

Issue Number 52 - Autumn 2014



# FEEDBACK



& the

**Barn Owl Trust Annual Report 2013 - 2014**

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



**2014 is a good year for  
Barn Owls**

*Conserving the Barn Owl and its Environment*

# In this issue ...

Welcome to Feedback	2
Diary Dates	2
BOT News	3
More BOT News	4
Encouraging Barn Owls	5
Winners	6
Nestcam Update	6
Bird News	7
In Memoriam	7
Walk on the Wildside	8
LLP Update	9
BOT Annual Report 2013 - 2014	10 - 16
Fund-raising News	17
State of the UK Barn Owl Population 2013	18 - 19
Team Talk	20 - 21
Planning & Barn Owls	22
Summer Sightings	22
Wanted Wild Barn Owl Pellets	22
Training Days	23
Thanks and Things	24
Tail Piece	24

*Cover Photo: Draw prize winner Margaret Davies holds an owlet for ringing - see page 6. - Jo Plant*

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

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

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Website: [www.barnowltrust.org.uk](http://www.barnowltrust.org.uk)

## Diary Dates 2014 - 2015

October - Thursday 30th - 2.30pm Autumn Colours Walk  
November - Wednesday 19th - 7.30pm 'Restoring the Balance' Talk and Ploughman's Supper  
December - Thursday 11th - 2:30pm or 7:00pm Festive Wreath Making Workshop  
January 2015 - Weds 14th, February - Weds 18th & March - Weds 11th join us for Practical work with the Conservation Team - 10am - 4.00pm  
April Wednesday 29th - Wildflower Walk - 2.30pm  
May Friday 15th - Dawn Chorus - 4.30am

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 our 'Events Diary' on our website for more details & dates of other LLP events:

[www.barnowltrust.org.uk](http://www.barnowltrust.org.uk) ★

**Welcome to the 52nd issue of Feedback containing our 2013 - 2014 Annual Report.** Once again we've produced these two publications together to reduce our printing and postage costs.

It's great to be able to start this issue by announcing, for the first time in many years, that this has been a good year for Barn Owls! Generally the birds have nested earlier than usual, giving hope of second broods and they've had bigger broods than usual. See page 4 for more details of our annual monitoring site visits.

This is particularly good news in light of last year's extraordinarily poor breeding season. In fact it was so bad we compiled results from groups all over the UK and in April produced a new publication, the 'State of the UK Barn Owl Population 2013'. Twenty-one groups provided data for the first edition; by July we'd produced a second run with two more groups included and in August the number of groups wanting to contribute rose to twenty-six. The full publication is available free-of-charge on our website but we have included a summary and the table of results on pages 18 -19. The 2014 publication will be an amazing contrast!

Those of you who are lucky enough to have wild Barn Owls around might like to help out by sending us owl pellets - see our Wanted poster on page 22. We can never collect enough to supply all the schools that ask for them.

A good breeding season does mean that there are more birds around to get into trouble as Stuart explains on page 7 in Bird News. Small birds and butterflies have also benefitted from having a real summer and in the LLP Update on page 9 Matthew provides a summary of the species and numbers of butterflies recorded on our weekly monitoring transect.

The weather has generally been kind for our Lennox Legacy Project (LLP) events this year, with some really memorable wildlife sightings, including great views of a Barn Owl on our Dawn Chorus walk in April. We've met some lovely people through our 'Diary Dates' (listed below left) and from the groups that have joined us for bespoke events. Without exception everyone seems to have had a great time and our wonderful Meeting Room provides a perfect place to gather and have refreshments. If you're in Devon on any of the listed dates do consider joining us - see Walk on the Wildside on page 8 for more information.

If you have found the Trust on Facebook, the social media site, you will know that we now have well over 6,000 Facebook likes. This means that whenever we post news or information about Barn Owls or the Trust's work all 6,000 people get notified. It also provides a platform for folk to tell us their news and to share photos and videos of their Barn Owl related happenings. On page 22 we've included just a few of the exciting things people have shared during this breeding season.

Not only is this a better year for Barn Owls, it's also a better year for the Trust as you will see from the Annual Report (pages 10 -16). We ended our last financial year with a deficit of almost £100,000 but, thanks to legacies, grants and generous donations, we now have some reserves. As our Honorary Treasurer Mark explains on page 16 we can't afford to be complacent; "It is a difficult balance - holding reserves to ensure you can continue through the lean times often makes your appeals to Charitable Trusts less attractive particularly in difficult economic times", but we can now plan ahead, at least for a little while!

During the autumn we plan to replace our main website and to produce the 2013 Devon Barn Owl Survey Report. During the survey fieldwork we found a lot of old-style (flat) nestboxes which need to be replaced with the safer, deep ones which we also hope to do. There's also lots of practical management on the LLP as well as our general work of practical conservation, enquires, education and care of casualty and resident birds. With staff changes (pages 20 - 21) we expect to be pretty busy!

We hope you enjoy reading this issue of Feedback. Maybe when you've finished with it you can pass it on and spread the word about our work. Thank you for supporting the Barn Owl Trust, we really do appreciate all of the support we get. After all we couldn't do it without you.

**Frances Ramsden & Marianne Bryan** ★



Almost independent, these young Barn Owls will soon disperse from their natal site

Photo: Andrew Cook

*"I've been farming for 36 years and having a brood of Barn Owls is the most satisfying thing that's happened on the farm"*

- Andrew Patmore -

## Rodenticide Campaign Latest

According to **new** government figures, the proportion of Barn Owls that contain highly-toxic rat poison now stands at 87%. Along with Kestrels (100%) and Red Kites (93%), even bird-eating predators like Sparrowhawks and Peregrines are now known to be widely contaminated. The Barn Owl Trust campaign for radical reforms in the use of these poisons and vastly improved product labelling is still in full swing and our petition now stands at a staggering 126,758 signatures.

Since the last issue of Feedback, the Government Oversight Group led by the Pesticide Regulators (HSE) thankfully rejected the industry's Stewardship Scheme proposals which had been heavily criticized by the Barn Owl Trust. In that crucial meeting on 4th March, the rodenticide industry was told to go away and consolidate its proposals in preparation for the next Government Oversight Group meeting on 7th July.

What the industry mainly did was to swell their 44-page Proposal into 72 pages by adding a mass of background information in an effort to justify their position. HSE was obviously not impressed. They told the Government Oversight Group members not to attend and used the 7th July meeting to convey their concerns and send the industry away yet again to amend the proposal.

Although not in the public domain, we managed to get hold of a copy of the 'second draft Proposals for the Stewardship of the Second Generation Anti-coagulant Rodenticide' and circulated an 8-page 'Checklist and Recommendations' to the Government Oversight Group and key representatives of the poison industry on the 3rd July. We have since heard that on 7th July, ALL of the issues raised by the Barn Owl Trust were addressed by the Regulators (HSE).

At the time of writing, we are waiting to see a third version of the industry's Proposal and hear from HSE about the final round of Public Consultation. Please rest assured that your 126,758 signatures have made a difference! We may be a tiny little charity facing up to a multi-million pound industry but thanks to you we ARE being heard! ★

### Trusts step up for Owls

Increasing numbers of county Wildlife Trusts are setting up Barn Owl projects. Suffolk Wildlife Trust and its counterpart in Somerset are running impressive Community Barn Owl Projects, Essex is following suit, and now Dorset, Ulster, and Derbyshire are talking to us about possible future projects. "This is fantastic news" said David, "our Barn Owl Conservation Handbook is all about empowering others to help these wonderful birds – the more the merrier!"

### All aboard

Our 'State of the UK Barn Owl Population 2013' report in April this year presented results from 21 independent monitoring groups from Scotland to Jersey (see page 18). Then groups in Leicestershire and Norfolk asked for their data to be included so in July we produced an updated version. Now Manchester Raptor Group, the North Cumbria Barn Owl Study Group, and the Stour Valley Wildlife Action Group in Warwickshire have sent in their results! Version three, here we come! The response has been so amazing that there is obviously scope for making this an annual publication.

### Small Bird Success

This year's breeding season wasn't just good for Barn Owls. The small bird boxes dotted around the LLP and adjacent woodland accommodated 14 nests, with the following results (average brood sizes in brackets): 8 Blue Tit (5.75), 3 Great Tit (4.33), 1 Dipper (2), 1 Nuthatch (6) and 1 House Sparrow (2). Additional House Sparrow nests were also found in the Wildlife Tower and in the apex of the barn, whilst Grey Wagtails raised a brood of 4 just outside the office.

### 100 gigs 100 causes

On 20th March 2014 The Choir of Loretta, (aka Steve Nisbet) played a benefit gig at The Barrel House in Totnes, Devon to raise funds for the Barn Owl Trust as part of his '100 gigs for 100 causes' tour. He was supported by the Trust's two singer songwriters Owly Dave & Jasmin Ramsden. The event was organised by Friend of the Trust Trudy Turrell and raised a wonderful £156.37 exceeding Steve's target of £100 for each of his 'good causes'.

### The Rise of the Super Rat

As a result of our Rodenticide Campaign the Trust was asked to participate in ITV's Today programme - The Rise of the Super Rat in June.

### Springwatch

More than 2,600 Barn Owl records were reported on the UK Barn Owl Survey website ([www.barnowlsurvey.org.uk](http://www.barnowlsurvey.org.uk)) following promotion of the site by BBC Springwatch. See map on page 18 for viewers' records. ★

# More BOT News

## 2014 Breeding Season

After a catastrophic season in 2013, this year's round of annual monitoring site visits has been something of a revelation. Nesting occupancy was slightly below average, but this was to be expected with so few breeding birds last year. Nevertheless, it was much better than anticipated. The biggest surprise was the brood sizes we encountered, with 4's and 5's the norm, and exceptional broods of 6 on a few occasions.

The most striking thing however, was how early the birds had nested, no doubt a result of the mild winter and good numbers of small mammals. Most birds appeared to have laid around the end of March/beginning of April, some 2-3 weeks earlier than the average of mid-April. This increases the chances that pairs will double brood. So, if the weather holds and pairs do have another go, 2014 has all the hallmarks of a record breaking year. Some good news for a change! ★

Year	Nesting (%)	Mean brood size	Regular roosting (%)	Occasional roosting (%)	Absent (%)
Average 1990 -2006	51	2.9	16	4	29
2007	53	3.4	15	8	24
2008	52	2.1	19	3	25
2009	53	2.0	16	4	27
2010	50	2.3	15	10	25
2011	39	2.6	15	3	42
2012	58	3.2	11	0	31
2013	15	2.1	27	15	43
<b>2014</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>4.1</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>36</b>

Barn Owl Trust figures from Annual Monitoring Sites 1990 -2014 as at July '14.



## 2015 Calendar

New for 2015 this A4 page-to-a-month calendar was designed and created here at the Barn Owl Trust. It features a selection of beautiful photographs from some of the great photographers who have allowed the Trust to use their stunning images - thanks to Kevin Keatley, Russell Savory, Les Foster, Richard Tadman, Steve Harber and Ed MacKerrow - your pictures are amazing.

The calendars have UK holidays, full and new moons and room to write your own important events. They are printed in full colour on recycled card and make a useful, unique and wonderful gift. Available only from the Trust the calendar is £5.00 plus £2.80 p&p. ★

## Giveacar

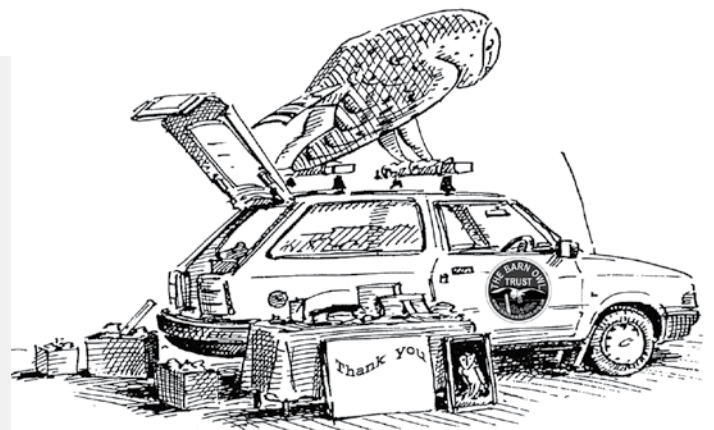
The Barn Owl Trust has raised over £1,000 through Giveacar!

Giveacar is a not-for-profit social enterprise that can turn any old car into cash which is given to the UK charity of your choice. They arrange free collection, then either sell your car at auction or scrap it with the proceeds raised going to your charity.

Our fund-raising total from unwanted vehicles via Giveacar is now a wonderful £1,101.16. Hopefully with a little bit of a promotion we can really add to that!

Our most recent donation came from Karen Barton. Karen used to volunteer at the Barn Owl Trust. Initially she worked in the office, transferring the old contact cards onto the database. After moving away for a while, Karen then returned to her voluntary work at the Trust. She continued with this until she began more hands-on work with Joanna Vinson who cared for all kinds of injured birds of prey. Joanna had been one of the Barn Owl Trust's original trustees back in the '80's.

The car that Karen donated to the Barn Owl Trust through Giveacar actually belonged to Joanna who died at the end of last year and left Karen the car in her will. After seeing Giveacar in 'Feedback', Karen thought that donating Joanna's Nissan



Micra through the scheme would be particularly fitting as Joanna had kept and cared for disabled owls until illness meant that she had to pass them over to the Barn Owl Trust. Karen hoped that the car would help fund the amazing work that the Barn Owl Trust does.

Karen gave a glowing report of the Giveacar service, describing it as 'very smooth and very quick'. She submitted her information on the website and then was phoned to confirm the donation. After that, her car was collected within 2 or 3 days by a 'very helpful' collection agent. Her car was then scrapped, and the money was donated to the Barn Owl Trust, after which she received a confirmation letter from Giveacar and a thank you card from the Barn Owl Trust. ★

# Encouraging Barn Owls

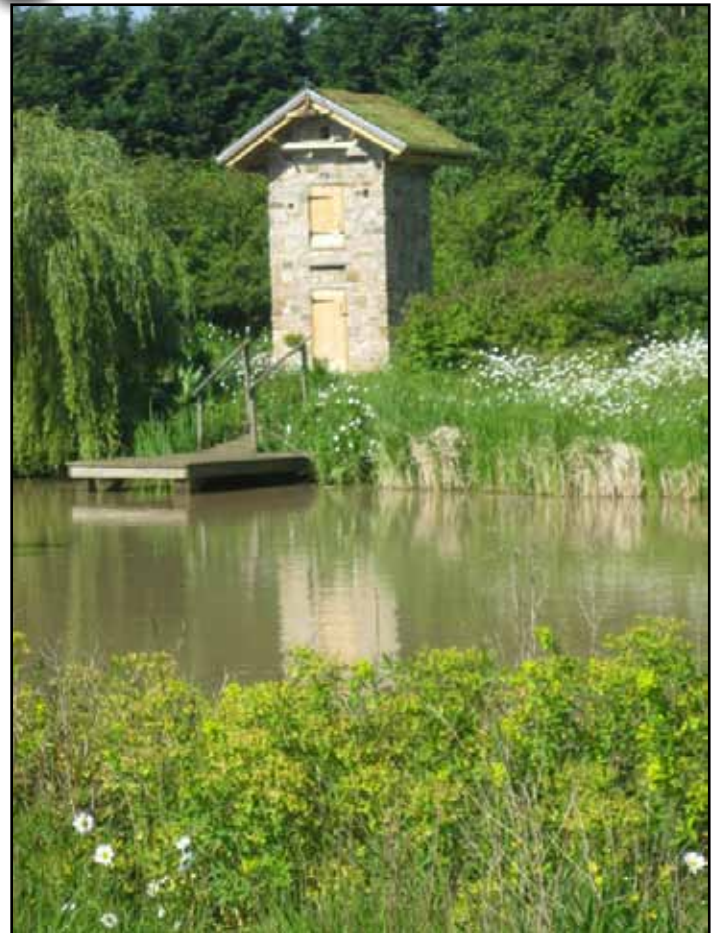
## A wildlife tower – with a difference

It is with great pleasure that we can report the completion of yet another Wildlife Tower based on our own, this time in Warwickshire.

Having originally been contacted to provide architects' drawings to an interested landowner in December 2013, email correspondence began as the finer points of the construction were discussed and the build started to become a reality. Now, in June 2014, the tower is complete, along with a wonderful green 'living roof', made of sedum.

The actual cost of the tower was £8,500 but significant expense was reduced by sourcing some of the materials in-house and on-site. The best estimate of the total cost if no in-house assistance had been available is £10 -12000. However other towers based on our design have been constructed for as little as £2,000 using reclaimed materials.

Although this one is probably too extravagant for most people's budgets, it would constitute a very small outlay if it were to serve as wildlife mitigation and enhancement at a housing development and of course it looks absolutely stunning in this setting. We wish the landowner great success with the tower, and look forward to being able to update you on its first residents. ★



*This Warwickshire wildlife tower is built to the Trust's design and looks absolutely stunning in this beautiful setting. A great modification is the 'living roof', made of sedum - see photo below  
Photos: Provided.*

## Success



*Our four Owlets 18th July 2014 - Photo: Alex Bailey*

Our Barn Owl story begins two years ago when we moved from North Cornwall to an X-Duchy farm with 15 acres.

One cold February morning in 2012 I was in our long barn and felt a presence. Sitting right next to me at head height on a cattle feeder was a young Barn Owl with his eyes closed. Playing the ... If I can't see you .... You can't see me game.... I quietly moved away avoiding eye contact. I wasted no time in putting a Barn Owl box in our highest Dutch Barn... Over the coming days and weeks we saw him regularly. He wasted no time in moving into the box.

Around a similar time last year (2013) we were very excited to notice that there were definitely two floating about in the early morning hunting in our fields.

Since then we have invested heavily in improving the adjacent habitat. In one strip of land of about 2 acres I have put a dozen fence posts as perches, I have also made mice/vole breeding



chambers by using CGI sheets on the ground weighted with concrete blocks. All our fields are meadow grass cut once only for hay in August and we do not use any pesticide or insecticide. Consequently when the Barn Owls bred this year, to our utter delight, we watched them catch their early evening feed for the owlets some 12 trips in under 30 mins... They can catch within 200 metres of their nest every 3-4 mins it's stunning to watch. I have a dedicated water trough for them with steps out should they get stuck.

Earlier this year we put a second owl box in another barn. It appears the adults now use this and the youngsters are in the older one.

The Barn Owls have brought us an immense amount of pleasure and satisfaction, most of all to my two year old son who is an expert at spotting the 'Barneys' from his bedroom window before he goes to sleep. It just goes to show that nature can be helped with a little care and consideration. That's our story! ★

**Alex Bailey**

# Winners

## 2014 Poetry



Prize winner Margaret Davies (left) and her friend Pamela Cure enjoy their day out with the Trust Photo: Jo Plant

First prize-winner of our 2013 Grand Draw Margaret Davies, a long-time supporter of the Trust, came along to collect her prize on 3rd July this year. She brought her friend, Pamela Cure, to share her 'Day with the Conservation Team'.

Margaret said: "I have never won a prize on a raffle before so I was over the moon when I found out I had won. I love all animals and birds and Pamela and I support a few animal charities. To see the work that the Barn Owl Trust does was truly wonderful. We didn't know what to expect and certainly didn't realise how far we would go (up to North Devon)!"

We visited two monitoring sites with David and Jo and enjoyed a lovely lunch at the Church Inn in West Down in the middle of them. The first site we unfortunately couldn't get across to (walking through the maize crop) but the second site we drove right up to and we were lucky enough to find a brood of four owlets and the female. We got to hold the owlets while David ringed them. To hold a Barn Owl chick was something I never envisaged I would ever do. We enjoyed everything and had a grand day from beginning to end. Everyone was so lovely that we met; A marvellous, marvellous day". Pamela added: "I'm so glad she took me!"

Don't forget to buy your tickets this year for a chance to win one of our great prizes, including your very own 'Day with the Conservation Team'. ★



Nestcam screenshot 16/07/14: Natalie Marsh

This year's Poetry Competition was well-supported and raised over £200 for the Trust. We had 76 entries from folk all over the UK – from Scotland to Cornwall and even some from the USA. Thank you all.

Our Judge this year was Jackie Bennett, winner of our last Poetry Competition. She enjoyed reading through the poems and chose "Daytripper" by Hilary Jupp as the winner. Well done Hilary and thank you for your support. Your prize is on its way.

The prize winners are:-

- 1st prize - Day Tripper – by Hilary Jupp
- 2nd prize - Pesticidal – by Susan Richardson
- 3rd prize - Glow Worms – by Rosie Barrett

Highly commended:-

- Feeding time at Gigrin – Jennifer Hammond
- With the Lengthening of Days – Hilary Jupp
- Peregrine – Graham Burchell
- Children by the Stream – Joan Condon
- At the Tip of Dawlish Warren – Virginia Griem
- Reassembling the Leaf – Isobel Thrilling

Wildlife Words Volume 3 - containing all of the winning and commended poems and a selection of others is available from the Trust for £5 plus £1.50 p&p.

### Day Tripper

When did you last take time for a walk by the sea?  
Can you journey there slowly, change trains  
through a fret of travellers? At the end of the line  
will you walk the remainder along a bridleway,  
nettled and brambled, towards the wash of the ocean?  
Will you be entertained by a pantomime of gulls  
or a dance of sanderlings as they chase  
the shush and fall of the waves?  
When the tide recedes will you build  
a world from sand, or dabble in pools,  
absent until a gossip of oystercatchers  
amble up over the pebbles?

And as the tide returns, and come the end of the day,  
what will you leave behind, and what will you carry away?

Hilary Jupp ★

## Nestcam Update

The winter storms wreaked havoc across the UK, and our Nestcam set-up was no exception. A direct lightning strike at the farm in south-east Cornwall during the storms at the beginning of January outed the hub, much of the telephone cabling and one of our computers that stream the images! Little did we know that the camera set-up in the barn conversion next to the Nestcam barn had also been fried.

What bad luck then when the pair of Barn Owls seemed to disappear from Nestcam and, as we later found out, moved into the cameraless barn conversion and laid a clutch of eggs. The good news was that their healthy brood of four were ringed in June and were all good weights. As we go to press, a single adult is at roost most days viewable on Nestcam, but hopes of being able to stream a second clutch of eggs there are slowly disappearing as the summer whizzes past.

Check out our nestcam at [www.barnowltrust.org.uk](http://www.barnowltrust.org.uk) to see what's happening now and read our Nestcam Diary 2014 for latest updates. ★

# Bird News

This year has been the busiest on the rehabilitation front since I started work for the Trust in 2009. While this doesn't sound like good news at first glance, it is actually the result of an unusually good breeding season. More young owls around means more young owls getting into trouble!

So far this year, we have had a total of ten Tawny owlets brought into us, only one of which died shortly after arrival. One was found on the road, and while it appeared to have escaped any external injuries, it appeared to be completely blind (albeit temporarily) - probably as a result of a head injury. Fortunately it is now flying and landing perfectly, reacting to visual stimuli, and shows every sign of being releasable. Sadly three of the remaining eight developed severe bumblefoot and had to be put to sleep. This infection is extremely difficult to treat involving surgery, many weeks of living in a box, with frequent handling and re-dressing of wounds. Treatment is extremely stressful for the birds and it's a lot kinder to put them to sleep. Bumblefoot is usually caused by self-inflicted puncture wounds of the feet and can be the result of keeping birds in unsuitable containers or moving them in containers without providing anything for them to grip.

While we are always pleased to receive owls, many of these birds should never have been brought in to us in the first place. After leaving the nest but before they fly, young tawnies go through a stage known as 'branching' and it is perfectly natural for them to spend some time on the ground. The likelihood is that they are perfectly capable of climbing back to their nest and that their parents are still in attendance, supplying them with food. Our advice is usually to place the owlet somewhere off the ground, very close to where it was found, to keep it away from predators. Shrubs, low branches or even a wicker basket attached to a tree trunk are all suitable. Unfortunately, many of the owlets brought to us this year had been taken in and kept overnight, or for a few days, by well-meaning members of the public. If they are absent from the territory for any length of time, continuity is lost and their parents are unlikely to resume feeding them, meaning the owlets cannot simply be put back where they were found. We will do our very best for all of these birds, but in many cases they would have been better off left in the wild, with their parents.

Barn Owls are a completely different story. A young Barn Owl on the floor really is an owl in trouble. As long as there are owlets in the nest, the parent birds will only deliver food to the nest and will ignore the one on the floor. It will either starve or be predated. In the case of Barn Owls, a fallen owlet in good condition should always be put back in the nest. However, sometimes this is simply not possible, or the owl is in very poor condition. We've had a total of four brought into us from three locations, all suffering from starvation and dehydration. Unfortunately, two of them were severely emaciated and did not last the night. They simply didn't arrive in time. The other two are thriving and will be released as soon as they are ready. Another fledgling Barn Owl has just arrived! Somehow its wing has been shortened by broken glass(?). Fortunately it's only the flight feathers that are damaged but we'll need to keep it until its cut-off feathers have been moulted out and new ones have re-grown.

We have also had an unusual patient, a Little Owl, our first since 2009. This was another fallen owlet, and, as is often the case with Little Owls, the nest could not be located. This is a very feisty little bird(!), and we are setting up one of our Mobile Release Aviaries for it tomorrow at the site where it was found. After a couple of weeks on-site in the aviary, the top will be propped open so the owl can come and go until it is self-sufficient.

It has not just been fallen owlets, we have also had a couple of injured adults brought in, both found on roads. The first, a Barn Owl had a severe leg injury and was taken straight to the vet. Regrettably, we were told that there was no hope of a recovery



*The Little Owl was fitted with a BTO ring before release  
Photo: Frances Ramsden*

and they had put it to sleep. Our most recent arrival (at the time of writing) is a Tawny Owl with a badly broken wing. Although it had been pinned by the vet, the vets knew its treatment was a 'long-shot' and they were not surprised to hear that the pin had failed and the bird had to be put down.

Unusually, there is nothing at all to report from the permanent resident owls in our sanctuary. There have been no issues at all, and everyone is fit and well. Considering that many of them are a motley crew of elderly, injured and otherwise infirm individuals, this is good news indeed! 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



# Walk on the Wildside

In addition to the open monthly events we've held this year, we've also been pleased to welcome groups to the Lennon Legacy Project (LLP) for their own 'bespoke' events. Students from Plymouth University join us regularly for monthly practical tasks during the autumn and winter and Hungarian trainees spend up to a week at a time here when they're in the UK. We are also pleased to welcome (by arrangement) groups of all kinds for a variety of events and activities. Staff from EDF Energy and Exeter University have joined us for team-building days and two groups came this July to see our butterflies.

Brilliant sunshine greeted a group of twenty-four from the National Trust Axe Valley when they visited the Trust's Lennon Legacy Project for the first time. Hundreds of Marbled Whites and Ringlets, plus Meadow Browns, Skippers and Burnet Moths were amongst the species seen flying in 'Barn Owl heaven' (rough grassland). The event finished up with a delicious cream tea in our Meeting Room. "A great afternoon, especially the tea - thank you very much".



*Members of the National Trust Axe Valley Group enjoy their cream tea in our Meeting Room*

The next day the first of our two open Butterfly Walks was also blessed with good weather and the butterflies were once again out in force.

Unfortunately the weather forecast was awful for the second open Butterfly Walk so we cancelled. Guess what? The forecast was wrong and we could have gone ahead!



*Kingsbridge Estuary University of the Third Age enjoy a gentle stroll and magnificent views*



*Kingsbridge Estuary U3A group visit our wildlife tower  
Photos: Frances Ramsden*

Two days later a group of 21 from the Kingsbridge Estuary University of the Third Age visited. The weather turned out to be suitably glorious despite what the weatherman said and the wildlife, especially the butterflies, again put on a great show.

The group decided to visit after David gave two different presentations to them in less than a year at their monthly meetings. Despite some initial misgivings from a couple of the participants who weren't sure they could manage the whole route, with the gentle pace and frequent stops to admire the wildlife everyone completed the walk and had a wonderful time. Here are some of the things the group said about their visit:

"Tremendous – so glad I did it – took me back to my childhood (over 80)"

"An exciting project. A privilege to visit"

"An astonishing achievement if we leave things alone, look what will happen"

"The apprentice walk and the wild wood was my favourite"

"What a beautiful place to be!"

"A special memory to add to my store of treasures"

If you are a member of a local group and are interested in booking either a talk or guided walk around the LLP, or would like to enquire about a team-building event for your business or organisation please get in touch for more information. ★

## Memory Tree

If a member of your family or a friend has left a legacy to the Trust in their will or, if we receive donations in memory of them, or a collection from their funeral, they will have a leaf made and inscribed with their name on our Memory Tree.

The Memory Tree has pride of place in our beautiful Norman Alderson Meeting Room.

We don't have a visitor centre but if you would like to come and see their leaf please join us on one of our events. The dates are listed on page 2 and on our website.

This will not only give you the opportunity to see how we have remembered them, but also to see some of the work their gift supported. ★



# LLP Update

*The Lennon Legacy Project (LLP) is 26 acres of land owned and managed for wildlife by the Trust. What was once intensively grazed pasture has become a haven for birds, butterflies, flowers and insects. We hold regular events to share the 'LLP experience' and welcome groups by appointment.*

After the mild winter, spring came early. Dippers were heard from early February onwards by the top bridge in Corner Wood. They eventually bred again for the second year in a row and fledged a brood of two. A recently released Barn Owl was seen during the day in North Park in March, throughout April and into May. The Dawn Chorus Walk in April recorded Blackcap, Song Thrush, Blackbird, Chiffchaff, Goldcrest, Chaffinch, Goldfinch, Siskin, House Sparrow, Robin, Wren, Dunnock, Blue Tit, Great Tit, Coal Tit, Great Spotted Woodpecker, Woodpigeon, wild Barn Owl (both seen and heard) and wild Tawny Owl.

A Kestrel also started making regular appearances as it hunted over the field at about the same time. It was so settled that by the end of April it was harassing the local Buzzard into submission. Also in April a pair of Mandarin arrived on the Flo pond but typically disappeared almost immediately. In May, a brood of four Grey Wagtails fledged from the Ashburn and a male Whitethroat was in song in the hedge along Pennsland Lane.

A pair of Swallows arrived and spent much of their time going in and out of our owl hospital extension but never seemed to get around to nest building. By June, the now usual flock of Swifts that forage over the field had increased to about 30 individuals with a similarly-sized mixed flock of House Martins and Swallows.

The Wildlife Tower was checked for nesting birds, and although some Barn Owl evidence was found, it was the House Sparrows that appeared to have adopted the building for the first time, with at least one nest on the wall top under the eaves by the Kestrel provision.

The tadpoles hatched in March, whilst the first slow worms of the year were seen in a couple of places towards the end of April. At about the same time, a buck Roe Deer gave prolonged views in North Park and was presumably the father of the fawn that was seen with its mother in various places until mid-June. A fox was watched hunting voles in early May, and a few days later a hedgehog was seen walking down the road in broad daylight at lunchtime!

A male Beautiful Demoiselle graced Corner Wood briefly in early June and by the end of the month, the now familiar sight of Marbled White butterflies was at least 3 weeks earlier than normal. Visitors for our Butterfly Walks in July saw hundreds of Marbled Whites and Ringlets, plus Meadow Browns, Skippers and Burnet Moths. The Duck box by the cattle drink may not have been used by the Mandarins but a hive of bees was under construction from mid-June onwards.

Our lone Early Purple Orchid was up by the middle of April, with petals erupting by the end of the month. A Hairy Tare (like a small vetch) was found in mid-June along the path in North Park. Unfortunately, an eruption of Himalayan Balsam was found in late June in Kiln Close. The estimated 3,000 plants came from nowhere and were well-grown by the time they were pulled by hand.



**Marbled White butterfly - one of the LLP's great success stories Photo: Frances Ramsden**

The final group of Plymouth University students came in Mid-March to cut back bramble from the new hedge in front of the solar panels, then trimmed back some of the Pennsland Lane hedge. A month later the Hungarian Cohort VI arrived. As usual, they each built an outdoor nestbox for the conservation team, as well as replacing the rotten Dormouse boxes with brand new BOT-built ones along Riverbank Walk, then counted the vole holes in the permanent quadrats, and finally helped check the small bird boxes for signs of early nesting. In June participants on the Midsummer Evening Walk enjoyed prolonged views of the hind Roe Deer in North Park. Also in June, Hungarian Cohort VII visited and amongst other things helped to bash the bracken along the roadside boundary despite the weather being particularly inclement on the day.

By Week 19 of the UK Butterfly Monitoring Scheme, and with 11 weeks still to go, we had counted an amazing; 192 Small Skipper, 10 Large Skipper, 14 Brimstone, 19 Large White, 15 Small White, 18 Green-veined White, 12 Orange-tip, 10 Small Copper, 24 Common Blue, 2 Red Admiral, 70 Small Tortoiseshell, 28 Peacock, 17 Silver-washed Fritillary, 9 Speckled Wood, 340 Marbled White, 242 Gatekeeper, 757 Meadow Brown and 129 Ringle! ★

**Matthew Twiggs**  
Conservation Officer



**You can keep up to date with what's happening in the LLP by visiting our monthly 'Lennon Legacy Project News' at [www.barnowltrust.org.uk](http://www.barnowltrust.org.uk)**

*This lovely Roe Deer was captured by the Trust's remote wildlife camera on the path outside Corner Wood at 5:15am in early June. Deer were spotted on LLP walks in April and June*



# 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.

Practical conservation and rehabilitation work takes place in South West England (mainly Devon and Cornwall), but all other areas of work have national (and sometimes 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 and promoting habitat creation by others is a significant part of the Trust's work.

### TRUST STAFF

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

### TRUST VOLUNTEERS

HONORARY SOLICITORS : Wollen Mitchelmore LLP  
BTO RINGING COORDINATOR : Keith Grant  
EDUCATION VOLUNTEER : Baley the Barn Owl  
LIVE OWL EMERGENCY HELP  
& OWL TRANSPORTATION : Cathy Pitt  
Bill Bishop  
Greg & Carol King  
Kim McNeil  
Margaret Rhodes  
STUDENT PLACEMENT : Dzhane Emin, Charlie Eccles  
WORK EXPERIENCE : Farley Lapenna  
PRACTICAL SUPPORT : Kim Baker  
FEEDBACK : Frances Ramsden  
AVIARY CLEANING : Bethany Smith  
GENERAL ASSISTANCE : Beryl Welsh, Tommy Lee  
Sally McCarter  
Jim & Marion Perriss  
Margaret Rhodes  
Margaret Crocker  
Sylvia Marshall  
Hungarian Volunteers  
Sandra Reardon  
Miriam Darlington  
Jayne Hartley  
University of Plymouth  
Volunteers

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.

\* Indicates those leaving during the period of this report.

## 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 2013 - 2014



Welcome to our Annual Review of the financial year 2013-2014, a chance both to reflect and to look at future plans.

As you will see from the Conservation Report on pages 12 and 13 this was another busy year for the Trust with the Devon Barn Owl Survey and the Rodenticide Campaign taking up a lot of our staff time. However the most notable thing about the year was that the 2013 Barn Owl breeding season was the worst any of us could remember and this was true across most of the UK. Indeed conservationists in Europe reported a similar situation. Given the awful year we were delighted that our nestcam owls survived and laid eggs in May (later than usual). They successfully reared 2 owlets 'on camera' bringing the precarious ups and downs of 'owl life' into homes worldwide.

Thankfully I am delighted to tell you that the 2014 season (so far) is much, much better. Where the birds survived they are producing earlier and larger broods than in recent years. If we have reasonable weather we are hopeful that there will be lots of second broods to swell the population.

The Conservation Team had a 'day out' in July when they visited a 50+ acre site in Cornwall managed for butterflies. I understand they were given a great lunch too. This inspirational visit was only the second team outing in twenty-five years and we hope to manage them slightly more frequently in the future.

2013 was the 25th anniversary of the Trust becoming a registered charity, we celebrated in August with a well attended Acoustic Music evening. Six talented musicians gave their time to entertain our audience with one travelling from as far afield as Doncaster to perform!

You might remember we started the year in a state of financial 'crisis' having recorded a record loss of almost £100,000 in the previous financial year. As you can imagine the Trustees were concerned about maintaining staffing levels and being able to continue to cover the workload. Fortunately this financial year was much better for the Trust. Income from individuals, Charitable Trusts and grant giving bodies was significantly higher than the previous year and generous legacies meant that we could replace some of our reserves and look ahead to the current year.

## 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 16).

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.

Including the Annual Report with 'Feedback' last year was one of our cost-cutting decisions and as you can see we're doing the same this year. We have had to stop using recycled vegetable oil as fuel in our vehicles due to expensive problems with fuel pumps. However we have cut the number of vehicles from four to three and replacements are more fuel efficient.

During the year we increased our conservation staff by one fixed-term post to allow us to complete the Devon County Survey. This post finished at the end of the financial year. We had a change in one of our two part-time handyman posts and one of our admin team semi-retired at the end of February. Other than that there have been no changes to existing staff. Volunteers have received training and work experience on both long and short-term placements with the Trust. At the year-end we had 11 staff in post; five full-time and six part-time.

Looking ahead, we failed to find sufficient funding to carry out the 2014 Cornwall Barn Owl Survey which was a disappointment, however we will continue to visit our 70+ annual monitoring sites, some of which are in Cornwall, and collect data from other ringers to enable us to determine whether the population is recovering. In response to the disastrous 2013 breeding season, the Trust has been collating data from monitoring schemes around the country and have pulled these together to create a document giving a UK perspective on the population: 'State of the UK Barn Owl Population 2013' which we produced in April this year.

During the autumn we will be producing a report on the results of the Devon Barn Owl Survey allowing comparison with previous surveys in 1993 and 2003. In addition to our general work of dealing with enquiries, practical conservation such as site visits and nestboxing, school visits, adult talks, training courses and caring for resident and casualty birds, plans for this year include continuing to develop our survey website – [www.barnowlsurvey.org.uk](http://www.barnowlsurvey.org.uk) and to replace our main website – [www.barnowltrust.org.uk](http://www.barnowltrust.org.uk) thereby making both sites more user friendly and reducing staff time spent dealing with enquiries – a major part of the conservation team's work.

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. Once again there are several events with different themes planned for the summer to allow visitors to the site to experience the increasing bio-diversity first-hand. We have also allowed one day a week of staff time to be 'out and about' in the South West in an effort to raise awareness of this beautiful bird, its plight and our efforts to help restore the balance.

We continue to work with other groups both in the UK and abroad and to run our 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 Surveys and Mitigation (ABOSM) course we started in 2011.

We will also continue to lobby for the implementation of recommendations from research projects, and to develop educational / training activities and resources, to target practical conservation projects (e.g. nestbox provision) whilst trying to ensure that any development is sustainable, thereby reducing the Trust's dependency on legacy income to support core costs.

On behalf of the Trustees I would like to thank everyone who has supported us during the year. I would also like to thank our wonderful team of staff, volunteers and all of our Friends for continuing to believe that, *together we can make a world of difference* - thank you all.

Keith Grant  
Chairman of Trustees, July 2014



# Conservation Report

## Our Rodenticide Campaign

Prompted by concerns over the widespread environmental contamination by rodenticides (rat & mouse baits) the EU required Member States to address the issue of environmental contamination, in particular the widespread secondary poisoning of predators.

As part of a review, the Health and Safety Executive held a seminar for 'stakeholders' and invited the Barn Owl Trust to give a presentation. This was a great opportunity to get our message across as the attendees included manufacturers, regulators, and representatives of the user groups such as Pest Controllers, Gamekeepers, and Farmers. Needless to say, with 84% (*this figure has since been increased to 87%*) of Barn Owls containing rat poison our presentation was extremely hard-hitting, illustrating the need for much tighter controls and the inadequacies of product labels.

Immediately after the presentation, Jonathan Peck, Chairman and majority shareholder of Killgerm and honorary member of the Chartered Institute of Environmental Health, invited us to submit an article to Pest Control News. This was equally hard-hitting. The article produced some 'interesting' responses from poison users and a link to it produced the biggest response we have ever had on the Trust's Facebook page. This, along with press coverage on the plight of Britain's Barn Owls, prompted the petitioning organisation Avaaz to get in touch and we launched our first ever e-petition on 21st January 2014.



On 26th February David was interviewed by ITN TV legend Jon Snow as part of our Rodenticide Campaign Photo: Rachel Seifert

Our petition called for a ban on permanent baiting, the use of poisons as a last resort rather than a first resort, and vast improvements in product labelling.

The first set of proposals for reducing wildlife contamination, prepared by the Rodenticide Industry, was inadequate to say the least and our highly critical response ran to four pages. By February, our petition with Avaaz had reached 120,915 signatures and the Minister responsible, Mike Penning MP, agreed to meet us at Westminster on the 27th.

We arrived to find that he had called in top civil servants from Public Health England, Natural England, HSE and DEFRA. The meeting went extremely well and it became clear that the Government Regulators (HSE) shared many of our concerns.

The Government Oversight Group consequently rejected the industry's proposals and at the time of writing (19/06/14) we were still waiting to see the second round of proposals. We are determined to keep up the pressure for improved wildlife protection at least until the outcome of the current review gains Ministerial approval (expected September 2014).

## Launch of UK Barn Owl Survey website

Since the Trust started in 1988, we've been meticulously recording all wild Barn Owl sightings, plus roosts and nests, initially in Devon, adding Cornwall in 1994 and Dorset in 2003. With Barn Owls being reported to us from across the UK it became clear that we needed a way of recording them that would not be an unmanageable burden. [www.barnowlsurvey.org.uk](http://www.barnowlsurvey.org.uk) went 'live' on 25th April 2013 and recorded well over 1,000 records by the end of the year, by which time plans for further development of the site were underway.

## The worst year ever recorded



Due to prolonged cold weather, by mid April 2013 there were probably fewer Barn Owls in Britain than at any time since records began Photo: Les Foster

From the 70+ Barn Owl sites that we monitor in Devon and East Cornwall it soon became clear that 2013 was not going to be a good year for the birds. Where we'd normally find around 35-40 nests there were only eight. Similar reports started to trickle in from across the UK and then the BTO announced that Barn Owl mortality in March 2013 had been 280% higher than usual due to the bitterly cold weather.

With so many independent Barn Owl groups/schemes/projects/ringers sending us their results it seemed a shame not to publish them so, towards the end of the year, we collated the first 'State of the UK Barn Owl Population' report on behalf of 21 groups from Ayrshire to Jersey and Suffolk to West Cornwall. The results have proved to be a great resource especially when press contacts and TV researchers such as Springwatch ask 'how are Barn Owls doing?' The answer, sadly, is that 2013 was indeed the worst year ever recorded with a staggering 71% drop in the number of nests.

Coincidentally, the Barn Owl Trust also had its worst year financially. Unfortunately, our clients (the owls) are unable to pay us for all the work we do on their behalf and we depend entirely upon a completely different species (that's you!) paying us instead. Sadly 2013 not only saw a huge reduction in the owls' resources (less food) but also in the Trust's resources (less money). In fact, we came pretty close to making some very drastic cut-backs.

## 2013 Devon Barn Owl Survey

It is a particular shame that the biggest 10-yearly Barn Owl survey in Britain happened to take place in such a poor year. But, from a scientific point of view, quantifying the absence of birds is equally, if not more important, than quantifying presence – partly because it's so rarely done. Visiting all known roosts and nests provides a rare opportunity to find out what is happening at those sites and identify any conservation action needed. Devon is a huge county and we had 1,285 sites to check.

By the end of the financial year, Luke, Stuart and Matt had contacted all of them and visited the vast majority during 134 fieldwork trips. We are extremely grateful to all our Survey Volunteers: Mike Tyler, Seb Loram, James Baker, Peter Howells, Martin Davies, Viv Geen, Chris Sowden, Bill Bishop, Bethany Smith, Sally McCarter, Pak Lun, Charlotte Eccles, Miriam Darlington and Kim Baker.

As the site visit results streamed in, we were very disappointed to discover how many sites (now X-Barn Owl sites) had been converted to dwellings without any provision being made for the birds. This indicates serious failings in the planning system and is a subject we will return to when the 2013 Devon Barn Owl Survey Report is published.

### Practical conservation work

Apart from the odd trip to erect a nestbox or rescue an owl, our practical conservation work was put on-hold for most of the year so we (the Conservation Team) could focus on the survey. However, during survey fieldwork, we took numerous opportunities to talk to farmers and landowners about 'how to encourage the owls' with habitat improvements etc. and on 3rd November we ran a Nestbox Workshop event for the Pensilva Wildlife Group down in Cornwall where attendees constructed 13 nestboxes for erection in their own home areas.

### Awareness raising

Despite the demands of the county survey, we still managed to keep spreading the word; encouraging others to help these wonderful birds. During a further 25 school visits, over 1,000 children heard the 'Wings of Change' story and watched our tame volunteer Baley fly around their classroom for a few minutes. Although we don't display live birds to adults, our 'Restoring the Balance' presentations are still as popular as ever with 16 being provided to various groups such as the National Trust and U3A. As a follow-up to 'Restoring the Balance', some groups arrange to come on a guided walk. Five of these were held of which the 18th of July 'LLP Walk' was most memorable, with literally hundreds of butterflies fluttering all around us.

Our training courses for Ecological Consultants were very well attended. Our foundation course (BOESS) was run five times and our advanced course (ABOSM) was run once with a grand total of 74 attendees.

Despite the rise of the internet, we are still sending out paper leaflets as required and raising awareness through newspaper and magazine articles. For the first time we had a major feature article all about the work of the Trust in an Italian magazine, 'Endeavour', produced by Skua Nature, and several mentions in an 11-page feature in BBC Wildlife magazine. We are particularly pleased that our Barn Owl Conservation Handbook first published in 2012 by Pelagic Publishing had its second print run.

Our internet presence was maintained despite considerable difficulties with the Content Management System of our main website and, by January 2014, we had started planning the creation of a replacement website that will (eventually) be much easier to manage. The need for a site that displays well on mobile devices had also become clear. We were amazingly lucky that our Nestcam site had breeding Barn Owls in 2013 with a brood of two from just three eggs. This generated numerous enquiries, particularly from the USA, which prompted us to produce a new webpage about the American Barn Owl which, although similar, has recently been classified as a separate species. Unfortunately, the farm that hosts our Nestcam and Barncam cameras was struck by lightning in January 2014 causing prolonged 'down-time' and expense.

Face-to-face contact with interested people is a real pleasure and we were pleased to host visits by three different 'cohorts' of Hungarian trainees, who learn about Barn Owls and help us out with LLP management tasks. The RSPB's SW Regional Office staff came down for a liaison visit on 2nd July, and our

Rodenticide Campaign and the Barn Owl's worst-ever-year resulted in Radio and TV staff reporters visiting the Trust, starting off with a team from BBC Spotlight on 15th April 2013. All of the three big Agricultural Shows we attend had good weather; one highlight of which was an injured Tawny Owl brought to our stand at the Devon County Show!



### Hands-on with the birds

The low numbers of owls coming into rehab was indicative of the fact that 2013/14 was such a poor year for birds and numbers were down following the preceding bad winters. We only took in three Tawny Owls from the wild and no Barn Owls. However, we did take in a further seven Tawny Owls and three Barn Owls when Joanna Vinson, one of our founding Trustees, became unwell. Sadly she passed away a few months later. We were able to release two of the Tawny Owls plus a Barn Owl we received from the RSPCA in Somerset. The Barn Owl stayed around for many weeks and at the end of the financial year it was still here flying around screeching every night – wonderful! Whilst on the subject of owls in rehab/aviaries, our stalwart volunteer aviary cleaner deserves a special mention. Ex-Army Captain Kim Baker, is so much more than just an aviary cleaner. All those years as a Sergeant Major have certainly paid off! He gets the owls all lined up and the aviaries looking spic and span in no time at all. During college holidays Kim has had help from Bethany Smith who did her work experience placement with us in 2012.

### Our very own Nature Reserve

Thanks to Vivienne Lennon's legacy back in 2001, we now look out onto 26 acres of Barn Owl Heaven – the Lennon Legacy Project. This is a haven not only for Barn Owls but all the other species that benefit from the creation of rough tussocky grassland, the John Woodland Wildlife Tower and the nestboxes we've provided elsewhere on the site. On 2nd April it was a great pleasure to receive a visit from Jen Woodland and showed her around the Wildlife Tower once again. John would have loved to know that his memorial was being used by no less than three species of bat and, on 6th December, almost exactly five years after he passed away, a Barn Owl was roosting in it.



*The Wildlife Tower summer 2013  
Photo: Frances Ramsden*

In fact, the year ended as it began, with nightly Barn Owl song-flights; the plaintive screeching heard alongside the hoots and 'kewicks' of Tawny Owls. Under the top bridge, a pair of Dipper produced a brood of three in a special nestbox we provided for them, a Kingfisher was seen over the pond we created in memory of Florence Parsons and a Mallard produced four ducklings. The discovery in 2012/13 of Brown Hairstreak eggs (a UK BAP species) prompted us to start managing patches of Blackthorn specifically for this rapidly declining butterfly in August '13.

Out in the grassland, our one and only orchid flowered for the second time. Lizards were seen more often than ever before and the first Weasel was seen, no doubt attracted by the hundreds of Voles now resident across the site. Overhead, at least thirty Swifts and over thirty House Martins were seen with a single Sand Martin, feeding on all the invertebrates flying up out of the rough grass. Rare summer sightings included a Red Kite and a few Clouded Yellow butterflies. Fortunately, winter 2013/2014 was relatively mild and Field Voles were seen nesting throughout.

**David Ramsden MBE**  
*Head of Conservation*

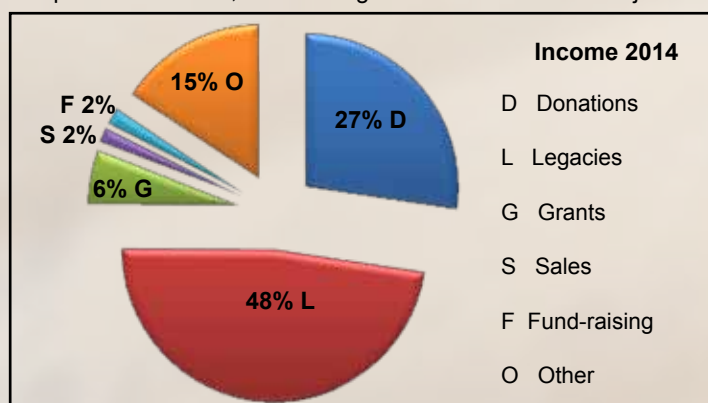


# Financial Report

After the awful end to our last financial year, this year was a very welcome change. The Balance Sheet and the Statement of Financial Activity, are shown on these pages. The total incoming resources for the year to 31 March 2014 increased to £369,535 (£134,129 in 2013) giving us a net increase of £124,810 compared to net deficits in the last two years (-£99,674 - 2013). This is mainly accounted for by a significant increase, 1703% in legacy income £176,320 - 2014, (£9,781 - 2013). 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. Legacies accounted for 48% of our total income. We have also seen an increase in donations from Charitable Trusts £31,953 (£6,725 - 2013) probably due to the significant drop in our reserves at the end of last year.

Overall income from grants and donations was up 60% on the previous year at £122,151 (£76,218 - 2013) accounting for 33% of total income (57% in 2013). Restricted grants from Charitable Trusts to support specific areas of our work increased by 60% to £21,000 (£13,100 - 2013). Most were to support the County Surveys and £4,000 was towards a replacement vehicle. We received £4,000 to develop our two websites and support our IT work which enables us to reach out and provide information worldwide. Other grants contributed towards nestboxing and our rodenticide campaign. We are very grateful for all of the grants we have received and particularly for the non-designated donations from Charitable Trusts. During the year we have also been very thankful to see a 23% increase in individual donations which has been wonderful.

The legacies that we have received this year have allowed us to replenish our reserves. However we are concerned that having reserves does make it harder to get grants and donations from Charitable Trusts. The years when we have received significant legacies are the only years we have not shown greater expenditure than income. 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, currently the building of our new website. Previous projects have included the purchase of the Lennon Legacy Project land, the creation of the two ponds in the LLP, the Meeting Room and the Solar Project.



THE BARN OWL TRUST		31 March 2014		31 March 2013	
BALANCE SHEET AS AT 31st MARCH 2014		£	£	£	£
	Notes				
<b>Fixed Assets</b>	2		170,452		174,519
<b>Current Assets</b>					
Stock		13,785		13,246	
Prepayments & debtors		3,669		3,042	
Bank deposit account		248,144		151,547	
Bank current account		39,989		6,848	
Other bank accounts		1,687		328	
Petty cash		300		250	
		<u>307,574</u>		<u>175,261</u>	
<b>Current Liabilities</b>					
Trade creditors		13,072		9,636	
<b>Net Current Assets</b>			294,502		165,625
<b>Total Net Assets</b>			<u>464,954</u>		<u>340,144</u>
<b>The funds of the charity:</b>					
<b>General Fund</b>			126,133		21,817
<b>Restricted reserves</b>	8		16,978		26,121
<b>Allocated reserves</b>	9		321,843		292,206
<b>Total charity funds</b>	3		<u>464,954</u>		<u>340,144</u>

Our percentage profit on sales of promotional goods increased by 5% although overall sales were down for the second consecutive year to £5,988 a 2% drop in income (£6,088 -2013). This year sales account for just 2% of total income compared to 5% in 2013. Fundraising income increased to £6,692 and accounted for 2% of income a 19% increase (4%, £5,608 - in 2013). Fundraising income comes almost entirely from our Annual Draw, sponsorship of Hannah and volunteer fundraising. Hannah from our conservation team walked to raise funds for the Trust in 2013 finishing her walk on 8th April raising over £3,500 - well done Hannah. Our amazing volunteers raised another £636 during the year in all sorts of ingenious ways - thank you all. The lucky dip accounted for £454 a drop of £40 (£495 -2013), consequently we plan to introduce some new prizes this year.

We saw an 85% increase in income from our BOESS (Barn Owl Ecology, Surveys and Signs) and ABOSM (Advanced Barn Owl Surveys and Mitigation) courses in the year £21,479 (£11,592 - 2013). The sale of nestboxes also increased. This year's net figure is up 102% - £12,308 (£6,083 - 2013). We have added Tawny Owl, Little Owl and Small Bird Boxes to our range as we build them all for our own use anyway.

Our overall expenditure increased by 5% to £244,725 (£233,803 - 2013). After an 11% increase in our overheads last year, we were pleased to see a 7% decrease this year. We saw savings on electricity of 37% due to a milder winter and the solar panels.

Continued on page 16



THE BARN OWL TRUST For the year ended 31st MARCH 2014		Notes	Unrestricted Funds	Restricted BOT Env.	Restricted Other	Total Funds 2014	Total Funds 2013
			£	£	£	£	£
<b>Incoming Resources from generated funds:</b>							
Voluntary income:							
			101,151		21,000	122,151	76,218
			176,320			176,320	9,781
<b>Activities for generating funds:</b>							
	4		5,988			5,988	6,088
			6,692			6,692	5,608
	7		58,384			58,384	36,434
<b>Total Incoming resources</b>			<b>348,535</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>21,000</b>	<b>369,535</b>	<b>134,129</b>
<b>Resources expended</b>							
<b>Direct charitable expenditure:</b>							
<b>Practical work</b>							
			87,648		19,524	107,172	90,905
			6,839		143	6,982	6,963
	2		18,945			18,945	22,507
			925			925	3,236
			8,188		500	8,688	6,897
			504			504	472
			1,237		289	1,526	543
			2,796		2,395	5,191	6,388
			127,082	-	22,851	149,933	137,911
<b>Information &amp; advice service</b>							
			53,738			53,738	53,579
			3,865			3,865	4,692
			940			940	950
			4,462			4,462	4,969
			148			148	115
			2,213			2,213	3,307
			1,118			1,118	1,044
			7,241		2,500	9,741	10,334
			854			854	509
			74,579	-	2,500	77,079	79,499
<b>Direct charitable expenditure:</b>			<b>201,661</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>25,351</b>	<b>227,012</b>	<b>217,410</b>
<b>Other resources expended:</b>							
<b>Fundraising &amp; publicity</b>							
			7,885			7,885	8,099
			249			249	303
			242			242	253
			1,723			1,723	837
			10,099	-	-	10,099	9,492
<b>Governance costs</b>							
			6,494			6,494	5,832
			202			202	169
			918			918	900
			7,614			7,614	6,901
			17,713	-	-	17,713	16,393
<b>Total resources expended</b>			<b>219,374</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>25,351</b>	<b>244,725</b>	<b>233,803</b>
<b>Net incoming resources</b>			<b>129,161</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>(4,351)</b>	<b>124,810</b>	<b>(99,674)</b>
<b>Transfers between funds</b>			<b>4,792</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>(4,792)</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>
<b>Net incoming resources after transfers</b>			<b>133,953</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>(9,143)</b>	<b>124,810</b>	<b>(99,674)</b>
<b>Fund balances brought forward</b>			<b>314,023</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>26,121</b>	<b>340,144</b>	<b>439,818</b>
<b>Fund balances carried forward</b>			<b>447,976</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>16,978</b>	<b>464,954</b>	<b>340,144</b>



# 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  
Barbara & Richard Barker  
Blair Foundation  
Cecil Pilkington Charitable Trust  
Chapman Charitable Trust  
Church's Hardware Store  
Cobalt Trust  
Devon County Council  
Diana Symon Charitable Trust  
Dumbreck Charity  
Elmgrant Trust  
Eucalyptus Charitable Foundation  
Ian Askew Charitable Trust  
J W Swire Charitable Trust  
Jack Patson Charitable Trust  
Joan Tanner Charitable Trust  
John Cohens Foundation  
Keensave Ltd – (Christine Mercer)  
Keith Ewart Charitable Trust  
Kevin Keatley - Wildlife Watching Supplies  
Lesley May Carter Charitable Trust  
Lord Farrington Charitable Trust  
Macdonald-Buchanan Charitable Trust  
Marjorie Coote Animal Charitable Trust  
Marsh Christian Trust  
Mercer Charitable Trust

Mitchell Trust  
Moorland Merrymakers  
Norman Family Charitable Trust  
Oakdale Trust  
Ofenheim Trust  
P F Charitable Trust  
Panton Trust  
Penny Cress Registered Charity  
Phyllis & Ben Charitable Trust  
PP Mackintosh Foundation  
Quaker Concern for Animals  
RA & VB Reekie Charitable Trust  
Rosalind Hicks Charitable Trust  
Save Me Trust  
Seven Pillars of Wisdom Trust  
Sharpham Trust  
Spear Charitable Trust  
St Mary's Charity  
Tanner Trust  
Three Owls Sanctuary  
Verdon Smith Family Charitable Trust  
Veterinary Hospital Group  
Web Broadcasting Corporation  
West Devon Borough Council  
William Dean Countryside Trust  
William Haddon Charitable Trust

During this period we also received legacies from:

Linda Brett, Thelma Bonnington, Terence Lilley, Mary Doreen Baines, John Tremain, Freda Farmer and Avril Stainton

Gifts in Memory of:

Gavin John Robertson, Eugenie Mary Wise, Gay Carter, Heather Smit,  
Doreen Brook, Mrs Mattis, Dorothy Scott and Kay Goodchild

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

Axe Valley Runners, Aliyah Q Sauer, The Barley Sheaf - Gorran, Chloe Lord, Margaret & Derek Crocker, Owlies Jewellery, Melanie White, Sophie Allington, Kent RaG & UKC Hogwarts Society @ Kent University, Shakti Ellenwood, Hannah Bosence, Royal Mail MDEC Office, Sarah Williams, The Carpenters Arms - Ilsington, Darrel & Lucy Wheeler - Eco Cottages

*Thank you all so much for your support*

## Financial Report continued

Practical work again accounted for 61% of total spend at £149,933 (59% £137,911 - 2013) a 9% increase on the previous year due to the additional post and mileage incurred by the county survey. Provision of our Information and Advice service cost £77,079 - 31% of total spend. This was a 3% decrease on 2013 (£79,499).

Fund-raising remained at 4% of total spend £10,099 - a 6% increase in real terms from £9,492 in 2013. This was accounted for by expenditure on 1,000 leaflet dispensers. LLP expenditure decreased significantly by 71% in the year to £925 (£3,236 - 2013) with no major projects other than the top stretch of the drive hedge being laid. The Trustees have ring-fenced a fund of £59,618 for future projects and long-term maintenance of the Lennon Legacy Project.

Our overall spend on training has increased this year by 154% to £1,674 (£658 in 2013) due to the fixed-term post created for the Devon County Survey and the continued development of core staff. Expenditure on Governance has increased by 10% to £7,614 (£6,901 - 2013) but remains just 3% of total spend. We are able to keep this figure down because of our volunteers who have continued to be an invaluable asset to the Trust, assisting in every aspect of the work including practical tasks, administration, clerical work and fundraising, as well as the provision of professional services.

The Trustees have adopted a formal policy on general financial reserves. During the year's review of this policy it was agreed that in light of the losses recorded since 2003, when legacy income did not play a significant role in the Trust's income, it would be prudent to retain reserves on unrestricted funds of up to two years' expenditure, as shown in the previous year's accounts. This policy will continue to be reviewed on an annual basis. In these accounts we have allocated one year's expenditure as a reserves policy.

Of the general funds available to the Trust the Trustees have allocated £321,843: £244,725 as a reserve for the next financial year, £59,618 for the Lennon Legacy Project and £17,500 for other projects leaving a general fund of £126,133. However our fixed assets and stock still account for significantly more than this and in light of the regular shortfall in income vs. expenditure (excluding legacies) the Trustees continue to look carefully at all outgoings. It is a difficult balance - holding reserves to ensure you can continue through the lean times often makes your appeals to Charitable Trusts less attractive than those from charities with smaller reserves particularly in difficult economic times.

In summary, financially it has been a much better year for the Trust than the previous two. However we cannot afford to be complacent and will continue to do our very best to ensure that we make the best possible use of our resources and ensure that they benefit both Barn Owls and other wildlife. A big Thank You to everyone who has supported the Trust during this financial year.

**Mark Pountney MAAT**  
Honorary Treasurer



# Fund-raising News

## £250 Target Smashed!

BOT supporter Leonna Walters (13) fell in love with owls on a family day out to the Tropical Butterfly House in North Anston. Since then, she has become a Friend and fund-raiser for the Barn Owl Trust. ➔

After initially raising £50 through a cake bake, Leonna set herself an ambitious target of raising a further £250 for the charity to celebrate our 25th anniversary, which she smashed! Leonna raised £330 for the Trust in just a year through various fund-raising initiatives, these included sweepstakes for the Grand National, Strictly Come Dancing and the World Cup; auctioning tickets for Sheffield Wednesday and Derby County football matches plus running a Guess the Name of the Teddy competition, cake bake and designing / selling owl themed greetings cards.

Leonna says "I hope to visit the Barn Owl Trust in Devon at some point to spend time volunteering with the birds and would like to thank everyone who has helped me raise a total of £330 for the charity and animal I love." ★



Leonna with a Barn Owl from Robin Hood's Wheelgate Family Theme Park birds Photo: Nicola Walters

## Rose's Owl Event

Rose Fulton, aged 5, from Gwernogle, loves all things owly and is possibly The Barn Owl Trust's youngest fund-raiser! She was saddened to hear of the threats to owl populations including loss of habitat, eating poisoned prey and being hit by cars. Barn Owls in particular have seen their numbers decline, and Rose wanted to do something to help. She had the idea for an "Owl Event" and received lots of help from family and friends to organise and run it.



Rose's Owl Event at Keeper's Corner and Rose Fulton inset Photos: Susi Richardson

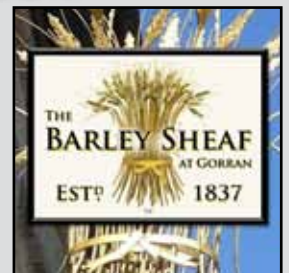
Rose's Owl Event took place at Keeper's Corner in Brechfa on Sunday 11th May. The day was well attended, with about eighty people, young and old, families and owl enthusiasts, all gathering at Keeper's for a great afternoon out.

There were home-made refreshments as well as a range of different activities to have a go at including a Barn Owl drawing competition, owl mask making, lucky dip, a raffle and pellet dissection. There was also a sewing activity where you could sew fabric feathers onto a giant fabric owl which was auctioned off at the end of the afternoon.

In addition, Rose had designed and produced a home-made magazine called "The World of Owls" which contained crosswords, jokes, word-searches and colouring-in activities

## Cheers!

The Barley Sheaf Pub at Gorran in Cornwall has a weekly quiz night and raffle and all the takings go into the Barleysheaf Quiz account. All participants are encouraged to nominate a charity and every six months the money is distributed. We have been nominated twice in the last year and the latest donation was a generous £100!



It is not just the Barley Sheaf but other pubs have also raised funds for us over the last few months including The Carpenters Arms at Ilstington and The Welcome Stranger at Liverton. A huge thank you goes out to them, to our individual supporters and to our inspirational young fund-raisers too. ★



Fabric Owl activity Photo: Susi Richardson

as well as a wealth of information on how to help protect Barn Owls. There was even a visit from some birds of prey from the Pembroke Dock Raptors. Everyone learnt a great deal about these magnificent birds as well as the threats which they face in the wild. Rose's Owl Event was enjoyed by all and raised £211 for The Barn Owl Trust. Thank you Rose! ★

# State of the UK Barn Owl

In April the Trust published a unique document; 'The State of the UK Barn Owl Population 2013' containing the monitoring results of 21 groups throughout the UK. This was updated in July '14 with data from two additional groups.

Barn Owls are without doubt the most extensively monitored bird species in the UK and 2013 nest-visit results were sent to the Barn Owl Trust by 23 independent groups from Scotland to Jersey and from Suffolk to Land's End. The results were quite shocking and this gave us the idea of producing a document pulling them all together - The State of the UK Barn Owl Population publication. It soon became clear that 2013 was by far the worst year ever recorded for Barn Owls with a 72% reduction in the number of nests.

The combined effort that goes into collecting such information is immense with well over 6,300 sites being visited. This alone made us feel that the results deserved publication and that the various groups, projects and individuals involved deserved full credit and public recognition for their efforts.

From the outset, we were determined that producing the results would not be a burden, either for the Trust or for the contributors, as we all have more than enough to do already! The data gathered was very straightforward and we presented it in the simplest possible way. Although possible reasons for population change are discussed, definitive answers to questions beginning with 'Why' were rather beyond the scope of the publication. The principle was 'KIS' (keep it simple) and the objective was to answer simple questions like 'how did Barn Owls do last year?' or 'how do the results compare?' See the Results Table as shown on page 19. Full copies of the publication which contains contributors notes are freely available from our website or for a very small fee to cover copying and postage.

## So, how did Barn Owls do across the UK in 2013?

Given that 2012 was a relatively good year (overall) and winter 12/13 was much less severe than the preceding three, Barn Owl numbers at the start of 2013 were probably about average. Most years there is a peak in mortality in February that reduces in March as rising temperatures stimulate small mammal activity. Unfortunately March 2013 was the coldest since 1962 and during the month the number of dead Barn Owls reported to BTO was 280% above normal. By the time temperatures finally rose in mid-April, there were quite possibly fewer Barn Owls alive in the UK than at any time since records began.

Without exception, every monitoring scheme that contributed data reported a high proportion of nest sites with no signs of occupation and it is quite safe to assume that many of the absent birds were dead. In Berkshire, the Pang Valley Barn Owl Group that normally finds 14 nests and Craig Ralston in Yorkshire who normally finds 25-30 found none at all. Nesting occupancy in Buckinghamshire (Dave Short) and Sussex (Barrie Watson) was 91-93% down and even the Jersey Barn Owl Conservation Network recorded a 96% drop and commented "2013 has been the worst on record". The Results Table shows that, overall, nesting occupancy in 2013 was an estimated 72% below the all-years' average.

The Barn Owl Trust's own monitoring scheme in Devon and East Cornwall, Barrie Watson in Sussex, and John Lightfoot in Shropshire all reported little evidence of non-breeding pairs and that most nestboxes were empty. Conversely, some contributors did comment on the presence of single birds and non-breeding pairs. The Lower Derwent Valley National Nature Reserve Group (Craig Ralston) reported "Most sites had pairs present but none bred" and in West Berkshire, the Pang Valley Barn Owl Group (John Dellow) reported "even though there was no breeding there

were a good number of adult birds found". On Salisbury Plain, the Imber Conservation Group (Major Nigel Lewis) reported "Out of the 307 sites we checked, 50 contained pairs that did not breed, there were 45 nest sites with a single roosting bird and only 30 nests".

Ian Armstrong in Cumbria reported that 2013 was no worse than 2012 "although the successful nests were mostly the later ones". Similarly, Geoff Sheppard in Ayrshire & Galloway reported "The percentage of sites producing eggs in 2013 was similar to 2012". However, with the exception of Cumbria, Ayrshire & Galloway, 2013 was reported as a disastrous year for Barn Owls across the UK.

"Our birds have had a hammering" Chris Griffiths, Montgomeryshire Barn Owl Group

"The worst year in the 30 years I have been owling in Wiltshire"

Major Nigel Lewis, Imber Conservation Group

"The worst year we have known" Rob Salter, East Riding Barn Owl Conservation Group

"2013 was the worst on record" Tony Beaumont, Jersey Barn Owl Conservation Network

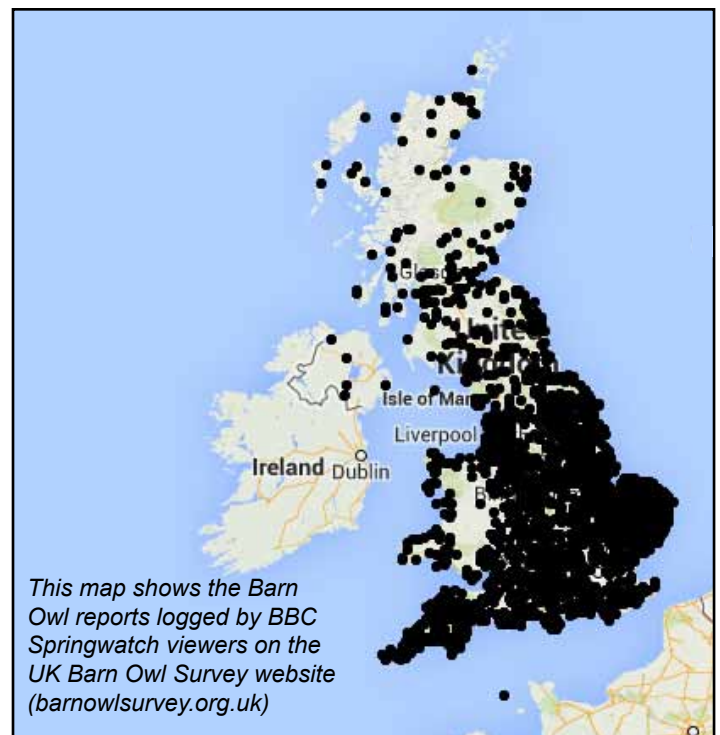
"Worst year since I started 18 years ago" Paddy Jackson, Northamptonshire Barn Owl Project

"A very bad year" Steve Piotrowski, Suffolk Community Barn Owl Project

"Many traditional sites where occupancy could be more or less guaranteed were totally deserted" John Middleton, NW Norfolk Ringing Group

## Prospects for 2014

Although extremely stormy and wet, winter 13/14 was mild, Field Voles were breeding on the edge of Dartmoor in December, and first reports of Barn Owls on eggs were received in March. In the final eight months of 2013 the Barn Owl Trust recorded 1,147 records on the new UK Barn Owl Survey website ([barnowlsurvey.org.uk](http://barnowlsurvey.org.uk)) and following promotion by BBC Springwatch over 2,600 Barn Owl records were reported in May – June. At the time of writing (July 16th) weather conditions have remained favourable so far and prey abundance seems to be above average. Most pairs laid early and typical brood sizes are 4-6 rather than the usual 2-4. Many breeding females appear not to be moulting yet which suggests that second broods are likely. ★



# Population - 2013

County / group	NO. OF SITES CHECKED		NESTING OCCUPANCY			MEAN BROOD SIZE			Notes - see appendix
	Typical (<2012)	Actual in 2013	Typical (<2012)	Actual in 2013	% change from norm	Typical (<2012)	Actual in 2013	% change from norm	
Ayrshire & Galloway - Scottish Raptor Study Group – Geoff Sheppard	75	74	70	26	-62%	3.5	2.7	-23%	19, 20
Berkshire – WBCS - Pang Valley BOG, John Dellow	111	119	14	0	-100%	2.8	0	-100%	13
Buckinghamshire Owl Raptor Group – Dave Short	186	339	22	3	-93%	2.7	4	48%	22
Cheshire – Andrew Duncalf on behalf of the Cheshire Barn Owl Groups	c.750	c.750	115	19	-83% E	2.85	2.6	-09%	25
Cornwall – West Cornwall Ringing Group	33	32	21	13	-36%	3.1	2.4	-23%	5, 6
Devon & Cornwall (east)- Barn Owl Trust	81	77	37	8	-77%	2.9	1.4	-52%	1,2
Jersey Barn Owl Conservation Network	108	50	53	1	-96% E	3	1	-67%	21
Linc. (south) – Alan Ball, Bob Sheppard, G Steele	1,200E	1,200E	200-250E	120-150E	-40% E	3.1	3 E	-03%	
Montgomeryshire Barn Owl Group	330 E	330 E	48	14	-71% E	3.1	3.5	13%	9
NW Norfolk Ringing Group - John Middleton	519	519	200	53	-74%	2.4	1.7	-29%	27
Northamptonshire BO Project – Paddy Jackson	-	-	52	13	-75% E*	-	3.2	-	24
Shropshire Barn Owl Group	174	148	17	4	-72%	3	2	-33%	1,2,3
Somerset - Hawk and Owl Trust – Chris Sperring	46	46	46	7	-85%	2.7	2.12	-22%	4
Somerset NE (Cam Valley WG) – Andre Fournier	71	133	11	3	-85%	2.5	1.3	-48%	12
Staffordshire Barn Owl Action Group	218	236	30	15	-54%	3	2	-33%	
Suffolk Community Barn Owl Project (inc. Suffolk Owl Sanctuary data)	972	1192	203	93	-63%	2.4	2.3	-04%	23
Sussex (west) - Barrie Watson	c.90	c.90	64	6	-91%	2.9	c.3	03%	1,2, 7, 8
Isle of Wight – James Gloyn & Gil Gaylor	50	47	32 E	23	-24% E	2.5	2.4	-04%	26
Wiltshire - Imber Conservation Group Major Nigel Lewis MBE (with volunteers)	488	307	137	30	-65%	1.98	1.14	-42%	14, 15, 16, 17
Vale of Belvoir Barn Owl Conservation (VBOC)	135	135	22	7	-68%	2.13	2	-06%	28
Yorkshire – East Riding BO Cons. Group – Rob Salter Dave Dickinson, Karen and Tony Chelsey	500	450 E	275-300E	31	-88% E	3	3.5	17%	18
Yorkshire – Lower Derwent Valley NNR Barn Owl Group - Craig Ralston	35	40	28	0	-100%	3-6	0	-100%	11
Yorkshire – Wolds Barn Owl Group	40	30	15	4	-64%	3	2.75	-08%	10
TOTALS (zeroes are excluded)	6,212 E	6,344 E	1,749 E	508 E	-72% E	3.15 E	2.63 E	-12% E	

E = estimated

# Team Talk

Since the Spring issue of Feedback Pete Webb, one of our admin team has semi-retired:

Since March I have been working part-time, two days a week in the office with 1 day a week "out and about". This day out is primarily to promote the Trust and I have been taking posters and leaflets around the county, usually visiting vets and garden centres. I have also been able to pick up donation boxes, donated items and even deliver nestboxes.

I've delivered boxes in North Devon and in Tiverton for a happy farmer who needed the box urgently for a barn conversion. As the customers had paid for carriage in both cases this was used towards our fuel instead of going to a carrier company and I could do other things in the area whilst I was there.

Other outings have included a day at RHS Rosemoor near Torrington (Native Plant and Wildlife Day on 28 May), the Royal Cornwall Show and most recently to the Carnival Fete at Ashburton. BOT has purchased a new pop-up Gazebo for me to use at small events. Despite the wonderful summer, on its first outing it got a thorough soaking as did I, but I managed to get it up and down single handed!

We hope that the Trust will be "out and about" in the county to publicise our existence several more times before the end of the year.



Pete gets soaked at Ashburton Carnival Fete Photo: John Germon

**Pete Webb**

In May we were interviewing to replace Hannah:

I began working at the Trust back in January 2012. It's been a remarkable two and a half years. I have been very lucky to work with such wonderful people, who have made me feel very welcome and helped keep me sane during the busy times!

The thing which entices me away is the opportunity of a lifetime. I will be swapping South Devon for South Africa, where I will be working as an intern in their National Parks. By the time you read this I will already be there! At the beginning of July I start my placement with training in Kruger National Park. From there I will be transferred to Augrabies Falls National Park where I will be working for their "People in Conservation" department. Certainly so far as climate goes, it couldn't be much more different from Devon if it tried!

Some of my favourite times at the Trust have been days spent working in the LLP, seeing owls successfully released back into the wild and definitely reaching Wembury Beach last April at the end of my sponsored Two Moors Way walk.



She did it! Hannah gets to Wembury Photo: David Ramsden

Working at the Trust has taught me a lot. Not just about wildlife conservation and caring for owls, but also through my responsibilities of arranging our training courses, giving school visits and attending various events. I am moving on with a huge amount of gratitude to the Trust and everyone there.

Thank you, and goodbye!

**Hannah Bosence**

And then there was Jo:

Hi, I'm Jo and I joined the Trust in June 2014 taking over from Hannah as David's PA. I completed a zoology degree in 2010 and have been working in zoos since then as an Education Officer and Mammal Keeper. Originally from Leicestershire, I moved to Devon in 2012 to be with my partner and live in the house



Jo started work here in June

Photo: David Ramsden

I owned but hadn't lived in! I was attracted to this job by the variety it offers and to work for a small organisation making a big difference to UK conservation. Having worked with monkeys for the past 18 months, owls are certainly a bit different! However, I have had a strong interest in birds since I was little, fuelled by my mum's passion for the outdoors and I look forward to expanding my knowledge of these wonderful animals.

I am taking over the reins from Hannah, supporting David, arranging BOESS and ABOSM courses and travelling to local schools to tell the Wings of Change story with Baley, our Education Owl.

I am an active person who is always busy (sometimes a bit too busy for my partner's liking!) I'm either rehearsing for a musical, at training for taekwondo or working on my Anthrozoology masters!

My first weeks at the Trust have certainly been varied, having visited a couple of nestbox sites with Matt and David, helped Stuart with a couple of rescued owls, got stuck into some practical work on the LLP and getting to grips with all the ins and outs of the Trust. With the first of the training courses taking place at the end of July I haven't got long to get to grips with things! I hope to do Hannah (and everyone at the Trust) proud as her replacement.

**Jo Plant**

In June we welcomed a new volunteer to the team - Alan Sloman seen right - is using his woodworking skills to build us a bench.

July saw us struggling with the workload and then Assistant Conservation Officer Stuart had a spell in hospital and Marianne (Maz) Bryan told us she was going to take a break at the end of the year to have a baby - (Congratulations Maz & Jas). To help us cope we approached another of our May interviewees: ➔



Photo: Gill Matthews

# More News from the Team

Emma Moxham starts work with us in September as part of the admin team. She will work alongside Marianne until Christmas and then cover when Marianne takes maternity leave. We hope that Emma's teaching experience will help us to develop the 'Kids Pages' on our website and develop new educational resources:

I have always enjoyed working in places where I am able to interact and help people wherever I can. Most recently I have been working for the National Trust, and before that for eight years as a primary school teacher in Devon. Although I'm ready for a change, I thoroughly enjoyed my time in teaching, where there were plenty of opportunities to share my creative and artistic flair – In my spare time I enjoy painting and trying my hand at any new craft that I stumble across (some more successfully than others!)



Emma will be part of the admin team  
Photo: Provided

My interest in Barn Owls was sparked a few years ago, when I was lucky to live in a converted barn in the South Hams; which regularly played host to a nesting pair. It was such a privilege to observe their hunting habits, hear their eerie hissing noises and watch their families grow and venture beyond the nest.

Occasionally this would result in having to bring injured or starved owls to the Trust for help. At the time I even got my year 3 class involved; by getting the children to research Barn Owls and write letters advising the owls of what they could do to survive... this proved to be a really fascinating and inspiring topic.

I have begun to realise that throughout my life I have unwittingly surrounded myself with owls (perhaps this explains my slight obsession with Harry Potter!) and I cannot help but feel that my new position with the Trust is more than just coincidence... I am really excited about joining the team!

Emma Moxham

In July we had a student on work experience:

When faced with the opportunity to spend a week in work experience, I knew I wanted to do something in conservation – my ideal career path. I already knew about the Barn Owl Trust, being local, so instantly had a goal in mind for the week. I have enjoyed my stay and got a lot done; there is never a shortage of work around the site. Over the course of the week I have had a lot of experience performing a wide range of tasks both indoors and out.



Jesse meets Baley the Barn Owl  
Photo: Jo Plant

At the start of the week I went out to pick up a rather troublesome Little Owl; at the start of May a young Little Owl was found out of the nest huddled in a barn. Attempts to find the nest proved fruitless, so it had to be taken in. Over the months it grew in strength, until the point that it was moved to a mobile release aviary. This was taken to the area it was found, where it would be left for two weeks – after this time the roof would be opened, and the owl would be free to fly off.

However, when in the mobile aviary it refused to eat; and after five days we went out to retrieve it. Strangely, once back at the Trust, it began eating instantly. Over the course of the week it put on weight, until now, as I write it is about to be moved back into the mobile release aviary, and will soon be given another chance at release.

After picking up the Little Owl, a group came for a tour of the LLP. I spent the afternoon with them helping out as we walked through the grassland in some of the hottest weather this year! Also I have spent time reconditioning the spare mobile release aviaries, done at the perfect time as the locks had almost seized up. I have cleaned out aviaries, fed the owls, done some nature reserve management and taken a survey of butterflies on site – and a lot more. Being able to talk to people who have taken a similar path to that which I want to has been really useful, I now have a far better plan of where to go next. All in all it has been a very enjoyable experience – as long as you don't mind getting your hands dirty!

Jesse Woodward ★



## New species recorded!

Photo: David Ramsden

We got very excited in August when we spotted this rather tatty looking individual just outside the LLP - our first-ever White Admiral - a high-priority UK Biodiversity Action Plan species! Honeysuckle in shaded woodland and Bramble flowers in clearings are their required habitat so in theory they could do well in the woodland we manage. ★

## Pet Purrfect

Suitable for small dogs or cats these plastic bowls are made from recycled plastic bottle tops.

A rounded triangular shape, each side is approximately 15cm and they stack neatly. They come in green or black and are not easily tipped over.  
£2 each plus p&p ★



# Planning & Barn Owls

Photo: Barn Owl Trust



As some of you may be aware, changes to the Town and Country Planning Act mean that, as of 6th April 2014, barn conversions outside National Parks, AONBs and some other protected areas, can be carried out under General Permitted Development rights. Despite providing comments on the proposal during the consultation phase in autumn 2013, the amendments went through anyway, and our suggestions were ignored. Concern was also expressed by Natural

England and various other conservation bodies, to no avail.

The changes mean that a full planning application is no longer necessary. A wildlife survey conducted by a professional ecologist is not required either. Biodiversity interests are certain to be damaged as a result.

Even before this new policy, planning decisions often failed to achieve protection of biodiversity interests. The idea that the welfare of Barn Owls is adequately covered via wildlife legislation is incorrect. Although the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) protects individual birds it affords no protection to the sites they use outside the breeding season. Such protection can only be delivered by the planning system.

Our position regarding development of known or potential Barn Owl sites has not changed:

- A wildlife survey should always be undertaken by a suitably qualified person.
- If necessary, timing restrictions and/or temporary alternative provision for Barn Owls should be put in place during the course of the development.

- Permanent provision for Barn Owls should be made inside the completed development.

No aspect of the new legislation alters the Biodiversity Duty placed on planning authorities under the Natural Environment & Rural Communities Act (NERC) 2006, which confers on them a responsibility to have regard to the conservation of biodiversity.

Moreover, prior approval decisions must still be based on the National Planning Policy Framework, which similarly emphasises the need for net gain in biodiversity interests. It remains to be seen whether or not LPAs will honour their Biodiversity Duty when dealing with Prior Notifications for barn conversions. ★

## Summer Sightings

The good breeding season has meant lots of activity on our Facebook page with lots of folk posting photographs, video clips, news and questions on our page. If you use Facebook take a look and 'Like' the page to get 'newsie' notifications from us. We've picked a few posts to share from people that have been enjoying having Barn Owls around this summer.

- ☺ "Heard our Barn Owl screeching tonight, nice to know they're doing ok. Eggs should have hatched by now so lots of hunting to do" - Jacqui Collier
- ☺ "6 owl chicks in the box all doing WELL" - Jonny Fisher
- ☺ "Barn Owl at 20:35 last night - making food forays to feed hissing owlets. Mouse seen dangling from her claw on one return to nest" - Mary Smith
- ☺ "I crept down to the barn just now as I could hear strange sounds coming from the Barn Owl nest box area. The best way I can describe it is a very loud and regular asthmatic breathing" - Lesley James
- ☺ "Have a new young Barn Owl flapping about at the moment! Still fluffy and not yet ventured outside though. Adults being really protective and not at all happy about us going in the barn" - Hannah Metcalfe
- ☺ "Saw Barn Owl fly along our lane twice this evening. What joy!" - Lyn Cooper
- ☺ "Can hear a Barn Owl 'screeching' at night. Sounds like a male flying as the sound comes and goes as if it's calling out for mates" - Louise Barrell
- ☺ "We are so lucky we have Barn Owls living in a tree over the road from where we live, they are so graceful, only one chick this year" - Po Roberts
- ☺ "Delighted to let you know, we have some owlets hatched in one of our boxes. I watched the parents bringing in food the other evening, fabulous!" - Sandra Ward ★

# WANTED

Wild Barn Owl  
Pellets!



Do you have a Barn Owl in your barn?

Would you be happy to collect and send us their pellets?

The Barn Owl Trust sends out wild Barn Owl pellets to schools and other groups so they can dissect them and learn about the diet of the Barn Owl. We also include a sample pellet in our Pellet Dissection Pack which we sell on our website. These pellets are collected by our Conservation Team whilst they are out doing practical work, but they cannot collect enough for us to continue supplying pellets to schools all year round.

If you have a Barn Owl on your land and are happy to send us any pellets you collect we would be very grateful. Please send them to our usual address for the attention of 'Pellet Pete'.



The Barn Owl Trust,  
Waterleat, Ashburton, Devon, TQ13 7HU  
pete@barnowltrust.org.uk



This 15 piece magnetic puzzle is unique to the Barn Owl Trust and features a beautiful Barn Owl image by Russell Savory and our website address. Measuring 10.5 x 14.8cm it will look great on any magnetic surface. Made in the UK - £2 plus p&p ★

# Training Days

For those of you who don't know, the Trust runs regular training courses for professional ecologists, planners and conservation workers. Jo Plant provides some feedback on the latest Barn Owl Ecology, Surveys & Signs (BOESS) and Advanced Barn Owl Surveys and Mitigation (ABOSM) training days:



The BOESS course includes both classroom and practical field-work sessions

Photos: David Ramsden (above), Hannah Boscence (below)



We were very busy at the end of July running our popular training courses for ecologists. People travelled from across the UK to come and learn about surveying for Barn Owls and how to mitigate the impact of planning developments. The prize for furthest travelled definitely goes to the Ulster Wildlife Trust's Barn Owl Officer who flew over from Northern Ireland for the course!

We ran three days in total – two foundation courses and one advanced day. As ever, places were limited and take up was excellent with just one place empty over the three days. We were lucky the spell of dry weather was still with us during the two days of the foundation course and the field trip out to a local farm to practise survey techniques was well-received by all. Most well received on these two days though was definitely the food with a fantastic spread being provided by Barbara and Debbie at Fowlescombe farm where the Barn Owl Ecology, Surveys & Signs (BOESS) course is held.

Sadly we began to lose the weather on the Thursday for our Advanced Barn Owl Surveys and Mitigation (ABOSM) course which takes place here at the Trust and the participants had a slightly drizzly field trip to another local farm and out and about on the Lennon Legacy Project (LLP). The advanced course is much more hands-on and everyone really got stuck in to all the tasks to get the most out of the day.



ABOSM participants search a traditional farm building and identify how recently it was used by Barn Owls by ageing the pellets  
Photos: David Ramsden



The advanced-level training day is specifically designed for those who have previously attended our BOESS course.

A classroom session covers examination of samples, design of mitigation measures and discussion of real-life survey reports. The advanced training also covers the assessment of trees, landscapes and habitats part of which takes place on the Trust's own nature reserve.

There is additional survey practise, in-depth sample examination, discussion about large-scale developments, wind turbines and major roads, habitat creation and management and different ways of making provision for Barn Owls.

Here are some quotes from the latest participants about the courses:

"Great course, great day, great people!"

"Provided great motivation to help (the Barn Owls) cause. Great lunch too! It was very inspiring to see the wildlife tower" - Lisa Webb

"Overall, I definitely feel more confident and competent with Barn Owl surveying and would definitely recommend the course to colleagues" - Rory Jones

"Highly informative, fun and enjoyable" - Charlie Dwight

"Everything was well-structured, clear and digestible" ★

# Thanks and Things

The Trust extends a really big thank you to all those who have supported us over the last few months. We really appreciate all your support whether you are a Friend, adopting a Barn Owl, giving a one off or regular donation or volunteering your time to raise money for us. We would also like to take this opportunity to thank everyone who sent us various items to sell and recycle and also goods from our Wants List so a huge thank you to:

Margaret Rhodes, Jayne & Tim Hartley, Kate Batten, Richard & Leigh Anne Boucher, Francis Camp, Alan Bedbrook, David & Gwyneth Parish, Melanie White, Peter Mason, Louise Brown (Torc Ecology), Marsh Christian Trust, Mrs Kate Rogers, Ann Stansell, Rachel Edwards, Brian Larard, Betty Bailey, Jennifer Muir, Jillian Horne, Chris Moncrieff, Tara & Becky Shaw, Frances Yan-man-Shing, Jane Morrell, Ashburton Post Office, Andrew James Holmes, Tony & Jeane Dennis, Gill Sheppard, Mike and Sue Mott, Jason Gibbs, Lynne Green & Michael Becker, Jonathan Webster, Mrs I Bennett & Linda Martin, Mandy & Brian Pollard.

Many thanks to our fundraisers, both those mentioned on page 17 and; Shakti Ellenwood -10% of the profits from the sale of her Athene owl bracelet, Margaret Crocker - £50 from Plant sales, Kent RaG & UKC Hogwarts Society @ Kent University - £49.86 from fundraising, Axe Valley Runners - £100 from the 2014 Grizzly run, The SpooF Club @ Welcome Stranger pub, Liverton - £200. Tracey Morris & Shelley Wright - £25 from holding a cake stall at work. Well done and thank you all.

Please do keep sending us items for recycling and check out our Wants List opposite for the latest details of items we'd be glad to receive either new or used. Thank you.

Can you help with:

- ◊ 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
- ◊ Anabat detector
- ◊ Hand held hetrodyne bat detector
- ◊ Waders - for working in the ponds
- ◊ Lino (3mx5m) suitable for the office
- ◊ Metal detector
- ◊ Pliers
- ◊ Drill-driver bits (for screwing)
- ◊ Set of sharp circular hole cutters (large sizes for cutting neat holes in plywood)
- ◊ Good quality Barn Owl winter scenes either photographic or illustrative for Christmas card images
- ◊ Wild Barn Owl pellets
- ◊ Anyone in the Ashburton area who could occasionally provide temporary lodging for a Barn Owl Trust volunteer, at a reasonable rate
- ◊ Small Plate Compactor
- ◊ Emulsion Paint (pale colour) sufficient to paint an office
- ◊ Bubble wrap
- ◊ Brown Packaging/parcel tape 50mm x 66mm
- ◊ A3 Rotary Trimmer for paper and card
- ◊ Landranger OS maps of Devon. Particularly Torbay/South Dartmoor area
- ◊ Large curver boxes for casualties
- ◊ Small folding 'Gopak' type tables



## Tail piece ...

Wasn't it great that we had a summer this year? And no hosepipe ban! At least not so far! After the wettest winter in England and Wales since 1766 it was great to have some sunshine. It wasn't the hottest summer on record, but even so has been generally warmer, drier and sunnier than average so far (June & July Met. Office data). The garden, the insects, the small mammals and the owls have all benefitted from the weather and it is really great to have reports of good Barn Owl brood sizes and second broods especially after last year.

However as we all know, we are experiencing climate change and after the severe storms and extensive flooding of last winter who knows what's coming next.

It seems really crazy to me that humans are still so invested in destruction, especially when faced with problems such as climate change, the Ebola virus and the cancers and dementia that threaten our species. People, politicians and companies are choosing to kill others and destroy the natural world in the name of religion, power and profit rather than appreciate and enjoy the amazing gift of life on this wonderful planet.

Wouldn't it be wonderful if instead of investing all that money and energy in destruction it was used to provide clean water, food, shelter, education, good health-care to everyone, and to protect the Earth and the creatures that share it? Naïve maybe, but surely there are enough natural disasters and accidents without people wanting to create more.

One hundred years ago the world went to war, the first World War was known as 'the war to end all wars'. More than 16,000,000 people died and we all know what happened next, over 70,000,000 died in WW2. Unfortunately there has been human conflict constantly somewhere in the world since then.

Who knows how many millions have died, how many more have suffered, how much destruction there has been and how much it has all cost. Surely the best way to honour those that died for peace is to live their dream.

Global communication can do much to break down the barriers that create misunderstanding and hatred. Education can help to broaden perspective and to develop tolerance for ethnic and religious differences. But to save our species and the planet that supports us, humans need to be prepared to share. We need to change the consumer mind-set that big businesses and our political systems have encouraged and put aside the 'I want more' attitude. Rather than expanding our boundaries we need to work at nurturing our planet and all of the life that shares it with us. We all need to work at developing a civilisation that is invested in peace before we destroy our species and our planet. After all we do not own the Earth we are only borrowing it from our children.

We can all make the world a better place by caring for our friends and neighbours, for our local environment, for the birds, insects and animals that visit our gardens. When we shop we can support local businesses and companies that have ethical and environmental policies. We can vote for politicians who care for the environment and we can work at patience and understanding in our dealings with our fellow man/woman. If we smile at strangers and help to promote goodwill to all, then our portion of the world will be a nicer place to be.

Make the time to enjoy the natural world, it puts frustrations in perspective. Count your blessings and appreciate how lucky we are to be here now and make the most of every day. *Together we really can make a world of difference.* ★

**Frances Ramsden**