

The Flyer



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Barn Owls in Spring



As the days become longer and temperatures warmer, Barn Owls begin to think about nesting and raising a new brood of chicks. Male and Female Barn Owls begin to search for a mate at the end of Winter and begin nesting at the beginning of Spring. Barn Owls nest inside a safe, dry hole, high up off the ground where they are safe from predators. This could be inside a building, hollow tree or inside a nest box. They do not build a nest from natural materials like other birds, but lay their eggs on top of a pile of regurgitated pellets.

A female Barn Owl can lay between 3-7 eggs and each egg is laid 2-3 days apart. It takes 31 days for each egg to hatch. Because the eggs are laid at different times, the Owlets vary in age and size and the eldest sibling can be much bigger than the youngest! When they first hatch, the female Barn Owl stays with the owlets to keep them warm. The male Barn Owl goes out to hunt for food and brings it back to the female, who tears it up and feeds it to the owlets.

Once the owlets are 3 weeks old they can eat and swallow small prey by themselves. As they get older they get hungrier and hungrier and the parents must catch more and more food. By 6 weeks the owlets are nearly as big as the adults and by 8 weeks they are starting to think about trying to fly. They are now brave enough to leave the nest but don't go far! They still go back to the nest to be fed by their parents! By 10 weeks the owlets are fully grown and ready to leave the nest and find their own home.



Reg Charity No: 299 835
www.barnowltrust.org.uk

Waterleat, Ashburton
Devon TQ13 7HU

How to make a nesting material holder

Although Barn Owls do not build nests, many garden birds will be searching for nesting materials to make a safe nest in which to lay their eggs. You can help them by making and filling a nesting material holder to hang in your garden or from a balcony.

YOU WILL NEED: Some bendy sticks like Willow | A selection of natural materials | Craft wool | Scissors | Garden secateurs

ADULT SUPERVISION REQUIRED

Choosing your Nesting Material

Good materials include Sheep Fleece, Dog Fur, Feathers, Thin Twigs, Leaves, Grass, Moss and Straw. Remember to only collect small amounts from each place.

Avoid anything that is not natural and might harm baby birds like plastic and synthetic material.



1. Bend a long piece of stick into a circle, wrapping the thinner end around the thicker end to hold it in place. Try and make sure you overlap the thin end as much as possible. You can tie a piece of wool around the top to secure it in place if needed.



2. Cut 2 pieces of stick the same length as the width of the circle you have made. Push one of the sticks into your circle between the wrappings and repeat at the other end on the other side of the circle.



3. Do this again with your other stick so you have made a cross shape across the middle of the circle.



4. Weave pieces of thin bendy stick in, out and around your circle and across until you have made a criss cross pattern as seen above. It does not matter how messy it looks, the birds will not mind!



5. Collect different nesting materials and push them between the sticks so they are held in place. You can tie a piece of wool around the pieces to help hold them if you need to.

6. Tie a piece of wool around the top of the ring and use this to hang it in a tree, on a fence or somewhere similar.

7. If you can't find bendy sticks to make a holder don't worry. You can fill an empty bird feeder or anything else with holes in it with nesting materials and hang outside. **WARNING** Do not use anything with soft plastics like orange nets as these may wrap around small birds' feet.

Who's egg?

Can you identify the birds who laid the eggs in the pictures below?

One of the pictures below shows the eggs of a Barn Owl. Can you guess which one it is? The other pictures show eggs that were laid by common birds. Using the clues to help you, fill in the letter blanks below each picture.



S_a_r_w



B_ _n O_l



B_ac__i_d



S_ _n

Who's egg? clues

1) This bird was once a common small brown bird seen in large numbers in our gardens but is now declining. Their song is a cheep-cheep sound and they love to eat seeds.

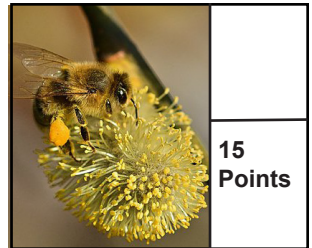
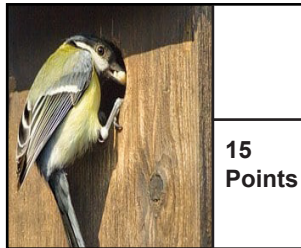
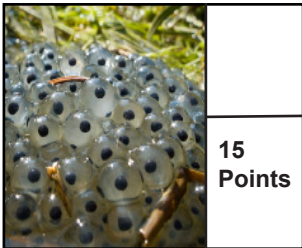
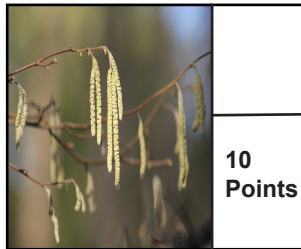
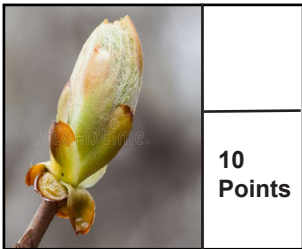
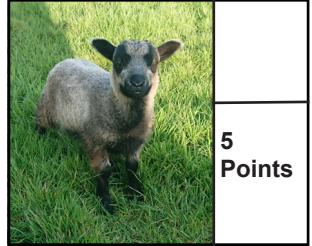
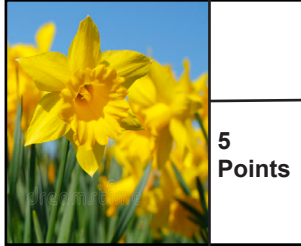
2) This bird makes a screeching sound. If you are very lucky you may see them hunting over rough grassland at dusk.

3) This bird has a beautiful song, males are black and females brown and both can often be seen in gardens eating worms.

4) This regal large bird can be found on lakes and other waterways. Don't get too close during nesting season as they can be very protective of their eggs and may hiss at you.

Spotters Challenge

Can you spot the Signs of Spring below? Some are easy. Some are more challenging. For every sign you see tick the box and record your points score. Add up you total score at the bottom.



Total Points

Whose Egg? Answers 1) Sparrow 2) Barn Owl 3) Blackbird 4) Swan