



feedback

Issue 67 / Spring 2022

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Main Cover Photo: Curiosity by Mike Pearce

Small photos left-right: Adult Dormouse - page 9, Joe handing cheque to BOT - page 10, Young Barn Owl by Jo Plant, BOT T-shirt available from barnowltrust.teemill.com, Baley the Barn Owl by Melanie Lindenthall, New nestbox builder Chris - page 14, Barn Owl in Snow by Ed MacKerrow.

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

A big thank you to everyone who provided words and pictures for this issue.

Proofing: Sandra Reardon & the BOT Team

Copy date for issue No 68 - 29th July 2022

Send your contributions - news, letters, pictures and information to: Feedback, Barn owl Trust, Waterleat, Ashburton, Devon, TQ13 7HU

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DIARY DATES 2022

April

Saturday 23rd - Spring Walk - 2:30pm

May

Friday 6th - Wild Flowers Walk - 2:30pm

Saturday 14th - Wild Flowers Walk - 2:30pm

June

Tues 21st - Midsummer's Eve Walk - 7:30pm

July

Friday 8th - Butterfly Walk - 2:30pm

Saturday 9th - Butterfly Walk - 2:30pm

August

Thursday 11th - Bat Walk & Talk - 7:30pm

For more information visit the Events Diary on our website. Contact us on info@barnowltrust.org.uk or call the office to book a place - booking is essential as places are strictly limited.

'She turned to the sunlight
And shook her yellow head,
And whispered to her neighbour: Winter is dead'

AA Milne excerpt from *When We Were Very Young*.

Hello and a very warm welcome to the 67th edition of Feedback. This Spring edition comes at a time when our Devon hedgerows are bursting forth with primroses and daffodils and even a few violets. All this at a time when the world anxiously watches events in Eastern Europe, the burgeoning of Spring brings hope and a smattering of joy to relish. We hope that you all get the opportunity to be out and about in nature this Springtime and soak up some of the green promise that Spring brings.

The Pandemic has obviously impacted on all of us and has forced changes on the Barn Owl Trust as well, but we are trying to settle into a new 'normal' where we operate safely and efficiently. Some of our staff have stayed working from home, whilst others have returned to the office under strict Covid security guidelines. Much ventilation and fresh air are being endured but we are a hardy lot and are coping well with the way we need to work to stay safe, including regular Covid testing. Happy to say that, so far, we have mostly escaped the virus and we hope that our supporters also remain safe and well. Our Conservation Team is ready to publish the new on-line training course which has been 18 months or more in the making. We are delighted with the results of so much hard work, done mostly working from home, as the team kept in touch remotely to ensure a great end product. You can read all about the new courses on Page 5.

This issue has plenty of interesting reading for you. We are sure you will enjoy reading Frances' update about the Lennon Legacy Project on Page 4 – there is plenty happening on the site and we have very exciting news about a new post we have created. We are going to employ a Reserve Warden for the LLP for 12 months. We plan for the new post holder to work on the land to help with the upkeep and routine maintenance of the site, and also to lead on the volunteer events we hold (see Page 14).

There are also great reports from our Conservation Officers which highlight the fantastic work they have been involved in over recent months. Dr Mateo Ruiz writes about the co-existence of species and the impacts of predators like Pine Martins on Barn Owls – read this on Page 13. There is also a great report (Page 7) about an important study that the Trust has been involved in, looking at how Barn Owl fatalities on major roads might be reduced. This is possibly the most important piece of research that the Trust has carried out to date, and we are proud to have completed the study report with its mitigation recommendations. More research is outlined on page 12, this time about radio-tracking of Barn Owls, which provides valuable information about bird movement and survival.

Our fantastic volunteer, Tony, has written about the Hazel Dormouse on Page 9 – this delightful British mammal is very vulnerable to climate change and its numbers are reducing. The BOT team has also changed significantly recently with some colleagues moving on to other roles and new staff members and volunteers joining us. We wish our leavers the best of luck and give a big welcome to our new team members – read all about us on Pages 14 and 15.

In these uncertain times, it's good to step back and take a good look at the nature around you and to consider all that is good about the seasons. We hope that you enjoy reading this Springtime edition and that somewhere near you is a natural place for you to enjoy as the seasons change. Once again, we want to thank you so much for your vital support, and especially so during these difficult times.

Gill Gant - Office Manager

BOT News



New Research Published!

Surprisingly little is known about what young Barn Owls do when they become independent, but collaborators from the Trust, Ambios Ltd and Lotek UK have produced original scientific research on dispersal behaviour. By fitting radio-tags to young owls in their nests, the team created an exciting opportunity to follow the juveniles as they ventured out into the world.

We are pleased to say after many years of hard work the research paper was published in the esteemed journal 'Bird Study' earlier this year! You can read more on page 12.

Climate Update 2022

2021 saw record extreme weather events around the world although most of them didn't make the UK news. Climate scientists are saying to expect more of the same—and possibly worse—in 2022, as rapidly warming temperatures continue to exacerbate heat waves, wildfires, destructive storms and sea level rise.

Whilst here in the UK, Scotland has been most affected so far but we have been very lucky compared to other parts of the planet. In the first two months of this year the USA saw Seattle recording an unseasonable 9 inches of snow. Washington had 'thundersnow' storms that left five dead and 850,000 homes without power, and in southern states extreme heat was recorded, with temperatures soaring to the mid-30s Celsius and wildfires in California. Wildfires have also destroyed more than 300,000 hectares of South American woodlands mainly in Argentina and Patagonia. In Malaysia, 50 people were killed and 125,000 evacuated from their homes after extreme flooding. While floods are not unusual during the monsoon season, the region was hit by one month's average rainfall in one day, leading to one of the worst incidents of flash flooding on record. In Malawi Tropical Storm Ana caused floods, destruction, and fatalities with 250mm+ rainfall recorded in 24 hrs. In Brazil intense floods have caused death and destruction in some parts of the country whilst other parts have experienced severe droughts affecting crop production.



Photo by Chris Gallagher

What is particularly unjust is that countries like Madagascar are now dealing with the ravages of a climate crisis it has played virtually no role in creating. Even though its global share of historic carbon emissions are significantly less than 1 percent, the country's vulnerabilities to climate change are stark. The United Nations World Food Programme have stated that Madagascar has 1.64 million people in need of emergency food assistance after four years of consecutive droughts in the south. As if that wasn't enough, two tropical cyclones hit the country in the first two months of 2022 causing flooding, landslides and deaths.

If you are interested in finding out about extreme weather events around the planet that aren't reported on the main news channels the YouTube channel – [The Rage of The Earth](#) posts regular viewer filmed updates.

News Bites

VAT Registered

Since 1st January 2022 BOT is now VAT registered - 399 8301 41. This means that VAT is payable on nestboxes and sales goods and can be reclaimed by anyone who is VAT registered. Currently we are trying to absorb the VAT we have to pay so as to avoid passing on these additional costs to our customers.

NEW News

Since September last year the Trust has been posting Monthly News Bytes on our website. This pulls together everything shared on social media in one place so supporters don't have to wait for the next issue of Feedback to hear our news.

Thank You 34SP

Big thanks to [34SP.com](#) who continue to provide free hosting for our website. It continues to be a source of excellent practical Barn Owl information and advice based on over 30 years' experience of conservation, rescue, and rehabilitation. The website is visited by nearly a million people annually, and 34SP's support since 2017 has helped to make this possible.

Barn Owl Trust and Climate Coalition

The Trust has become an Environment Member of the Climate Coalition, which brings together a diverse group of people from across the UK who passionately want to protect the things they care about from climate change. Other members include the Wildlife Trusts, the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) and the National Trust, to name but a few. The Coalition has published a 10 Point Plan for a Green Recovery that you can read here theclimatecoalition.org/greenrecovery. The Climate Coalition is not just for organisations, but for individuals too, to petition the Governments that the time is now for a cleaner, greener world that works for everyone. We are proud to be part of the Climate Coalition as we are passionate about the need to protect the planet from the climate emergency and so you will see the Climate Coalition logo being displayed alongside our own BOT logo.

New Rules Affecting Website Donations

New card payment rules coming into effect from March 14th mean that all our supporters with regular donations set up via the BOT website will find that their next scheduled donation will fail. They will need to log into their account on our website and make the next donation manually – this will reactivate the regular donation. Alternatively setting up a regular donation through internet banking avoids any issues surrounding debit/credit cards expiring or new rules being implemented plus the Trust does not have to pay a fee on the donations so more of your money goes towards our conservation work! An email will be sent out when your donation fails with information on how to renew your donation. **Thank you so much for your support.**

LLP Update



*Barn Owl in Wildlife Tower, North Park
Photo by David Ramsden*

By early August the Sunflowers in the bird crop were really beginning to put on a show and in the warm sunshine the crop could be heard humming with the insects visiting the flowers. On the 3rd we had our first sighting of Linnets returning to the area when a flock of 10+ flew up from the crop. The two owlets (Jane & Greta) received at the beginning of July emerged from their nestbox in the barn for the first time on Saturday 21st. One flew off the barn roof and into the field, it then spent the following day roosting in the neighbouring Ash tree. On the 23rd it was back in the nestbox with its sibling. On the same day a flash of a Kingfisher was seen on the River Ashburn just above the lower bridge, the first we'd seen for some time. On the 24th we recorded our 11th LLP record of Wall Brown Butterfly; it was seen along the North Park hedge walk just north of the Wildlife Tower.

September began dry and mild; on the 3rd a Dipper was seen on the river from the Apprentice Path and on the 6th a Hobby was spotted flying over the field! Ambios trainees joined us on the 8th helping to count Creeping Thistles for the research project in Kiln Close. It was on this drizzly day they spotted a Barn Owl emerge from a neighbouring Conifer, fly to an Ash tree on our boundary hedge. They watched it stretching and preening in the rain for about 10 minutes before it returned to the shelter of the Conifer. On the 14th, Mateo and volunteer Harry began pulling the Reed Mace out of the Flo Pond and clearing the island and the overgrown margins. Later that day, a Barn Owl was seen sitting on the tray of the polebox by the roadside hedge. When it spotted the humans walking down the Long Path it popped into the box. The polebox is very close to the site the Barn Owl was seen by the Ambios trainees so it's very likely it was the same bird.

There were numerous Roe Deer sightings throughout October and on the 23rd a Sparrowhawk was watched hunting over the crop. Throughout the month, a Linnet flock had been seen flying over and feeding on the bird food crop and by the 25th the flock had swelled to 80+. In mid-October we noticed lots of the fallen Oak leaves in Corner Wood had small, disc-shaped growths on the undersides of the leaves. These were identified as galls of the Common Spangle Gall Wasp. This is a tiny wasp, (*Neuropteris quercusbaccarum*) that causes a growth, or 'gall', on the underside of oak leaves in early autumn. A single leaf can host up to 100 galls, each containing a single larva. The galls then fall to the ground in autumn and the larvae continue to develop through the winter till they emerge as adults in April.



*Barn Owl in LLP polebox
Photo by Tony Utting*

November saw the arrival of our land management volunteers: 8 Belted Galloways from a local farmer. The cattle grazed the rough grassland for a few weeks to stimulate growth and diversity, which is good for the Field Voles. At dusk on the 3rd, a rehabilitated

juvenile Barn Owl was released from the mobile aviary in North Park. It was still around and taking food a few days later and, on the 8th, a Barn Owl was seen during the day sitting in the owl hole of the Wildlife Tower, almost certainly the released bird. Sightings of the Barn Owl continued throughout the following months.

The first hedge-laying of the winter began on the 9th, with two volunteers working with Mateo on the North Park hedge. Annie and Clarabel (the goats) enjoyed the company and chewing over the cleared material. At dusk on the 12th a murmuration of Starlings was seen from the field further up the valley, an unusual occurrence here. On the 17th, University of Plymouth Students Union volunteers cut back the encroaching Blackthorn from the roadside boundary below the Polebox. Also on the 17th, we saw a 4-inch Brown Trout by torchlight in the Flo Pond, and an 8-inch one was spotted 4 days later. We think they probably came in via the abstraction from the river as eggs or fry and they must have been there without us spotting them for some time to reach that size.



Roe Deer in LLP

Photo by Tony Utting

In December, Devon Birds members (DBWPS) joined us for the first Winter LLP Bird Walk of the year which included a stop at the winter bird crop, two more bird walks were held later in the month. The Kingfisher was heard calling in the Orchard on the 12th and a Barn Owl pellet was collected from below the Stock Dove provision at the back of the Wildlife Tower, also spotted were several white splashes (Barn Owl droppings) on the ledge and the rocks below. The pellet showed that the owl is now catching wild food.

The New Year began with unusually mild temperatures (mean of 11.6°C) for the first three days (average January mean temperature is 6.19°C). The first frogspawn of the year was seen in the Oakley Pond on the 4th - the earliest date recorded since 2008! On the 13th a Grey Heron was seen flying up from the Flo Pond and did a slow circuit of the valley; it is visiting regularly as evidenced by the large number of white droppings on and around the pond.

At the beginning of February, Matt and Pip, along with volunteer Rick, planted 10 trees in the rewilding area by Corner Wood, 2 Almond trees (Ingrid) in the orchard and then cut back Blackthorn along the roadside boundary. The following day Mateo, Pip and 6 Plymouth University Student volunteers planted another 16 trees and cut back more Blackthorn. On the 8th Mateo went to trim the orchid patch but found rosettes up already. He counted 6 but they were still very small and presumably there were more still covered by grass. On the 12th the first Primrose and Celandine were seen flowering on the path in Corner Wood and two days later a pair of Mandarin Ducks were seen on the Flo Pond. They were seen for three consecutive days after and again on the 18th during Storm Eunice. The storm blew over our mobile aviary which was pulled up with the tractor and moved to a more sheltered spot, we were pleased to see the owl come back in for food that evening.

Frances Ramsden

Training Courses Go Online!

Our Barn Owl Ecology, Surveys and Signs (BOESS) and Advanced Barn Owl Surveying and Mitigation (ABOSM) courses were developed to provide training for ecologists and planners, and anyone else who intends to survey for Barn Owls.

BOESS has been running since 2005 with over 1,200 participants to date! ABOSM was created in 2011 after feedback from BOESS participants who wanted more in-depth knowledge of surveying and mitigation techniques. Historically, these courses were always face-to-face and involved site visits to local farms for practical experience along with PowerPoint presentations from our conservation team (and a fantastic lunch!).

The last BOESS and ABOSM courses were held in February 2020 just prior to Covid. We had hoped to run them again in July but by then we were all in lockdown. Once the severity and longevity of the pandemic became clear to us, we decided it was time for the courses to go online! This way, whatever happened, at least we could continue to train professionals.

When we decided to re-create the courses as online training, we had little idea what this would entail. With hindsight, we might not have made this decision so lightly! It has taken us a very long time for numerous reasons – none of us are tech specialists or have ever created an online course before, we are a small team, we've been understaffed for the vast majority of the time since we embarked on this journey, we've continued our usual work alongside this enormous project, and there have been numerous unforeseen set-backs! It has, however, been a really interesting challenge for all of us!

Our first job was to decide what platform to use. This took a significant amount of work as it's not something any of the team had any experience with. After that it was time to write the content... the Conservation Team spent many, many hours writing, re-writing, updating, expanding and finalising the content for the new course. We then asked every member of staff to record themselves so we could choose the best narrators! While the narrators were busy recording voice-overs, the team put together a shot list and we paid a young local media student to

do the filming and take high quality photos. Then it was time to put all the pieces together... Using (to us) a new video editing software programme, I created 'movies' with film/images, text, and narration. These were then embedded as a 'LearnDash' course on our website.



The first level of testing was our Conservation Team who had created the course comprising David Ramsden (Head of Conservation), Matthew Twiggs (Senior Conservation Officer), Mateo Ruiz (Conservation and Science Officer), and Kaye Thomas (Conservation Team Admin Assistant). Level 2 testing included Pip Laker (our new Assistant Conservation Officer), Frances Ramsden (Managing Trustee) and the entire Admin Team! Level 3 was the first time the course was tested by non-BOT people... This time the course went out to a select number of professionals within the science, conservation, and ecology sectors. Level 4 will see BOESS tested by people who were originally booked to do the course in-person back in July 2020! Once we've received all the feedback and made the necessary changes, the [BOESS course](#) has been available through our online shop from Monday 4th April!

Once any teething issues are out of the way, work will begin on ABOSM...

Kaye Thomas
Conservation Team Admin Assistant

What does the Online BOESS course include?

- A copy of the Barn Owl Conservation Handbook.
- A digital site visit to a local farm to examine genuine wild Barn Owl nest and roost sites.
- A certificate of completion which acts as a reference towards gaining a Survey 1 licence.
- Full training from knowledgeable and experienced staff.
- Successful completion of BOESS qualifies you to take the advanced course (see ABOSM below).
- Ecologists who attend this course are entitled to be listed in the Barn Owl Directory.

The BOESS course covers:

- Barn Owl ecology
- Decline and conservation
- Barn Owl protection, legislation and nest inspection licensing
- Correct survey and search techniques
- Interpretation of Barn Owl evidence
- Health and Safety and risk assessments
- Planning and mitigation strategies for Barn Owls

What to expect from the Online ABOSM course

- Full training from knowledgeable and experienced staff
- In depth course, suitable for people who have completed BOESS
- 2 digital field trips to Barn Owl sites
- A certificate of attendance
- Ongoing support from the Barn Owl Trust
- **This advanced course is specifically designed for past participants of BOESS**

The ABOSM course covers:

This course is designed to offer participants further training and experience through remote surveys. There are 2 virtual field trips – one to improve Barn Owl surveying techniques and the second to take a practical look at good Barn Owl habitat, its management, and a Wildlife Tower. These are new sites not visited on the BOESS course. Presentations include: advanced survey techniques, the formulation of mitigation strategies, recommendations, and reports.

You can register your interest in either of these upcoming courses by contacting us on info@barnowltrust.org.uk.

Barn Owls in the Vineyards of California



Cal Poly Humboldt's Barn Owl Research Team is a grant-funded project in the Johnson Habitat Ecology Lab at California Polytechnic University Humboldt in Arcata, California, USA. The Johnson lab's unifying theme of habitat ecology – how animals interact with their environment - guides our research on Barn Owls (*Tyto furcata*) in working landscapes, specifically winegrape vineyards. These landscapes include farms, rangelands, and managed forests where many of us live, work, and recreate. Working landscapes provide us with the foods and fibers used to sustain human communities and economies. They can also provide homes for wildlife, sequester carbon, filter and store water, cycle key nutrients, and offer people places of refuge and inspiration - all of which are considered 'ecosystem services'. Ecosystem services refer to the benefits people obtain from ecosystems and the species that are a part of them. These ecosystem services, perhaps better thought of as environmental gifts, represent a reciprocal relationship between people and the rest of nature.

Our research team has monitored approximately 300 Barn Owl nest boxes across more than 60 winegrape vineyards in Napa Valley, California since 2015. Many winegrape vineyard owners and managers have installed Barn Owl boxes across their vineyards in hopes that the owls provide an ecosystem service in the form of rodent pest control, by consuming gophers, voles, and mice. Napa Valley is one of the most well-known wine producing regions in the world. It contains a diverse network of urban development, winegrape vineyards, and native, uncultivated habitats including grasslands, oak savannas, forests, etc. Some of the main research topics addressed by our research team include: determining how Barn Owls chose which nest boxes to breed in and where they hunt, how surrounding



habitats impact hunting in vineyards, the potential of Barn Owls to control rodent populations, how variation in the feathers that make up their plumage influences preferences in habitat and prey, and whether their preferences for certain nest boxes/habitats is adaptive.

The American Barn Owl differs from the European Barn Owl (*Tyto alba*) in weight, body size, and diet, with American Barn Owls being much heavier and larger. With this in mind, our team has used The Barn Owl Trust's aging guides since the beginning of our research in Napa Valley. The aging guide was especially influential in our fieldwork this breeding season, as we needed to accurately age nestlings and fledglings in order to: decide the optimal time to handle birds for data collection while minimizing nest abandonment, collect pellets at specific points in the breeding cycle, and monitor overall nest success. We share our research and findings across many groups, including farmers, scientists, agencies, non-profits, etc.



If you would like to learn more about our research team, email us at barnowlresearch@humboldt.edu and/or find us on Instagram (@calpolyhum.barnowls) and Facebook (Cal Poly Humboldt Barn Owls).

A Trip To Worcestershire!

We have received many amazing donations over the years in response to our 'Wants List' on the back page of Feedback (page 16) but when we asked if anyone had a spare three-furrow plough...we weren't sure if we would have much luck!

But not long after asking, a Worcestershire farmer got in contact and very kindly offered us this plough. When we arrived to collect it, he loaded it onto the trailer, secured the load...and provided tea! Thank you so much - we look forward to trying it out later this year to prepare the ground for sowing the winter bird crop in the LLP.

All donations - big or small - really are greatly appreciated. Thank you.



Reducing Barn Owl-Vehicle Collisions

The verge of a trunk road is an inhospitable place, even if you are kitted out with goggles, hard-hat, boots, gloves and hi-viz. Standing there, you are buffeted by powerful turbulence, bombarded by awful sounds, and faced with the sight of high-speed vehicles whizzing by uncomfortably close, some of which weigh well over 20 tonnes. I and my colleague Matt Twiggs have recently had plenty of opportunities to experience these sensations first-hand, while working on a funded project to inform the South West Trunk Road utility provider on how to reduce the number of Barn Owl fatalities.



Photo by Mark Fullerton

So how do Barn Owls cope with this extreme environment?

Unsurprisingly, the answer is 'very badly'. They are more vulnerable to collisions than most species for several reasons. They are drawn to the prey-rich grassy verges, they hunt on the wing at the same height as the traffic, and their slow, drifting flight means they are easily caught up in the turbulent wake of passing vehicles. The outcome is that an estimated one quarter of juvenile Barn Owls die on trunk roads each year, along with one-sixth of adults. Not only are they more frequently killed on trunk-roads than many other wildlife species, but they are also much rarer than most of the other wildlife species that are frequently killed.

In 2003, David Ramsden identified two key methods of reducing Barn Owl deaths: Planting trees beside trunk roads to create screens that prevent Barn Owls from flying into the traffic stream, and maintaining the grass on verges to be really short, so small mammals can't survive there. Although these measures have since been widely recommended, action has yet to be taken. However, in April 2019 a conversation began to develop between the Barn Owl Trust and Kier Highways, who manage vegetation along trunk roads on behalf of National Highways and were keen to receive practical advice on preventing so many deaths. After an initial meeting on December 12th and the inevitable setbacks of 2020, in February 2021 the Trust was informed that funding was available from the 5-year Regional Infrastructure Strategy. To qualify for funding, the Trust would need to use its data to identify where Barn Owls were being killed and display this information using a Geographical Information System.

Work began, and on 4th of March 2022 we handed in a 77-page document 'Mitigating Barn Owl-Vehicle Collisions on the South West Trunk Road Network: Where and How'. It contains an analysis of 346 Barn Owl-vehicle collision records to identify high-risk road sections, including 40 records from the Barn Owl online survey. Many thanks to all those citizen scientists who have recorded their Barn Owl sightings on the survey webpage www.barnowlsurvey.org.uk.

These high-risk sections are 10 km long and are the perfect places to begin work on reducing the death-toll. The report also includes careful evaluations of exact locations where Barn Owls have been killed, based on measurements of vegetation, road width, and the height of the carriageway relative to the surrounding countryside. Knowing what the roads are like where

accidents tend to happen, helped us to design the measures intended to reduce fatalities. We advocate continual screening with double rows of tightly-packed trees and as close to the road as permissible, with grass along the standard 2 metre verge kept to a maximum of 10 cm long. Short sections of wire mesh fencing should be used to plug gaps in the screen where bridges and power cables make trees impossible.

Perhaps the most critical aspect of the report is the detailed descriptions of exactly what sort of vegetation needs to be where on high-risk sections of trunk roads. This was achieved by six days of visits to the M5, M4, A38 and A30. The field work could only be carried out after receiving safety training and, where necessary, we were also in the company of a Kier Highways ecologist. Although we had already made extensive use of satellite images and street-view photos, there was nothing quite like actually standing where many owls have been killed and asking: 'what exactly needs to happen here?'. Although our main objective was to document our mitigation recommendations, we found a total of 10 dead Barn Owls over the six days. Six of them were spotted on the roadside as we drove the many kilometres to and from where we were working, but four owls were a grim confirmation of our data in the form of further fatalities right in the high-risk sections we had identified for mitigation.

In another section of the report we address how taking action will help meet the Road Investment Strategy pledge of achieving net biodiversity gain by 2040. To use 'net gain' in the context of devastating mortality rates is very counter-intuitive. However, given the high biodiversity loss implied when every Barn Owl is killed, there needs to be a higher biodiversity gain elsewhere. Thus, the most direct and least risky approach to net gain is to prevent loss.

There may be an important factor contributing to the worrying lack of any previous attempts to reduce the numbers of Barn Owls killed: doubt. A scientific evaluation of how effective the proposed measures are could well dispel uncertainty, but therein lies a Catch-22. An evaluation of mitigation measures requires a fairly large-scale project, and it is precisely this sort of project that struggles for approval because there is no existing evaluation. But it is time to break this destructive cycle! So, in our new report the Trust specifies and advocates a trial of mitigation measures that can be monitored, evaluated, developed, and ultimately expanded.

Dr Mateo Ruiz
Conservation and Science Officer

Bird News

Bird Hospital

In the Autumn 2021 Feedback we mentioned a brood of two Barn Owls that were already in a release aviary and were expected to be released when the time was right. These were duly released on August 25th, but unfortunately didn't return for food. Another Barn Owl was brought to the Trust on October 1st, and although he was a little underweight there were no obvious injuries. He was moved to the release aviary just three days later and the roof was gently raised to give him freedom on October 14th. This bird was in no hurry to leave, and on February 22nd he was recorded taking food from the aviary on a camera trap. We are still leaving food daily and won't stop until we're certain he doesn't need it.

Two Tawny Owls arrived at the Trust in October 2021, and both were successfully rehabilitated and released. One was from Salcombe Regis and took a month to recover a healthy condition and the other was from Plymouth and had an injured wing. Thankfully, this healed well, and the owl was released 16 days later. In January 2022 a third Tawny Owl was brought to the Trust by BOT supporter, Esther Van Delft, on her first mission as a live owl transport volunteer. This magnificent female Tawny had been picked up dazed on a road near Callington, and then spent two days under observation at Westmoor Vets, Tavistock. Happily, she was able to fly strongly when we let her try in one of our aviaries. She was ringed and Esther released her at a quiet spot near where she was found, just two days later.

In September 2021 we received a wild female Barn Owl that had been found near Liskeard. However, she was very subdued and unresponsive, and quietly died two days later. In February a Barn Owl was found near Kennford, but it was also too late for this bird. Although the owl survived the journey to our rehab facilities

and received attention, it unfortunately died 10 hours later. On September 17th we received a female Barn Owl that had been removed from an unlicensed collection, and she was in very poor condition with very worn primary feathers. Sadly, she never recovered and died on November 2nd.

A third Barn Owl was found in March, this time in a barn near Woodbury. There was an obviously damaged wing, which was confirmed as an open fracture after volunteer Kim McNeil transported it to City Vets in Heavitree. However, the injury was so bad that the owl was put to sleep, so it never arrived at the Trust. This bird was a female, and because our Trustee Keith Grant had ringed her as an owlet we know she was 2 years 8 months old, and had travelled 2.5 km from where she had hatched.



Camera trap captures a released Barn Owl returning to the mobile aviary for food

Sanctuary

On October 20th a much-loved captive bred Barn Owl called Grace died, after spending 18 years at the sanctuary. Tawny Owl Norman also died in the same month, after a peaceful 11 years residing with us here at the Barn Owl Trust.

Dr. Mateo Ruiz

Conservation and Science Officer

In Memoriam

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

Remembering the Barn Owl Trust in your Will is a very special way to support the future of the Barn Owl in the UK. It's never too early to think about the world we leave behind and many of you have chosen to leave gifts in your wills to charities of all types. Gifts in wills help us to save, support and protect Barn Owls and other wildlife, and their habitats for future generations. In the past we have been left legacies, both small and substantial, and each and every one is greatly appreciated - Thank You.

The Trust has received legacies from the estates of:

Joyce Ruby Aldridge, Peter Blood,
Michael Edney Coles, Janace Margaret Heslop,
Harvey Kendall & Michael Cradock Robinson

and donations in memory of:

Nora Dorothy Coombes, Christopher Harrison,
Harvey Kendall, David Pearson,
Margaret Richardson, John Roe,
Martin Luther Smith, Rebecca Jayne Smith,
Christine Walker, Enid Wells
& Gwen S Wilson

Michael Edney Coles
2nd August 1932 - 2nd November 2021.

'My uncle had a real affection for Barn Owls and during his time at Hullavington as a fire officer, he spent many hours of his spare time rescuing and rehabilitating owls and I know he would be thrilled that proceeds from his estate will go towards Barn Owls'



Quote from Mr Cole's niece - Nicky Hill who kindly gave permission to use this photograph of her uncle.

Sleepy Dormouse Update

It might be true that anyone asked a random question about dormice, will recall from their childhood the Lewis Carroll character in Alice in Wonderland and the Mad Hatter's Tea Party where the Dormouse is always falling asleep and perhaps the line: "You might just as well say," added the Dormouse, who seemed to be talking in his sleep, "that I breathe when I sleep is the same thing as I sleep when I breathe". This characterisation is actually not far from reality.



Torpid juvenile Dormouse.

The native Common Dormouse or Hazel Dormouse to give it its full name hibernates from October through to April and even during the summer months, it will spend periods during the day in 'torpor', a state of physical inactivity or sluggishness bordering on deep sleep. The Dormouse is rarely seen as it is almost exclusively nocturnal and arboreal, and therefore its true distribution and exact UK population size are very difficult to estimate. In Devon, there are around 600 sites where the Dormouse has been recorded. Core areas are east Devon, along the west Dorset and west Somerset border, and the Teign Valley edge with Dartmoor, which in particular have high concentrations of Dormouse records. Records seem more scattered but are still numerous across mid and north Devon, the South Hams, and much of Dartmoor.



Four baby Dormice around two weeks old

One aspect of Dormouse behaviour discovered in the late 1980's was that Dormice will utilise bird nest boxes for both shelter and nesting which prompted the design of a specific box for Dormice. Of a similar size to a tit box, the entrance hole faces inwards towards the tree trunk with spacing bars either side of the hole to create the entry space required. This also serves to restrict access by inquisitive tits although their nests are always likely to be found in any sample of Dormouse boxes examined. Dormice take

readily to boxes even where previously, only natural sites were

available and therefore this has proved vital in enabling zoologists to better understand Dormouse biology and ecology through population studies centred around the regular inspection of boxes.

The Dormouse constructs a woven, grapefruit-sized domed nest ball from grasses but especially stripped honeysuckle bark where this is available, which is then topped with fresh leaves. The use of 'green' leaves, usually hazel, is distinctive and helps distinguish nests from those of the Wood Mouse, the

only other rodent found regularly in nest boxes, and which uses dead brown leaves taken from the ground. Generally, the best Dormouse habitat is any woodland, species-rich hedge or area of woody scrub especially mature coppiced hazel stands with a rich understorey of plants such as bramble and importantly, honeysuckle.



Adult Dormouse.



Dormouse nest in situ

At the Barn Owl Trust, there had previously been evidence of dormouse presence some years ago but had not been formally confirmed. In early 2018, 25 boxes were sited along suitable hedge boundaries surrounding the 26 acres of the Lennon Legacy Project. During that first year's initial inspections, 3 boxes had both nests and 1 adult dormouse in each and later inspections revealed a further 3 boxes with Dormice nests present. Subsequent years have yielded both nests and adults but to date, no confirmed breeding nests have been discovered. As a result of the very cold and wet Spring in 2021, Dormouse presence was very much reduced and provides an indicator as to how vulnerable these beautiful and rare mammals are to changes in climate and habitat loss. We shall hope for improved breeding indicators in future years.

All Photos by Tony Hulatt

Tony Hulatt
BOT Volunteer

The Owly Inbox

Dear Barn Owl Trust

Dear Barn Owl Trust,

I thought you might like to see this clip of my barn owls renewing their bond. Video taken a couple of days ago. The chirping sound is sweet!

Regards, **Beatrice Potter**



Photo Provided

Good afternoon Beatrice,

Thank you so much for this footage! I must say, we all melted here in the admin team watching that little film. I have forwarded it onto the Conservation team which they will absolutely treasure too – Thank you!
I wish you (and the Barn Owls) all the best in this year; would love to hear if their bonding worked and they manage to raise a brood this year!

Kind regards, **Anne-Marie**

Good afternoon Anne-Marie,

I am glad you liked the little film. I must say I have the camera on the whole time whilst I am at my desk... Last year (21) I watched the first egg hatch. They raised all 5 owlets to fledge in mid- September. Two hang around for a bit near their "birthing" tree. One was shown to me dead as it had been hit by a car. One dead but how have the other four fared? Who knows.

I love their juvenile faces! The box was full of pellets right to the top... So it was cleaned out whilst the adults were in my other box...I hope all our Barn Owls have a good 2022.

All best wishes, **Beatrice**

Joe's Fundraising Bounce

Joe Boyce, age 12, has recently completed a sponsored 'jumpathon' for his Civic Award and chose The Barn Owl Trust as his charity, because of his obsession with birds.

He managed to jump 1548 times on his trampoline and raised £155. Joe presented the cheque to Rick Lockwood from the conservation team after a short tour of the trust.

Thank you Joe for your splendid efforts.



One Small Step for Nature

We are very fortunate to have 5 acres of land that is grazed by our ponies, which includes 4 large Oak trees in the hedgerow. Several years ago our local Barn Owl group put up 2 Barn Owl Boxes in the Oak trees and we had one chick born about 5 years ago then the jackdaws took over and much to our disappointment we didn't have any more. Last year we decided to leave a margin down one side and to our delight we had 2 chicks born who fledged a few weeks later after being ringed.



Photos Provided

This year we decided to leave a third of our field un-grazed and uncut and having put up an owl cam (my xmas present) we were thrilled when we saw 2 Barn Owls occupying one of our boxes however this was short lived as the Jackdaws were once again fighting for the box and eventually won. We were absolutely gutted for about 4 weeks then picked up that the Owls had moved to the other box so enjoyed watching them for the next few weeks. In July our local Barn Owl Group come and check the box and this year we were absolutely amazed when they said we had 4 chicks. WOW ! When they came back 2 weeks

later to ring them I was able to be there to watch. As the 4 female chicks

have grown we have had the most fantastic few weeks watching

them grow and fledge. It has

been fascinating seeing them learn to fly, fight for food, cuddle and kiss each other and shout

when they wanted food. The most awesome experience was one night seeing the 4 young chicks and their mum flying

around at the bottom of our field. We consider ourselves incredibly fortunate to have experienced our family of 5 owls all flying together.



Our grandchildren have also been able to be part of this amazing experience and we have now built a hide for our 7 year old grandson called Olly's Hide. The first night we went in the Hide we heard a Tawny Owl, then it flew right past us and into the woods. That was the first time we had ever seen a Tawny Owl in the wild. Olly has also sold potted Sunflower seeds this summer and donated over £200 to wildlife charities, all his own idea.

Since then we have had a large pond dug in the field for Great Crested Newts and are planting a woodland this Autumn, all with help from our Wildlife Trust. So from just 'One Small Step' of leaving an un grazed area of land this has changed our lives in the most incredible way.

Helen Broughton

More Owly Inbox News



BOT & Ethical Banking

Given the current Climate and Ecological Emergency the Barn Owl Trust made the decision to keep our conservation funds deposited with Triodos and with CAF Bank. Triodos is a mission-based institution which only lends to organisations that create social, environmental, and cultural value such as charities, community projects and environmental initiatives. CAF Bank is a not-for-profit bank which offers interest bearing current and deposit accounts to charities and not-for-profit organisations. We want to be sure that the money donated to us is not invested in fossil fuels or in the arms trade, in oppressive regimes or third world debt.

As a private individual, have you ever asked yourself if your bank is aligned with your ethics and values? Where people choose to put their money can have a positive impact on how banks invest the money deposited with them and ultimately therefore, on the planet. You might consider opening an ethical banking savings account if you want to be certain that your money won't be invested in companies you would consider unethical. More and more people are thinking ethically about their own bank accounts and choosing to bank with institutions such as Triodos, who are reckoned to be one of the most ethical banks available in the UK. Other ethical UK banks include the Co-operative Bank, Starling Bank, and Nationwide – but there are others to choose from too. If you've decided to switch to a more ethical bank, do let your current bank know why you are leaving. The more voices they hear, the quicker things will change.



Lockdown Project



Andrew Rogers contacted The Barn Owl Trust and spoke to our Assistant Conservation Officer Pip. He sent in some lovely photographs of him and his boys making a Barn Owl box which was a home schooling project during lockdown last year. What a brilliant idea, we hope you all really enjoyed the project. Well done boys (and dad) it looks fantastic!

You can find all about building a Barn Owl box on our website:

www.barnowltrust.org.uk/barn-owl-nestbox

Wild Life Drawing



Photo: Mike Glide for Wild Life Drawing.

At Wild Life Drawing in London, we host life drawing classes with a difference - the human form is replaced by a host of wonderful animals from frogs to falcons; piranhas to piglets. Our classes are for everyone from total beginners to professional artists- the focus is on the process more than the outcome. We believe that observational drawing is a great way to learn about a subject, and that the more people know about the natural world, the more they will want to protect it. We donate a proportion of each ticket sale to animal charities or conservation



Photo: Mike Glide for Wild Life Drawing.

efforts connected to the species we draw, resulting in thousands of pounds raised. Since the pandemic, we have run online classes in collaboration with sanctuaries and rescue centres around the world, alongside our magical in-person classes.

Our very first class back in 2014 was a collaboration with a birds of prey centre who have gone on to be one of our firm favourites - Sky Birds of Prey, based in Kent. The centre is run by passionate experts, and they house a variety of raptors, owls and vultures. As well as caring for their birds, the team works with local wildlife groups and the RSPCA to rescue and rehabilitate injured wild birds. At the 2021 Big Draw Festival, we were delighted to welcome some of our finest feathered friends along - Alfie the Canadian Great Horned Owl, Barry the Bengal Eagle Owl and Rex the Spectacled Owl. All of the animals we draw are happy, healthy and well cared for, and that shows in their characters. These three gorgeous owls proved to be great models, and everyone's drawings were fantastic! We were delighted to donate 10% of each ticket sold to the Barn Owl Trust. **Find out more at wildlifedrawing.co.uk or follow us on [@wildlifedrawing](https://www.instagram.com/wildlifedrawing).**

Get in Touch

We love sharing news from our supporters!
We would love to hear from you!

Please get in touch at: info@barnowltrust.org.uk.

Perhaps your story could be featured in the next issue of our Feedback magazine

Radio-Tracking Research

What happens to young Barn Owls as they grow up? Radio-tracking provides some answers...

In many ways, a Barn Owl nest site is an ideal place to study these wonderful creatures. The owls tend to return to the same site each year, making them comparatively predictable. They readily use nestboxes, which can be designed to have suitable inspection panels, or even cameras. The young owls stay in the nest for the first eight weeks of their lives, giving a relatively ample time window for observing them. Furthermore, for over a month the adults usually spend the day away from the nest, which creates excellent opportunities to visit the site without causing any disturbance to the breeding pair.

A similarly convenient state of affairs does not continue once the young birds leave the nest site. Granted, they will return to roost there while they develop their ability to fly, and even while they explore the nearby surroundings. However, the time will come when they embark on a journey into mystery we struggle to follow. Juvenile dispersal is a dangerous period in the owls' lives and their survival strongly influences the size of the population as a whole.



Despite this, for many years we have been poorly informed as to what these young birds experience. Although the distance from a nest site and the time elapsed is calculated when ringed juveniles are found dead, further details on how and where they moved during dispersal have been sorely missing.

Radio-tracking offers incredible opportunities for gaining insight into when and where birds move. However, there are considerable limitations when studying juvenile dispersal in Barn Owls. While GPS tags are extremely useful for tracking the movements of adults, the birds need to be re-captured in order to access the data and when a young Barn Owl sets off to look for a new home range, there is no knowing where it will go, making recapture very unlikely. A further problem is the power source of the transmitter. Usually, a small solar panel can provide the necessary energy, but on a nocturnal species this is hopeless. The Barn Owl Trust has been well aware of these problems for over 20 years and in 1998 it was getting to grips with emerging technology, albeit with limited success. Now, years of work have taken shape in a scientific article on radio-tracked juvenile Barn Owls, that was produced in collaboration with co-authors from two other conservation organisations. Brian Cresswell of Lotek UK and Simon Roper and Jack Skuse from Ambios Ltd have teamed up with two members of the BOT Conservation Team to submit work for peer review and publication in the British Trust for Ornithology Journal 'Bird Study'.

In 2003 some careful trials were carried out by fitting 10g tags to Barn Owls in captivity and at nest sites. Video surveillance was then used to check the birds were not affected by the equipment. Radio tracking began in earnest in 2004, and continued through 2005, 2008 and 2009. Following the young owls was no mean feat, even with the tags on! Radio-tracking in Dorset and Cornwall was coordinated by Brian Cresswell and in Devon by Jack Skuse. In total, 28 people helped and radio-tracking teams spent an average of 12 hours every week trying to relocate the tagged owls. Although the owls sometimes used a roost site more than once, more often than not they had moved to somewhere completely different. So, the trackers first went to

where an owl had last been recorded roosting, and then moved to higher ground nearby to give the receivers better range.

Nineteen juveniles were tagged in all, two of them had hatched in a pole-mounted nestbox, two in a tree-mounted nestbox and the rest in nestboxes in buildings. They began to roost away from their nest site between the ages of 63 and 122 days, with a mean average of 93 days. Once they had made the first leap and roosted elsewhere, there was no looking back! They didn't use the nest site again, with the exception of one bird on just one occasion. Even though few of the owls hatched in trees, they nearly all used trees as their first day roost and preferred tree roosts in general. However, as winter set in the survivors switched to nestboxes, which shows the importance of providing dry and sheltered refuges.

The radio-tracking enabled a good overview of the range of their dispersal. The average distance at which birds were recorded from their nest site reached its maximum of 8 km after three months of dispersal, and then it dropped and fluctuated between 5 and 7 km for the next three months. Female owls tended to move further between roosts than males, suggesting wider ranging movements. This may be because females tend to settle where males have already selected a nest site and are actively trying to attract a mate.

Ten of the young owls were successfully radio-tracked right through their dispersal, to when they settled on their own home range at an average of 5.65 km from where they had hatched. The altitude at which they settled was similar to that of their home range. However, there was a noticeable tendency for birds that hatched at higher altitudes to disperse through more elevated landscapes, and then settle further down. There has been much speculation about whether Barn Owls use major roads or rivers as dispersal corridors. However, no relationship could be found between the position of roost sites and these linear features.

The odds are stacked against a newly independent young Barn Owl, with an estimated 17-30% surviving their first year in Britain. Unsurprisingly, thirteen of the tagged owls either quickly disappeared or were found dead. However, six birds survived well into dispersal or onto their home range before signal was lost.

Animal movement is a complex and challenging area of research that has captured the interest of many biologists and a wide public. This engagement with nature is important in itself, as it kindles a badly needed sense of connection with the natural world. Some of the findings also have implications for conservation, such as the importance of nestboxes to juvenile survival, or the added risk of vehicle collision that female Barn Owls are exposed to by dispersing further, which gives weight to justifications for mitigation measures on trunk roads. On the other hand, much biological research can seem irrelevant to the urgent actions that are needed to conserve our wildlife and ecosystems in an era of spreading extinction. Nonetheless, methods of biodiversity conservation are continually adapting to the developing circumstances of a rapidly changing world, and learning through new research is important because our knowledge of nature must grow to keep pace.



We used 'Sika' receivers with 'Yagi Flex' antennas for tracking - supplied by Lotek UK Ltd.

Dr. Mateo Ruiz

Conservation and Science Officer

A Case for Coexistence

These healthy Barn Owl owlets are on top of an old Jackdaw nest, showing how different species can use a nest box in succession.



'Nature's Balance' suggests an intricate system of plants and animals that all exist in a constant state of perfect equilibrium. But how realistic is the so-called 'steady-state' perception of population dynamics? Although it was the predominant view held by biologists up until the 1950s, the 'non-equilibrium' perspective has since been accepted as an essential counterpart. An understanding that incorporates dramatically fluctuating populations, extinctions and colonisations is particularly relevant in an age when humans have taken the role of a disturbing force of geological proportions. Even without our influence, natural systems are characterised by strong dynamics and nature's balance could equally be seen as a never-ending series of adjusting interrelationships.

For Barn Owls on the British Isles, changing interrelationships can result from fluctuations in population levels of other species that use Barn Owl nestboxes. For example, if Jackdaws begin using a Barn Owl nestbox it is hard for any prospecting owls to ignore the large heap of sticks, mud and bits-and-bobs that quickly accumulates. For the human who put the box up, the reaction can range from resigned amusement to bitter despair! More Jackdaws could mean less available Barn Owl nestboxes and with a UK population of around 1.5 million pairs, the Jackdaw is by no means rare. In contrast to most other farmland birds, both the short- and the long-term trends are actually increasing. Jackdaws are good communicators with a strong pair-bond, so much so that they can team up to oust larger species from nest sites, including the fierce Tawny Owl. However, even Jackdaws have their adversaries, as shown by Fred Koning, who with the help of his son has monitored raptors in a Dutch study site for over 60 years. He found that when Goshawks recolonised their study area, they limited the Jackdaw population to such an extent that Tawny Owl nesting success increased. Thus, the recent return of the Goshawk to the British countryside brings with it the possibility that Barn Owls in the future may have less competition for nest sites.

Besides Jackdaws, the Grey Squirrel and the Stock Dove are other common squatters in a Barn Owl nestbox. While the Grey Squirrel is an invasive species and hopefully high on the menu of our multiplying Goshawks, the Stock Dove is in a very different position. Commonly perceived as a 'pigeon', this species can be distinguished from the Wood Pigeon and Rock Dove by the beautiful colour on its back: a delicate shade of blue with purple hues. However, in our view a nestbox has been put to good use if it is adopted by this Amber-listed species of European conservation concern and we are happy to know its population has increased in the UK. Furthermore, we have plenty of cases of Stock Doves and Barn Owls alternating their use of nestboxes, and occasionally even cohabiting!

Although the Red Kite does not enter nestboxes, it is another example of a species that has caught people's attention as it

gains lost ground and gradually spreads to occupy its former range in the UK. Interestingly, people have expressed their concern that these large, swift raptors may catch and eat Barn Owls. However, an extensive analysis of 1,371 Red Kite pellets collected in Wales showed that while the kites had preyed on 21 bird species, none of them were owls or raptors. Indeed, members of the crow family made up 28% of all the birds eaten. Hopefully, these findings give reassurance that the coexistence of these wonderful birds is entirely viable, as evidenced by their overlapping range in Europe.

The Pine Marten is another predator that we hope will become more widespread in the UK. With a current population of between 1,600 to 8,900, it is classed as being of 'Least Concern' in Scotland but Critically Endangered in England and Wales. Encouragingly, the historic and recent trend is positive, with their range expanding south and east in Scotland and over the Scottish border into Northumbria and Cumbria. Furthermore, translocation projects have helped reinforce populations in Wales and reintroduce the species in the Forest of Dean. But how might this affect Barn Owls?

Here we can learn something from our previous correspondence with people from areas where Pine Martens and Barn Owls already coexist. The Hungarian Barn Owl Foundation informed us that Pine Martens do not interact with the owls, because the Pine Martens are strictly associated with dense woodland, which Barn Owls rarely enter. On the other hand, in some areas they are more prone to leaving the woods and we have received reports of Pine Martens using Barn Owl boxes in Serbia and Scotland. People contacting us from Ireland, northern England and Scotland have enquired about how to make Barn Owl nestboxes Pine Marten-proof. This is no mean feat, as Pine Martens are capable of scaling walls and leaping from branches. Using sheet metal or plastic fixed flat to the wall and the box can make a slippery barrier that only allows airborne access. However, we can also take advantage of the different requirements of the two species: The Barn Owl being a bird of open countryside that readily enters man-made structures, whereas the Pine Marten is a mammal with a generally more woodland ecology. Importantly, Barn Owl nestboxes in agricultural buildings are much less likely to be visited by the Martens than nestboxes on trees. Furthermore, locating nestboxes in barns that are neither close to woods nor surrounded by trees should further reduce the chances of inquisitive attention.

While we have received no reports of Pine Martens raiding Barn Owl nests or killing the adults, it is inevitable that these two, native, cavity-dwelling species interact. However, the resulting dynamics are not undesirable because, in the words of Fred Koning, Pine Martens "...belong to the system". In fact, nest predation is ultimately a process that has had an important influence on the evolution of nesting behaviour of birds. Looking at predatory feeding from the other opposite perspective: Barn Owls will occasionally take rare species of small mammal, such as the water shrew or the water vole. Dynamic predator-prey relationships should be complex in places where biodiversity is recovering, as multiple species compete, hunt and are preyed on. Indeed, there is clear evidence that diversity is a very healthy attribute, which brings resilience to biological communities. So, when a Barn Owl comes face-to-face with a natural predator or arrives at a nestbox to find that another occupant has already settled in, this is not cause for us to become alarmed or automatically seek to intervene. Instead, it may be an opportunity to see how the natural balance is constantly adjusting.

Dr Mateo Ruiz
Conservation and Science Officer

Team Talk - Saying Hello...

Jessica Mundy Reception / Administrator

Jess joined the Barn Owl Trust team in October 2021 as an administration assistant to support the current admin team.

Jess has always had a keen interest in wildlife and the outdoors, studying Zoology at the University of Reading and spending a brief period volunteering with the Barn Owl Trust back in 2000. Since then, she has spent over 15 years working within the field of outdoor education in Oxfordshire and Hertfordshire, before moving back to Devon in 2018.

In her spare time Jess enjoys walking, horse riding and caring for her small flock of Shetland sheep.



Dr Pip Laker Assistant Conservation Officer

Pip started working for the Barn Owl Trust in February 2022. She carries out a number of duties within the conservation team including responding to conservation enquiries, assisting with fieldwork and helping with outreach activities. Inspired by a love of nature, Pip has spent time researching a range of animals from bumblebees and guppies to dwarf mongooses and pheasants. She has a PhD (in animal behaviour) from the University of Exeter and an MSci in Biology from the University of Bristol. With an ever-growing concern over the climate and ecological crisis we are facing, Pip is incredibly excited to devote her time to protecting the beautiful Barn Owl and its habitat.



In her spare time Pip enjoys walking her rescued ex-racing greyhound around the Devon countryside and beaches, gardening and spending time with friends and family!



Chris Allen - Nestbox Builder

Chris joined the Trust in the autumn of 2021. A very practical and hands on person, Chris is enjoying working for the Barn Owl Trust one day a week. He has recently retired from many years working for Western Power Distribution.

Chris is the proud owner of several motorbikes and rather nice cars, and quite likes spending time out on the road in one or other of his vehicles. He also loves the countryside and in his spare time he is happy out walking with Bodger, his Border Terrier. Chris is fond of music and growing things, and is a dab hand at sourdough loaves too!



Sam Tully Admin & Legacy Officer

Sam grew up travelling the world as a Services child, and has had varied exciting careers from Air Traffic Controller to Events Manager and Leader. She has spent the last 15 years as a Veterinary Nurse in Devon.

Sam loves travelling, reading and walking the moors and has recently helped build her own house. She lives with her family in rural Devon accompanied by her needy cat Neil.

Exciting New Post

The BOT Trustees have decided to use some of the legacy income received this year to create a brand-new post. We hope that our new Reserve Officer & Volunteer Co-ordinator will increase public access to and appreciation of the natural world by encouraging individuals to join us for events and get involved in hands-on practical conservation tasks and monitoring of our 26-acre nature reserve.

The funds will support the post for 12-months and give the opportunity for people to engage in a range of seasonal activities throughout the year. They will also enable us to maintain and increase the bio-diversity of the reserve and continue to monitor the wildlife that lives and visits here.

We are currently recruiting and hope to have the new position up and running soon.



... & Goodbye

Rick Lockwood
Assistant
Conservation Officer

Rick said goodbye in late 2021. He is passionate about birds and their conservation, and has travelled widely to follow his passion, especially for raptors and owls in particular.

Rick has moved onto another conservation post in the Westcountry after 6 years at BOT. We wish him happiness in his new role.



Lisa Fordham Legacy Officer & Design

We also said goodbye to Lisa Fordham who retired at the end of March.

Lisa joined BOT in 2018 and worked as Legacy support one day a week.

She has gradually taken on more design work

over her time at BOT working one day a week on a multitude of projects including the bi-annual Feedback magazine.

She hopes to be able to spend more time with her husband, family and friends, travelling and out enjoying the countryside and coast. Having just acquired an allotment she will be growing lots of her own vegetables this year!

Lisa has loved her time here at BOT and will keep in touch with the team and hopes to visit and volunteer from time to time. We will miss her very much and the office doggies will certainly miss her drawer full of dog treats!

A Huge THANK YOU to The Three Owls Bird Sanctuary

Once again we have received generous financial support from the wonderful Three Owls Bird Sanctuary!

The Three Owls Bird Sanctuary is a registered charity that makes grants to established organisations who help wild birds and they have kindly supported the Barn Owl Trust for many years.



This sanctuary has an extraordinary history which you can read about here: www.threeowls.co.uk but in essence it was started by Mrs Eileen Watkinson in the 1960's, and then, following her death it was taken over by Nigel Fowler. Nigel was awarded the 'Volunteer of the Year Award' in 2000, for his dedication and work at the sanctuary.

Sadly, although the charity carries on (see the information on their website) the sanctuary and its aviaries had to close in 2010, and the Barn Owl Trust were approached to take on a large contingent of Tawny Owls. With the help of volunteers from Western Power, a new aviary was designed and built on the BOT site over a period of 4 (extremely busy) days. Western Power were able to do this for us as part of the community projects their trainees were encouraged to become involved in. We remain very grateful to Western Power for their support; the aviary is still functioning well and housing our resident Tawny's. The extremely tight build deadline was because 45 Tawny Owls and 2 Barn Owls from the Three Owls Bird Sanctuary were to arrive the following week – all the birds arrived safe and well and were moved into their brand-new home. The Three Owls Bird Sanctuary provided generous funds towards their future upkeep. Quite a few of the Tawny's are still alive in the sanctuary here at BOT, living well beyond their normal life expectancy.

Over the years, BOT has retained its links to the Three Owls Bird Sanctuary and have been the grateful recipients of several very generous grants. And now, post-pandemic, the wonderful Nigel and his fellow Trustees have considered us yet again and last year gave us a fantastic grant of £10,000 towards our costs. We were pleased to receive this grant which was very helpful in enabling us to recover from the impact of the pandemic, where so many funding streams were closed to us for 18 months.

Calling all Poets!

After what seems like a gap of ages, we are delighted to announce our 7th open poetry competition and invite YOU to take part.

This year's subject is *'Inspirational Nature'*. All profits from the competition will help our vital conservation work and to provide care for casualty birds. We also hope to produce Volume 7 of our *'Wildlife Words' Anthology in the Autumn of 2022* using the entries submitted.

There will be a First, Second and Third prize and six runners up will also receive certificates of commendation. The competition is open to all writers and there is no entry form required or limit to the number of entries you make. There is an entry donation of £5 for each poem submitted.

POETRY COMPETITION

Closing date
29th July 2022

For full competition rules, please visit our [website](http://www.barnowltrust.org.uk) or email info@barnowltrust.org.uk

Thanks & Things

We would like to say a big THANK YOU to all our wonderful supporters who have sent us bits for recycling, prizes for our annual draw, donated goods to sell and raise funds and items from our Wants List. **Thank you so much for all your support:**

Mrs Hague, Rob Hamar, Pam and John Harrod, Honey Ingram, Kim and Ed Mcneil, Gwyneth & Dave Parish, Celia Ralph, Janet Rutter, Elizabeth Stone, Mrs Paula West, Michelle Wheal, Mrs Elizabeth Wilson, Brian & Janet Woodford, Howdens Joinery and J. Dilnot Smith and Son Funeral Directors.

Special thanks goes to all those who have given their time to help the Trust: Jackie Atkinson, Kim Baker, Rick Barton, Bill Bishop, Esther van Delft, Harry Hingston, Tony Hulatt, Kim McNeil, Chris Marshall, Rajni Patel, Sam Tully, Kat Webb, David Withall and two groups of volunteers from Plymouth University.

To all those Fantastic Fundraisers out there - Thank You! Joe Boyce raised £160 in a sponsored trampoline venture, Billing Finance raised £500 by dressing up at Halloween, Catherine Williamson's daughter raised £50 by holding a charity raffle at her school, Tracey Morris & Shelley Wright raised another £200 by making and selling their Owl Cosies, Fiona Law from Viveka Gardens Yoga Farm raised £30 at Orchard Day and Jennie Webber from Wild Life Drawing gave 10% from each ticket sold to The Big Draw Festival (see Page 11).

A big thank you to City Vets (Exeter), Estover Vets (Plymouth) and Westmoor Vets (Tavistock) for treating injured Owls.

We are looking for volunteers, experienced electricians, plumbers and telephone engineers to help with specific projects.

CAN YOU HELP WITH:

- Folding saw horses/trestles
- Electric chain saw (cordless)
- Digital 4K Camcorder - Sony Handycam FDR-AX53
- Used stamps, including any foreign stamps & currency
- Padded envelopes (new or used)
- Postcards and pre1970 envelopes with stamps on
- Wild bird food - mainly sacks of black sunflower seeds, also peanuts & plain canary seed
- Wood for making outdoor nestboxes - sheets of 9 / 12mm tanalised ply and lengths of 25 x 50mm tanalised batten
- A4/A3 recycled paper/card both coloured and white
- Waders - any over size 7
- Old newspapers (for owl boxes in our Bird Room)
- 2 covers for 50mm tow-balls
- Brightly coloured ripstock material for banner printing
- Outdoor PIR sensor LED lights (small)
- Socket set (48 pc 1/2 inch drive)
- Extra long drill bits (3,4 & 5mm)
- Wire cutters
- Quick grip clamps
- Caravan levelling ramps (for our new trailer)
- Box Trailer (minimum 2.4m x 1.5m x 1.8m high)
- Small plate compactor
- Wintery Barn Owl images for Christmas cards
- Prizes for our Grand Draw (postable i.e. not heavy or bulky)

Tail Piece ...

There is sunshine and blue sky whilst I am writing this but rather like life, there are dark clouds looming, threatening. My walk today was accompanied by bird song and a woodpecker drumming. Daffodils flowering, Tadpoles and Brown Trout in the ponds and a flypast by 200+ Linnets. How lucky I am, and how lucky are all of us when you look around the world and see what is happening to other people. The conflict in Ukraine is quite rightly the major news story at the moment with harrowing tales of people having their lives destroyed and dying in a war that should never have started. As with all wars throughout human history the quest for power and resources has had a detrimental impact on the innocent.

Just imagine how different life would be if the resources that went into weapons and destruction were used to create a more equitable and balanced world. We could use the money for food and healthcare and to provide sanitation, clean water and a better standard of living for the poorest people on the planet.

In February, the International Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) published its report on 'Impacts, Adaptation and Vulnerability'. This was almost entirely eclipsed by the war in Ukraine but is a stark warning that we need to act now. "The scientific evidence is unequivocal: climate change is a threat to human wellbeing and the health of the planet. Any further delay in concerted global action will miss a brief and rapidly closing window to secure a liveable future." Global greenhouse emissions will have to be halved by 2030 to stand any chance of limiting warming to 1.5°C, yet at the moment they are still increasing. The report says, "global warming, reaching 1.5°C in the near-term, would cause unavoidable increases in multiple climate hazards and present multiple risks to ecosystems and humans" and that climate change is already killing people, destroying nature, and making the world poorer.

The meeting of COP26 in Glasgow last year completely failed to put the world on track to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in line with

'safe' levels of warming and we've now activated some of the tipping points that scientists have been warning us about for decades. That means that, in many cases, the damage we will see in the coming years will be beyond anything that humans and nature can adapt to.

We are already experiencing more heatwaves, flooding, droughts, and wildfires on land plus extreme hot spots in our oceans. Approximately half of all marine species assessed globally are shifting towards the poles to escape the increasing warm waters at mid-latitudes and on land a similar proportion of species are moving to higher elevations. Since the last report in 2014 this report shows much more clearly that it is human induced climate change that is causing these events and the extent and magnitude of climate change impacts are larger than in any previous assessment. Given the potential for mass-destruction we humans have developed, one would think that in the twenty-first century, we would have learnt from history that working together and sharing resources despite differences in race and religion is the only way we can ensure a peaceful and healthy future for ourselves and other species.

Covid showed us that significant changes in human behaviour are possible. The current sanctions against Russia have shown that governments can implement new policies quickly when there is a will. Reducing our dependence on fossil fuels is a necessity if we are to survive, but investment must shift to the development of renewables which are cheaper, faster, and safer than nuclear power.

The war in Ukraine has shown us all how quickly a 'civilized society' can break down. It has also shown how resilient and supportive human beings can be. Citizens around the world need to accept their differences and learn to work together to stop the wars, to elect compassionate leaders who will build a resilient, inclusive, and supportive world-wide community. *Together we can make a World of difference.*

Frances Ramsden