazing Hannah, Luke our new Survey Officer, our Handyman Tim, Jasmin who builds the best owl boxes I've ever seen, our wonderful volunteers; the fantastic support we get from BOT's even smaller admin team and last but not least, our supportive Trustees.

We are all really grateful to everyone who supports the Barn Owl Trust - Thank you all.

David Ramsden MBE
Head of Conservation



The 5th Hungarian Cohort with Matthew (backright) Photo: Hannah Bosence

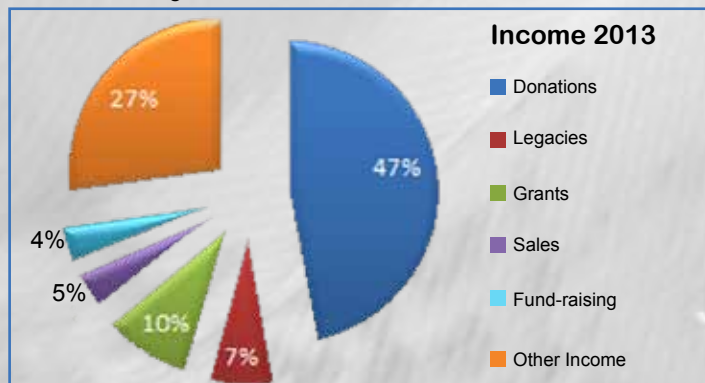


Financial Report

We might well have achieved a great deal of work during the year, but financially it was not a good year for the Trust. Our reserves accumulated over the past decade have been decimated by a loss of -£99,674. This was preceded by last year's deficit of -£33,281. This was not unexpected but we had hoped that with the reduction in our reserves in 2010-2011 we might find it easier to attract more grant funding and donations from charitable trusts. However the general economic situation and low interest rates meant that grant giving trusts generally had less money available and more requests for support. This resulted in a significant 72% drop in our donations from this source £6,725 (£23,700 in 2012).

The total incoming resources for the year to 31 March 2013 decreased to £134,129 (£194,585 in 2012) giving us the net deficit of -£99,674. Overall income from grants and donations was down 12% on the previous year at £76,218 (£87,095 - 2012) accounting for 57% of total income (45% in 2012). However designated grants from Charitable Trusts for specific projects increased by 20% to £13,100 (£10,950 - 2012). Most was to support the County Surveys – Devon 2013 and Cornwall in 2014. We received £3,800 to support our website and IT which is a constantly developing part of our work and enables us to reach out and provide information worldwide. Other small grants have supported our educational work, nestboxing and equipment. On a positive note, during the year we have seen a 43.5% increase in individual donations and raised slightly more with our fund-raising events.

At £5,608 fund-raising accounted for 4% of income, (3%, £5,107 - in 2012) a 10% increase. Fund-raising income came almost entirely from our Annual Draw, sponsorship of Poppy the Springer in 2012, Hannah from our conservation team who walked to raise funds for the Trust in 2013 and Volunteer fund-raising. Our amazing volunteers raised £1,336 during the year in all sorts of ingenious ways – up 48% on the previous year – thank you all. The lucky dip accounted for £494 (£577 -2012) and our Wildlife Poetry competition and sales of Wildlife Words generated £339.



This graph shows our Income and how it was made up in the year. See the chart on page 15 to see the differences between our Income and Expenditure since 2000. It illustrates very clearly how our income fluctuates and the resulting deficit.

THE BARN OWL TRUST

BALANCE SHEET AS AT 31st MARCH 2013

	31 March 2013		31 March 2012	
	£	£	£	£
Fixed Assets		174,519		195,372
Current Assets				
Stock	13,246		12,448	
Prepayments & debtors	3,042		3,681	
Bank deposit account	151,547		228,064	
Bank current account	6,848		7,667	
Other bank accounts	328		848	
Petty cash	250		250	
	<u>175,261</u>		<u>252,958</u>	
Current Liabilities				
Trade creditors	<u>9,636</u>		<u>8,512</u>	
Net Current Assets		165,625		244,446
Total Net Assets		<u>340,144</u>		<u>439,818</u>
The funds of the charity:				
General Fund		21,817		106,780
Restricted reserves		26,121		28,908
Allocated reserves		292,206		304,130
Total charity funds		<u>340,144</u>		<u>439,818</u>

Our profit on sales of promotional goods dropped by 5% to £6,088 (£6,386 -2012) and reflects a significant drop in sales somewhat compensated for by sales of the Barn Owl Conservation Handbook. This year it accounts for 5% of total income compared to 3% in 2012. We saw a 2% decrease in income from our BOESS (Barn Owl Ecology, Searches and Signs) and ABOSM (Advanced Barn Owl Surveying and Mitigation) courses in the year £11,592 (£11,846 - 2012). The sale of nestboxes also decreased, this year's net figure is down 25% - £6,083 (£8,117-2012) and reflects the drop in sales generally.

Since 2000 legacies have been a vital part of our income. Legacy income in the year was £9,781, this was £50,190 (84%) less than the previous year (£59,971 -2012). However we are extremely grateful for the legacies and the Gifts in Memoriam we have received. It is previous years' legacies that have enabled us to survive the financial losses of the last two years. This year legacies accounted for just 7% of income, (31% in 2012). Legacies not only enable the Trust to continue to achieve so much of our general conservation work they also allow us to invest in special projects such as the purchase of the Lennon Legacy Project land, the creation of the two ponds in the LLP, the Meeting Room and the Solar Project.

Our overall expenditure increased by 3% to £233,803 (£227,866 - 2012) despite efforts to economise. Staff did not receive an annual pay increase. We saw a 11% increase in our overheads with a 7% increase in insurance costs - despite no claims, and a

Continued on page 22

THE BARN OWL TRUST For the year ended 31st March 2013	Restricted Funds		Total	Total
	Unrestricted Funds	BOT Env.	Funds 2013	Funds 2012
Incoming Resources from generated funds:	£	£	£	£
Voluntary income:				
Grants & donations	63,118		76,218	87,095
Legacies	9,781		9,781	59,971
Activities for generating funds:				
Sale of promotional goods	6,088		6,088	6,386
Fundraising events	5,608		5,608	5,107
Other Incoming resources	36,434		36,434	36,026
Total Incoming resources	121,029	-	134,129	194,585
Resources expended				
Direct charitable expenditure:				
Practical work				
Salaries, NI, pension	85,495		90,905	89,179
Overheads	6,963		6,963	6,296
Depreciation	22,507		22,507	21,114
Lennon Legacy Project	3,236		3,236	965
Motoring	6,897		6,897	7,323
Mobile phones	472		472	468
Training	543		543	88
Costs of practical work	5,233		6,388	9,287
	131,346	-	137,911	134,720
Information & advice service				
Salaries & NI	53,579		53,579	52,594
Overheads	4,692		4,692	4,243
Telephone	950		950	994
Postage	4,969		4,969	4,613
Training	115		115	18
Printing & reproduction	2,857	450	3,307	2,696
Shows & events	1,044		1,044	959
Internet, website & IT support	5,034	5,300	10,334	6,244
Misc I & A costs	509		509	3,066
	73,749	-	79,499	75,427
Direct charitable expenditure:	205,095	-	217,410	210,147
Other resources expended:				
Fundraising & publicity				
Salaries & NI	8,099		8,099	7,738
Overheads	303		303	274
Cost of projects & events	253		253	428
Other FR expenditure	837		837	1,674
	9,492	-	9,492	10,114
Governance costs				
Bookkeeping / financial management	5,832		5,832	6,586
Misc expenditure	169		169	179
Independent Examination	900		900	840
	6,901	-	6,901	7,605
	16,393	-	16,393	17,719
Total resources expended	221,488	-	233,803	227,866
Net incoming resources	(100,459)	-	(99,674)	(33,281)
Transfers between funds	3,572		(3,572)	
Net incoming resources after transfers	(96,887)	-	(99,674)	(33,281)
Fund balances brought forward	410,910	-	439,818	473,099
Fund balances carried forward	(314,023)	-	340,144	439,818



Thank You

We are very grateful to the following organisations that have supported our work with grants, sponsorship or donations in kind during this financial year. Thank you!

Alan & Karen Grieve Charitable Trust
Ashburton Post Office - (Hazel Baldwin)
Barbara and Richard Barker
Barry Green Memorial Fund
Blair Foundation
Church's Hardware Store
Cobalt Trust
Coda Wildlife Trust
Diana Symon Charitable Trust
Dumbreck Charity
Francis Clarke
Hamamelis Trust
Jack Patston Charitable Trust
J. W. Swire
Keensave Ltd - (Christine Mercer)
Kenneth Hargreaves Trust
Kevin Keatley Wildlife Watching Supplies
Margaret Davis Charitable Trust
Marjorie Coote Animal Charitable Trust

Marsh Christian Trust
Martin Wills Wildlife Maintenance Trust
M E Woofe Charitable Trust
Michael & Shirley Hunt Charitable Trust
Mitchell Trust
Panton Trust
Phliss & Ben Charitable Trust
Really Useful Group
Sir John & Lady Heathcoat Charitable Trust
Stella Symons Charitable Trust
Verdon-Smith Family Charitable Trust
Veterinary Hospital Group Plymouth
Viscount Amorys Charitable Trust
Walker Animal Trust
Walter Guinness Charitable Trust
William Dean Trust
Web Broadcasting Corporation
William Haddon Charitable Trust

During this period we also received legacies from:

John Francis Roper, Nora Irene Lee, Kathleen Margaret Tennant, Susan Lang and Mary Collis Higgins

Gifts in Memory of:

Phyliss Sarah Gardiner
Win Dear (Hazel Potter)
Joan Fowler
Robert Goronwy Williams
Nora Irene Lee
Vera Haselden
Joan & Wally Keegan
Jane Baker
Milda Marburg

Reg Welsh
Elaine Jones
Kathleen Jones
Jim "Chief" Denham
Johnny Wearing
Kevin Moseley
Shirley Anne Ball
Rita Gargrave
Barbara Angela Chisholm

and donations from sponsored events and other fund-raising from:

1st Hordle Brownies
Alan Duns
Axe Valley Runners
Brundall Primary School
Cator Cricket Club
Dalton Phoenix Ladies Group,
Darrel & Lucy of Eco Cottages

Grace, Amy & Charlie Steele
Janice Walsh & Friends
Jonathan Carr
Leonna Walters
Margaret Crocker
Paul & Kirsty Stenning
St David's C of E Primary School, Exeter

Thank you all so much for your support

Financial Report continued

38% increase in electricity costs. Insurance premiums account for a massive 3% of our total expenditure. Price rises and an unusually cold summer requiring additional heating accounted for most of the increases.

Practical work again accounted for 59% of total spend at £137,911 (59% £134,720 - 2012) a 2% increase on the previous year. Provision of our Information and Advice service cost £79,499 - 34% of total spend. This was a 5% increase on 2012 (£75,427), with rises being seen on printing, postage and IT costs. Fund-raising remained at 4% of total spend £9,492 - a 6% drop in real terms from £10,114 in 2012.

LLP expenditure increased significantly in the year to £3,236 (£965- 2012) with the last stretch of the Pennsland Lane hedge being laid and the building of the new Implement Shed in Forde Orchard to house the agricultural machinery. The Trustees have ring-fenced a fund of £59,840 for future projects and long-term maintenance of the Lennon Legacy Project although some of this will be used to support our Survey Officer for the Devon Barn Owl Survey.

Expenditure on Governance has decreased by 9% to £6,901 (£7,605 – 2012) and is just 3% of total spend. We are able to keep this figure down due to our volunteers who continue to be an invaluable asset to the Trust, assisting in every aspect of the work including practical tasks, administration, clerical work and fund-raising, as well as the provision of professional services.

In summary, after 25 years of conservation our workload continues to grow and this combined with the need to generate more regular income continues to be a major dilemma for the Trust. It is a delicate balancing act for the Trustees and our Management Team who are constantly looking for ways to balance our income and expenditure whilst ensuring that we continue to fulfil our aims of *conserving the Barn Owl and its environment*.

Thank you to everyone that has supported the Barn Owl Trust during the twelve months covered by this report. Although once again, we ended the year with a financial loss, we achieved a great deal. Barn Owls (and other species) have benefited from our work - we couldn't have done it without your help - thank you.

Mark Pountney MAAT
Honorary Treasurer

Thanks and Things



Thank you everyone who has sent us items on our Wants List since the last issue of Feedback. We've had Barn Owl pellets to send out to schools, padded envelopes and bubble wrap for posting things out, keys, jewellery, watches, bank notes, coins, postcards, 1st day covers, stamps and ink cartridges for recycling.

We've also been given towels for the owl hospital, a donation from the sale of scrap metal, stationery for the office, items to sell on ebay and prizes for our Grand Draw at the end of the year and the raffle at our Acoustic Music evening.

So thank you very much: Mark Tatam, Annie Rhodes, Nicky Pearce, Wendy & John Lightfoot, Maureen Robinson, Gwyneth Parish, Ann Green, Elizabeth Wilson, Simon Aylett & Susan Bell, Keith & Janice Dickinson, Mr & Mrs Wallis, Richard & Leigh Boucher, Margaret Crocker, Mrs W. Shaw, Melanie White, Beryl Welsh, Ann Oxley, Brian Larard, Mrs Middleton, Ashburton Post Office, Kim & Ed McNeal, Karen & Rick Barton, Margaret Rhodes, Keith & Janice Dickinson, Simon Aylett & Susan Bell, Hazel Baldwin, Shelley Wright & Tracey Morris, Karen Smerdon (Oggy Oggy Pasty Shop), One Stop Sealing, Ann Oxley, Peter Stafford, Sarah Dimmock, the estate of Olwen Hunt, Robin & Marlen Bidgell, Sandra & Paddy Reardon, Estelle Baker, Tuckers Maltings, Riverford Field Kitchen, Coteigh Brewery, Dick Twinney, Marieanne Bryan and Mark Pountney. These donations are all very welcome and either save us money or raise funds to support our work.

Before we move on we'd just like to mention a few more folk who have supported us with unusual donations: Sophie Allington made a donation in memory of a Barn Owlet who died in June, Frances Clarke of New York gave a £200 donation specifically for our 'nestcam/Barncam', Miranda Coleman-Cooke donated a Swarovski telescope, Western Power Distribution donated the poles used to build our implement shelter and Alan Duns gave us

a blue Renault Master van to sell from which we raised £3,000. We are very grateful to everyone listed and to all of you that have supported the Trust. Please read through our Wants List and see if there is anything there you can help with, or consider having a fun fund-raising event (see page 13) to celebrate our 25 years of Barn Owl conservation:

- ◇ Wild bird food - mainly sacks of black sunflower seeds, also peanuts & plain canary seed
- ◇ Wood for making outdoor nestboxes - sheets of 9 or 12mm tanalised softwood ply and lengths of 25x 50mm tanalised batten
- ◇ A4 and A3 recycled paper and card both coloured and white
- ◇ Padded envelopes
- ◇ Anabat detector
- ◇ Hand held heterodyne bat detector
- ◇ Waders - for working in the ponds
- ◇ Leaf blower
- ◇ Carpet suitable for the office
- ◇ Metal detector
- ◇ Stamps (especially mint British) but also used - world wide
- ◇ 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
- ◇ Small Plate Compactor
- ◇ Emulsion Paint (pale colour) sufficient to paint an office
- ◇ Brown Packaging/parcel tape 50mm x 66mm
- ◇ Any of the items listed in the 1st paragraph (top left) for recycling
- ◇ New or nearly new wood chisels, particularly wide/rounded
- ◇ Landranger and OS maps of Devon; particularly Torbay/South Dartmoor area
- ◇ Bubble wrap
- ◇ Small marquee (3m x 3m or less)
- ◇ Revenue from old cars - via Giveacar



Tail piece ...

No wonder we British talk about the weather all the time; it's fairly unpredictable and increasingly extreme. What a wonderful few weeks of summer we had in July after the record breaking cold and wet months of the past few years. Although Barn Owls are having an extremely tough time there are more butterflies, crickets and grasshoppers around than last year when we didn't seem to have a summer at all. I love the sunshine and, given the smiles that were on most faces, so do most folk. It seems to lighten the spirit and increase goodwill, although there were some mumblings that it was 'too hot'. The rain came just in time here, the trees were starting to suffer with browning leaves and the grass in the fields had stopped growing and started to die. Now we have a new flush of green and the threat of hosepipe bans has receded for a while.

The knapweed and the lavender in my garden are attracting huge numbers of bees and butterflies but ladybirds seem to be having a pretty hard-time this year; I've seen five so far whereas usually I'd see a hundred or more.

When you have a summer like last year with the floods, and a Barn Owl breeding season like this one, you can feel quite impotent that there is little we can do to help our native wildlife. But Nature is wonderful and wildlife tries to make the most of the opportunities we provide; if we don't plant the flowers the bees can't feed on them. If we don't put up nestboxes and create good habitat there won't be good places for Barn Owls to live when there is a better breeding season.

We need to think long-term, to consider the legacy we are leaving for future generations. Do we want to leave them oceans full of plastic... nuclear waste dumps that will exist for thousands of years... an ever-increasing list of declining habitats and extinct species? Our politicians won't do it for us - they just want to win votes. It is up to each and every one of us to do what we can to make the world a better place for all its inhabitants.

Did you know that since 1997 measurements of plastic waste in the ocean has seen a 600% increase and wildlife is dying because humans dump their rubbish in the sea? I grew up in a town called Modbury, the first town in the UK to become carrier bag free, let's hope that there will be many more. People Power can make it happen!

Back in the early 1980's we were thought quite odd when we collected newspapers and cans for recycling, whereas these days most local authorities do it. Now many of them are planting parks and verges to encourage bees and other insects. Education, information and People Power are the keys to a better world for our children.

Big companies have their eye on the 'bottom line' and they will sell us whatever makes the most money for their shareholders. If enough of us ask questions about sustainability, genetically modified ingredients, environmental awareness, the recycling of packaging, fair trade and the percentage of the cost the producer gets, then those companies will have to increase their ethical efforts. So by just spending the pounds in your pocket wisely you can have an impact on your planet and if enough of us do, it becomes really significant.

It is very easy to feel overwhelmed, that what we do won't make much difference to a planet that is facing Earth's problems. But People Power can provide better conditions for workers in third world countries, it can force multi-nationals to clean up their acts, it can stop the destruction of habitats and it can improve the lives of individuals and of the creatures that share our wonderful home. People Power is you and me and the other folk who care about this wonderful world we are lucky enough to share;

Together we can make a world of difference. ★

Frances Ramsden

Christmas Cards



We have four new Christmas cards for you this year with the greeting *Best wishes for Christmas and the New Year*. Order the cards on-line or using the sales booklet included with this issue. ★



The images for these beautiful cards have been provided for us by wildlife photographers: Ed MacKerrow, Les Foster and Russell Savoury - thank you all.



New Nestboxes

The Trust range of sales goods includes both indoor and outdoor Barn Owl nestboxes. These well thought-out designs are built to last with good quality materials and have proved a huge success, not only as homes for owls but also as a way of supporting the costs of our conservation work. When asked about nestboxes for other species we have always directed people to other suppliers. However, because of our financial situation and the often poor quality products on the market, we have just started building and selling nestboxes for Tawny Owl, Little Owl, and traditional tit boxes. Rather than being built for ease of manufacture and maximum profit, our designs are built to last and to be as suitable as possible for the birds. We are not aiming to be the cheapest, we're aiming to be the best.

to its success. It is constructed from 12mm FSC-approved pressure treated plywood, all-weather sealant and a thick felted roof. It features the same easy-fix system for erection and has an inspection hatch on the front.

The Small Bird box design we use is again from the BTO, and whilst there are many variations of the design out there you can rest assured our box has all the key features small birds look for. Again, it's built to last with three-quarter inch treated plank and 18mm pressure treated ply. It has an opening lid, with thick torch-on-felt forming the hinge and overhanging the sides. The box is sealed to make it weather proof, has a 28mm entrance hole and a metal plate to stop the hole being widened by squirrels or woodpeckers. Although primarily designed for tits, the box can house many other species of small birds. This box costs **, and there is also a flat pack version at the lower price of **. For those wanting to put up multiple boxes we offer a bulk order price; contact the BOT office for further details.



SMALL BIRD BOX
23 x 41 x 25 cm
£XX
plus £10 carriage



TAWNY OWL BOX
31 x 93 x 35 cm
plus fixing batten

£XX
plus £10 carriage

Our Tawny Owl box is based on a British Trust for Ornithology (BTO) upright design. Each box is substantially built from Forestry Stewardship Council (FSC) approved 18mm pressure treated plywood with a thick felt roof and sealed joints throughout. Erection is facilitated by the easy-fix system originally developed for our Barn Owl tree nestboxes.

Our new Little Owl box has been designed by Bob Sheppard, who has had great success with this design in Lincolnshire with 44 breeding pairs this year. This box is very specific to Little Owls, the size of the entrance hole, the baffle to decrease light in the box and the internal measurements are all key



LITTLE OWL BOX
30 x 35 x 39 cm
plus fixing batten

£XX
plus £10 carriage

All the designs of owl and bird boxes we supply have been used by us year after year very successfully. Provided they are maintained they will last for years and provide safe homes for birds and owls. Order yours on-line or using the sales booklet included with this issue. ★