



FEEDBACK

REGISTERED CHARITY No 299 835

THE BARN OWL TRUST, WATERLEAT, ASHBURTON, DEVON, TQ13 7HU TELEPHONE ASHBURTON (0364) 53026

WELCOME TO FEEDBACK

The Barn Owl Trust's aims are to conserve the Barn Owl and its environment. This issue comes in a year when despite increasing awareness of the environmental problems facing the planet, Britain has had an election campaign where environmental concerns are almost completely ignored. In June world leaders meet in Rio de Janeiro for the Earth Summit. It is vital for the future of the planet and all its species that they consider how to tackle the huge environmental problems that exist. On page 7 you can read about the Tree of Life and how you personally can play a part in the Earth Summit. We all have a responsibility to protect and conserve this planet for ourselves, our children and the creatures that share it with us. You may feel that it is not possible for anything that you do to have an effect on the massive environmental problems that exist - it does seem that way, but if enough people make an effort things can change. Do what you can - it does make a difference.

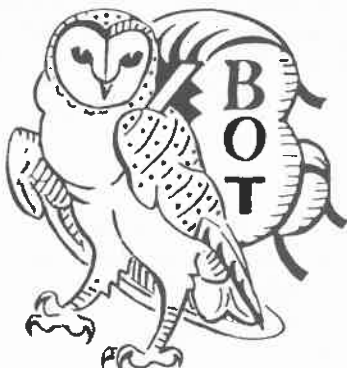
This newsletter, the first of two this year, will tell you something about the Barn Owl Trust and the work we do. We hope that you will enjoy reading it and that it will encourage you to support the Trust and to "think globally and act locally".

WORRYING BARN OWL DECLINE IN WEST DEVON

See page 3



25th MAY 1992
SPONSORED



WALK

FAMILY FUN AND FUND RAISING

To raise funds the Trust has organised a sponsored walk and picnic to take place on Bank Holiday Monday 25th May 1992. Starting between 10:00am and 10:30am the walk will go from Totnes along the old carriage road into the beautiful Sharpham Estate overlooking the Dart Estuary. Routes of both 5 miles and 8 miles have been planned. As an extra point of interest there will be an opportunity to sample and purchase wines and cheeses produced on the estate. Sharpham Point with its superb views of the River has been chosen as the picnic area for those walking the 8 mile route. Sensible footwear and a picnic lunch are essential. Dogs on leads are welcome. The Owl walk will start from the Nursery Car Park off South Street. Non-sponsored participants will be asked to make a donation of £2 per adult and 50p per child. For more details please send an SAE.

TRAINING FOR THE ARCTIC HELPS BARN OWLS

Two conservationists from the Devon Wildlife Trust, Simon Roper and Fraser Rush, are planning their second visit to Svalbard an island 625 miles from the Norwegian coast, and only 800 miles from the north pole, where they intend to photograph its wildlife. Their trip involves carrying all their belongings which means walking with weights in excess of 50lbs on their backs often over distances of more than 20 miles a day.

As well as needing to get fit for their trip, Fraser and Simon are also keen to help the Barn Owl Trust, and to satisfy both these goals are intending to take part in the Sponsored Walk on Monday 25th May - but with a difference. They intend to complete the 8 mile route twice, carrying heavy rucksacks! Anyone interested in helping them by sponsoring their Barn Owl walk should contact Simon Roper on 0392 79244.

THE RELEASE OF CAPTIVE BRED BARN OWLS IS TO BECOME ILLEGAL EXCEPT UNDER LICENCE.

See page 3

RELEASE SITE ROUNDUP

The Barn Owl Trust releases Barn Owls in Devon at selected sites with the help of volunteers. All birds are fitted with British Trust for Ornithology (BTO) rings and detailed records are kept for each site.

Stoke Gabriel

This site is one of two long term release sites planned by the Trust in 1991. Two adult birds were released in August when the female was on eggs. The male roosted in the barn after release, and the female hatched two young. At two weeks old they were found dead in the box. The male Barn Owl was also found dead in the release site, cause unknown, approximately 20 days after release. The female remained at the site and continued taking food.

Holsworthy

A pair of Barn Owls were installed here for a long term release. Two attempts to breed failed, and in September the adults were released without young. Both adults returned to the site and took food for only 3 days before disappearing.

Chagford

Five owlets were installed here in May, and by the end of June all the owlets had fledged and were roosting away from the box, although they continued to take food through into August.

Chillington

Four owlets were placed at this site in August. Food has been taken by the owls throughout the winter and into April 1992, although the birds are no longer roosting at the site.

Cullumpton

A brood of four owlets from a late hatching were placed in a tree nest box at this site in October. Fledging coincided with a period of bad weather, including gales, and two owlets were recovered on the ground below the box, and transferred to an alternative nestbox within the shelter of a barn. Owlets were seen at the tree nest box until mid November and took food until early December. The owlets in the barn were seen until late December and continued taking food until the 28th of that month.

Tawstock

At this 1988 long term release site the adult owls disappeared suddenly and the young dispersed gradually. In 1991 we placed another pair of owls for a further attempt at release, but they were subsequently removed when a wild Barn Owl appeared in the vicinity.

The following sites have been used for release in previous years and have owls present this year.

Hollowcombe

This 1986 release site produced a brood of six owlets last year. Four fledged successfully bringing the total of owls fledged from this site to forty five. One owlet was found dead in a field in March 1992,

nine months after ringing.

Dunsford

A pair of owls were released from here in 1987. After breeding successfully each year since release, and double brooding in 1990, only one owl was present at the site in the 1991 breeding season. In December 1991 the adult male was found dead on the A30 dual carriageway, four years and six months after release, approximately 4km from the release site. A single owl was seen at the site in January 1992.

Woodland

This is a 1987 long term release site where Barn Owls bred in the spring, and disappeared early the following summer. Sightings of owls stopped at the end of 1988, but at the end of 1990 a Barn Owl appeared and began using the barn again. Two Barn Owls were seen roosting in the barn during the summer of 1991 and in April 1992 a Barn Owl was seen flying out at dusk. Arrangements have been made to put up nestboxes on neighbouring farmland.

Bicton

Barn Owls were released here in 1988 and owls have been present since this time, although BTO ringing of owlets has proved very difficult as the birds are using inaccessible nest sites.

Yealinton

A 1988 young clutch release site - Barn Owls bred here in 1990, 1991 and currently have 3 eggs.

Moniton

This site was used for a young clutch release in 1989. As a result a breeding pair was successfully established and breeding occurred in 1990 and again in 1991 when two owlets were ringed.

Woodbury Salterton

This is a 1989 long term release site where breeding occurred in 1991 and three owlets were ringed. In April 1992 two adults were seen in the building and flying around in the vicinity.

Branscombe

At this 1989 long term release site the adults reared two broods of owlets in the release year and a further two broods in both 1990 and 1991 - a total of nineteen owlets. In February 1992 an adult male was found dead at the release site. One Barn Owl was seen at the site during March.

Rattery

A young clutch was released from this site in 1989, occasional sightings have been reported both here and at another 1987 release site within one mile. A Barn owl is being seen with increasing frequency at this site.

Kenn

At this 1990 young clutch release site Barn Owls have stayed. They bred and reared five owlets in May 1991 and a further four in September. Owls have remained at the site during the winter and we hope they will breed again this year.

NATIONAL BARN OWL LIAISON

The National Barn Owl Liaison Group (BOLG), coordinated by the Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC), meets biannually to discuss the latest research and conservation issues relating to the species. Group members are drawn from national bodies involved with Barn Owls and include the Barn Owl Trust, British Trust for Ornithology (BTO), Representatives from Edinburgh University, JNCC the Royal Society for Protection of Birds (RSPB) and the Hawk and Owl Trust (HOT). In 1991 this group wrote the Department of the Environment (DOE) suggesting the addition of the Barn Owl to Schedule 9 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act. As a result the DOE convened a Barn Owl Working Group (BOWG) in November 1991 with representatives from the BOLG and other bodies to discuss issues relating to the release of captive bred Barn Owls and make recommendations to the Minister regarding schedule 9.



LICENSING OF BARN OWL RELEASE SCHEMES

In February 1992, David Trippier, the then Minister for the Environment, announced that the Barn Owl would indeed be added to Schedule 9, making it illegal to release Barn Owls except under licence. This is will come into effect when the addition is made and is likely to be in the Autumn this year (1992) and should not affect people releasing birds this year. The DOE's Wildlife Division at Tollgate House, Houlton Street, Bristol. BS2 9DJ. will be the body responsible for the issue of licences and we advise anyone involved in the release of Barn Owls to contact DOE and request a copy of the Code of Practice and licence application form.

The DOE Barn Owl Working Group includes representatives from Barn Owl Trust, British Bird Council, British Owl Breeding and Release Scheme, British Trust for Ornithology, DOE, Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group, Hawk and Owl Trust, Joint Nature Conservation Committee, Royal Society for Prevention of Cruelty to Animals and The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds. The group has been working together to produce the Code of Practice for release operators which will be issued with licence application forms. Licence conditions will include BTO ringing for all Barn Owls for release, adherence to the Code of Practice, diligently kept records and an end of year report for each release site operated.

It is hoped that these measures should help to prevent the widespread and indiscriminate (and largely unsuccessful) release of captive bred birds whilst at the same time encouraging those that take release seriously to ring their birds, keep good records and assess the long term value of their work.

In March David Ramsden, Barn Owl Trust Conservation Officer, gave a presentation on release methods, monitoring and results to the BOWG.

The DOE is currently compiling a list of names and addresses of people wishing to receive a copy of the Code of Practice and/or a licence application form when the legislation comes into effect later in the year.

WORRYING DECLINE IN WEST DEVON

An intensive search of 22 square kilometres between Sourton and Lifforddown has revealed a rapid decline in Barn Owl numbers and distribution since 1983. At the time of the last National Barn Owl Survey (1983-85) there were 16 locations within the 22 square kms where regular Barn Owl sightings were reported - currently there is only 1. There were 14 occupied roosting sites - now there are only 3. There were 4 sites where Barn Owls used to breed - currently there are none.

No obvious cause for the decline is apparent. The use of rat poisons has not increased dramatically. Most of the traditional roosting and breeding sites are still available. Foraging areas look average to good with some areas of very prey rich rough grassland. Unfortunately two of the remaining three roosts are likely to be lost soon as a new A30 dual carriageway is now under construction and passes within 300 metres of the sites. Barn Owl Trust studies in the region have shown that 62% of all known Barn Owl mortality occurs on major roads.

The Barn Owl survey was commissioned by Devon County Council acting as agents for the Department of Transport as part of an environmental impact study of the A30. The Council also paid for the erection of 10 Barn Owl nestboxes, put up by Barn Owl Trust staff just over 1 km from the new road.

It is hoped that the new nestboxes will encourage successful breeding away from the new road which may help offset the inevitable increase in road mortality once the new A30 dual-carriageway is opened. Human residents along the route of the old A30 are no doubt pleased that the juggernauts rumbling past their front doors will be diverted elsewhere. The few remaining Barn Owls resident along the new route are blissfully unaware of the danger posed by fast traffic.

RINGING

During 1991 Keith Grant and David Ramsden have BTO ringed 96 Barn Owls for the Trust, 32 captive bred Barn Owls for release, 29 owlets at previous years release sites and 35 owlets at wild sites.

BARN CONVERSION RESEARCH PROJECT

In April 1990 the Trust began a 3 year Research Project to find out whether conversion of barns into human dwellings is a cause of Barn Owl decline. The project is now entering its 3rd year and is progressing well. Although it is too early to predict the results a great deal has already been achieved. 790 buildings and hollow trees are currently being regularly monitored in areas where Barn Conversions are taking place. The Trust's Conservation Officer, David Ramsden, said "We are extremely concerned that the loss of individual Barn Owl breeding sites is having a very disruptive effect on local Barn Owl populations even where alternative sites exist". A 2nd year Interim Report has been compiled for sponsors of the Project which is likely to be extended into a fourth year after which a full report will be produced and published.

NESTBOXES

Children from the Asburton Watch Group have been making nestboxes for Barn Owls and for small birds with the Trust. The Barn Owl boxes have been used in North Devon. Thirty six small bird boxes were erected at Waterleat last summer and BTO ringers checked the boxes with the children and found Pied Flycatchers, Nuthatches, Blue Tits, Great Tits and Robins. Another twelve boxes have been erected during Winter 1991/92.

BRITAIN'S GARDENERS LIKE BARN OWLS



In Autumn and Winter of 1991 we were swamped with enquiries about tree nestboxes for Barn Owls following a small item in BBC Gardeners World Magazine. Hundreds of habitat and nestbox leaflets were sent out by the Trust and we hope that a fair proportion of them resulted in boxes being put up throughout the country.

THE SPANISH CONNECTION

Last year the Trust received donations from two Spanish conservation bodies, Brinjal in Madrid and



Collserolla in Barcelona to enable representatives from the Barn Owl Trust to visit Spain and discuss practical conservation and education work. David Ramsden, Barn Owl Trust Conservation Officer, gave a presentation about the Spanish excursion and problems faced by Spanish conservation workers, at the Trust's AGM in September 1991. Both Brinjal and Collserolla are planning to send representatives to England to visit and work with the Barn Owl Trust during 1992.

THE BIRDS

We currently have 41 owls here, all but 4 are permanent residents including 3 Little Owls, 9 Tawny Owls (one of which will be released) and 29 Barn Owls (only three of which are suitable for release and would stand any chance of surviving). An increasing number of the Barn Owls we are asked to take are captive bred birds, either unwanted birds or "welfare cases", and are not suitable for release. The welfare problems we are now encountering are likely to escalate dramatically during the next few years and discussions with other Barn Owl workers indicate that we may shortly reach the same stage with Barn Owls in Britain that we have with cats and dogs - where healthy creatures are being put down because not enough suitable homes are available. In Feedback Number 6 (1991/92) we described the captive Barn owl situation in Britain and the huge captive population (now estimated at 25,000). The Trust is advising that Barn Owl keepers should actively prevent their birds from breeding, unless good homes or thoroughly researched release sites, (licensed schemes when Schedule 9 is implemented) are available.

In order to prevent the Trust becoming swamped with Barn Owls and to keep aviary space free for injured and convalescing birds, the Trust has worked with several volunteers in South Devon to provide long term homes for some of these permanently captive birds. The volunteers provide an aviary of a high standard built to the Trust's specifications, and undertake the feeding and care of the birds, and making regular reports to the Trust on the owls progress. All the birds involved continue to belong to and remain the

responsibility of the Trust. This scheme is seen as an effective way to deal responsibly with at least a proportion of the increasing number of healthy birds in need of a good home and is currently being expanded (slowly, due to the limited resources available for work of this kind). If you are interested in providing a long term home for non-breeding Barn Owls, please write to the Trust stating your reasons for wanting to do so, and giving details of the area you would want to construct your aviary in. In the interest of the birds we are unlikely to consider any area where disturbance is likely to occur due to humans, machinery, animals etc. or where regular monitoring by the Trust is not possible.

BREEDING HIDE

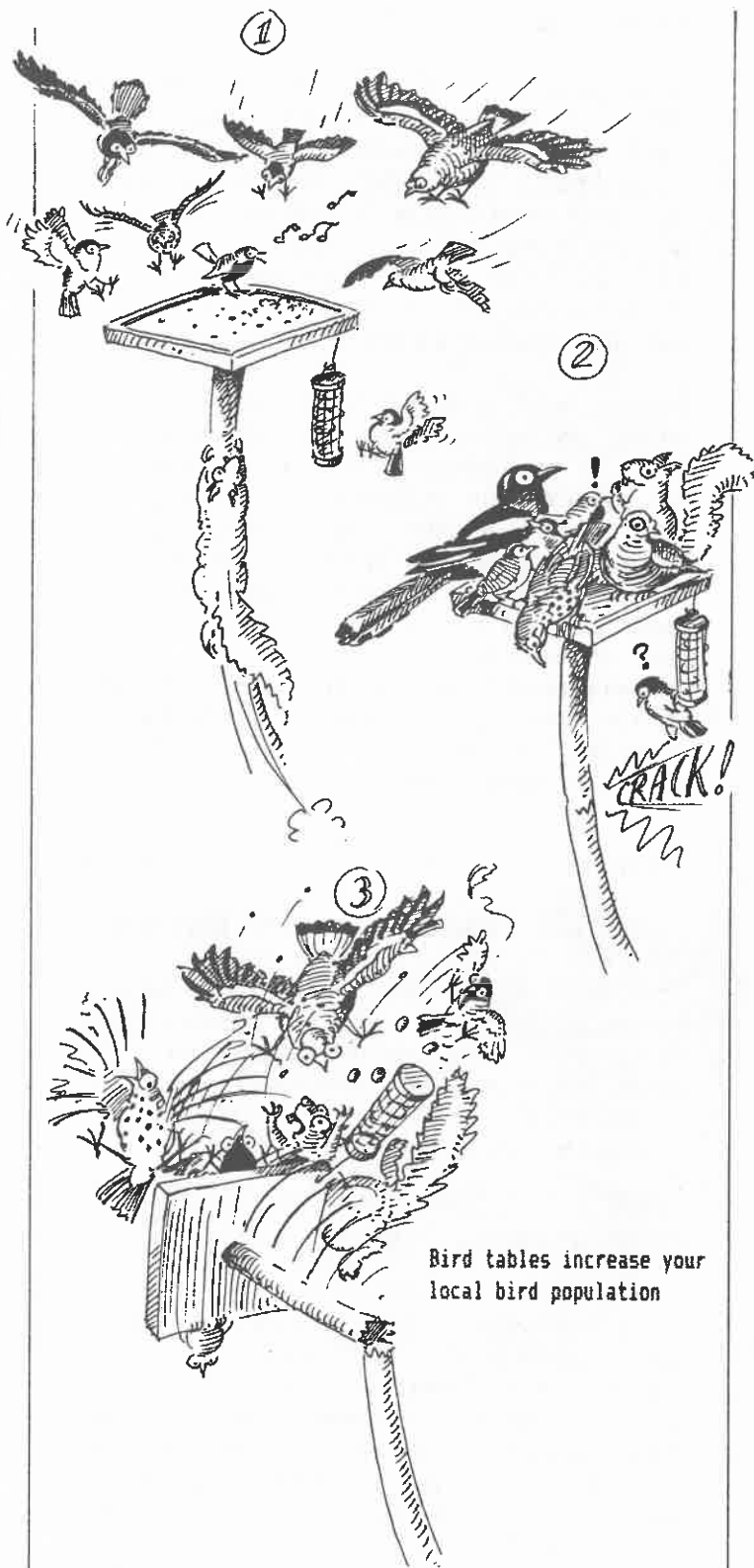
One of the aviaries built for the Trust by the British Trust for Conservation Volunteers (BTCV) in March 1991 was designed for a breeding pair of Barn Owls and had a hide constructed to enable breeding behaviour to be easily observed. This was used by the RSPB during the 1991 breeding season whilst working on their Barn Owl film. During the winter the nest site area has been completely rebuilt by Mike Wallish and we now have what appears to be a traditional stone barn wall top with owl hide entrance. A sheet of one way glass has been donated to the Trust by Andrewartha to enable the owls to be viewed easily from within the hide.

BIRD ROOM

The caravan, which until recently housed the Trust's office, has begun its transformation into a bird room. In fact, it currently has a convalescing Little Owl and a duckling resident. At present the facilities are extremely basic, but thanks to a recent donation from the Jean Sainsbury Charitable Trust and the efforts of volunteers we will shortly have it fully equipped and completely operational.

WILDLIFE AT WATERLEAT

Throughout the winter we have maintained 5 bird tables and 9 bird feeders and currently have a very large small bird population, some of which we hope will use the nestboxes we have provided in the area. Being at the top of a sheltered south east facing valley with a good mix of woodland and farmland we attract a variety of species including siskins, pied flycatchers, spotted flycatchers, dippers and grey wagtails. Before dusk the wild Tawny Owls start calling and are answered by the captive birds here, it is not unusual to walk out of the office in the evening and see a wild Tawny Owl on a telegraph pole or a tree. The new pond in the "pocket handkerchief nature reserve" has attracted frogs and toads, and we look forward to seeing it become more established as the year progresses.



Bird tables increase your local bird population

NEWS

Laurel Hanna, a Zoology Student from Edinburgh University who visited the Trust in October 1991 to take blood samples for her Barn Owl genetics study, should complete her research work later this year. Students from South Dartmoor School, Ashburton, visited the Trust in to hear about its work and to promote conservation work within the community. The school is planning a general knowledge quiz in September to raise funds for the Trust and is designing and making a first prize trophy of Ashburton Marble. Quiz teams are welcome and should contact the Trust for more details.

RECYCLING

The good news on the recycling front is that the Trust has used its grants from Teignbridge District Council's Environmental Awards and the Shell Better Britain Campaign to buy a shed. After many telephone calls, letters and a lot of footwork, Wendy Board made contact with Cavalier Portable Buildings of Cornwall, who delivered and erected an 8' x 12' shed for the £400 we had available. This has provided us with a much needed centre of operations for the recycling project.

Newspaper recycling has continued and raised £59.16 for the Trust in the past year. This represents about 7395kg, or approximately 53,000 papers which would have otherwise would have been dumped in landfill sites. We have now found a company that will recycle old telephone directories. A big thank you must go to Newton Abbot Racecourse who have provided storage space in the form of a stable, where we also store paper for recycling.

The market price for aluminium cans has dropped during the year. Recycling of aluminium cans and foil has raised £83.43 for the Trust since September 1991, all due to the efforts of volunteers.

SWEB NESTBOXES

In March 1992 SWEB presented 50 Barn Owl boxes to the Trust most of which will be used for the Barn Conversion Research Project. The Devon Bat Group also received 50 bat boxes as part of this SWEB/Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group (FWAG) initiative. For further information on Bats contact Mrs George Bennett, Vincent Wildlife Trust/Devon Bat Group, c/o Paignton Zoo, Totnes Road, Paignton, Devon.

FUND RAISING EVENTS

The Barn Owl Trust is a Registered Charity and is funded almost entirely by donations and grants for specific projects. Fund raising events for the Trust are organised by volunteers and we would like to thank everyone for all of their efforts and support for the Trust. Included are a few examples of where funds come from. One lady on a birdwatching holiday in Austria, run by Barn Owl Travel of Kent saw 15 species of birds she had not previously encountered and donated £1 to the Trust for each one. Another lady organised a coffee morning, 50/50 sale and a jumble sale. An OAP collected a jar full of 1p and 2p coins and a local company donated the contents of their wishing well (which although rather mucky amounted to over £50).

We are always pleased to hear from anyone with any fund raising ideas.

Margaret and Derek Crocker have recently held their 2nd annual plant sale in aid of the Trust. Last years sale was held in Totnes and this year they moved to Kingsbridge and raised £340 with the pots of jam and plants they and their supporters provided. In their free time they can be found helping out with the recycling and construction/maintenance work of the Trust.

GALMPTON COFFEE MORNING

Volunteers at Galmpton organised their third annual coffee morning in aid of the Barn Owl Trust in March.



ADOPTION

The Trust's Barn Owl Adoption Scheme devised to provide an opportunity for people to support the Trust in an individual and personal way is now into its fourth year. The adoption of a Barn Owl costs £30 per year. An introduction to the adopted owl is sent out with a certificate of adoption and a poster or photograph, and is followed at the end of the year with a further report about the adopted bird. Anyone participating in the scheme also receives Feedback and a Barn Owl Trust car sticker.

Several people have adopted owls on behalf of others as an "unusual gift" and in these cases we also send a card (with an owl on!).

The Trust has been adopted by the Ship Inn at Axmouth and following a 24 Hour Darts Marathon we received a £100 donation. Throughout the summer the Ship are running a prize draw to raise funds for the Trust, culminating in a Grand Draw to be held on Friday 30th October "Owl Night" at the Ship Inn. Tickets are available from both the Ship Inn and the Trust. A book of 5 tickets is 50p and the first of thirty prizes is a gallon of brandy!

BARN OWL ADOPTED BY BROWNIES

The 9th Paignton Brownies have adopted a Barn Owl Trust Barn Owl. Lynda Squire is the Brown Owl of the Pack, and when she heard about the Trust's recycling project from her daughter Karen (Karen is involved in regular correspondence with Moon the Trust's tame Barn Owl). She encouraged the Pack to organise its own can collection scheme. As well as supporting the Trust by recycling, the Brownies took part in the 1991 letter box walk on Dartmoor and raised £144 from sponsorship for the Trust. This year 30+ Brownies and their leaders intend to join us for the sponsored walk and picnic at the end of May. Highweek Cub Pack, Newton Abbot have also adopted a Barn Owl during the last year.

NATIONAL BARN OWL SURVEY

A national Barn Owl survey is being planned by the Hawk and Owl Trust (HOT) in conjunction with the British Trust for Ornithology (BTO). Starting in 1993 they will be appealing for information on Barn Owl breeding sites throughout Britain. Further details will be available in the Autumn/Winter Feedback.

R.S.P.B. BARN OWL FILM

In September 1991 the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) released a Barn Owl film which is currently touring RSPB groups around the Country. The Barn Owl Trust assisted in the production of the film by providing an artificial set and with advice on the script. A copy of the film is available on video and details can be obtained from the RSPB at The Lodge, Sandy, Beds, SG19 2DC.

REINTRODUCTION REPORT 1986 - 91

In 1989 the Trust published the first ever report of reintroduction results for Barn Owls in Britain. The report covered the period 1986-88 (inclusive). Since '88 the Trust has continued to operate its release scheme in order to further research its effectiveness. We now have the results from a 6 year period covering 1986-91 and intend to publish an entirely new report at the end of 1992 - see next issue of Feedback for further details.

TREE OF LIFE

In June 1992 World leaders will meet in Rio de Janeiro for the Earth Summit.

The Tree of Life/Pledging for the Planet is an independent initiative working worldwide to raise public awareness of the issues relating to the Earth Summit.

A special Tree of Life is being assembled in Rio de Janeiro during the Earth Summit. It will be made up of millions of pledges in the shape of leaves from people all around the world.

The Tree of Life is a universally understood symbol of the relationship between human beings and the natural world. It will provide a powerful and positive reminder to world leaders that much is expected of them at the Earth Summit.

That is why there are two leaves to be filled in, one will go directly to the Prime Minister, and the other to record your own pledge which will become part of the Tree of Life.

Please think about making a Pledge for the Planet. You can pledge to take on one or more of the following actions:

1. Energy: I will use 10% less gas and/or electricity at my home during the next year.
2. Third World Debt: I will write to my bank manager urging the banks to write off debt owed to them by poorer countries.

We'll take this card to Brazil.

Fill in your pledge and what you expect the governments should be doing at the Earth Summit.

Pledge to

Governments should

Name

Town NO ADDRESS OR POST CODE NEEDED

See over leaf for details

Send this card to the Prime Minister.

Say in your own words what you have pledged to do and what you expect governments to do for the Earth Summit. Make sure you ask for a proper reply.

Dear Prime Minister

Name

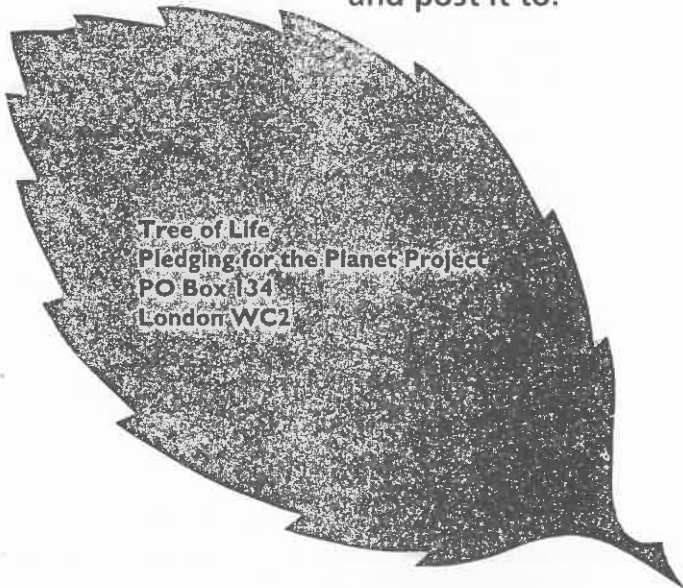
Address YOUR NAME AND ADDRESS WILL NOT BE USED

FOR ANY FURTHER MAILING

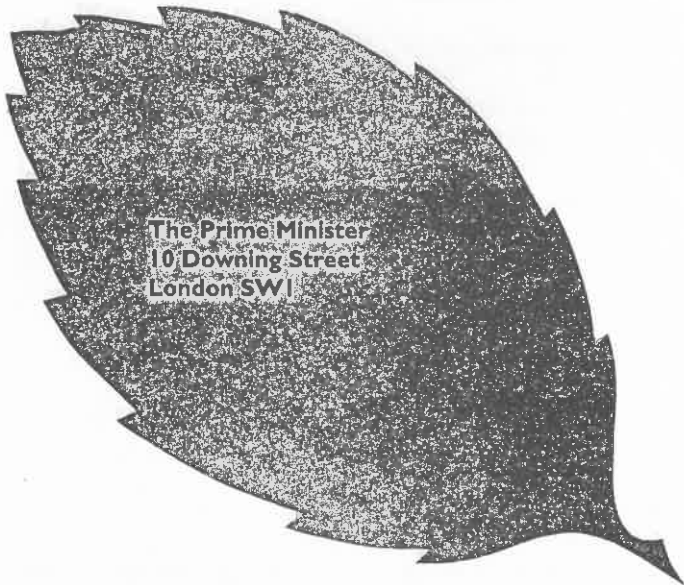
See over leaf for details

3. Transport: I will cut my car mileage by 10% during the next year. I will walk, cycle or use public transport wherever possible.
4. Recycling: I will recycle as much waste as possible at home and/or I will help to organise recycling at work or at school.
5. Forests: I will not buy any products made from tropical hardwoods.
6. Fair Trade: I will try to buy products that are made without exploiting the people who produce them, or which damage the environment.
7. Acting Locally: I will increase the amount of time or money I give to environmental and development organisations.
8. Spreading the Message: I will personally raise 20/50/100 pledge leaves for the Tree of Life in Brazil before 1st June 1992.

Put this pledge in an envelope,
and post it to:



To arrive no later than
3rd June 1992



FEEDING THE OWLS

Feeding the owls is usually my task when David and Frances go away. Its quite hectic, but I enjoy it as it brings me into close contact with the birds. My eyesight is not good enough to pick out birds in the wild - "Look at that buzzard over there!" friends say. I dutifully squint in the direction indicated and possibly see an unidentifiable black speck! So I feel especially privileged to be able to see our assortment of owls at close proximity. At dusk I set out armed with a long list and a bunch of keys worthy of the Governor of Dartmoor Prison. Food - dead day old chicks from a hatchery and sometimes mice donated, (a little unwillingly), by our cats, is carried in a bucket. In summer the top aviary is a mass of bluebells, campion and bracken - a delight to behold.

It often appears to be empty of birds, but as soon as I put the food on their table, they seem to swoop down, from every corner. Many of our long term residents are disabled. We are one of the few organisations who offer sanctuary to such birds, who would have no hope of survival in the wild, but lead an apparently contented life with us. Woodstock and Woodrow are two such Tawny Owls who I find specially endearing - they always look so wise! And little Wobble, who has his own "bijou residence" on the lawn! Wobble is a brain damaged Little Owl, a bit unsteady, but much more sociable than the average Little Owl, despite his cross look. He is currently very vocal, possibly due to the breeding season.

Everyone knows, or knows of, Moon, our much travelled and photographed Barn Owl, who accompanies David on his school visits and brings so much pleasure to the children. She is a real "one off", amazingly steady. One of her aviary companions is Spirit, a special favourite of mine. He is so used to humans, he thinks he is one! He is well named, gliding down like a white and silent spirit to take food from my hand. Another great character is Honey. She is always in a hurry for her food and can't wait for it to be put on the table. Her wings gently brush my face and hair as she grabs some food and flies back to her perch to eat it. With the arrival of food, all the aviaries seem to come to life, with birds flying in all directions. As I finish feeding, and wander back up the track, if I am lucky, the moon will be rising and the wild owls are engaged in a "meaningful dialogue" with the Waterleat Owls. A magical time.

Heather Buswell



SCHOOL VISITS

On 12th November 1991, Moon the Barn Owl made her 100th school visit and the event received international media coverage. Newspaper cuttings of Moon and children from St. Mary's Roman Catholic Primary School in Buckfast, who celebrated the occasion with her, have been received from Germany and Japan.

Moon accompanies David Ramsden, the Barn Owl Trust Conservation Officer, when he talks to children about the decline of the Barn Owl. She does not attend talks to adult groups.

TALKS FOR ADULTS

David's illustrated talks for adult groups average about one per fortnight throughout the year. He has also developed a talk specifically for planning officers called "An Introduction to Barn Owls" to encourage planners to take account of Owls and their needs when assessing planning applications. A "one off" presentation was prepared on release methods, monitoring and results for the Department of the Environment Barn Owl Working Group (BOWG).

ARE THEY STILL DECLINING?

One question I am frequently asked is "are you winning?. Are there more Barn Owls around now?" It would be wonderful to answer this question with one simple word, but I can't. On the one hand we are aware of areas where Barn Owls seem to be on the increase, returning to their former haunts and occupying new nestboxes. On the other hand the birds are still disappearing from traditional sites at an alarming rate.

Short term changes in population occur frequently as a result of weather conditions and/or changes in food availability. Changes in population can occur as a result of local factors such as the loss of a particular barn, the building of a new major road, or perhaps an improvement in food supply on set-aside land.

Plans are afoot for another National Barn Owl Survey in an attempt to identify a National Long Term Trend in the Barn Owl population. Figures on the overall long term decline can be a powerful force in lobbying the British and European Parliaments for changes in agriculture, to benefit the birds. High flying political moves may have their place, but there must be a willingness to listen, to change and to act at ground level. There is NO substitute for your own personal localised conservation efforts. If we all protect and encourage our local Barn Owls, then the population as a whole will have a better chance.

David J Ramsden
Conservation Officer

STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS

The Trust has 5 Trustees, one full time paid member of staff and 2 Employment Trainee's. The Trust relies on volunteers to help with all sorts of tasks - from telephone answering to erection of nestboxes and from posting out leaflets to collection of owl food. Our volunteers help with administration, accounts, post, telephone, local survey work, aviary construction, cleaning, recycling, fund raising, maintenance, compiling reports, collating newsletters, photocopying, typing, events, transporting birds and rescue work. We are always pleased to hear from anyone with any free time or expertise they would like to share with the Trust - if you would like to get involved please contact us.

Special thanks for voluntary work go to both Nel Tullis and Wendy Board who left us at the end of 1991. Nel had managed the Trust's weekly mailing since 1989.

Wendy did a great variety of work for the Trust, including being our regular (and excellent) aviary cleaner. We not only want to thank them both for their contribution to the Trust but also to let them know that we miss them, and wish them both well for the future.

Mike the handyman

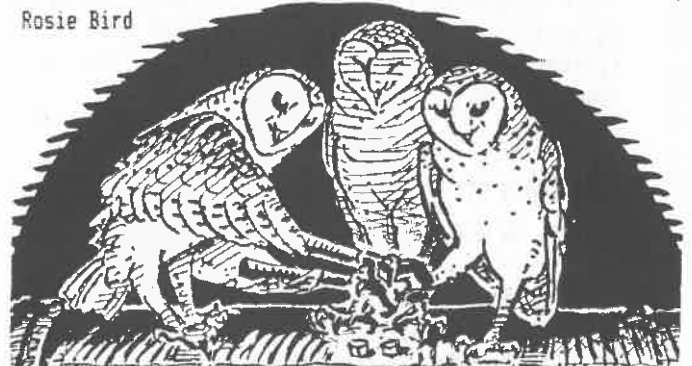


Congratulations to Mike Walsh for completing his first year as the Trust's full time Handyman, during which time he has renovated the building now used as our office, and worked on aviary construction and maintenance, including the breeding hide. He regularly loads up the Trust's trailer with newspaper for recycling, and is also the organiser of the Trust's letter box walks.

NOTE FROM THE NIGHTSHIFT

Once a week for the last 10 months or so Alec and I have been coming into the Barn Owl Trust's office here to help deal with some of the letters and requests for information received each week, and to churn out quite a lot of typing (not least this Newsletter!). We sit here with Frances, beavering away until around midnight when we all start wilting and have to call it a night. I often wonder what the local residents adjacent to the Post Office in Ashburton think to this strange couple who arrive in the middle of the night to stuff heaps of mail into the post box. Needless to say we have got to know Frances and David quite well - so much so that they are taking a day off shortly to be witnesses at our wedding!

Rosie Bird

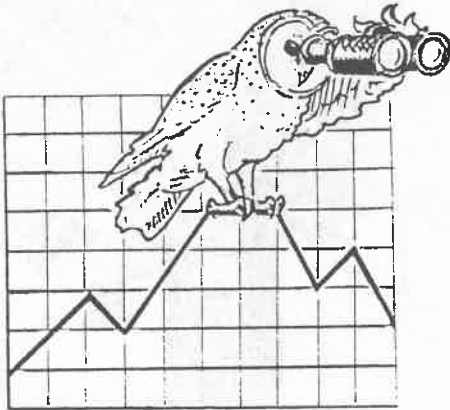


With this Ring.....

BUSINESS ADOPTION SCHEME

We run a corporate adoption scheme, aimed at businesses in an effort to encourage financial support for the Barn Owl Trust. The annual cost of this scheme is £250. Businesses adopt the Trust rather than an individual bird and receive a certificate of adoption and a framed Barn Owl portrait. Further details are available from the office.

FRIENDS OF THE BARN OWL TRUST



In December 1991 the Barn Owl Trust launched a "Friends" scheme to encourage regular support for the Trust. To become a "Friend of the Barn Owl Trust" just ask for a "Friends" leaflet and make an annual donation of at least £10 a year (that's just 20p a week - less than a newspaper or a pint of milk). You will automatically receive copies of our newsletter Feedback, our annual report, a Barn Owl Trust car sticker and a "Friends" badge.

We also operate a Give As You Earn scheme, which enables you to make a regular contribution to the Trust straight from your salary. Please ask for a leaflet if you would like more information about this. Standing orders enable us to plan ahead.

Covenanted donations are even better as they enable us to reclaim from the Inland Revenue any tax already paid on the money given to the Trust. With a gift of £25 per year covenanted to the Trust by a tax payer we can reclaim £9.34 from the Inland Revenue effectively increasing the donation to £33.34 at no extra cost to the person making the gift. "Friends" leaflets, standing order and Deed of Covenant forms are available from the Trust on request as are Deposited Deed of Covenant forms.

All donations help the Trust and are gratefully received. Please consider supporting the work of the Trust by becoming a friend, or with a donation. Help us to continue our conservation, education and research work and support our information service and resident birds.

OKEHAMPTON COLLEGE STUDENTS MEET A BARN OWL

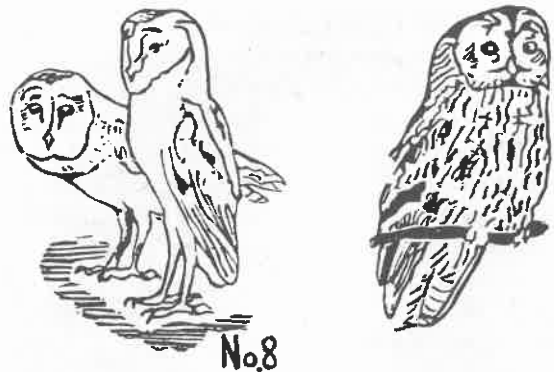
Students at Okehampton College are producing a play about grasslands and wetlands for the Devon Wildlife Trust, which features the character of a Barn Owl. On

Wednesday 8th April the students visited the Barn Owl Trust to get a good view of a Barn Owl to help them with their production. The play, for the Devon Wildlife Trust's special Wildlife Week in June, will tour around Devon and Somerset with the aim of highlighting the need to protect precious grassland and wetland sites.



BARN OWL TRUST LETTER BOX WALK

Last year's letter box walk organised by Mike Wallsh for the Trust was a great success and resulted in us asking Mike to arrange another one this year.



This year's walk will take place on South Dartmoor, Devon. Rubber Stamps depicting Owls will be hidden for three months from Saturday 18th July 1992. The clue sheet and first stamp of the series can be purchased from the Trust after the 16th July. Please include a stamped self addressed envelope and a cheque, postal order or postage stamps to the value of £1.50. The Barn Owl Trust, Waterleat, Ashburton, Devon TQ13 7HU.

Please note:-

None of the stamps will be buried or placed in environmentally sensitive areas.

Anyone walking on Dartmoor should wear sensible clothing and footwear.

A copy of the letter boxing code of conduct and sensible equipment will accompany each set of clues sent out.

DONATION BOXES AND LEAFLET DISPENSERS

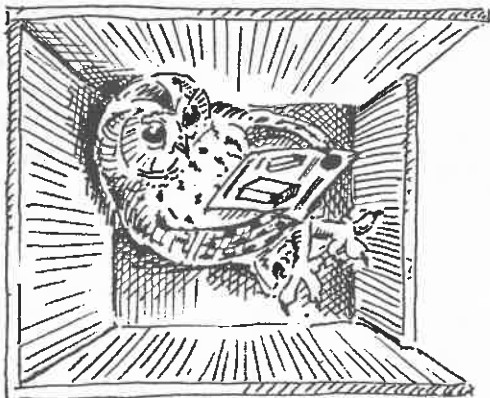
We have a number of very attractive wooden donation boxes and leaflet dispensers available if any one knows of a "secure" location. They need to go into places where someone will be responsible for keeping an eye on them, to let us know if they need emptying or restocking and they have to be where they are accessible to the public. Please contact us if you know of a suitable location.

LEAFLETS

The Barn Owl Trust has a range of 26 information leaflets available (free of charge) on all aspects of Barn Owl conservation. Please send a SAE to the Trust if you wish to receive any of the following:-

1. Habitat for Barn Owls.
2. Rough Grassland Management.
3. Indoor Nestbox Design.
4. Outdoor Nestbox Design.
5. The "WANTED" Poster.
6. Why Release Barn Owls?
7. Captive Owl - Wild Owl: Acknowledge the difference.
8. A Local Barn Owl Survey.
9. † Release Site Selection.
10. † Release Site Preparation.
11. The Long Term Release.
12. † The Barn Aviary.
13. Feeding Barn Owls.
14. † Breeding in Captivity.
15. Ringing Barn Owls.
16. † Release Night Procedure.
17. The Young Clutch Release.
18. † Post Release Care.
19. † Post Release Record Form.
20. Pellet Analysis.
21. Rat Poisons and Other Hazards.
22. Barn Conversions - Provisions for Owls.
23. Sexing Barn Owls.
24. Further Reading.
25. Captive Barn Owls in Britain - The situation 1991
26. Search Procedure for Buildings

A leaflet on Tawny Owl Nestboxes is also now available.



The new Tawny Owl Nestbox Leaflet

* These leaflets cover specific aspects of Barn Owl Re-introduction. They are not relevant to people making general enquiries. Should you require information on the subject of breeding and release of Barn Owls please include your telephone number with your enquiry.

Thanks

This issue of Feedback has been produced by Paul Adams (illustrations and layout), Rosie Bird and Frances Ramsden. Feedback title graphics courtesy of Gary Henderson of York. Many thanks to all the other people that contributed to its production and distribution.

This year a second (Autumn/Winter) issue will also be produced - in order to prevent unsolicited mailing and to minimise costs it will only be sent out to Friends and regular supporters of the Trust unless specifically requested.

WHERE THERE IS A WILL THERE IS A WAY

The Barn Owl Trust

Conserving the Barn Owl and its Environment

Together we can make a difference

Please consider a donation now and a legacy to help us in the future.

For advice or information please contact the Trust.

We hope you have enjoyed this Newsletter and feel that your personal efforts make a contribution to conservation and the environment. Recycling, nestboxing and even shopping wisely does have a positive influence. Those of you that have the time and energy can get involved in practical tasks through organisations like the British Trust for Conservation Volunteers (BTCV) and your County Wildlife Trust. If this idea is not practical for you, then support a conservation or an environmental group and put your weight behind those that have the energy to campaign for both wildlife and the environment.

Please continue to support the Barn Owl Trust as it is individual donations along with the efforts of volunteers that make so much of our work possible. Good luck with all your conservation efforts and environmental projects - let us know if we can help.

BARN OWL TRUST SALES GOODS

Barn Owl Trust hand bag mirrors 2 designs -
Barn Owl Trust Logo or Barn Owl On Post 75mm

£1 each

Car Stickers 50p each

Badges - Logo or Barn Owl On Post 50p each

Cards :- Xmas cards or
Blank cards for your own message
in six assorted childrens designs,
or a Barn Owl or a Tawny Owl design,
made with recycled card and envelope
(Please state design required when
ordering)

£2 per set or 50p each

A3 Full colour Barn Owl portrait poster

£2 + £1 p+p

Selection of signed 'baby owl' prints
by wildlife artist Dick Twinney.

Individual prints (unframed) £14 each

Set of six (unframed) £60 per set

Framed prints £25 each

Set of six (framed) £130 per set

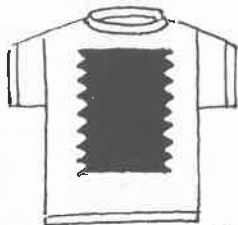
Pencils 30p each

There is no additional charge for postage and packing
(except for the poster), however a SAE or a donation
towards the cost would be appreciated.

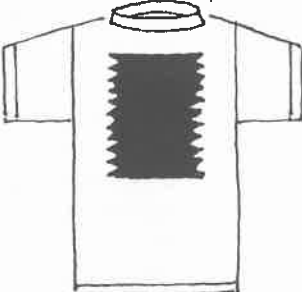
NEW THIS YEAR

**BARN OWL TRUST T-SHIRTS
and SWEAT SHIRTS**

CODE	SIZE	AGE
A	23"-24"	3½
B	27"-28"	
C	31"-32"	
D	32"-34"	



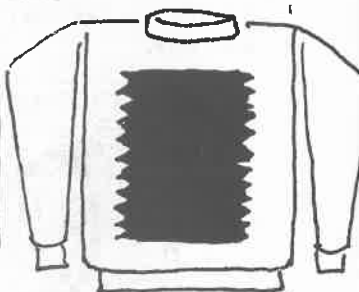
CHILDS T-SHIRT ■



ADULT T-SHIRT ■



LONG SLEEVED ■



SWEAT SHIRT - WHITE ■



Postage and packing add £1 for one item
£1.50 for two or more

Black sweat shirts (50% polyester)
are available in L and XL.

Childs T-shirt	A B C D	£5
Adult T-shirt	XL only	£7
" Long sleeved	XL only	£10
Sweat shirt	M L XL	£14



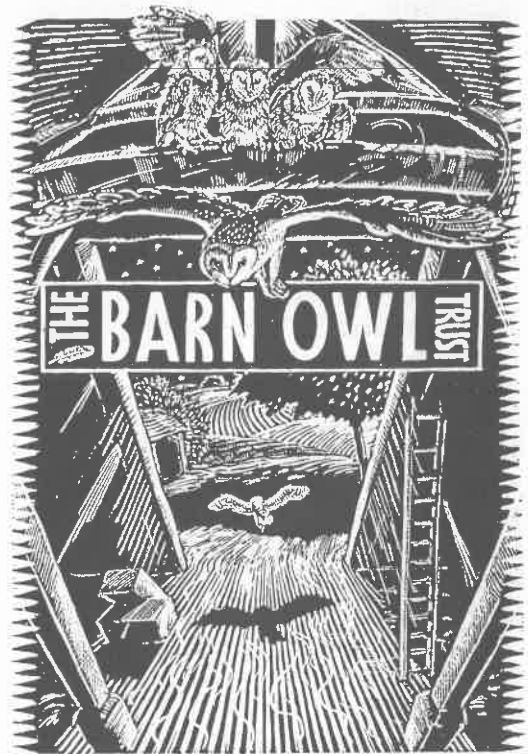
Badges (2 designs) 50p each



Car stickers 50p each



Childrens Card Designs



t-shirt/sweat shirt design

DESIGNS ON *unbleached* COTTON