

# feedback

Issue 57 / Spring 2017



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

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## Diary Dates 2017

**April** - Weds 12th - 10:30am & 2:30pm - Easter Egg Hunt

**April** - Fri 21st - 5:00am - Dawn Chorus Walk & Breakfast

**May** - Thurs 11th - 2:30pm - Wildflower Walk & Cream Tea

**June** - Thurs 2nd - 7:30pm - Mid-Summer Walk

**July** - Weds 5th - Poetry Competition Closing Date

**July** - Thurs 6th - 2:30pm - Butterfly Walk & Cream Tea

**August** - Thurs 18th - 7:30pm - Bat Walk

**September** - Thurs 7th - 2:30pm - Walk & Cream Tea

Contact the office for more details or to book a place at an event - booking is essential as places are strictly limited.

Please visit [www.barnowltrust.org.uk](http://www.barnowltrust.org.uk) for details.

Welcome to the 57th issue of Feedback. As you can see, our bi-annual magazine has a smart new layout and design, thanks to our talented co-editor Aaron. Along with the new look you may notice that this issue also has a different feel to it, this is because we are using 100% recycled paper throughout rather than 75% as before. Recycled paper is the greenest option as it uses less energy and water. It also produces lower carbon emissions than the manufacturing of non-recycled paper whilst at the same time reducing the amount of waste to landfill as paper can be recycled up to 5 times! Fantastic! We hope you like the new look and feel of our Feedback magazine.

A massive thank you to all our supporters who choose to receive their copy by email, you are helping us save money on printing and postage costs and you get the benefit of seeing our publication in full colour. If you'd like to receive your future copies in colour and by email please contact the office.

The design may be different but you will still find our regular articles such as BOT News (page 3), LLP Update (page 7) and Tail Piece (page 16). This issue also showcases our fantastic new Kingfisher Wall (pages 8-9) made possible by funds from three generous supporters leaving legacies to the Trust. It's a potential home for not only the Kingfisher but also Grey Wagtail and Sand Martin. Fingers crossed we will have some exciting news to share in future issues.

At the end of 2016 we were sad to say goodbye to two of our oldest resident Barn Owls, the infamous feisty duo, Hazel and Valentine. Hazel was the oldest Barn Owl in our sanctuary reaching the grand old age of 21 and you can read their story along with other Bird News on page 10. Turn to page 6 to read about another 'old bird' that is the oldest wild Barn Owl recorded in Britain discovered by the Bisham Barn Owl Group.

It certainly feels like Spring has finally sprung and with Easter just around the corner we have an egg-citing limited edition offer now available; an Owlet in a Mug! For just £10 you can purchase one of our cuddly Barn Owlets sitting proudly in a Barn Owl Trust mug, there are two mug designs to choose from and a saving of £2.50. This offer is available through our online shop or call the office for other ways to order.

Those local to the Trust with little people in their lives may like to join us on our first ever Easter Egg Hunt around the LLP. Participants will be given an activity booklet full of clues and puzzles to solve and will receive a yummy chocolate treat. It will also be a great opportunity to look around our 'Barn Owl Heaven' - the LLP. For other events see our 'Diary Dates' below left.

We are so proud of all our fundraisers. Ali Ramsden took up the task of running her first ever Half Marathon last year and taking up the baton this year is our own Pete Webb who will be walking the Salcombe Coastal Marathon in April. You can read more about Pete's challenge and see how much Ali's run raised for the Trust on page 15 along with other Fundraising news.

You will see from our 'News Bites' that we have just published the latest 'State of the UK Barn Owl Population Report' which can be viewed on our website. Data collection (however boring that might sound) is central to the work of the Trust. The Barn Owl Trust Survey website encourages everyone to take part in recording sightings. Please report all of your Barn Owl sightings, dead or alive, nests and roost sites anywhere in the UK. This information helps us to assess the current state of the Barn Owl population. Visit <http://www.barnowlsurvey.org.uk/>.

For those lucky enough to have seen a wild Little Owl there is a great project recording these sightings in the UK. Their population in this country is rapidly declining so your information would be greatly received by them. Visit [www.littleowlproject.uk](http://www.littleowlproject.uk).

We hope you enjoy reading this issue of Feedback and feel inspired to continue caring for the natural world. Thank you for supporting our work, after all we couldn't do it without you.

Frances Ramsden, Aaron Kitts & Marianne Bryan ★

# BOT News



Robbie & Jasmin filming - Photos; David Ramsden

## New Videos

Ever wondered how to fix a puncture or mend a leaky washing machine?

Simple – just watch a YouTube video!

A staggering FIVE BILLION YouTube videos are watched every day, many of which are instructional. But search for 'how to create Barn Owl habitat' or 'how to pick up an injured owl' and nothing comes up. Try 'how to prevent owls drowning' and 'how to erect an owl box in a barn' - and, nothing - no useful information at all. Well, all that is about to change... enter film maker Robbie Hill of Hill Tribe Media.



The drone camera in action

We first worked with Robbie back in 2010 when he produced 'An Introduction to the Barn Owl' which has so-far been viewed almost 300,000 times on YouTube. A year ago, we approached Robbie with the idea of producing nine short instructional videos, each covering a different aspect of Barn Owl conservation. We started to film 'How to create Barn Owl foraging habitat (UK)' back in February 2016 and have been doing it on and off ever since. Key to this short film will be a unique time-lapse sequence showing how to create the all-important grassland litter-layer. What you'll see is 15 months of habitat growth compressed into about 10 seconds.

For anyone finding an injured owl, our video 'How to pick up and examine a starving or injured owl' will show all of that plus how to administer life-saving fluids, and how to feed it, before the bird is passed on or released.

Robbie was so enthusiastic about the project that he suggested a tenth short film 'Fly like a Barn Owl' which we have also been filming. This uses the very latest aerial filming technology - basically a high resolution film camera mounted on a drone - licenced by the Civil Aviation Authority. By showing the countryside through the eyes of a Barn Owl, our hope is that viewers will be motivated to help by gaining a better understanding of their struggle for survival and the hazards they face.

We've just filmed 'How to build a Barn Owl nestbox to go inside an out building' and another about outdoor Barn Owl boxes. We are also working on a video showing how to erect and install nestboxes and 'How to choose the best nestbox design'.

Filming has gone extremely well (so far!) and we hope that all ten videos will go live this summer (2017). We are extremely grateful to the grant-giving Trusts who funded this project especially the Ernest Kleinwort Charitable Trust who covered virtually half the cost with other grants and legacies making up the rest. ★

## News Bites

### The State of the UK Population

The latest 'State of the UK Barn Owl Population 2016' report was published in February 2017 and can be found on our website. Thirty-two groups from around the UK contributed data and Bird Life International has written an article based around our publication titled 'British Barn Owls still struggling to adapt to modern life. This can be found on their website [www.birdlife.org](http://www.birdlife.org).

### New Trailer for Events

The Barn Owl Trust has a new exhibition trailer on the way! After almost 10 years of use, BOT's homemade and unique exhibition trailer will be going into retirement. Grant funding and legacies have made it possible for us to replace it with a brand new trailer just in time for its first outing at the Devon County Show in May. It will be lighter, easier to manoeuvre and have eye catching graphics. Do pop in and see us!

### 2017 World Owl Conference

BOT is hoping to attend the World Owl Conference in September which is being held in Evora, Portugal. The last global owl event was held in the Netherlands ten years ago.

### Bats in our Wildlife Tower

An attendee of our ABOSM training course on 16th Feb 2017 spotted a Brown Long Eared Bat in our John Woodland Memorial Wildlife Tower – only the 2nd recorded sighting of this species here, the first being back in July 2015 when one was seen roosting in one of the specially designed bat boxes in the tower.

### Barn Owls & Weather

Mark Ellison was a student on placement with us from Plymouth University in 2015-16. He is using BOT data to investigate the possible relationship between the finding of dead Barn Owls and weather events as the thesis for his degree in Conservation Biology.

### New Trust Vehicle

We would like to take this opportunity to thank the Hatcher Animal Welfare Trust for the recent grant received to purchase a new vehicle.

This grant has enabled us to replace our thirsty 12 year old Ford Ranger with a new economic Dacia Duster Commercial vehicle. This will save us money on fuel and repairs and allow us to transport nestboxes to sites for erection.

The new vehicle will also be used to tow our new, state-of-the-art exhibition trailer for shows and events. ★

# Rodenticide News

## Rodent Control on UK Farms

From 1st October 2016 only rodenticide products with new and legally binding 'stewardship conditions' labels, arising from a compulsory re-authorisation process, will be available for professional use by farmers.

The supply of these products (also to gamekeepers and professional pest controllers) is now governed by the UK Rodenticide Stewardship Regime. At the point of sale, this requires purchasers to show approved documentation that demonstrates proof of competence in the use of rodenticides before being allowed to buy. Reporting to HSE, the regime is being implemented by the Campaign for Responsible Rodenticide Use (CRRU) UK.

Effective rodent control is essential in the UK on all farming enterprises, but the way we do it is undergoing a revolution, according to Dr Alan Buckle, chairman of CRRU.

"From 1st October 2016, everyone who wants to buy professional packs of rodenticides to be used outdoors will need to show either an approved certificate of competence or a document showing membership of an approved farm assurance scheme," he says. "This cornerstone of stewardship applies via all suppliers including internet." A list of training and certification is available from the CRRU website (<http://www.thinkwildlife.org/list-of-training-and-certification/>)

Dr Buckle says this all comes about because rodent control practice has resulted in widespread contamination of UK wildlife with poisons, mainly anticoagulants, contained in rat baits. A recent study by Science and Advice for Scottish Agriculture (SASA) has shown the wide scope of rodenticide residues in wildlife, including many species of high conservation value (see table below).

"If we are to reduce residues in wildlife, the way we use rodenticides, especially when outdoors, must change," Dr Buckle continues. "For many years it was thought best practice to set out bait points on farms and keep them permanently topped up with rodenticide. However, we now believe this practice is responsible, at least in part, for the contamination of wildlife that we now see UK-wide.

"Some birds of prey - Barn Owls and Kestrels, for example - feed almost exclusively on wild small mammals, not rats," he explains. "The availability of tamper-resistant bait boxes can give a false impression that it is acceptable for rodenticide baits to be put out for extended periods or even permanently."

The stewardship regime's requirement is clear: Except as a justifiable last resort against clear, sustained and documented threats to human or animal health, long term rodenticide baiting is ruled out around the outside of farm buildings.

The Code of Best Practice specifies a planned approach using a combination of methods, starting with those at lowest risk of adverse consequences. In particular, these include making the farm as inhospitable to rats as possible: clearing rubbish, denying food and water sources, controlling vegetation around buildings and involving all members of farm staff in the control plan.

"It is simply not acceptable continually to provide 'bed and board' for rodents on farms and solve the problem by repeatedly poisoning them with rodenticides," says Dr Buckle. "Clearly, any use of rodenticide outdoors poses a risk to wildlife. Conducting an Environmental Risk Assessment (ERA) will identify these risks and help minimise them. CRRU UK will shortly issue guidance on how ERAs should be done, including an ERA template."

Guidelines for farmers are available from the Agriculture and Horticulture Development Board (AHDB) website and more information is also available from the CRRU website at <http://www.thinkwildlife.org.uk/> ★

Anticoagulant rodenticide residues in UK predatory birds found dead, 2003-2015		
Species	Number of birds analysed	% containing residues of one or more anticoagulant †
UK (data from Centre for Ecology and Hydrology: <a href="https://wiki.ceh.ac.uk/display/pbms/Home">https://wiki.ceh.ac.uk/display/pbms/Home</a> )		
Sparrowhawk	94	89
Barn Owl	63	87
Kestrel	20	100
Red kite	18	94
Scotland only (data from Science and Advice for Scottish Agriculture: <a href="https://www.sasa.gov.uk/wildlife-environment/wildlife-incident-investigation-scheme-wiis">https://www.sasa.gov.uk/wildlife-environment/wildlife-incident-investigation-scheme-wiis</a> )		
Buzzard	506	48
Red kite	112	72
Barn Owl	48	44
Golden eagle	34	12
Peregrine falcon	29	35
White-tailed sea eagle	20	25

† most birds had died from other causes and contained low-level, sub-lethal rodenticide residues

# More BOT News

## Barn Owls Building Site

*In Feedback 56 (last autumn) we reported on a Planning Emergency. Here is an update from the site.*

Last July we received a phone call from builders working on a cob-walled barn conversion in Mid-Devon. While demolishing a wall they became aware of an unfamiliar noise and upon investigating discovered two owl chicks in a cavity within the wall. Upon receiving the call we instructed them to stop work immediately and I went to the site to investigate further.

Initially I met with the Site Manager, the Case Officer from the local planning authority, and the builders to work out a way forward that would allow the owlets to fledge and leave the nest, and at the same time ensure that the building work was not significantly delayed because of the owls' presence. Hence began a long and fruitful process of negotiation and collaboration that is now nearing completion. **Continued right >>>**



The first action we agreed was to create an exclusion zone around the nest to minimise disturbance at the nest site. Building works continued on other parts of the barn as we believed that the parent birds were already habituated to the noise and daily activity going on around them. The parent birds were observed continuing to feed their young and we believe that both owlets fledged successfully towards the end of July.



As building works continued talk turned towards how to provide a permanent space for the owls to nest within the barn conversion. The owners of the property were consulted and were happy for purpose built Barn Owl provision to be incorporated.

Six months later a dormer has been created just for the owls and is nearly finished. Evidence of Barn Owls is still being found at the site so everyone now has their fingers crossed that they find and approve of their new home – and all in time for the coming breeding season.

So an excellent outcome has been achieved out of what was initially a planning emergency. This is a great example of what can be achieved when people are open to collaborating and are motivated to do the right thing. As the building works near completion the new owners of the property will soon move in and enjoy their new home and, I imagine, take great delight in meeting their new neighbours. Hats off to the site manager and the builders for providing a first class example of permanent provision for Barn Owls. ★

**Rick Lockwood**  
Assistant Conservation Officer

## Belgian Owl Drowns on I.O.W.

On 27th October 2016 we took a phone call from a landowner on the Isle of Wight asking who to report a dead ringed Barn Owl to. Sadly nothing unusual about that, until that is, he mentioned that the ring was showing 'Brussels'!

Some months later, in January 2017, we received an email from the ringer of the bird in Belgium. Apparently it had been ringed as an owl in the roof of a church in Buggenhout, Flanders, on May 30th 2016, so had travelled over 400km west before drowning in a water trough 149 days later.

Although not unheard of, it's still quite unusual for a Barn Owl ringed on the continent to find itself in the UK. For a species that is so reliant on open countryside for its small mammal prey, the prospect of a journey over open water makes little sense. And yet, there are a number of similar UK recoveries of Barn Owls ringed in continental Europe.

The autumn of 2016 was characterised by a predominantly easterly airflow and it may be that this dispersing juvenile simply 'went with the flow'. We'll never know of course but it's such a shame that something as easily constructed and fitted as a water trough float could have saved this bird's life, and a Belgian Barn Owl could now be on the cusp of breeding with a British Barn Owl somewhere on the Isle of Wight.

*More information on preventing drowning can be found on the website at <http://www.barnowltrust.org.uk/> ★*

## In Memoriam

The Trust has received legacies  
from the estates of

Mary Gwendoline Bridge, Jeanette Audrey Manton,  
Fiona Nicol and Dorothy Twigge

and donations in memory of

Craig James Buckley, David John Burton,  
Russell Cartmell, Eva Ellen Easter,  
Charlie-Marie French, Gillian Kendall, Vera May  
Little, Di Paterson, Gary Reid, Maurice Spong,  
Adrian David Williams and Donald Woodridge

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

*They all now have a leaf on our Memory Tree*

# Britain's Oldest Barn Owl!

## Bisham Barn Owl Group

The Bisham Barn Owl Group, set up in 2014 to study Barn Owls in South Buckinghamshire and East Berkshire have made an amazing discovery – Britain's oldest Barn Owl! Carl continues ...

### Barn Owl Longevity

Knowing how long birds live is one of the many questions answered by our national bird ringing scheme run by the British Trust for Ornithology (BTO). Ring a chick and if it's found (normally when it dies) you can find out how long it lived. Repeat this year after year and you'll build a picture of the species' life expectancy, mortality causes, and a whole host of other interesting information.

For British Barn Owls we've learned that the average life expectancy, above 5 weeks old, is only about 18 months. Those that survive more than 12 months typically go on to live until their fourth year.

### Above Average

In the summer of 2001, on a farm near Watlington, Oxfordshire, a brood of six Barn Owls was ringed\* by the South Oxfordshire Ringing Group. The brood included a chick fitted with ring number GN40325. The young fledged but were not seen again by the Group.

We have to wait nearly fourteen years, to the start of 2015, for the Bisham Barn Owl Group to enter the story. We were invited to check an owl nest box in the Buckinghamshire Chilterns. The box, attached 5 metres above the ground to the bough of a tree, hadn't been inspected for some time. Its roof leaked, it was stuffed full with sticks from a forgotten Jackdaw nest, and yet, a pair of Barn Owls had set up home. We cleared out the sticks and repaired the roof to give the birds a chance of breeding.



Come the summer a pair bred successfully, raising a single chick. In the Autumn, whilst we were checking all our boxes for repairs, we caught the parents. After ringing the male, we found that the female was already ringed. Her ring number GN40325 identified her as being from the brood ringed in 2001. This made her 14 years old - not then the oldest barn owl recorded but well beyond that 4-year average. GN40325 was nicknamed 'Bernice', and we wondered if she would return the following year.

In June 2016 we checked Bernice's box - she was present and incubating four eggs. Alas, the wet spring that year restricted vole hunting and the eggs failed to hatch (the eggs will be analysed in due course to see if we can determine why they failed).



In November, we made further repairs to the aging box. Boxes are often empty at this time of year but Bernice and her mate were present and with that visit she became the oldest Barn Owl recorded in Britain at 15 years, 113 days.

The Bisham Barn Owl Group will be active again in 2017, monitoring owl boxes and ringing chicks. We hope to meet Bernice again, that she'll raise more chicks, and with rings applied, in years to come, another ringing group may record the oldest Barn Owl in Britain.

Carl D Hunter Roach  
Bisham Barn Owl Group

<http://www.bishambarnowlgroup.blogspot.com/>

Photos by Paul Wareham

*\*The study is being carried out by bird ringers licensed by the British Trust for Ornithology. The data is collated nationally and used to analyse nesting productivity and survival rates of the Barn Owl population. ★*

## Calling All Photographers!

Each year we create a series of Christmas cards along with a calendar which are then sold to raise funds for the Trust. Our festive cards are always popular and this year we would like your help and to get more of you involved.

We are looking for well photographed, high resolution images of Barn Owls (ideally with a wintry theme for the cards) that can be used for 2017 and 2018.

Naturally we don't want anyone to disturb Barn Owls or nests, but perhaps you have managed to snap an owl in flight or perched on a post? We would love to see your photos. Eight will be selected for our 2017 and 2018 Christmas cards and 12 for our 2018 Calendar.

Please send your photos as a high resolution jpeg, either on a CD, or by e-mail to [info@barnowltrust.org.uk](mailto:info@barnowltrust.org.uk).

Those of you who may be more tech-savvy can send photos via file sharing services such as **Dropbox** and **WeTransfer**.

The deadline for photo submissions is 1st July 2017. This allows us plenty of time to print and pack them in time for Christmas .... so get snapping! ★

# LLP Update

The LLP received a significant amount of maintenance over the summer months and into the autumn. In July, the densest areas of Creeping Thistle and Bracken were topped with the tractor. In the less dense area east of North Park hedge, members of the Conservation Team and 5 Ambios volunteers, from Portugal, Spain and Britain, helped pull Creeping Thistle. More Creeping Thistle pulling took place with the help of Harry, our Teign School work experience volunteer a few days later in early August. The orchard also received its annual cut about this time with the brushmower, and the areas around the ponds were strimmed.

In September, an area of turf was lifted and transported to the new aviary, where it was bedded in. The resulting patch of bare ground proved attractive to a number of species and it'll be interesting to see how this patch naturalises in the future. Some of the apple trees in the orchard needed restaking as the weight of fruit appeared to be dragging them over; a hard prune at the end of the winter should help them stabilise. Some of the overhanging Sycamore tree branches were also removed in an effort to bring more sun to the more shaded fruit trees. The on-going Brown Hairstreak management involved removing another patch of Blackthorn along the roadside boundary in Kiln Close. A stand of Canadian Fleabane, an invasive species, totalling hundreds of plants, was pulled by hand along North Park before they went to seed. These were disposed of in the fire pit. The remnant hedgerow in Kiln Close was given some attention, overhanging tree branches cut back and encroaching bramble flailed.



During October, the slope outside Corner Wood was brush mowed and the scrub patch brushcut. The regular Plymouth University volunteers cut back the brash in the hedge above the barn, ready for hedge-laying. They continued this in November and December, getting a bit of hedge-laying done at the same time. Geoff and his trainee Frankie also came for a spot of hedge-laying the same hedge before Christmas, and helped start off the double-comb hedge in North Park in January.

Half a dozen Belted Galloway cows with their calves arrived in December for a couple of months of winter grazing; this attractive breed is steady around people and quite adventurous, visiting every corner of the site without needing to shut them into various compartments, as we have had to do in the past with other breeds.

In January, two additional duck boxes were erected in the orchard; one on the old Sycamore stump between the two ponds and the other in the implement shelter, in the hope that the Mandarins find one of them attractive. The Bluebell area in Corner Wood was brushcut ready for the spring, and the old Hornets' nest in the Tawny Owl nestbox overlooking this area was cleared out at about the same time.

**Above:** Volunteers removing brush **Top Right:** Belted Galloways **Center Right:** Stonechat in the LLP



Wildlife recording played an important role and a number of notable observations were made. Kingfishers were seen or heard in August (and again in January; see pages 8 & 9). Our first guided bat walk in mid-August during a beautiful full moon recorded Common Pipistrelle, a myotis species, and the rare Barbastelle, which made passes over Corner Wood and the Holly hedge. Most surprising however was the Nightjar that floated past the group at the end of the walk as we headed back to BOT HQ. About half a dozen Brown Trout were recorded in the ponds, the biggest being approximately 6" (15cm) long.



A juvenile Stonechat was by the dung heap by the end of the month and a juvenile/female-type Redstart was by the bare patch briefly, along with a Wheatear.

Up to 3 Stonechats, the LLP's first record of Whinchat (a juvenile) and the/another Wheatear were on the recently mown airstrip mid-September. A particularly late maximum count of 6 Small Copper butterflies was recorded at the start of October. Another LLP first, a flock of 4 Woodlark, flew north calling over the top of the field mid-month, possibly alighting in the field immediately to the north. A Woodcock wing was found in the field in December, probably the result of a fox kill. The Dormouse boxes were checked by a license-holder before Christmas and all six showed some signs of use by small mammals. Two however showed real potential, with fully-formed nests of dried moss and leaves, indicating possible Dormouse occupation. These will be checked again in the summer. A very alive Woodcock was flushed from beside the path in Corner Wood and disappeared in a flash of russet wings.

Keep up-to-date with all our LLP news by visiting our Wildlife Diary at <http://www.barnowltrust.org.uk/wildlife-diary/> ★

**Matthew Twigg**  
Senior Conservation Officer

**All Photos BOT Staff**

# Our Kingfisher Wall

As you may know, finances are almost always tight at the Trust. It would be lovely to have a more sustainable income stream so we don't have to worry quite so much about the future. The most difficult thing to find funding for is staff time, though we have managed to maintain the same team numbers for a couple of years now, it hasn't been easy. Having said that, we are incredibly lucky to receive legacies from time to time. Sometimes these are significant, like the one we received from the estate of the late Vivien Lennon in 2001, which allowed us to become a landowner for the first time.

The Lennon Legacy Project's (LLP) aim was not only to create perfect Barn Owl habitat but to encourage as much other wildlife as possible. The LLP continues to exceed expectations and you can read about the latest developments on page 7 of this issue.

More often than not, the legacies we receive are somewhat more modest, but no less welcome. We try wherever possible to spend these gifts on something tangible, something that provides a lasting monument to the legacy donor's generosity, something that will still exist long after everyone here at the Trust is gone. Other legacy projects have included the John Woodland Wildlife Tower (John Woodland), the Oakley Pond (Major Charles Oakley), the Flo Pond (Florence Lucy Parsons), the Norman Alderson Meeting Room (Norman Edward Bolton Alderson) and the Fullman Solar Project (Peggy May Fullman).



*Blockwork inner faced with local stone*

Work started in April 2016, with the water level of the Flo Pond deliberately lowered and vegetation around the site of the proposed wall scraped away. This would ensure that the foot of the wall would be underwater once the water level was restored to normal, a prerequisite for making its inhabitants feel safe from predators. The bedrock was drilled and steel rebar fitted so that the concrete footings, once poured over the rebar, created a stable base for the wall.



*Kingfisher caught on camera in the LLP*

The most recent project completed in summer 2016 is the beautiful Kingfisher Wall, funded by legacies received from the estates of Brian Mitford Campbell, Eileen Joyce Fradgley and Richard Mervyn Bocking. The wall was conceived after regular sightings of Kingfishers around the ponds on the LLP and the River Ashburn over the years.

The wall is 4 metres long, just under 2 metres high, and contains 13 pipes leading to 'nest boxes' which can be checked and any young BTO-ringed.



*Soil pipes packed with sand*

A blockwork inner was faced by local stone from the LLP, mortared at the back to protect the aesthetic look of the wall as a feature in the orchard and replicating the other dry stone walls already on site. Three facing stones at the top of the wall were strategically removed to provide additional nesting spaces for species like Grey Wagtail, Robin and Redstart.

Two staggered rows of 150mm diameter clay soil pipes of approximately 600mm in length were fitted roughly 1.5 and 1.8 metres above water level.



*The wall takes shape ...*



*Sealing the top of the wall*



These were filled with a weak sand:cement mix which would be excavable by any interested individual. The nesting chambers, former painters' rectangular paint buckets, were lined with a stiffer mix then topped up with the same looser mix.

We used cement and kiln-dried sharp sand. Having tested, off-site, both an 8:1 mix, which was too hard, and a 10:1 mix which seemed too loose, we decided on a 9:1 mix. However, having packed the pipes and the nest boxes, it was soon apparent that this mix was too hard for some reason. Having laboriously chipped out the concrete, another go with a 14:1 mix proved ideal. Some landscaping later, and the wall was finished by August 2016.



Nesting chambers

Amazingly, we had some occupation even before the wall was finished. We had been landscaping the slope above the nest inspection chamber for a couple of days before someone noticed that nesting material was spilling out of one of the cavities we had created by deliberately leaving out a rock from the stone-facing. Remarkably, a pair of Grey Wagtails had moved in and laid a clutch of eggs despite our constant comings and goings. Unfortunately the brood was predated close to fledging, which, although sad, is not unusual in the species.



Grey Wagtail nesting in the wall

Fast forward 5 months to January this year, and our volunteers Kim and Tony headed off into the orchard. As they walked down towards the bridge over the waterfall between the two ponds Kim saw a flash of electric blue disappear into the trees along the Ashburn from underneath the wall.

He was so gob-smacked that by the time he managed to get the words out the bird was long gone and Tony was left disappointed. A closer look at the wall revealed that several of the packed pipes had received some attention, with signs of scraping and loose sand around the edging stones. Very, very exciting..... By the start of February we'd had further sightings of a bird using the ponds to fish in – even more to get excited about.

Kingfishers are territorial, with both males and females establishing and defending individual territories of about 1km for much of the winter. These are then relaxed when the birds pair up, typically in February. Both start excavating the proposed nesting hole by March, with egg-laying in April. Two broods are normal, with a second brood in the later summer.

Suitable nesting opportunities appear to be the limiting factor in many areas. Riverside sites must be excavable so are predominantly found in relatively forgiving dirt/sand banks lacking large rocks and stones. However, this makes them susceptible to flooding and/or collapse and a site used one year may not be available subsequently. As a result, Kingfishers have been



The completed Kingfisher wall

recorded nesting in such diverse places as among tree roots and in sand pits. Pairs may often need to commute several kilometres to fish if an ideal nesting place is discovered. Let's hope they think this one is! ★

All Photos BOT Staff

Keep up-to-date with all our Kingfisher news by visiting our Wildlife Diary at <http://www.barnowltrust.org.uk/wildlife-diary/>

## About the Kingfisher

Scientific Name: *Alcedo atthis*

Order: Coraciiformes

Family: Alcedinidae

Number in Britain: 4,900 pairs (approx)

Habitat: Rivers, marshes, lakes & seacoasts

Diet: Mostly freshwater fish, also aquatic invertebrates

The Kingfisher has an average clutch size of between 5-7 eggs. These eggs are incubated for approximately 20 days with fledging occurring between 23-26 days.

The hungry brood of a Kingfisher can demand over 100 fish a day from their parents, which they dive for at the surprisingly low speed of about 10mph!

Info from <https://www.bto.org/>



Photo: Kevin Keatley

# Bird News

## Bird Rehabilitation

You may remember, the last bit of Bird News we left you with in Feedback 56 was the story of 'Willow' the Barn Owl who was struggling to fly. Since the last issue, she began to perk up and was becoming quite lively. After two weeks in the Bird Room, she was placed into the static release aviary along with 'Hal' the Tawny Owlet from last Feedback. Whilst her flying improved, she was still not 100% and we took the tough decision not to release her. Willow is now a happy resident at the Trust, residing in our 'Main Aviary' with 6 other Barn Owls for company. Hal eventually grew all his adult feathers and was then released from the static release aviary on the 5th September. It did take him a while to lose his 'fluffy trousers'. Hal was given support after his release but it soon became apparent that he had set off to find his own territory.

Another Tawny Owl was brought to us after a visit to the vets. Once the owl was here, it was checked over and found to be suffering from a very serious case of Oral Trichomaniasis and was put down. October saw two more Tawny Owls brought to us in two days; they both had quite a story to tell! Our first casualty was found caught in a domestic electric fence near Tavistock. The finders took the owl to the vets for an initial check-up and later that day arrived here. Weighing a very healthy 410g, the owl was kept at the Trust for only 6 days before being cold released back at the site it was found, well away from the electric fence.

Our second casualty was found in Torquay and also came to us after a visit to a vets. This owl had blood on the beak and had a possible concussion. The owl appeared to be deteriorating and although eating well, it was discovered to have been partially paralysed and was euthanised.

The rest of the month was quiet until another Tawny Owl was found trapped by its head and hanging between two glass panels of a balcony. It had minor damage to the soft tissue around the neck from trying to escape, the bird was otherwise un-injured. This Tawny Owl made a swift recovery and we were able to release it back where it was found after only six days with us.



Rick setting off to release 'Brent'

Later that month yet another Tawny Owl came in. He was found in the middle of the road near Brent Tor, we named him 'Brent'. Suffering from concussion he soon perked up and was released near the site where he was found.

It was a bout of good luck that one of our November training course participants came from Bedford. She very kindly offered to transport two recently fledged Barn Owls from Bedfordshire Wildlife Rescue. In October the two owlets had fallen from a nest site that was inaccessible and it was deemed too dangerous to put them back.

All photos: BOT Staff

After just over four weeks in captivity the owlets were brought to the Trust where they were BTO ringed and also colour ringed so they could be identified when released. We kept them in the static release aviary for two weeks prior to their release, and then continued to supplementary feed them. Two months down the line, the owls are still in the area and return to the aviary for food. The great news is they have also started to catch small mammals now as evidenced by the pellets we are finding.



The Bedford Barn Owls

## BOT Sanctuary

September saw the death of one of our long standing residents Valentine, hatched in 1996; Valentine was 20 when she died.

During our annual health checks in October, we weighed, clipped the talons and beaks and wormed over 50 owls in our sanctuary. During the health checks, we noticed that one of our resident Barn Owls had developed some calluses on her left foot. She was taken into the bird room for treatment with iodine and has happily returned to the Main Aviary.

In December our oldest resident Barn Owl Hazel sadly died. She and Valentine had been housed together for many years, during the winter she developed a chest infection. Hazel was 21 when she passed away.



Valentine & Hazel

We currently have 20 Barn Owls and 33 Tawny Owls in our sanctuary.

A big thank you to all the volunteers, site owners and vets who have assisted with our rehabilitation and release work, especially the Veterinary Hospitals Group.

Would you like even more bird news? Follow us on **facebook** and **twitter** for all the latest news and information. ★

Rick Lockwood  
Assistant Conservation Officer

# Other News

Roger and Lorna Bailey have been BOT supporters for over 10 years and we are delighted to be able to share their Barn Owl success story with you:

"We have been very fortunate this year in having a breeding pair of Barn Owls successfully use an external nestbox we fixed to the gable end of our house wall in 2006. This is the second year that a brood has been raised here. The first time was in 2012 when 2 chicks successfully fledged and dispersed. As can be seen below three lovely chicks fledged and dispersed in September 2016.



Photos: Supplied

They have given us so much pleasure watching the video from the external camera! As the infra-red image suggests diligent parenting yielded a steady supply of food! We have been so pleased to provide a successful roost/nesting box for the Barn Owls. It also provided a home in a non-breeding year to a very fine hornet's nest, and some rather persistent jackdaws but fortunately the intended occupants successfully prevailed." ★

Roger and Lorna Bailey

## Barn Owls in Bavaria

In 1995 when I visited the BOT the Barn Owl in Bavaria was on the Red List, classified as 'critically endangered', which was mainly due to the loss of breeding sites. Today the Barn Owl is off the Red List, however it seems only a matter of time until it is back on it again.

The reason for the decline nowadays seems to be the intensification of agriculture by growing more and more maize (fattening feed and production of biogas) and the reduction of grassland. Therefore, the Bavarian department of conservation has recently started a monitoring programme to get up-to-date data on the development of the populations over here.

### Latest News

I've just checked the new Red List of birds in Bavaria which was released a short while ago. The Barn Owl is already on it, categorised as 3: *Vulnerable*. We erected a nest box in a little village in the Obermain area, which is a broad river valley and a quite rural part of Northern Bavaria.

Our nest boxes are fixed to the interior walls of barns with a hole sawn into the latter, so the owls get directly into the box from outside the barn. This is to prevent predation by Stone Martens (a member of the weasel family), which are regular inhabitants of barns over here. ★

Jan Ebert  
Bavaria

# B.O.M.F.A.'s

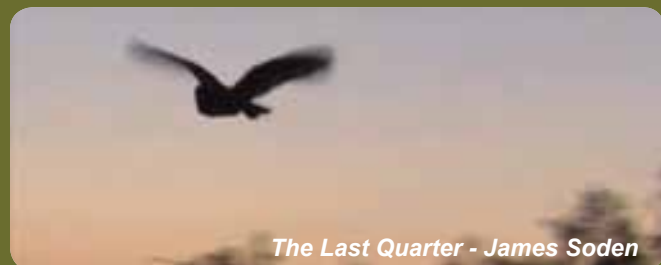
The Barn Owl Mini-Film Awards were organised by the Barn Owl Trust and ran from 1st May 2016 until the 16th December 2016. Thank you to all of our entrants, to our judges and to businesses who donated prizes. Thank you also to Tansy Barton from Plymouth College of Art who made our unique trophies.

Entrants were asked to make a short film that would raise awareness of this iconic bird. Our panel of judges included TV presenter and naturalist Chris Packham, Robbie Hill, Creative Director of Hilltribe Media and BOT Trustee and wildlife photographer Kevin Keatley.

Congratulations to all of our winners who receive a unique B.O.M.F.A. trophy along with a selection of prizes.

Our film categories were **Open, Amateur & Young Film-Maker.**

**Open - Winner** - James Soden for *The Last Quarter*  
The judges felt this video had 'a strong environmental message about a landscape which is about to be destroyed...'



*The Last Quarter* - James Soden

The judges would also like to commend Beau Eastman for *The Sound of Silence*. The judges said the video was 'shot beautifully, it's technically well made and short enough to hold attention. It also tells a story in those short few minutes'

**Amateur - Winner** – Brian Woodford for *A Brief Encounter*  
'Some lovely Barn Owl encounters in a beautiful location'



*A Brief Encounter* - Brian Woodford

**Young Film-Maker - Winner**

Jack Farrell for *Jack's Barn Owl Animation*  
'SUPERB! The bit where the owlet produces a pellet is absolute gold. It has a clear 'message' and must have taken him ages!'



*Jack's Barn Owl Animation* - Jack Farrell

All of the films can now be viewed on our website.

Thank you to **CornishTipiHolidays.co.uk**, **Wildlife Watching Supplies**, **Wildlife Photographer Russell Savory**, **Pelagic Publishing** and **Yeo Valley** who kindly donated prizes. ★

# Three Decades of Education

Since the Barn Owl Trust was founded in 1988, education has been a major part of our work. It now spans an impressive three decades!

Over the years we have been involved with a wide variety of education-based projects. This ranges from school and adult group talks to appearances on Blue Peter and even making our very own 'Wings of Change' DVD, twice.

Let's start at the beginning...

In 1989 our Head of Conservation, David Ramsden, along with our first education Owl 'Moon', gave the first ever school talk to St Mary's Roman Catholic Primary in Buckfast, Devon. The children watched a presentation we call 'Wings of Change'. It tells the story of a farm from the 1940's to the present day looking at how the landscape has changed and the effect this has had on the resident Barn Owls. The story was illustrated with a chalk board drawing of the farm.



David and New Moon

Children since 1989 have been enraptured by the tale and the changing picture before their eyes. The story culminates with the appearance of a tame Barn Owl, who demonstrates how silently the species can fly. By taking along our willing owl volunteer the children get to see a Barn Owl close up as it flies over their heads... a truly magical experience for them to remember for years to come.



Baley in the classroom

In March, 1992, we returned to St Mary's at Buckfast, where we marked the occasion of our 100<sup>th</sup> school visit with a cake. Now in 2017 we have delivered over 600 school talks with the Wings of Change story being heard at primary schools all over Devon and Cornwall. Along with school groups we have also given talks to Brownies, Rainbows, home school groups, Cubs and Scouts.

South Devon Bird Group hosted our first ever talk for adults in South Brent in 1989. We called it 'Restoring the Balance,' like 'Wings of Change', a title we still use today.

This talk, delivered by David, described in detail Barn Owl ecology and conservation, the work of the Trust and wider environmental themes.

Accompanied by owl calls and a range of stunning photographs, David explained how Barn Owls need all the help they can get. These talks have proved to be highly popular.

In 2001 the Trust received a significant Legacy from Vivien Lennon which enabled us to purchase 26 acres of land adjacent to the Trust offices. These 26 acres of intensively grazed sheep pasture have since been transformed into 26 acres of Barn Owl Heaven through a project known as the Lennon Legacy Project or LLP. In 2005 this became the theme for our second talk. Since then we have also been able to offer guided walks for groups where butterflies, birds, beautiful grasses and perfect Barn Owl heaven can be seen first hand. These visits are normally followed by a cream tea in our warm and cosy *Norman Alderson Meeting Room* (courtesy of another Legacy).



Visitors explore the 'LLP'

In 2002 David and Dusty (the Barn Owl) travelled to London with one of our mobile release aviaries and drove right into the Blue Peter Studios. They were there to film a feature for the programme. David talked to presenter Matt Baker about what to do if you find a wild injured Barn Owl or other owl species and described how we release owls back into the wild using our mobile release aviary.



David appears on Blue Peter

We also took along eggs from a Barn Owl, pellets and feathers. To this day children in schools still notice the Blue Peter Badge which is now attached to the travelling box we use for our education owl.

We've had several feathered volunteers over the years. Moon started our education work followed by New Moon and Dusty. Our current assistant, Baley, took over in 2006. Baley hatched at the Trust in a pile of hay bales, hence the name. He's coming up to his 11<sup>th</sup> birthday later this year!



*Baley and Lexie present 'Wings of Change'*

We have attended various educational conferences and events, one of which is Farmwise. Held in October every year, Farmwise attracts schools from all over Devon to Westpoint Arena near Exeter. The event is separated into various zones and you'll find the Barn Owl Trust in the Wildlife zone. With over 1,000 children in attendance, each group gets a short time allotted at each zone. We normally give a brief presentation on Barn Owls followed by dissecting some pellets which the kids seem to love. Our presence at the event has also led to more bookings for our school talks.



*Pellet dissection at the Farmwise event*

We produced our first educational 'Wings of Change' video (that's right ... VHS!) back in 1996. As with our talks this video is designed to educate children about Barn Owl conservation. In 2009 we enlisted the help of TV presenter Nick Baker to give our videos a much needed makeover. The new DVD is now sold to schools and youth groups nationwide and available to purchase via our online shop. It is a valuable resource to students learning about Barn Owls.



*Nick Baker filming our DVD*

Moving forward in 2017, the Wings of Change story is being developed into a digital presentation for use in schools. This move to a more manageable medium will also fulfil the schools obligation to incorporate IT within the curriculum.

This progression also allows for animation of the images, giving children a chance to see how the Combine Harvester moves through the fields and how the landscape changes gradually. Photographs have been incorporated to show the prey items of the owls, and some of the work that the Trust does to help conserve Barn Owls.



*Baley flies around the classroom*

Telling this story in schools gives the children a sense of how humans have changed the landscape and the effects on wildlife. The 'Wings of Change' does affect the way that children look at the world and wildlife around them, perhaps even inspiring some future conservationists.

If you represent a school or group in Devon or Cornwall, and would like to book a talk or visit, please contact the office. ★

**Lexie New**  
P.A. to Head Of Conservation

*All photos BOT Staff*

## Caught On Camera!

As part of our exciting new video project (see page 3) a section of ground in the LLP (Lennon Legacy Project) was cut away to allow a cross section view of the habitat, above and below the ground. A wood and perspex screen was designed and made to maintain the cross section.

Daily photographs were taken in order to be able to create a time-lapse sequence showing the creation of a litter layer. In June 2016 a family of field voles were discovered and later an adult was captured on camera in March 2017.

The amazing snap below was taken by BOT team member Lexie New who is our P.A. to the Head of Conservation.

See all the latest LLP news by heading to our Wildlife Diary at <http://www.barnowltrust.org.uk/wildlife-diary/> ★



*Field vole in the LLP*

# Poetry Competition & More...

## Work Experience

Hi I'm Lucy and I spent a week in October doing work experience with the conservation team.

One of the most interesting things I did was helping with the annual health checks. This involved clipping the owls' talons and beak, weighing and worming them. As we did all the owls in one day, it was great to see the range in behaviour amongst the different birds as well as gain an insight into some of the health problems that cause them to be in the sanctuary. It was very hands on and I'm now a lot more confident in how to handle owls.

I also went with Lexie to give a talk to a local school about how the change in farming methods in the last century has affected Barn Owls in the UK. **Continued right >>>**



Lucy helps with the health checks

It was a great experience seeing how this could be presented in a way for young children to easily understand and I loved seeing Baley fly around the classroom at the end (despite deciding to land on a light).

I also enjoyed going around the LLP and seeing how it is managed not only for Barn Owls, but also other rare species such as butterflies.

I've also been able to think more about how to adapt my own land for Barn Owls. Overall it's been a fantastic experience and I hope to continue learning about endangered birds in my future career. ★

Lucy Dufall

Work Experience Student

## Grand Prize Draw

Do not miss out on your chance to win a unique day out with the Barn Owl Trust's Conservation Team in 2018. A fantastic opportunity to see Barn Owls in the wild followed by a delicious lunch! This is just one of the prizes up for grabs in our 2017 Grand Prize Draw. Full list to be announced on our website.

We are still adding prizes and we'd love to hear from anyone who would like to donate good quality items that are easy for us to post, i.e not bulky or heavy.



Tickets for the draw cost £1 each or £5 for a book of 5. All proceeds go towards supporting our conservation work. You should find tickets enclosed in this copy of Feedback. For more books of tickets please contact the Trust on 01364 653026 or email [info@barnowltrust.org.uk](mailto:info@barnowltrust.org.uk) ★

## Poetry Competition

Calling all Poets! We are delighted to announce our 5th Open Poetry Competition and invite YOU to take part. This year's subject is Wildlife/Conservation. All profits from the competition will help provide care for casualty birds. We also hope to produce Volume 5 of our 'Wildlife Words' Anthology this autumn with some of the entries submitted.

There will be a First, Second and Third prize. Six runners up will also receive a certificate of commendation. Last year's deserved winner, Mary Woodward, has kindly agreed to be the judge of this year's competition.

The closing date is mid-day Wednesday 5th July 2017. The Competition is open to all writers and there is no entry form required or limit to the number of entries.

- The poem must not exceed forty lines of any style
- Entries should be in English, typed or neatly hand written on one side only of A4, if emailed - in the body of an email rather than as an attachment.
- Poems must be the writer's own original work, unpublished and not currently entered for any other competition.
- BOT can make no alterations once poems are submitted.

- If sending by post entrants should include their name and address on a separate sheet with the title of their poem, with no identifying marks on the poem.
- If emailed the name and address should be included in the body of the email so it can be separated from the poem. This allows the poem(s) to be judged anonymously.
- Judge's decision is final. Winners will be announced Autumn 2017 in Feedback where the winning poem will be printed.
- Each poem is to be accompanied by £4 (a minimum) fee. Writers can submit multiple poems. £4 per poem fee applies.
- Cheques made payable to Barn Owl Trust or via our website.
- Postal entries should be sent to '**Poetry Competition**' **Barn Owl Trust, Waterleat, Ashburton, Devon TQ13 7HU**. Enclose a SAE to receive a printed copy of the results.
- Send email entries to [info@barnowltrust.org.uk](mailto:info@barnowltrust.org.uk) with the entry fee of £4 per poem being made via our website [www.barnowltrust.org.uk](http://www.barnowltrust.org.uk) and our 'Give a Donation' page (found under the **Support us** heading), stating 'Poem' as reason for donation.

Don't forget to include your name and contact details.

Good luck!

# Fundraising

## Pete's Challenge

Pete Webb has been a member of the BOT team since 2003. He's taking on the Salcombe Coastal Marathon this April in aid of the Barn Owl Trust.

This multi-terrain coastal marathon runs from Torcross to Bantham along some of South Devon's most beautiful coastline. Now in its seventh year the event covers 26.2 miles and is open to both walkers and runners.

<http://salcombecoastalmarathon.blogspot.co.uk/>

'This will be my first long distance event since 1990 when I took part in the Torbay Marathon' says Pete. 'It took me four hours! Now in my late sixties I don't feel able to run the entire route but am still fit enough to walk the distance.' **Continued right >>>**



*Pete smiles for the camera!*



*Start Bay, Devon - Part of Pete's route*

'To celebrate fourteen years of working at the Trust all the money I raise will be going to support their work. Being a small national charity they really do need all of the support they can get. Thank you in advance for any support you can give.'

You can support Pete by sponsoring him or by making a donation online at:

<http://mydonate.bt.com/fundraisers/petebarnowl> or

<http://www.barnowltrust.org.uk/support-us/donate/>

Please use **PETEWALK** as your reason for donation.

Alternatively you can send a cheque made payable to: Barn Owl Trust, Waterleat, Ashburton, Devon TQ13 7HU. Thank You. Best of luck Pete from all of the BOT Team! ★

*All Photos Bot Staff*

## Running for Barn Owls



*Photo Supplied*

Huge congratulations to Ali Ramsden who completed the Great West Run in October 2016 in aid of the Barn Owl Trust. This was Ali's first half-marathon and she did brilliantly completing the course in 2hrs 28 minutes. A great achievement and we're sure the £991 raised helped to compensate for the aching legs! Here's what Ali had to say...

'I just wanted to say a huge thank you to everyone who has sponsored me through my on-line page and by direct donations to the Barn Owl Trust.' ★

## Swimming for Barn Owls



*Photo Supplied*

Inspirational 7 year old Henrietta Twose from Exeter swam 24 lengths each day of advent and raised an impressive £122 for the Barn Owl Trust. Well done Henrietta!

Henrietta wanted to give the money she raised to the Trust having witnessed some special sightings of a Barn Owl up at her Grandad's farm near Tiverton. The family plan to erect a nestbox in the barn there soon. We want to say a huge thank you to Henrietta and her family for thinking of us and we hope that a Barn Owl takes up residence in the new nestbox soon. ★

# Thanks and Things

A big thank you to all our supporters who have sent in items from our Wants List; goods for recycling, items to sell on eBay and prizes for our Grand Draw:

Douglas & Siobhan Abbott, Jenie Allen, Gillian Andrews, Jean & Andy Batten, Kate Batten, Irene Bennett, Richard & Leigh Boucher, Heather Collins, Margaret Davies, Vanessa Farbrother, Myfanwy Ford, Gil Gaylor, Mrs Glenn, Lynne Green, Rob Hamar, Miss J L Holloway, Home Property Lawyers York, Honey Ingram, Mark Lyddy, Ian Newitt, Ann Oxley, Judith Read, Nigel Reid, Shaldon Zoo, Alan Sloman, Mr & Mrs Richard Smith, South West Communications, Elizabeth & Brian Stone, Linda Tilbury, Trudy Turrell, Melanie White, Jo Winfield, Cathie Woods, Katie Woods, Wookey Hole, Tracey Morris & Shelley Wright and Frances Yan-Man-Shing.

Another huge thank you must go to our wonderful volunteers who give up their time to help the Trust:

Kim Baker, Diane Baker, Nic Butler, Diane Hawkins, Tony Hulatt, Michael Park, Pete and the guys from Exeter (you know who you are!), Geoff Pitt & Frankie, Margaret Rhodes, Plymouth University Students, Alan Sloman and Penny Woollams.

To all our fantastic fundraisers, Thank You! Since the last issue of Feedback we have received donations from individuals and companies for a variety of events including a sponsored run and swim (see page 15). It wasn't just sponsored events, some used Giveacar to scrap their unwanted vehicles, one sold their homemade jam and others gave a percentage of the profits from goods they sell online. We really appreciate all donations, big or small, so a HUGE thank you goes to:

Ashburton Carnival, Animal Friends Pet Insurance, Carole & Barry Bowden, Bristol Street Motors, Victor Cannon, Derrick & Margaret Crocker, Alex Joyner and Ecclesiastical Insurance, Steven Joyner, Ken May, Sheila Moore, Gwyneth Parish and Pink & Greene, Ali Ramsden, Andrew Shaw, Sir Jeremy Sullivan, Henrietta Twose, Jennie Webber, World Indoor Rally Championship at Dartmouth and anyone else we may have inadvertently missed. Thank you all.

## Can you help with:

- Postcards and pre1970 envelopes with stamps on
- Used stamps, including any foreign stamps & currency
- Wild Barn Owl pellets (we can never have too many)
- Wild bird food - mainly sacks of black sunflower seeds, also peanuts & plain canary seed
- Wood for making outdoor nestboxes - sheets of 9 / 12mm
- tanalised soft ply and lengths of 25x 50mm tanalised batten
- Green Oak rough-sawn planks for making bat boxes
- Anabat detector
- A4 and A3 recycled paper both coloured and white
- A4 recycled card 250/280g
- Socket set
- Wire cutters
- Drill-driver bits (for screwing)
- Quick grip clamps
- Small plate compactor
- Emulsion paint (pale colour) sufficient to paint an office
- Wintery Barn Owl Images for Christmas Cards
- Prizes for our Grand Draw (postable i.e. not heavy or bulky)

Thank you for your help. ★

## Tail Piece ...



After several days of low cloud the sun came out this morning and the Sparrows celebrated by chirruping loudly. They are thinking about breeding and checking out the local nestboxes. The amazing display of Snowdrops in February has been followed by Daffodils, Primroses and Celandines that are shining like stars in the lush green grass. We've had a much drier winter here than the last few years and the average temperature in February was the highest by a long way that we've recorded in 10 years, so it looks like Spring really is arriving. It's wonderful to see the Blackthorn blossom appearing in the hedgerows and the first fresh Hawthorn and Hazel leaves uncurling. There are masses of Frog tadpoles in the Trust's ponds and the musical croaking of Toads can be heard at night as they arrive to leave their strings of spawn around the water plants.

The natural world is truly beautiful and each plant, bird and animal knows exactly what it needs to do to survive. Human beings, on the other hand, are much more complicated and confused. Listening to the Breakfast Show this morning I heard an interview with the Author of the book 'Sapiens'. I haven't read the book yet but when asked about human happiness Dr Yuval Harari did say that "Humans are very good at acquiring power, we are not very good at translating power into happiness. The problem is really one of expectations; our happiness depends to a large extent on our expectations. As conditions improve, expectations increase, so no matter what we achieve it leads to an increase in human expectations not to human happiness".

An article in National Geographic reports that 'Every year the United Nations measures the quality of life for citizens around the world. The same 13 countries have dominated the top of the list since the reporting began in 2012. All of them possess a winning formula of good governance, strong sense of community, respect for fellow citizens, and general high quality of life'. Interestingly neither the UK nor the USA is in the top ten.

Denmark has been named the happiest country in the world. It offers an abundance of free public services, such as health care and education, and prides itself on its strong sense of social life and community. It also acknowledges climate change and is the first country in the world leading the transition to a green growth economy by introducing a clear vision of becoming independent of fossil fuels by 2050. Maybe our governments can learn from them!

In sharp contrast in the USA Donald Trump seems set to increase their dependence on fossil fuels, denies climate change and is arresting journalists and protesters that disagree with his policies. This is worrying given that the USA is the World's 2nd largest producer of CO2 Emissions after China. Congress and the White House are now attacking the US Environmental Protection Agency who do acknowledge climate change. They are reducing their budget and controlling data. It's scary stuff and anyone familiar with history will see disturbing similarities to Germany in the 1930's when dissenters were silenced and fascism ruled.

Given that we all know that climate change is not only real, it is a threat to humans and all the other species that share our wonderful planet, what can we do? We can support the individuals and organisations that are standing up for the environment. We can work together to create a better world for our children and our neighbours. Whatever our religion or nationality we are first and foremost human beings and only when we work together towards creating a strong sense of community and respect for fellow citizens can we solve the problems that we face. It may well also help to make us happier!

Thank you for caring about our natural World, for your support for the Trust and for everything you do to protect our environment. Be happy and remember that *Together we really can make a World of difference* ★ **Frances Ramsden**