

Issue Number 51 - Spring 2014



FEEDBACK

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

Mike Penning MP:

More
than

120,915
people ask you to

**Save Our
Barn Owls**



AVAAZ.ORG
THE WORLD IN ACTION

*** Rodenticide Petition delivered to Minister**



Conserving the Barn Owl and its Environment

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*Cover Photos: Avaaz petition
BOT & Avaaz meet the Minister - Frances Ramsden*

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Welcome to Feedback. It's hard to believe how quickly the time has passed since we put the last issue together. It really does seem as though it's getting faster every year!

We'd like to thank everyone who made a special effort with their support following the huge loss at the end of our last financial year. We have a financial update on page 14 and tell you what we are doing to help the situation. We saved several hundred pounds on printing and postage by producing Feedback 50 with our Annual Report, so plan to do the same again this autumn.

If you receive Feedback by post our Annual Draw tickets will be included. The first prize will once again be the very special, ever popular 'Day out with the Conservation Team' during summer 2015. This includes a pub lunch, an introduction to the BOT team and an opportunity to see wild owlets in the nest on our Annual Monitoring visits. Other great prizes will be added before the draw in December.

The past few months have been dominated by the last of the fieldwork for the Devon Barn Owl Survey - page 4 - and our Rodenticide Campaign. In case you missed it, on January 22nd we launched our first ever e-petition with Avaaz.org calling on Minister Mike Penning and the Health and Safety Executive to introduce stronger controls on the use of powerful rodent poisons and clear labelling on packaging. By the end of the first day we'd had an incredible 2,000+ signatures and we hit 100,000 on 19th February - amazing. There have been articles in the Sunday Guardian, the Ecologist and The Field magazines and coverage on local TV and radio. The petition has been supported by Chris Packham, Bill Oddie, the RSPB, the Wildlife Trusts and featured on Channel 4 news. See page 3 for the latest news.

On the fundraising front, Friend of the Trust, Trudy Turrell, has organised a music event in Totnes on 20th March with multi-instrumentalist Steve Nisbet as part of his '100 gigs for 100 causes' tour. He will be supported by our very own Owly Dave and handyman Jasmin who both performed at our Acoustic Music event in August 2013. We hope to have some pictures in the next issue.

We have two very beautiful and willing four-legged volunteers who are walking to raise funds for the Trust at the end of July. Poppy, age 3, is currently expecting pups but will be ready for the challenge by then and Maizie (2) will be doing her first BOT event - see page 11. Please sponsor them.

We've had a tremendous amount of rain over the winter leading us to produce the article about the weather data we've collected here on page 10. Our feature article 'Where have all the Barn Owls gone' on pages 8 & 9 looks at how the extreme weather we've been having has affected Barn Owls and mentions some of the other hazards they face.

We have a range of activities planned for the year, Diary Dates - page 14 - including walks, talks and workshops. You can come along and enjoy a summer stroll in the Lennon Legacy Project or build your own small bird nestbox and get advice about choosing the best position for it. Refreshments (tea, coffee and biscuits) are provided at each event and often supplemented with homemade cakes or even a cream tea.

The next few months will be busy with the inputting and analysis of the Devon Barn Owl Survey data, development of the www.barnowlsurvey.org.uk website and a huge project to rebuild our main website, making it much easier and cheaper for us to update and more accessible from mobile devices. In addition to this we will be dealing with enquiries, live bird emergencies, caring for our resident owls and the Lennon Legacy Project land, carrying out practical conservation, providing information and doing educational work. We will also be attending county shows in Devon, Cornwall and Dorset.

We hope you enjoy reading this issue of Feedback and that it encourages you to do your bit for conservation of the Barn Owl and its Environment. Thank you for supporting the Trust and its work. We couldn't do it without you.

Frances Ramsden & Marianne Bryan ★

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www.barnowltrust.org.uk

**New
in 2014**

The outcome is critical



David (left) and Frances (right) from the Trust meet Minister Mike Penning (centre) at the end of February Photo: Meredith Alexander

As I write, important decisions are being made. The subject is the future use of powerful rodenticides in the UK and the outcome will determine how many thousands of innocent mammals and birds are going to be poisoned in future.

On 4th March in York, representatives from the multi-million pound poison-manufacturers and the different poison-user-groups presented their proposals to the Chemicals Regulation Directorate of the Health and Safety Executive (the poison-regulators). Perhaps unsurprisingly, all the poison-industry is basically recommending are new Codes of Practice with additional non-compulsory training for poison-users and some publicity to promote a new 'Stewardship Regime'. Needless to say, we're not convinced that these wishy-washy measures are going to change the habits of a lifetime.

For the past 30-odd years Farmers, Gamekeepers, Pest Controllers, and amateurs have been using highly-toxic Second Generation Anticoagulant Rodenticides (SGARs) as a first resort because, in the words of the Pest Control Sector they are "the most practical, economical and effective method". Unfortunately, the economics of rodent control doesn't take into account the effect on wildlife.

Extensive use has resulted in the widespread contamination of wildlife including Wood Mice and Bank Voles, even Field Voles and Common Shrews have been found to contain SGARs. As a consequence, 84% of Barn Owls and 100% of Kestrels are poisoned according to latest government figures. Over-use is also responsible for the creation of so-called Super Rats that are resistant to SGARs, causing the poison-makers to provide ever-stronger (and more expensive) products and the Stewardship Regime proposes that HSE allows them to be used in the open countryside. Thus, the scene is set for increased damage to wildlife and the never-ending build-up of resistance.

Fortunately there's a fly in the ointment and thanks to the petitioning organisation Avaaz, it's a pretty big fly. With the backing of 123,000+ signatories the Barn Owl Trust really is rocking the boat. After submitting detailed comments on the industry's Stewardship Regime Proposals we presented our concerns and recommendations to the Minister responsible. So, for everyone who signed our petition, here's a little feedback on the meeting in London on 27th February:

THE MINISTER (Mike Penning MP, responsible for pesticide regulation) listened really well. He showed genuine interest and concern. He'd obviously taken the time to read his briefings and had pulled in top civil servants from across the country (from HSE and DEFRA) for the meeting. He chaired a well-informed discussion of the issues. He's now considering all sides; the threat that rats pose to public health; the emergence of super-rats resistant to ever-stronger poisons; the widespread contamination of wildlife; the shortcomings of current controls; and the possible ways forward.

AVAAZ are totally amazing. The amount of work they put in behind the scenes is incredible. Their mandate to act is simply the will of their 'members' (everyone who signs) and their only income is from members donations. Our contacts at Avaaz have been a real pleasure to work with, bringing tremendous knowledge, enthusiasm and strategic skill to our grass-roots campaign.

WE found the meeting a tremendously positive experience. On behalf of Britain's poisoned wildlife (and over 120,000 signers) we presented our concerns and delivered our recommendations, helped, in no small measure, by all the conversations we've had with farmers over the past 25 years and the replies we've created to the hundreds of enquiries we've had over the past 4 weeks .

The rodenticide industry's proposals are NOT satisfactory. However, they are a multi-million pound industry and we are a tiny little wildlife charity. The outcome of the March meeting between the rodenticide industry, HSE, DEFRA, and Public Health England is critical. ★

News Bites

Barn Owl Survey Website

Between 1st May and 31st December last year 227 people reported 1,471 Barn Owl sites and sightings from around the UK. This was despite there being far fewer Barn Owls about than in previous years. You can report your records at - www.barnowlsurvey.org.uk See page 13 to find out how we plan to develop the site this year.

Owl e-news

In September 2013 'Owl e-news' was launched. Designed to spread news about projects & events organised and run by the Trust, this monthly email has been sent to folk throughout Devon. If you would like to receive a copy please let us know and we'll add you to our mailing list.

Cornwall Survey on Hold

The 2014 Cornwall Barn Owl Survey has been put on indefinite hold. As we said in the last issue of Feedback BOT trustees reluctantly decided that the survey couldn't go ahead unless we could 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 our core work" said Chair of Trustees Keith Grant. Unfortunately despite extensive requests we didn't receive the sponsorship needed for the survey. We will continue to visit our Annual Monitoring sites in the county.

Barn Owls in West Berkshire

A new colour booklet has been produced by John Dellow of the Pang Valley Barn Owl Group and the West Berkshire Countryside Society. Full of wonderful photographs the 7 page booklet estimates a current population level of just 150 pairs in the area. The Trust helped advise on the content and provided pictures. Contact the Trust for sellers details if you would like to purchase a copy.

Bio-fuel Breakdown

Unfortunately the Trust has had to stop using recycled vegetable oil in its vehicles. The quality of filtration with the last batch we purchased has caused a series of expensive problems with our vehicles, the latest one requiring an uneconomic repair and resulting in the replacement of our field-work van.

Italian Article

Following a special request from Sara Genovese of the 'SKUA Nature Group' in Alessandria, Italy, we wrote our first article about Barn Owls in Europe. It has just been published (in Italian) as a fantastic 14-page colour spread in 'Endeavour' a 145-page glossy nature magazine. The Italian name for Barn Owl is 'Barbagianni'!

100 gigs for 100 causes

Multi-instrumentalist Steve Nisbet known as The Choir of Loretta is touring the UK as part of his '100 gigs for 100 causes' tour. He plans to raise money for 100 charities and on 20th March it's the BOT's turn. He will be supported by our very own Owlly Dave and handyman Jasmin. ★

More BOT News

Devon Barn Owl Survey

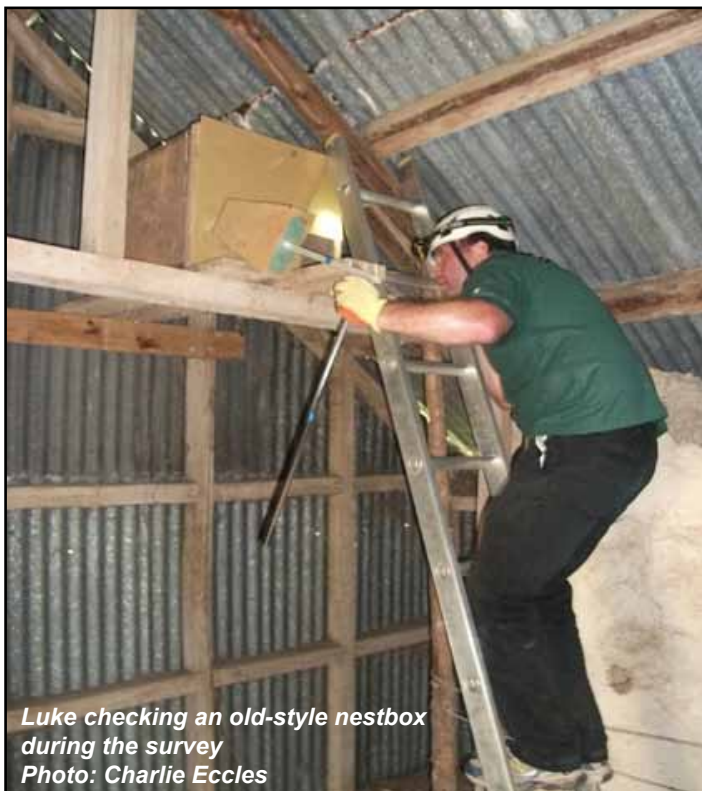
As reported in the last issue of Feedback, the Trust has been carrying out the 3rd Devon County Barn Owl Survey during 2013. The fieldwork started late because of a delayed start to the breeding season so we continued to check sites to look for signs of occupation until March 2014. The second survey in 2003 checked a total of 1,176 Barn Owl roost and/or nest sites. For the 2013 survey there was a total of 1,337 sites recorded that needed to be checked, they have now all had a visit.

The vast majority of the fieldwork has been carried out by Trust staff: Matt Twiggs (Conservation Officer), Stuart Baker (Assistant Conservation Officer) and myself. We've also had assistance from regular and seasonal volunteers, notably Kim Baker who volunteers at the Trust and Charlie Eccles, an undergraduate student at Nottingham Trent University who volunteered with us for four days a week during the summer and helped with survey work. This gave her useful work experience as well as data for her course, enabling her to make regular collections of Barn Owl pellets from a wide range of sites. She is now planning to use this to write her 3rd year dissertation on Barn Owl diet.

Unfortunately, as many of you may know, 2013 was a very poor breeding year for Barn Owls over most of the UK and Devon was no exception. We have found just 79 nest sites with a breeding attempt, either successful or failed. Compare this to 2003, when 281 nests were recorded and it starts to give an indication of how bad a year 2013 was for Barn Owls in Devon.

We have now come to the end of the survey and have started inputting the data collected and will soon begin analysing the results, with the report expected to be published later this year. It just leaves me to thank everyone who has helped with the survey: all of our volunteers, the charitable trusts that provided some grant funding, the licensed Barn Owl workers, landowners and the general public; without their support this survey would not have been possible. ★

Luke Sutton
Survey Officer



Luke checking an old-style nestbox during the survey
Photo: Charlie Eccles



Feed the Birds

A Great Spotted Woodpecker enjoying the bird cake
Photo: David Ramsden

With all the bad weather we've been having recently it's good to know there is something we can all do to help our local wildlife.

In January the Trust produced a three and a half minute pictorial guide to making bird cakes for your garden birds. You can find the recipe and instructions by visiting the Barn Owl Trust Youtube channel or by using the link from our website news page.

Not only do these cakes help over-winter survival they also give you really good close up views of the birds if you hang them near your window. ★

Hungarian Trainees



The latest group of trainees pose with the nestboxes they helped to build
Photo: Matthew Twiggs

A group of four Hungarian trainees spent four days with us in November as part of a project run by Ambios.net.

As part of their time here they accompanied conservation staff, who were checking sites for the Devon Barn Owl Survey. They spent a day in our workshop with our 'handymen' and built outdoor nestboxes for the conservation team to erect this winter and also had a day with Conservation Officer Matthew carrying out practical tasks in the LLP.

This is the sixth group of Hungarian trainees to spend time here at the Trust over the past two years. All have come through the Leonardo da Vinci Programme, part of the EC's Lifelong Learning Programme. ★

Short Stories

Boxing Day

In November the Trust ran its first nestbox workshop for several years. Working with the Pensilva Wildlife Group the event resulted in thirteen new homes for Barn Owls being built. Participants met in the Millennium Hall, Pensilva for a presentation by our Senior Conservation Officer David. They then transformed old tea-chests into desirable residences for the birds. The day was completed by a visit to a local farm where a nestbox was erected and David answered questions and gave advice on putting up boxes safely in suitable locations. Despite the wet and windy weather the day was a great success.

If you are part of a group interested in organising a nestbox workshop with the Trust in your local area please contact us and we'll let you know what's involved. If you are an individual wanting to attend a workshop here at the Trust to build your own box please read the Nestbox Workshop page on our website and then get in touch and we'll let you know when we have a date. ★



*The Pensilva Wildlife Group with their Barn Owl boxes
Photo: Frances Ramsden*



Implements In !

Photo: Frances Ramsden

Our implement shelter in Forde Orchard, started in January 2013, was eventually finished in the Autumn. Thankfully this meant we had somewhere dry to store our tractor and other machinery before the rain began. It rained here on 28 of 31 days in October and again for 28 days in January and in February! ★



Lucky to be alive Photos: Provided



Barn Owl Rescue

This young Barn Owl was the subject of a call to our Live Owl Emergency line in September. Recently fledged, she'd managed to get her legs tangled in baler twine and then hooked onto barbed wire on an electricity pole a short distance from the nest.

Glenda Calvert from Pry House Farm in North Yorkshire rang the Trust to ask for advice and then, despite her fear of heights, decided to climb up to cut the twine and release the bird.

Fortunately the barbed wire was much lower than the live wires! "The owl was quite calm and I was able to gently snip away at the string" said Glenda.

Having started to check the owl over, following the instructions on our website, she decided to take it to her local vet where the young owl was fed and observed overnight.

"The following morning the vet phoned to say that the owl had survived the night and was more lively; her talons were obviously working properly as she'd been trying to grab the vet, a good sign!" said Glenda. "Today I put her back in the barn where she was raised. Imagine my delight when I discovered another young owl in there too! So from a brood of three or maybe four, at least two have made it. A big thank you to David, Senior Conservation Officer at the Barn Owl Trust, his advice and guidance was invaluable." ★

LLP Update

Late summer is always a lovely time in the LLP. Bird sightings usually include one or two surprises, as both migrants and dispersing juveniles can and do turn up pretty much anywhere at this time.

A Skylark flushed from the middle of the field in late July was the first surprise as the lack of bare earth here makes the site less attractive than nearby arable fields. In late August a Spotted Flycatcher spent an afternoon making sorties for flying insects from the solar panel arrays above the barn, and a few days later in early September the first of our now annual reports of Kingfishers involved a vocal individual heard calling along the River Ashburn by the office. Unfortunately it didn't grace us with a view on that occasion but it, or another, was actually seen around the ponds over the Christmas period. A flock of over 60 Meadow Pipits were feeding in the rough grass in late September, presumably as they moved southwards, whilst a Green Woodpecker yaffled away in the background. In October a confused Grey Wagtail was in song on top of the workshop roof. By December, a small Barn Owl pellet and some whitewash was evident under the Kestrel provision of the wildlife tower.

The New Year started as 2013 ended; very mild. A Kestrel was seen on two consecutive days hunting over the field at this time, along with a wintering flock of 18 Meadow Pipits. Two Woodcock were flushed from along Pennsland Lane hedgerow in daylight affording good views of this normally nocturnal species. By day they are usually found lying low on the woodland floor where their cryptic rufous and brown plumage perfectly camouflages them from potential predators. By night however, they fly out into open countryside to probe for earth worms in ploughed fields and pasture. By mid-January the continuing mild, albeit wet and windy, weather had encouraged a Mistle Thrush, Song Thrush, Blackbird, Great Tit and Robin into song.

After the discovery of Brown Hairstreak eggs in the Kiln Close Blackthorn hedge in December 2012, management of the roadside buffer took place at the optimum time for the species. One to two-year old Blackthorn growth is where eggs are laid, often in the vicinity of mature Ash trees and the best time for hedgerow management is in early August as neither eggs nor larvae are likely to be present. After an initial survey for breeding birds, a third of the hedge was cut back on 7th August, with another third planned for 2014 and the final section in 2015. This will ensure suitable habitat for the next 4 years, after which the rotation will be repeated. Interestingly, the first ClouDED Yellow since 2006 was seen to go north past the work party the same afternoon. It or another ClouDED Yellow was seen twice in the orchard a few days later and one final time at the beginning of September.

A peak count of five Small Copper was recorded at the end of September during Week 26 of our UK Butterfly Monitoring Scheme survey transects.



A Small Copper Butterfly on Creeping Thistle
Photo: Kevin Keatley



A Common Lizard spotted under a corrugated sheet
Photo: David Ramsden

The first photograph of a Lizard in the LLP was taken in mid-October from under the top corrugated sheet, where one had been seen in September. This is well away from the usual site they've been seen, on the slope below the weather station and the orchard, so may constitute a range expansion in this species.

Field Voles were found breeding under the top corrugated sheet, with a young half-grown vole present at the beginning of December. This is the first confirmed winter breeding of this species for the LLP. Breeding continued into the New Year with another nest there in early January, as lots of holes started to appear elsewhere in the grassland right across the field. The first frogs appeared on the 23rd January, with spawn a day later. This compares with 30th January 2013, 19th January 2012, 4th February 2011, 9th February 2010 and 28th January 2009.

At the end of the month an old Harvest Mouse nest was found in thick Hedge Bedstraw along the Pennsland Lane hedgerow.

The on-going invasive species monitoring involved pulling Creeping Thistle from some of the quadrats above the weather station in early August. By the end of the month, the comparatively late Himalayan Balsam was also pulled and disposed of.

The Cherry and Plum trees in Forde Orchard were pruned during a warm, dry spell in early September to avoid bacterial and fungal infection and the orchard grass bank was cut as per Natural England's Third Conservation Plan habitat management agreement.

The first group of Plymouth University students for the academic year visited in October and tidied up around the ponds, clearing grass and weeds from the water's edge and removing Hazel and Ash seedlings that threatened the integrity of the clay lining. They came again in December for some much-needed scrub control and again in January, when they helped to prepare the site of a new double-height fence in the orchard.

The hedge along the entrance track in Kiln Close was laid by trainees from the Devon Rural Skills Trust over two days in late November, under the careful supervision of our hedgelayer Diana Smurthwaite. All six trainees passed the test, and the Trust got a beautifully laid 60-yard section of hedge into the bargain for next-to-nothing. ★

Matthew Twiggs
Conservation Officer

Bird News

The second half of 2013 felt like it was fairly quiet on the rehabilitation front, but now that I have sat down and gone through all the paperwork in preparation for this article, it seems that it was rather busier than I remember. The first thing to report is some good news; the Tawny Owl that was mentioned in the last issue did grow his tail feathers back and was returned to the wild at the beginning of September.

Towards the end of July, we received another Tawny Owl, this time from a local vets. The bird had been found by workers in a sewer, but fortunately for us, the vets had already cleaned it up prior to its arrival. Following the cleaning the feathers' natural oils had to re-establish themselves and then he was back to full health and released at the beginning of September. A pair of Tawny Owls arrived here in August from a local bird rehabilitator who could no longer look after them. They stayed here for a month to ensure that they were both fit and healthy before release.

In the middle of August we received a Kestrel that had been found in a local garden. Although not injured, it was very, very thin, and died after two days. We received another raptor a couple of weeks later, this time a Sparrowhawk. It was found in identical circumstances to the Kestrel and unfortunately the outcome was the same. Sometimes if a bird is very thin, its organs start to shut down. Once this happens no amount of feeding or rehydrating will help.

Towards the end of September, we had a Barn Owl brought to us that was spotted caught up in bramble by the side of the road. Initially we thought that it had a broken wing, but a trip to the vets for an x-ray revealed that this wasn't the case. What an x-ray couldn't see was damage to the blood vessels in the wing. The loss of blood supply led to gangrene, and another trip to the vets. It was decided that putting the bird to sleep would be the kindest option.

October saw us take in a Tawny Owl that was found by the side of the road. The bird had a broken wing, but had obviously been injured some time before as the bone had already fused. Unfortunately it had not set properly when this occurred, so it will never have full use of the wing. This owl is now a permanent resident in our disabled owl aviary with other Tawnies.

At the beginning of October we took a call from someone concerned about a Barn Owl that had been perched on the roof of their house for most of the day. There was no way to reach the bird, so they just had to keep an eye on it. Eventually it was spotted in their garden and they brought it in to us. Unfortunately it was very emaciated and didn't pull through.

In the middle of October, we took in another Sparrowhawk that had been found in a garden. She had a damaged eye on one side and the other side of her head was hugely swollen, so much so that the eye was not visible. At first we thought it was an infection and didn't hold out much hope for her. A trip to the vets showed that it wasn't an infection at all, it was physical damage. While the swelling has cleared up completely, the eye damage is permanent. Owls hunt primarily using their hearing, so a one-eyed owl may survive in the wild, but Sparrowhawks are visual hunters that catch birds on the wing. It is extremely unlikely that a one-eyed Sparrowhawk would survive release. As a consequence, she will be spending the rest of her days in captivity with a local rehabilitator.

Our most recent arrival is a Barn Owl from the RSPCA at West Hatch in Somerset. They received it as a fallen owlet and passed it to us for release. It is still with us at the moment, but weather permitting by the time you read this, it should be back in the wild.



*This magnificent Sparrowhawk spent four months recuperating here before moving to a permanent home
Photo: David Ramsden*

Things have been much quieter with our captive owls. In early August, we found a Barn Owl on the floor of the main aviary, clearly the worse for wear after fighting with another owl. After treatment for cuts and scrapes, as well as a nasty-looking leg injury, she made a full recovery and was moved to our Field aviary where she has remained without any further trouble.

At the very beginning of October we found one of our Tawny Owls with an injured eye. Despite administering treatment we couldn't save the eye, but as the bird was otherwise healthy it was returned to the aviary in due course. Since the last issue of Feedback the birds have all had their annual health checks.

Lastly, I am sad to report that we lost one of our long-term resident Barn Owls, Noel, towards the end of last year. Noel was originally brought to us in 2005 as an adult, after being found underneath some high-tension wires with a broken wing.

Thank you to everyone at the Veterinary Hospital Group at Estover in Plymouth for providing our veterinary support and all your help. ★

Stuart Baker
Assistant Conservation Officer

Where have all the

Since the last national survey (in 1995-97) produced an estimate of 4,000 pairs, a huge amount of effort has gone into conserving Britain's favourite farmland bird. This, combined with a run of mild winters, saw Barn Owl numbers increase and their distribution expand; particularly in Scotland. Although no further national survey was conducted, evidence from monitoring groups also showed substantial gains in the east of England. Initiatives like the Suffolk Community Barn Owl Project and nestbox schemes in counties like Lincolnshire demonstrated the ability of nestboxes to boost numbers where food supply was pretty good but there were insufficient roost/nest sites. In central and western areas, where food supply is more often the limiting factor, population gains were relatively modest.

Although exact numbers will never be known, by autumn 2009 we can be quite certain that there were more than 4,000 pairs of Barn Owls in Britain (hooray!). But none of us, at that time, had the slightest idea of what was about to happen...

...and now you may well ask... "Where have all the Barn Owls gone?"

We'd all got used to mild winters so December 2009 came as a real shock. Most Barn Owls had never seen snow before. December was bitterly cold and the New Year brought little cheer culminating in the worst winter weather for 30 years. Spring 2010 was also cold and unusually dry. The grass where I live on the lower slopes of Dartmoor just didn't grow. Lack of fresh grass shoots and low temperatures meant less vole activity and a hard time for owls. Owl mortality was high. The following winter was even worse with the coldest December for 100 years followed by another dry cold spring in 2011.



Photo: David Ramsden

We've had extremely cold winters in Britain before. I remember being five years old in 1963 having too much snow in my wellies and getting frost bite on the 'English Riviera'. If, like me, you weren't around in the winter of 1947, ask your older relatives; apparently it was even worse! "But some Barn Owls must have survived" I hear you say. Yes, a proportion of birds do survive severe winters but back in those days total population size was so much bigger to start with! 25% of 12,000 is still 3,000 pairs but 25% of 4,000 is only 1,000 pairs. That's the difference between scarce and rare.

Another difference is that back in '47 and '63 most of Britain had no trunk roads whereas these days, with our network of motorways and dual-carriageways, a third of all the young Barn Owls that fledge end up dead on a road.

By 2012, what Barn Owls desperately needed was a good breeding year, maybe even a bumper year!

2012 started out decidedly chilly and February gave us the coldest two weeks recorded since 1991. Then the miracle happened. It got warm! Very warm. Hot sunny weather lasted a whole four weeks - the warmest March since 1997! This was exactly what Barn Owls needed! Vole activity increased making them much easier for owls to locate, male Barn Owls soon brought their mates into breeding condition, eggs were laid early and often six or seven compared to the three or four of colder times. Surely this was to be the bumper year the owls so badly needed!



Photo: Barn Owl Trust

By early June we were finding broods of 4, 5, 6, and 7 where the previous average was just 2.9. Then; yes, you guessed it, torrential rain and high wind heralded yet another extreme weather event; the dullest June since 1929 and the coldest since 1991 with night frosts in some areas. It was the wettest June in England and Wales for 246 years. Barn Owls can't hunt in rain. Looking into nests of dead owlets was heartbreaking. However a few pairs did try again; breeding well into the autumn.

Winter '12/13 started out quite well with temperatures around average and after the autumn peak in mortality which occurs every year (mainly juveniles) survival rates were probably quite good. However, January and February were much colder with prolonged snow cover across much of eastern England although down here in Devon it wasn't too bad.

Every year sees a late winter peak in mortality (usually in February) composed in roughly equal proportion of first-years and older birds. Survival rates normally improve as temperatures increase in March, but March 2013 was like January across much of Europe. It was the coldest since 1963 with so much snow that 20,000 sheep and cattle died in the UK. Barn Owl mortality just kept going up and 2 ½ times the usual number of dead ones were reported to the British Trust for Ornithology. By the end of April there were quite possibly fewer Barn Owls in Britain than ever before.

The vast majority of survivors were in no condition to breed and those that did lay eggs produced small clutches 2-4 weeks later than usual. May and June were mediocre but amazingly, July 2013 was the hottest for seven years(!) giving a much needed respite to owls and humans alike. Although 2013 was a disastrous year for Barn Owls across most of Britain, one or two areas bucked the trend. In Cumbria and SW Scotland 2013 was not quite so bad as 2012.

Barn Owls gone ?



Somerset levels January 2014 Photo above: David Ramsden
Photo right: Bernie Bader

Winter '13/14 was a different story altogether. Many floodplains like the Somerset Levels were already part-flooded by Christmas. Rough grass ditch-sides that are so important for small mammals and Barn Owls were submerged and many remained submerged for several months. In fact, at the time of writing (mid-February) the levels are still flooded with more rain forecast. January 2014 was the wettest ever recorded and December-Jan-Feb the stormiest and wettest winter for 250 years. Thank goodness it's been mild (so far)! Other than in the worst flood areas, this winter may have been a reasonably good one for Barn Owls (so far). Although, like the rest of Britain, the land where I live has been totally saturated for many months, we had Field Voles breeding in December and we're still seeing plenty of vole holes on the Trust's 25 acres.

So, in answer to the question, "Where have all the Barn Owls gone?" the short answer is "they died". But all hope is not lost. Most of Britain is hilly and not flooded. Field Voles cope well with rain provided it's not too cold. This current run of frequent extreme weather events may pass and Barn Owls have a tremendous capacity to restore their numbers given the right conditions.

Let's remember too that the bigger the owl population the more robust it is. We must continue to push for habitat creation, rough tussocky grassland to provide a ready food supply, for the redesign of major road verges with the creation of hedge-screens to reduce road deaths. We need a significant reduction in the proportion of Barn Owls that contain rat poison (currently 84%).



Vole holes in the LLP Photo: Kevin Keatley



If we can deliver these things then the population has a real chance to recover.

Extreme weather events can devastate numbers but that has always happened occasionally as in 1947 and 1963. What we need now is a run of mild winters, warm springs, and nice summers to help this iconic bird recover. ★

David Ramsden
Head of Conservation

Across the Irish Sea

At the end of April 2013, a Co Down farmer contacted me with the sad news that he had found a dead Barn Owl in one of his sheds. I collected the owl carcass and apart from identifying it as a female bird and in good condition prior to death, I noticed that she was ringed. This was unusual for NI as no-one rings Barn Owls here.

I was amazed to discover she'd been ringed as a nestling in 2009 at Hawkins Point, Yorkshire, almost 400km from where she was found in Co Down! Although there are records of Barn Owls travelling from continental Europe into southern England and also of birds being found on ships and oil rigs, I had no records of a Barn Owl making a journey like this. Unfortunately it is impossible to know how long she had been in NI or if she ever had a chance to breed here.

The post-mortem showed no definite cause of death but detected two rodenticides (rat poisons) that may have been a contributory factor in her death. Sadly, this case echoes the recent reports from a collaborative study between BirdWatch Ireland, University College Cork and the UK Centre of Ecology and Hydrology. This study has shown that more than 85 per cent of Irish Barn Owls have detectable traces of rodenticides in their systems before death.

Knowing the regard that this farmer has for all wildlife, I have no reason to think that the owl ate rodenticide-contaminated prey on this farm. Over a single night of hunting, a Barn Owl may travel up to 8km from its roost so it is impossible to establish where the contaminated prey was caught.

The current population of breeding Barn Owls in NI is unknown but it could be fewer than 50 pairs. Any improvement on that figure depends on birds living longer and successfully rearing more young. It is clear that secondary poisoning from rodenticides has the potential to significantly impact our raptor populations. ★

John Woolsey
'Be there for Barn Owls' project, Ulster Wildlife Trust.

National News

Meeting a Legend



David from BOT meets TV legend Jon Snow
Photo: Rachel Seifert

To publicise our Rodenticide Campaign David Ramsden, our Head of Conservation, went to a farm in Berkshire to record an interview for Channel 4 news on 26th February with legendary broadcaster Jon Snow.

Jon posted an article *The fate of the beautiful barn owl* on his Channel 4 'Snowblog' the following day, when the piece was broadcast on the 7pm news. In his blog Jon said; "We and climate change have a relationship. We and the Barn Owl have one too, but unless we move on rat poison and what we are doing to our planet's delicate eco-system we run the terrible risk of losing both".

The farm where filming took place has a resident Barn Owl and instead of using poison they use spring traps to control rats.

Crazy Days

After a day visiting a local nature reserve at Seaton Marshes David left the BOT at 17:10 to drive to Berkshire and got back at 02:10 am, then on the 27th, up at 5:45 am to drive to Exeter and catch a train to London for a pre-meeting meeting with Rodenticide Campaign petition-hosts Avaaz.org. The meeting with Minister Mike Penning, DEFRA and HSE was at 16:00, then a debrief with Avaaz.org before something to eat and a train back to Devon arriving home at 00:10 the following morning - phew! ★

Whatever the Weather

The British are known worldwide for their obsession with the weather. This is hardly surprising given the variation we get and particularly the extremes we have experienced over the last few years. We have been recording the weather here at the BOT since March 2006 and we've now got a really interesting data set.

Here on the edge of Dartmoor we do get a lot of rain. The average over a year is 1,137mm, that's 45" or 3.76ft. In 2013 we had 1,445mm (57.4", 4.78ft). An extra twelve inches or 27% more than average! See the chart - right.

We all know that January and February 2014 were unusually wet. In fact in just those two months we've had almost 50% of our average annual rainfall. In January we had 286mm of rain, 93% more than average for the month and in February 267mm a massive 151% more than average. These two months were preceded by the wettest month we've recorded since 2006, December 2013 when 320mm fell (12.7"). We also recorded 270mm in October 13, so a very, very wet winter! ★ →



Photo: David Ramsden

H.S.2

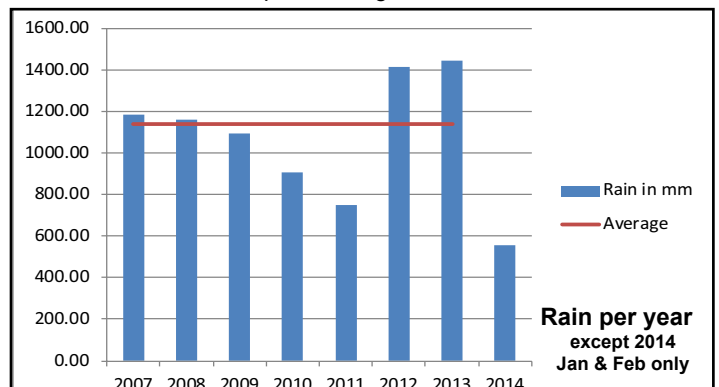
The Government plans to build a high speed rail line known as High Speed 2 (HS2) linking a number of the UK's major cities. Due to concerns over its impact on Barn Owls and the local environment, we submitted comments on the ecological content of the HS2 Draft Environmental Statement (ES) and associated documents.

The Trust fully supports the comments by the HS2 Ecology Technical Group, in particular: a) that more time is allocated for a proper assessment of both the short and long-term impacts on habitats and species, and b) the full Environmental Statement must set out exactly how the project will achieve net gains for biodiversity including Barn Owls.

The scope of the stated impact on Barn Owls, the terminology used, and other inadequacies indicate the author's lack of relevant knowledge. In considering only the impact on nesting sites within 1.5km of the route, the draft ES is clearly inadequate. Specifically, the long-term impact of increased annual mortality of dispersing juvenile Barn Owls is not mentioned and there are no proposed measures aimed at preventing owl/train collisions.

The idea that the provision of nest boxes over 1.5 km from the route can effectively mitigate the impact of HS2 on Barn Owls ("offset the adverse effect") is ill-founded. Specifically, the statement, "if the proposed mitigation measures for Barn Owl are implemented through liaison with landowners, the residual effect on Barn Owl would be reduced to a level that is not significant" is not true.

We and groups like the Woodland Trust, believe there is a need to move towards a low carbon economy. However, we are yet to be convinced that this proposed rail route by the Government, as an alternative to road transport, is as green as it claims to be. ★



Lucky Number 13



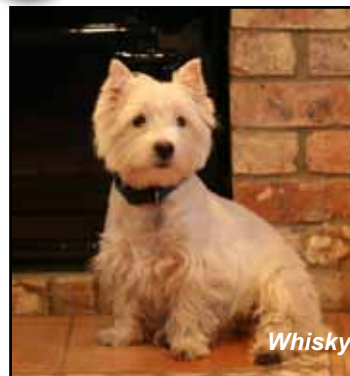
Lupe and Megan



Dolci



Hugo



Whisky

Dogs we have known

The sponsored dog walk is back! TheTrust has run sponsored dog events since 2001 and this will be the 13th...some may say it's an unlucky number, but Poppy and Maizie (pictured right) are determined to prove them wrong! You may recognise Poppy the Springer Spaniel from Feedback issues 47 & 48 when she walked/ran over 7 miles with owner, and BOT handyman, Jasmin Ramsden and BOT admin assistant Marianne Bryan. She raised a fantastic £1,105 for the Trust but didn't quite reach Whisky the Westie's total, he raised £1,380 the previous year.

This year Poppy is hoping to pass Whisky's total with help from her partner, Maizie the Golden Working Cocker and her owners, the founders of the Barn Owl Trust, David & Frances Ramsden.

They will be walking at least 5 miles one day in the week of 28th July and rumour has it some of the humans may even be in fancy dress; following in the footsteps of Hannah who walked a section of her Two Moors fundraiser last year dressed as a Barn Owl. They hope to make use of the new BOT donation buckets to get some last minute funds along the way (with permission from local authorities of course).

At the time of writing (early March) Poppy, the BOT office dog, is soon to become the proud mum of 5+ Sprocker puppies which are due mid-March. She met a very handsome Golden Working Cocker named Pip and the rest as they say is now history.



We've all noticed her belly expanding in size but she's coping well with the extra weight, and seems to approve of all the extra attention she is getting from the staff, not to mention the treats... of course she is eating for 6 now! By the end of July she will be ready and eager to take on the challenge of walking to raise funds for the Trust.

Maizie, who will be two in June, is also a firm favourite in the BOT office, always cheerful and pleased to see you. She will be a super asset to the Sponsored Dog team; who could resist those big puppy dog eyes. She is the latest recruit and the first Working Cocker to take part; she will be following in the pawprints of Megan the Golden Retriever, Lupe the Briard, Dolci the Dalmation, Hugo the Cocker Spaniel, Whisky the West Highland Terrier and finally her good pal Poppy the Springer Spaniel.

We will let you know how Poppy and Maizie get on in the next issue of Feedback; where they've walked and how much they raised. Because of the weather related problems on the Devon coast we haven't confirmed their route yet but let's make BOT's 13th sponsored dog event the best yet!

You can sponsor Poppy and Maizie using the enclosed flyer or via the donations page of our website, please put 'Dogs' in the 'reason for donation' box. If you would like to get involved in our event, why not walk your four legged friend and raise sponsorship for the Trust too? If you are interested please contact the Trust for details and your own sponsor form. ★

In Memoriam

The Trust has received legacies from the estates of the late
Thelma Bonnington,
Linda Brett,
Freda Farmer,
Mary Doreen Baines
John Tremain and Terence Lilley
and
donations in memory of

Eugenie Mary Wise, Gay Carter, Kay Goodchild,
Doreen Brook, Heather Smith, Winifred Mattis,
Dorothy Scott, Bethany Dawn Frude
and Jacqueline Davies.

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

They all now have a leaf on our Memory Tree

People News

To Go or Not To Go

After almost eleven years at the Trust it's time for Pete to go - or maybe not:

I started work here as the first full time admin assistant on the 1st April 2003 working with Lesley, who was a part-time receptionist; she retired in 2007. Sandra Reardon was the Office Manager when I started and she retired in 2009. Several other members of staff have come and gone over the years and now, apart from David, I am the longest serving staff member.



Pete Webb

Photo: Frances Ramsden

My tasks over the years have been really varied and include answering the phone, booking talks, dealing with post, donation boxes, vehicle admin, invoices, ordering stock and stationery, taking notes at monthly meetings, banking, recycling, and sending out leaflets. These days I work with Jackie, our Office Manager, Maz, Karen, Vanessa and the conservation team. A few years ago I used to go out with the conservation team one day a month for practical outdoor tasks but had to stop due to back problems, but recent Manual Handling training has helped with lifting nestboxes and other larger sales items.

I've seen a lot of changes over the years I've been here. Back in 2003 our internet use was very limited. We had just one computer on dial-up (pre broadband) and we had to arrange when we could use it as it tied up one of the phone lines. These days all of the staff use the internet and most correspondence is by email. Most of our sales orders are on-line and we send out far fewer leaflets by post, directing people to pages on our website instead.

Other changes over this period have been made with office layout and I have moved places at least three times as the office has changed. We now have 2 toilets and a shower, better aviaries, a purpose built meeting room, a barn, a state of the art owl hospital, three mobile release aviaries, solar panels, additional parking for cars and a new tool shed (to replace the one that was "bent" by a falling tree).

I have always been keen on recycling and even did an NVQ Environmental Vocational Qualification in 2005. Our recycling scheme, which began at the Trust in 1988, has been expanded to include mobile phones, used stamps and postcards, foreign currency (coins and notes), watches, jewellery and more. We still collect card envelopes, bubble wrap and padded envelopes which we use to send out our sales items. Other items, particularly if they are "owl related", are sold on Ebay to raise funds.

At the end of February I am partially retiring! I will still be working two days a week here in the office and I'll spend one day 'out and about' representing the Trust at local events as well as travelling around Devon providing leaflets and donation boxes wherever they are needed. My two 'days off' will mainly be spent carrying out further historical research with a view to adding to the seven or eight books I have already produced on local (Ashburton) history. I am also hoping to carry out further personal Family History Research which I shelved in the 1980's due to growing family commitments. I would like to thank my fellow work colleagues for the generous 'leaving' present, an electric drill. ★

Pete Webb
Admin

R.I.P Joanna

Having devoted fifty years of her life to caring for injured birds of prey and owls, Joanna Vinson died in December 2013 at ninety years of age. She will be fondly remembered and missed by everyone whose lives she touched and whom she helped.

Joanna moved to Devon in the early 1960's and after the death of her husband, Mark, she became a founder member of the Dartmoor Livestock Protection Society. This was also when she began caring for injured birds of prey at her home in South Devon which she did until shortly before her death. What began in a small way took over her life (and her garden which filled with aviaries). Kestrels, Buzzards, Owls and many more species found sanctuary and often a new lease of life in Joanna's care. There was even an Osprey for a while.

Back in the 1980's she helped to set-up the Devon Barn Owl Breeding & Release Scheme which became the Barn Owl Trust in 1988 and was one of our original trustees. In the summer of 2013 Joanna passed the remaining owls in her care onto the Trust and made arrangements for her other birds to be looked after by friends who hope to carry on her work. Bless you Joanna. ★

Prize Winner



Wednesday 11th December was not just an ordinary day in the office here, it was the day we had planned to pick the winners for our annual grand prize draw... Little did I know, I was a winner too!

We had invited our volunteers, Trustees and all the staff for afternoon tea in our meeting room where we would draw names from a basket to pick the winners for this year's grand draw. Just before leaving my desk I received an email from the website Give as you Live. I couldn't quite believe it when I opened it and read the words "You are the Winner of our Win Your Christmas competition".

I have been using the website Give as You Live for a few years now, logging in each time I use the internet to do some shopping, and a percentage of every purchase I make goes straight to the Barn Owl Trust, at no additional cost to me! Only a few days before I had received an email asking me to enter their competition to win £250 for the charity of my choice. All I had to do was click a button. I jumped at the chance to win the Trust some money, especially considering the financial strain during the year. After I entered I completely forgot about it until that exciting email arrived. Not only had I won the Trust £250 but I had also won a prize; a collection of goodies worth over £1000! The following week a delivery driver arrived at the Trust and 3 huge boxes were unloaded. The prize included a Kindle, gift vouchers for Nike, The Body Shop and Atterley Road along with gifts from The Disney Store, Lakeland and Hotel Chocolat, jewellery from Pandora and Ashley Clarke and a big box of wine!



If you use the internet to shop, I can recommend Give as you Live. You can use it for nearly all the mainstream shops like Amazon, Play, Argos and Ebay. You can sign up at their website www.giveasyoulive.co.uk and it's very simple to use. They hold regular competitions throughout the year so not only can you raise money for the Trust but you too could be a winner! ★

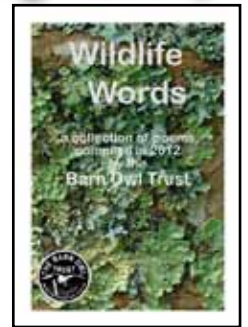
Marianne Bryan
Admin

You Can All Join In

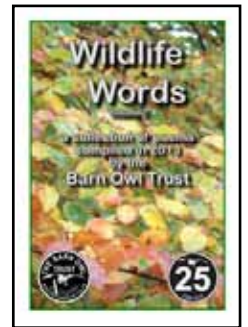
Wildlife Poetry 2014



Following the success of our poetry competitions in 2011 and 2012 we are now holding our third Open Poetry Competition and you are invited to write a poem on "Wildlife/Conservation". All profits from the competition will help us provide care for casualty birds. Depending on the number of entries, we hope to produce a third "Wildlife Words" Anthology in the Autumn of 2014.



The winner of our 2012 competition, Jackie Bennett, has kindly agreed to be the judge this year. Jackie won with the first poem she had ever written for publication, this just proves it's worth having a go! She is the author of *Wild About the Garden* (Channel 4, 1997) and *Your Wildlife Garden* (2011) and is currently writing another book.



Our 2014 Open Poetry Competition will have a First, Second and Third prize. They, along with six runners-up, will receive a certificate of commendation. The closing date is Wednesday 25th June 2014.

www.barnowlsurvey.org.uk

When you report a Barn Owl site or sighting on our Survey website at www.barnowlsurvey.org.uk you can see your record or records at their exact location in either map or satellite view.

As you record more reports your map will build up. Currently you are not able to see other people's records and no-one else can see yours. However to make things more interesting, logged-on users should soon be able to see their own records in relation to others at tetrad level set against a backdrop of Barn Owl distribution from the new British Trust for Ornithology (BTO) Bird Atlas and very soon we plan to be able to offer you the opportunity to select date ranges too.

The map above shows the geographical spread of records between 1st May 2013 and 7th February 2014. The different icons represent sightings, roost sites, breeding and dead owls. Unfortunately you can easily see that there weren't many breeding sites reported in 2013 because it was the worst season ever recorded. ★

Craft Corner

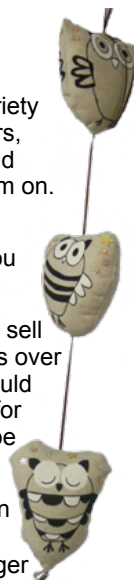
Over the years our supporters have participated in a variety of projects such as knitting scarves, mittens, leg warmers, mobile phone covers, making various jewellery items and much, much more to help us raise money by selling them on.

We now have a dedicated area within our on-line shop where we are advertising handmade items for sale. If you have access to the internet why not have a look.

We would love you to provide us with handmade gifts to sell but please think about the postage. Anything that weighs over one kilogram and is bigger than 45cm x 35cm x 8cm would cost us £5.60 to post and would probably not be viable for us to sell. If you can keep to an "Owlie" theme it would be appreciated but is not essential.

We look forward to receiving your items and thank you in anticipation of all your hard work. ★

Jackie Atkinson - Office Manager



The Competition is open to all writers and there is no entry form required or limit to the number of entries. The Topic is Wildlife/Conservation:

- * The poem must not exceed forty lines of any style.
- * Entries should be in English, typed or neatly hand written on one side only of A4, if emailed - in the body of an email rather than as an attachment.
- * Poems must be the writer's own original work, previously unpublished and not currently entered for any other competition.
- * Entrants should include their name and address on a separate sheet with the title of their poem if posted, there should not be any identifying marks on the poem. If emailed the name and address should be included in the body of the email to allow it to be separated from the poem(s).
- * BOT cannot make corrections or alterations once poems are submitted.
- * The closing date is Wednesday 25th June and the judge's decision is final. Winners will be announced in the Autumn 2014 issue of Feedback in which the winning poem will be printed.
- * Each poem is to be accompanied by £3 (minimum) fee. Writers can submit more than one poem provided the correct fee is paid (£3 per poem).
- * Cheques should be made payable to Barn Owl Trust or you can pay on line.
- * Send postal entries to "Poetry Competition, Barn Owl Trust, Waterleat, Ashburton, Devon TQ13 7HU and enclose an SAE if you wish to receive a printed copy of the results.
- * Send entries by email to info@barnowltrust.org.uk with the entry fee of £3 per poem being made on our "Giving a Donation" page, stating "Poem" as reason for donation.

Don't forget to include your name and contact details.
Good luck! ★

Financial Update

Extremely Relieved

The last issue of Feedback painted a pretty grim financial picture of the Trust with deficit approaching £100,000 at the end of the '12/13 financial year. We are extremely relieved to be able to report that things are a little better thanks to the generosity of supporters and charitable trusts, extra efforts made by staff and legacies received. Phew!

With less than two months to go until our next year end, we expect to show a small surplus to begin restoring our reserves. However we are not complacent as our income is significantly below what's needed to maintain our current level of work.

To try and address this we've been looking at everything we do. Our staff are a great team with a wealth of experience and we want to keep them so that we can continue to: provide good information, do practical conservation work, visit schools, give talks and care for casualty birds. Unfortunately none of these things generates enough income to cover the cost of doing them, which is why we are so dependent on you - our supporters.

What are we doing to help ourselves?

Our Trustees have decided not to carry out the 2014 Cornwall Barn Owl Survey as we simply can't afford it. Instead we plan to start producing yearly reports based on our Annual Monitoring site visits – these will include sites in Cornwall.

We've sold one of our vehicles and are going to use the proceeds along with some designated grant funding to replace our oldest vehicle with something more energy efficient and multi-functional.

Some of the money received from legacies will help to provide a rebuild of our website to make it easier, less frustrating for users and more 'cost effective' for our staff to maintain. This will also increase its accessibility on mobile devices, making it more 'user friendly' and easier for folk to find what they're looking for amongst such a mass of information.

Fundraising has never been a major part of our income. None of us are fundraisers but we do our best. Our annual draw and sponsored walk was supplemented last year by our Acoustic Music Evening and this March by another musical event with '100 gigs for 100 causes'.

Although we don't like doing it, we have taken to asking enquirers to consider making a donation in response to the free advice we provide. We have been pleasantly surprised! Most people don't mind being asked and some have even made a contribution.



Above pens 75p, right A6 notepads £1 plus p&p

We have recently added some new items to our range of sales goods including new nestboxes to suit Tawny Owls, Little Owls and small hole-nesting birds. All 'built to last' and to the same high standard as our Barn Owl boxes.

We've even introduced a miniature nestbox money box, made from offcuts - perfect for saving those pennies & pounds! Pens made from 70% biodegradable corn plastic, an A6 notepad, a new jigsaw puzzle and a cotton apron featuring a unique BOT design have joined our colourful recycled card owl bunting.

From March '14 our long-serving receptionist Pete will be going out one day a week to 'spread the word': working to raise the Trust's profile by attending events, finding homes for leaflet dispensers and donation boxes. Basically, we're doing everything we can think of!

You are our biggest asset

Our home-spun fundraising efforts do help but it's your grants, your donations, and ultimately your legacies that really make the difference. We have the knowledge, the skills, and the dedication to save these wonderful birds. But, without your continued support we wouldn't get far at all. Amidst all the uncertainty of financial recession and our ever-changing climate there is one thing we have no doubt about at all: you are our biggest asset.

Thank you ★

Diary Dates

Come along and join us for a walk, a talk or a workshop. If you are part of a group we can also run a special event for you. We have a range of activities throughout the year and provide refreshments, (often homemade cake). Spend an afternoon or evening enjoying our hospitality:

April 25th Thurs - Dawn Chorus Walk & Breakfast 5am

May 15th Thurs - Wild Flower Walk 2.30pm

June 19th Thurs - Mid-summer Evening Walk 7.30pm

July 10th Thurs - Butterfly Walk 2.30pm

Aug 13th Weds - Golden Grasses Walk 7.30pm

Sept 3rd Weds - Making Small Bird Boxes 2.30pm

Oct 30th Thurs - Autumn Colours Walk 2.30pm

Nov 19th Weds - 'Restoring the Balance' Talk 7.30pm

Dec 11th Thurs - Festive Wreath Making 2.30pm & 7.00pm

Contact the office for more details or to book a place at an event - **01364-653026** - booking is essential as places are strictly limited. All events take place at the Trust in Devon. There may be a charge for some of them. Check out Forthcoming Events on our website for dates of other LLP events:

www.barnowltrust.org.uk ★

Helping Out

When You Shop

TURN YOUR VEG INTO A PLEDGE!

Did you know that up and down the country, supermarkets set money aside for charities nominated by their customers?

One such example is Asda's 'Nominate a Cause' scheme and it only takes a few minutes to recommend the Barn Owl Trust for a share of the funding. Regardless of where you live, YOU can complete a form on behalf of the Trust if you shop in Asda. See the Community Notice Board or speak to a member of staff. How it works is simple! Shoppers receive tokens dependent on how much their bill came to and have a choice of three or four projects to split their tokens between. At the end of each month funding is distributed in line with the number of tokens donated by customers (usually around £250 per charity per month).

Other stores have charitable giving schemes that customers can nominate the Barn Owl Trust for, so if you shop in a supermarket please take the time to suggest the Trust to:

Tesco - you can write to the Charity/Community Champion at your local store asking them to consider the Trust.

Waitrose - ask in store for a nomination form.

Sainsbury's - ask in your local store to find out how to nominate the Trust.

As one of Asda's main competitors say, 'Every Little Helps', and if just 20 people supported this initiative we could raise £5,000 for the Trust. Imagine how wonderful it would be if 100 of us did it! ★

Nicola Walters
BOT Friend



£250 for 25 years

Thirteen year old BOT Friend Leonna Walters made it her mission to raise £250 for the Barn Owl Trust for our 25th anniversary.

So far she has run a Grand National Sweepstake, auctioned tickets to a football game, held a 'Guess the name of the Owlet' competition, sold handmade cards and is currently hard at work making friendship bracelets to sell to her school friends. Her next project is recycling jars into unique owl themed tea light holders which she will sell to raise funds.

In February Leonna and her mum Nicola (writer of the 'Turn your veg into a pledge' article opposite) entered a Valentine's competition at the Four Seasons Shopping Centre in Mansfield, Nottinghamshire and came 3rd winning a Pandora charm which they've donated to Leonna's fundraising for the Trust.

She hopes to hold a World Cup Sweepstake and then finish her year's fundraising how she started it...with a Grand National Sweepstake. More news on whether she reaches her £250 target in the next issue of Feedback. Well done and good luck Leonna, you are an inspiration! ★

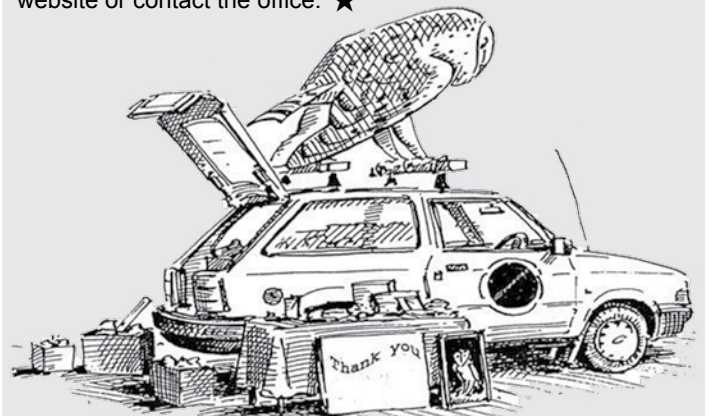


Give a Car

Every car has a value, whether it's roadworthy or only good for scrap. You can donate your old car to the Trust, just as you might donate possessions to a charity shop. The goal is simple - to raise as much money as possible for the Trust and to recycle cars to the highest environmental standards.

Giveacar arranges the free collection of any car, regardless of its condition, anywhere in the UK. The process is very simple. When you call or email them, they will arrange a convenient time to send round a tow truck. Vehicles are picked up by the largest vehicle manufacturer approved car recycling network in the UK. They will pick up any car, at no cost to you. Cars are either scrapped through an authorised treatment facility, or put into an auction, a donation is made to the Trust based on the money raised.

If you have an old car this is a really good way to get rid of it and support the Trust at the same time. To donate a car to the Barn Owl Trust, please search for our page on the Giveacar website or contact the office. ★



WANTED

Used toner and inkjet cartridges, old mobile phones, PDAs, BlackBerrys, MP3 players, iPods, CDs, DVDs, Digital cameras, Satnavs, Hand-held game consoles, Laptops, used stamps, old postcards, medals, jewellery, owl bric-a-brac, coins & notes UK & foreign

We can recycle and raise funds for Barn Owl conservation with all of these items.

We also want bubble-wrap and padded envelopes for use in our office

Send your items to:

The Barn Owl Trust, Waterleat, Ashburton, TQ13 7HU
or email info@barnowltrust.org.uk

Thank you for helping us to help the owls



Please contact Pete if you are interested in setting up a collection point in your office, school or community centre to collect items and raise funds for the Trust. We can provide posters etc.
pete@barnowltrust.org.uk
or call: 01364 653026

Thanks and Things

Many thanks to all you folks that have sent us items for recycling, please do keep them coming. We recycle used padded envelopes & bubble wrap to send out our sales goods. Stamps, 1st day covers, coins & banknotes (English & foreign), old postcards, old mobile phones, ink & toner cartridges, jewellery, keys, enamel badges and watches can all be recycled or sold to raise funds for the Trust. We've also received items from our Wants List including wild bird food, bath towels, pellets, items to sell on Ebay and prizes for our Grand Draw.

So a big thank you to: Ian Hamilton, Mark Tatam, David Moon, Ann Oxley, Sylvia Precious, Michael Jennings, Rob Hamar, Jackie Golding, Tracey Morris & Shelley Wright, Mr & Mrs C Dumpleton, Karen Thomas, Wallace Robinson & Morgan (solicitors), Gil Gaylor, Melanie White, Rachel & Julian Edwards, Sue Creaton, Emily Reeves (Marsh Christian Trust), Muriel Childs, Brian & Lynne Larard, HMG Law LLP, Mr N. L. H. Reid, Ashburton Post Office, Kim Baker, Annie Rhodes, Vanessa Farbrother, Mrs Marion Mant, Lynne Green, Richard & Leigh Anne Boucher, Ed Mcneil, Tee Marcheur, Phil & Eileen Webb, Caroline Lewis, Rachel & Julian Edwards, Fiona Seymour-Jesse, Miss P Holder, Kim Thompson, Nigel Morley, Les Foster, John & Shelagh Prickett, Otterton Mill, Sandra Stewart and Kelly Wakeham.

Well done & thank you to all those who made a special effort to help raise funds after reading our 'Trying to make ends meet' piece in Feedback 50: Sue Gandy raised £60 from selling artwork made by Shelley Castle, the Royal Mail MDEC Plymouth held a fundraiser in their office raising £125, Melanie White facilitated a £122 donation from the closed account of Kingsley Conservation Area Advisory Committee, Leonna Walters is hoping to raise £250 and many Friends came forward with generous donations. A very big thank you from all of us here at the Trust, your support really is greatly appreciated.

Please take a peek at this issue's Wants List and see if there are any items on here you may have surplus:

- ◇ 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 hetrodyne bat detector
- ◇ Waders - for working in the ponds
- ◇ Petrol leaf blower
- ◇ Large towels for the owl hospital
- ◇ Carpet suitable for the office
- ◇ Metal detector
- ◇ Secateurs
- ◇ 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
- ◇ Landranger and OS maps of Devon; particularly Torbay/South Dartmoor area
- ◇ Bubble wrap
- ◇ Small marquee (3m x 3m or less)
- ◇ Craft items to sell on our website
- ◇ Revenue from old cars - via Giveacar

Thank you for your help. ★



Tail piece ...

As I write this at the end of February there are snowdrops, daffodils, celandines and primroses flowering in the valley – a beautiful gift from the natural world.

Earlier this year I caught up with a friend I hadn't seen for a while. Back in the early 1980's we'd been involved in the Green Movement. A couple of those 'crazy people' concerned about climate change, pollution, deforestation and what humans were doing to the planet. Filled with idealism we wanted to change the world. Now more than thirty years on, the world has changed, the incredible rise of information technology has meant that most people are now aware of at least some of the environmental issues our planet faces. Climate change is a recognised fact. Television has brought natural disasters and extreme weather events into our homes and you are no longer considered odd if you are concerned about 'green issues'.

However we still face the same problems. Indigenous people are still being forced from their lands by big businesses. We are still exploiting our planet's natural resources at an unsustainable rate. Humans are still filling the oceans with rubbish and killing wildlife. Economic growth is still far more important than environmental sustainability. Politicians, whatever their party, seem only concerned with short-term fixes rather than long-term solutions and whilst people are dying from starvation, disease and natural disasters, others are choosing to kill each other for ideological reasons. It is hard to believe that humans, who show such concern and compassion for the suffering of others, as demonstrated by flood and famine relief appeals, are the same species that blow each other up in the name of religion or power.

Over a glass of wine we chatted about the human condition and were in danger of becoming incredibly depressed about the short-sightedness of the human animal and the future of the planet. Then we thought about the massive growth in environmental awareness. Over the years we have both met loads of people who do care and are doing their bit to heal the Earth. There are lots of people managing their gardens for wildlife, recycling, volunteering for charities and community groups, helping wildlife, campaigning to save species and

working to make the world a better place for humans and other creatures.

There is a saying that 'money is the root of all evil' but I don't think that is true. I think it's devilish if money becomes one's god. The pursuit of power and money above all else doesn't seem to bring the contentment or happiness that a beautiful sunset can or a gift given with love. However money can help to make a difference. Spent well it can exert influence on businesses and encourage them to rethink or amend their ethical and environmental policies. The tuna/dolphin campaign in the late '80's was a great example of this; when consumers came together and refused to buy tuna that had been caught using nets that damaged dolphins.

When you shop, take a little time to consider whether the things you buy are having a negative effect on human rights or the environment. As individuals we can make a tremendous difference when we spend our money. There are other small things we can all do to help to make our planet a happier and healthier place; take your own bags when you shop, plant flowers that bees and butterflies enjoy, feed the birds, and smile more at other people – make the most of every moment. Live each day as though it was your last, but treat the Earth as if you will live forever.

This year I am participating in a very simple 'Pay-it-forward' project. I have agreed to give a gift to five other people for no other reason than they are prepared to pass it on to five more. It can be anything, of any value, that I find, make or buy and just needs to be given with willingness and thought for the recipient. The hope is that this will spread goodwill and help to make the world a better place. Maybe you'd like to try it too?

We are all incredibly lucky to have the chance to spend time on this wonderful planet. Let us do our very best to make the most of this opportunity and ensure that we conserve what is left for future generations. *If we work together we can make a World of difference.* ★ **Frances Ramsden**