



Issue Number 23 - Spring 2000



FEEDBACK

The Barn Owl Trust, Waterleat, Ashburton, Devon TQ13 7HU - (01364) 653026 - Registered Charity: No: 299 835



- Barn Owl conservation schemes
- Nestbox workshop news
- Project progress reports
- Two new information leaflets

Barn Owl Trust News

Two More Leaflets

From May 1st two new titles will join the range of free BOT information leaflets. Number 31 will deal with drowning and its prevention and will feature a waterfloat design suitable for water tanks and cattle troughs arrived at over three years of field trials.

Leaflet number 32 will be a Little Owl nestbox leaflet.

Please send an SAE marked with the number(s) you would like to receive. ☐

Lottery Win

The Heritage Lottery Fund has awarded the Trust a grant of £77,800 towards a 3-year project called Barn Owl Country.

The project has been designed to raise public awareness of the need for the conservation of both the Barn Owl and its habitat. It will support the Trust's presence at various county and district shows and the purchase of display equipment. It will also provide funding for the employment of a full-time Information and Interpretation Officer, contribute to extra administrative support and provide resources to enable the revision of Trust leaflets and to promote the Friends scheme.

"By awarding us this grant the HLF is really saying that the Barn Owl and its environment is a part of our national heritage," says Trustee Simon Roper. "This grant will help us spread our message to more people and so help make Barn Owl conservation work even more effective."

Promotions and Development Officer Philip Knowling took on the new role of Information and Interpretation Officer in April 2000 with his previous role reverting to trustees. Sonia Seldon and Rosie Waine are sharing the additional admin. hours supported by the project. ☐



Photo: David Ramsden

Stepping Out

Our annual sponsored walk takes place as usual on Spring Bank Holiday Monday, 29th May. Once again we are fortunate to have the beautiful Flete Estate made available to us for the day, thanks to Anthony Mildmay-White and his family. This year we have an optional river crossing in an unusual, state of the art, twelve seater Canadian canoe (don't panic you won't have to paddle).

A poll of last year's walkers has revealed that 96% of those questioned enjoyed the route, which goes through woods and meadows and alongside the river Erme. In addition, 98% endorsed the location; 94% said the walk was held at a good time of year.

Although this is a fundraising event, it is also a wonderful day out in breathtakingly beautiful countryside, so if you have a day to spare, please consider joining us. You don't need to be an energetic walker; the shortest route is three miles - just an hour's stroll - and is suitable for pushchairs.

Last year we raised over £1,800; we are hoping to beat all records this year and if you are unable to join us, perhaps you would care to sponsor Mark or Paula our ACOs to do the walk for you.

Several local businesses have already pledged their support for a mention on Mark and Paula's T-shirts. Please give us a ring if you'd like to help. ☐

Jumping for Joy

On 8th July 2000 weather permitting, I am going to plunge out of an aeroplane at 3,500 metres just to see what it must be like to be a bird!

I am going to be doing this ridiculous stunt to raise money for the Trust at the Devon and Somerset Parachute School, near Honiton.

I really wanted to do a static line jump on my own, but because I have Temporal Lobe Epilepsy, I have to do a tandem skydive. I shall be attached to an instructor. We will

free-fall for thirty seconds and then I will be allowed to steer the parachute once it has opened.

Wish me luck and if you would like to support me please fill in the enclosed sponsorship form and take it to all your friends - I'm only doing this once!



Paula Carrier



The Birds

As usual a large number of injured owls and a few hedgehogs have passed through our hands recently and many of the birds and all of the hedgehogs have been returned to the wild. I took home four hedgehogs for release and put them in a run with a nice comfy box where they could sleep and feed. After a few days they had all managed to tunnel their way out of the run but were breaking back in at night for food and then disappearing again in the daytime to sleep elsewhere; so much for the detached bungalow with all mod cons.

In November we took in a Short Eared Owl. It had been found with a severely injured wing, which sadly could not be saved. However after surgery the owl improved in leaps and bounds and is now living in an aviary with an elderly disabled Tawny Owl and seems to be adapting very well.

December 2nd - the day of the annual health checks for the birds in our sanctuary. As usual it was rather cold and wet. I must find out why we don't do this in the summer; there is probably a very good reason.

First blood drawn was that of Paula (Paula one of our ACOs, not to be confused with Paula the Barn Owl). The wound was inflicted by a Tawny Owl called Thursday, who managed to penetrate a pair of heavyweight leather gloves. The rest of the day went fairly smoothly with only the odd scratch and a few dirty sweatshirts. Oh yes, one owl did manage a direct hit on Paula's head, so she was not smelling too pleasant by the end of the day!

All birds were found to be in good condition, even Red Ring our oldest inhabitant who lost a few feathers in the Autumn had managed to grow a new set by December. She is nearly twenty years old, hatched in about 1980 she came to the Trust in 1988. One of our owls, Burt, has been adopted for a second year by the Lowe Howard-Spink advertising

agency on behalf of Dollond and Aitchison for Burt Reynolds, star of their TV ads - so far our most famous adoptee!

In January we took in a Tawny Owl which was found in the road having collided with the roof rack and windscreen of a passing car. The only injury was to the left leg and foot which were paralysed by nerve damage. Amazingly it made a full recovery within a few weeks and has just been released.

Some weeks later another Tawny was brought to us. This one had become caught in netting protecting a pond and was extremely wet and cold. Better news of this owl as we were able to release it after a few weeks of tender loving care. Also in January we received a Little Owl with a clenched foot. After a few weeks the foot had sadly shown no sign of improvement; in fact it was clenched so tightly that one of its talons had pierced through the skin, so currently the Little Owl has a pad taped to the underside of its foot to keep the talons apart; again, unfortunately, it seems unlikely that we will be able to release this bird.

Rave our resident disabled raven came to the Trust in 1993. Following a glossy magazine article about the ravens at the Tower of London last year we contacted the Raven Master to ask about the possibility of our Rave getting together with the inhabitants of the Tower. Being quite an intelligent bird, we felt that his life would be more interesting as one of the Tower of London Ravens than surrounded by owls. Moving to London wasn't on the cards for Rave; they only have a small number of residents at the Tower. However they did offer us the opportunity of DNA testing a sample



Short Eared Owl

Photo: Kevin Keatley

of Rave's feathers. As a result in February this year we discovered that 'Rave' our disabled male Raven was in fact a female. So, is Rave really... Vera?!

With spring in the air there is definitely a feeling of expectancy amongst our resident Barn Owls and our conservation staff are finding themselves having to sort out the odd over-zealous male. The females of course are all behaving impeccably!

Sandra Reardon

In Memoriam

The Trust has received a legacy from the estate of Barbara Wakeford of Lymington and has been given donations in memory of Richard Pointer.

Our thanks and sincere condolences go to the families and friends of the deceased.

...More Team Talk

It's a Pleasure



Nothing could have prepared me for the variety of this job. I know it's a cliché, but every day is different.

Neither was I ready for the steepness of the learning curve. David has put us through a rigorous training programme. We have learnt such things as determining the age of pellets, search and survey procedures, Barn Owl conservation and ecology, how to erect nest boxes in all kinds of weird and wonderful places - the list goes on.

I have also been trained to go out and give our owls in foster homes their annual health checks. This involves first catching the bird -

voluntary work with a range of organisations including Exmoor National Park, where I was part of the weekend conservation group. Tasks included tree planting, scrub clearance and footpath work.

I spent time with the Exmoor and Quantocks Red Deer Research Project which involved radio tracking collared deer, vegetation surveys and carrying out dung transects. I worked with Somerset Wildlife Trust carrying out estate work and generally getting very muddy. I did six weeks research with the Kefalonian Marine Turtle Project studying Loggerhead Turtles on this beautiful island, an experience never to be forgotten.

For the last two summers I have worked for the National Trust at Dunster Castle in Somerset. My

which is easier said than done - then weighing it, trimming its talons and beak, worming it, looking for parasites and checking its overall condition. The first time I went out alone it was pretty nerve-racking, but the more I've done, the more confident I've become.

In December we started the North Devon Barn Owl Scheme. It is a three year scheme and I've just finished Stage One at 11 sites. I have loved every minute of it - meeting so many people from all kinds of backgrounds, employing the new skills I have learnt, being outside most of the time and getting to know a different part of the county. What more could a girl want?

More recently, I have been involved in consultation work for the National Trust in Cornwall. It is a wonderful feeling to have the knowledge to advise another professional body and to make recommendations which they will follow.

Yes, it's fair to say, I love my job!

Paula Carrier

job involves selling tickets, recruiting new members and acting as an information officer. You get to meet a wide range of people from all walks of life.

At the Barn Owl Trust my job involves answering the telephones, dealing with the daily postal enquiries, answering emails and other general office duties. Every day is different.

I'm enjoying working for the Trust as I am gaining valuable experience of working with a conservation charity. I talk to many different and interesting people who phone up and I have the personal satisfaction that I am helping to conserve this beautiful bird.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Sonia Seldon

Mice to be Back



If life is a journey then BOT is a destination I've been visiting with varying degrees of regularity for almost nine years. I worked for the Trust briefly in 1993 and have volunteered on and off over the intervening years. In September last year I took on the part-time role of Secretary to the Trustees which I am enjoying immensely.

It doesn't always do to be away for too long ... things happen ... An example: a busy day, my desk snowed under, my "things to do" list growing and my brain aching slightly from being wrenched around a variety of subjects. The phone rings again. A friendly, cheerful voice greets me and informs me that she has a milk bottle full of mice for the owls. I'm temporarily speechless, strange images form in my mind's eye involving milkmen and mice looking out of glass bottles. My brain supplies an interesting variety of possible questions, together with an obscure concern about the "best before" date of bottled mice. The caller rescues me, it all becomes clear ... Peter Dommert, one time ACO, had appealed for dead mice from household traps/cats (where no poison is used) for the casualty owls. What more hygienic way of storing them than a clean plastic milk container in the freezer? I wonder what other surprises are in store for me...

Rosie Waine

Project Updates

Teignbridge Feasibility Study

Barn Owls underwent a huge decline in numbers during the last century in Britain. In 1999 Ugbrooke Environmental Ltd provided the funding for the Trust to carry out a feasibility study in Teignbridge district to assess the attitudes of land managers and to facilitate the planning of future conservation strategies.

Approximately 7% of the total area of potential habitat in Teignbridge was studied by ACO Pete Dommett. Through direct consultation with farmers and landowners, Barn Owl distribution and status was reviewed, attitudes to conservation measures were gauged and the scope for improvements (in terms of suitability for Barn Owls) was assessed. Information on Barn Owls and their conservation was provided to interviewees.

Most participants were happy to take part in questionnaire interviews and

readily provided information and opinions. Response to the request for information about Barn Owl sightings was good, although many reports were insufficiently accurate to be very useful.

The vast majority of people interviewed were either "keen" or "very keen" to help with Barn Owl conservation. Those most keen seemed to be almost all managers or owners of smallholdings. An encouraging number of participants said they would make and put up a nestbox on their property. These were, again, mainly managers of small farms/properties. Most people were willing for the Barn Owl Trust to erect boxes for them. Half the respondents said they would be interested if they received more information from the BOT.

Whilst an encouraging number of farmers and landowners had land 'available' for habitat creation, few were willing to create suitable habitat for Barn Owls on this land. Most felt that there was already suitable habitat there - in some cases this was true. Those most willing to create habitat were mainly managers of large farms. Few farms were involved in a habitat creation grant scheme and, of those that were, most were large farms. This might suggest a general negativity towards such schemes and a lack of schemes suitable for small farms or holdings.

As a result of this study we have developed a long-term strategy for Barn Owl conservation in Teignbridge and are currently seeking the resources required for its implementation. □

Road Research

The Major Road Research Project was first mentioned in Feedback 15 in 1996 when the Trust allocated funds for a survey to recheck a 22km by 1km stretch of the countryside where a baseline survey had been conducted three years earlier and where subsequently the A30 dual carriageway had been built. Later that year and into 1997 Steve Panks (our first ACO) collected data from a 14km stretch of motorway and a similar "control" sample for comparison.

In 1998 David Perkins (a student from Manchester University) began some preliminary analysis of data collected by the Trust and then because of pressure of other work the research had to be put on the back burner.

Last year, thanks to grants and donations, we were able to increase our conservation team from two to three and with Mark and Paula now trained and doing most of our field-

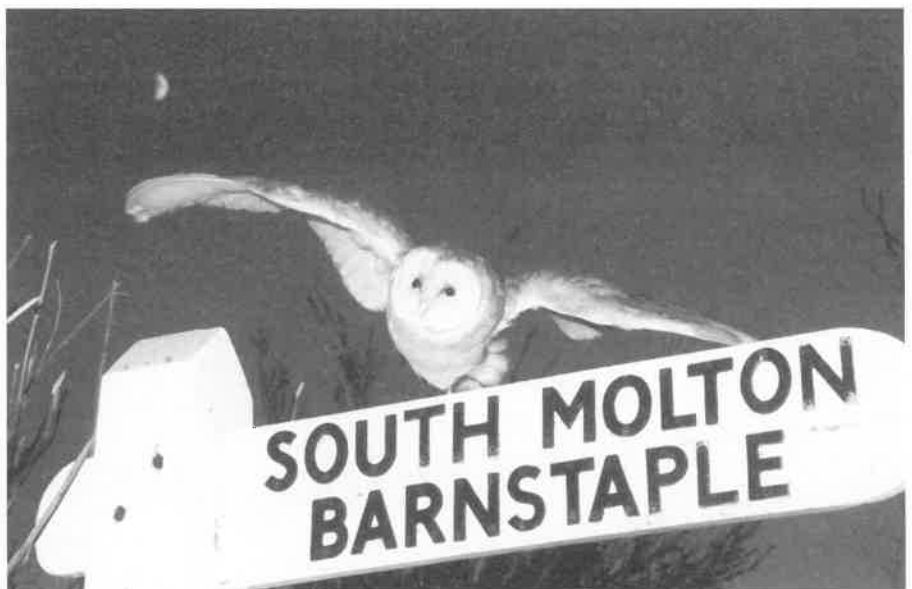


Photo: David Ramsden

work David has been able to get at the research again. In January Jessica Munday began volunteering with the Trust as a research assistant.

The Trust has collected a huge amount of information about Barn Owls in the South West and part of the project includes plotting over 2,000 sightings of live Barn Owls recorded since 1984. All of the data

has to be checked and entered onto our database and BOT admin. and conservation staff are slowly ploughing their way through the mass of records with help from old friend Muzz Murray.

David is really excited about the project and the preliminary results which "Look pretty amazing".

To be continued... □

Misconceptions & Musings

Popular Misconceptions

A new Feedback feature where we explode the myths that surround this beautiful bird.

No 1.

"Wild Barn Owls will never live near people, they only use quiet places where people rarely go" - wrong!

This is a very popular misconception which is completely unfounded. It's true that some roosting and nesting places are in isolated, derelict old buildings in remote little valleys - but the opposite is also true!

Here're just a few examples:-

- Cathy and Roger Pole live in a beautiful new house which they built themselves. They incorporated an entrance hole and nestbox for their local Barn Owls who moved in immediately - even before the house was finished!
- Hanneke and Dick Coates live in a range of barn conversions which are fully booked with holidaymakers right through the spring and summer - the owls nest every year



Adult owl emerging from its nest site in East Cornwall Photo: David Ramsden

just above the kitchen ceiling in one of the most popular holiday lets!

- Jim Colway has been farming for nearly fifty years and remembers when the "White Owls" lived in his hayloft. They roosted by day on an old roof beam just above the loft door. Every day he'd go in for a couple of hay bales, "an' the old owls just stood there an' turned

their heads an' watched me go in and out, in and out."

Barn Owl Trust research has shown that wild Barn Owls do not select sites which are isolated or busy - they just choose whatever happens to be available.

All that's required is an entrance hole at least ten feet above the ground leading into a suitable cavity. □

Little Boxes (but not made out of ticky-tacky)

A year or two ago the government decided that lots of extra houses would be needed in Devon for the growing population, and the Barn Owl Trust has extended this initiative to include owls. Here too the emphasis is on first-time buyers and the lower income groups, newlyweds and suchlike.

So since November I have been sawing and hammering away in the workshop to make all these boxes whilst David and his crew scuttle about finding barns to put them in. It's a race, but I'm winning because I have learned to make boxes faster now, whereas the erecting crew are having to travel much further afield to find their barns.

Mass production techniques are used

and sadly, the day of the old craftsman is over. Nestboxes are marked out, cut and assembled in job-lots of five. To avoid any muddles (which are always a lurking menace around here) all the pieces are named and numbered and are arranged in neat stacks inside the workshop. This has the added benefit that each finished nestbox is marked 'Top' 'Bottom' 'Side' etc and the erecting gang are then less likely to put them up the wrong way round.

The early boxes were put together with all these marks showing on the outside, but one day Phil arranged to have one photographed and he wanted the box to be clean and presentable to the paparazzi, so I began making them all with the

marks on the inside while I waited for this bloke to show up. He still hasn't done so and I daren't make a box the old way just in case he walks in and snaps a picture of it.

And there was also talk about some other bloke making a video of me and I went into town and bought myself a brand new white apron, the better to be seen in the gloom and dust of my workshop. But he hasn't showed up either and the apron is all dirty and worn out now, so I might have to write 'Spike' 'Top' 'Sides' 'Bottom' on it when the video is finally made, and then you'll all recognise me in the film.

Spike Rycroft
BOT Handyman

Around and About

Around and About is a new regular feature taking a look at Barn Owl conservation work and projects carried out by individuals around the UK. This issue features Gilbert Gaylor from the Isle of Wight. Gil has erected 21 nestboxes to date and each one is uniquely decorated with hazel rods.

I've been erecting Barn Owl boxes for the past four years. I work totally independently and belong to no wildlife groups. I was inspired by the work of two pals, Nigel Cantelo and Malcolm Pritchett. They've been erecting both Barn and Little Owl boxes since 1988 and to date have sited 32.

My boxes are built to beat the elements, they are extremely heavy but that's the way I like to build them. It's a challenge to get them up but I haven't failed yet. If I have all the materials including the hazel rods it takes around two days to complete a box.

The heaviest box I've built was 97lbs and was decorated with 140 pieces of hazel rod. A pal and I had to carry it over a mile across fields until we reached the oak tree we'd picked to put it in. It is my 'Chippendale' of the bird box world! Recently I re-visited this site when it was getting dark and from 50 yards away I could clearly see a Barn Owl perched on the platform preening itself. I quickly left the scene and headed home - all that hard slog had paid off. I have five established breeding pairs at present.



Photo: Gil Gaylor

The Barn Owl on our little isle is very well established. We have around 50 to 55 breeding pairs. There's no shortage of accommodation. A fair number of individuals (and National Trust volunteers) have scattered a good number of boxes throughout the island. We also still have a fair number of natural sites - old disused barns and hollow trees. Little Owl numbers are also holding well. I had two pairs rear young last year.

About myself: I've been a countryman all my life, I'm now 49. I was a piece rate farm labourer but I'm unemployed at present, which suits me fine, I now have the time to pursue my hobbies. My other interests are collecting old prints and books on the countryside.

I have a vast collection of pictures depicting pheasants, hares, rabbits, foxes, birds of prey including some

Barn Owl prints by Archibald Thorburn, George Lodge, Philip Rickman, George Rankin, Roland Green etc.

My favourite artist is Archibald Thorburn, 1860-1935, as a bird artist he had no equal. My favourite author is Richard Jefferies, a Wiltshire-born writer, 1848-1887. He died of tuberculosis at the age of 38, in the meantime he had written 16 books. 'Field and Hedgerow', published in 1887 is a real classic. Jefferies once wrote "Where Man goes Nature Ends".

I have been trying to obtain a copy of the book 'Tyto: The odyssey of an owl' by G Frewer. A 1978 publication it is a fictional account of a Barn Owl's survival. If anyone knows of a copy for sale please let me know.

Gil Gaylor
Isle of Wight

Barn Owl Fee

An Article 10 Certificate is a legal requirement if you are seeking to gain commercially from a species which is included in Annex A of European Community Directive 338/97. This means you need one if you are going to sell, display or exchange a captive bred Barn Owl.

The DETR is currently considering charging for these certificates. They have processed about 13,000 sales

applications since March 1998 at a cost of £317,000 and they estimate that 20,000 applications will be processed over the next 12 months.

Their recommendations are to extend the Convention of International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) licensing charges to cover all permits and certificates issued under EU Regulations and to set fees at a level that will secure the

recovery of all their processing costs. It is likely that the proposed fee will be about £25, come into force around July 2000 and be reviewed every three years. This could double the cost of purchasing a captive bred Barn Owl.

For more information contact the DETR on: 0117 987 8903.

We will have any further details in the next issue of Feedback. □

Focus on Friends

Photo: Herald Express Publications, Torquay



Joyce Blake has been an active supporter of the Trust for many years. She moved to Galampton from Hereford fifty years ago when she married Devonian Harry Blake.

In 1990 she and Harry went along to the local RSPB group to hear BOT Conservation Officer David Ramsden give a talk. They were so impressed that they decided to do something to help.

They organised their friends and had a coffee morning in the village for the Trust. Held in the appropriately-named Barn Hall it was a great success and raised £178. They decided to make it an annual event;

the coffee mornings soon became part of the social calendar of the village.

Sadly, Harry Blake died in 1998. Joyce, with help from her friends, has carried on with the coffee mornings - to date they've raised almost £1,800.

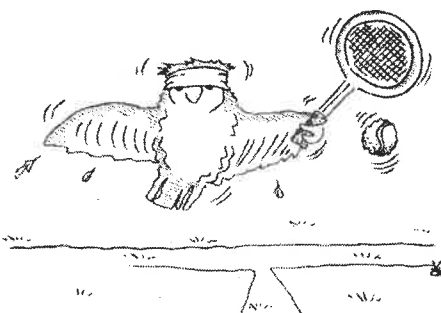
Joyce, who is active in the W.I. and the local church as well, also arranged a BOT talk last year for the Church Group in the village.

We'd like to take this opportunity to thank Joyce for her continuing hard work and dedication.

Volunteers don't come any better! □

Anyone for tennis?

A South-West based sports trainer is offering tennis lessons to raise money for the Trust. International tennis coach Errol Norris is offering 5 free individual coaching sessions to people who make donations to the Trust.



'I usually charge £5 an hour to coach tennis,' said South African-born Errol. 'I'll give a free one-on-one lesson to the first five people who contact me through the Trust. All they have to do is make a donation at least equivalent to the cost of the lesson.'

Budding tennis players can take their lessons with Errol in Newton Abbot or on their own courts in South Devon.

Weekend sessions are available.

Please call the Trust on (01364) 653026 on a Tuesday or Thursday to contact Errol. □

Rick's Run

In June 1986 I ran my first half marathon. I was younger, a lot fitter, and did the 13.2 miles in 1 hour 42.

After a 13 year break in my running career I started jogging home (1.5 miles) from beery social gatherings in Weymouth. I then thought I really ought to get a bit fitter and set myself the goal of running in the 1999 Maidstone Half Marathon. After a bit of 'training' and waining mental resolve I decided I needed further commitment in order to complete the run. What better way than to get sponsored? As I've always found the BOT to be a worthwhile cause who better to get the sponsorship for. I completed my run in September '99 in a time of 1 hour 51 and raised £300. I was a bit disappointed to have not beaten my 1986 time BUT there's always this year!

There were 4 really difficult bits to the running:



- 1) Mental anguish - why am I doing this?
- 2) Running up Portland hill as training
- 3) Beyond mile 5 in the actual run
- 4) Getting people to pay up!

Many thanks though to all those friends, work colleagues, and relatives who were so generous.

Rick Barton

Well done Rick!

Winged Ones

Anastasia Doble is a Friend of the Trust who volunteered to help out at events and came along to the Devon County Show last year. She has started her own business - Angels' Corner - selling a wide range of gifts, cards, oils and jewellery all inspired by

angels. She can be found at Honeybees cafe in Honiton, East Devon, so call in and see her when you're passing. □



Thanks and Things

Thank you very much to:

Jenny & Pat Ford from Exeter for a very large Xmas parcel containing a shovel, envelopes, chocolate and biscuits (for the owls?), gloves and rechargeable spotlight. Ida Ramsden (Teignmouth) for C5 envelopes. Peter Fleming of Bude for 12 new C6 card filing drawers which make finding records much easier. The shy individual who anonymously donated the electronic postal scales - perfect for weighing casualty birds. Rob Tiller and Paula Dyer of Worthing for leather gloves, measuring tapes, nails, liquid handwash, hand cream and stamps. Roger & Angie Stevens of Suffolk for binoculars, Bill Bishop for his painting of Gloss and her babies, Ian Farrell of Chulmleigh who sent us a big parcel containing loads of nails, three saws, measuring tapes, hammers and gloves. Baters Removals of Tipton St John have provided tea-chests and plywood to volunteer Simon Bishop for making nestboxes; Maureen and Alec Johnson of Bristol send beautiful handmade cards which we sell to

raise funds and Jane Manners has collected small mammals for the owls here.

Thanks too to:

Richard Smith who sent £50 towards "things we need". Chard Angling Centre for £80 from a charity fishing match. Bovey Tracey Swimming Pool for £25 from their sponsored swim. Neil Patey of Dartmouth sent us a cheque for £129.57 from a raffle, donations and card sales at his last art exhibition in Totnes. Heather & Mike Ross from Umberleigh raised £65 with an open day for people interested in old houses.

Also a big thanks to everyone who sent us cards at Christmas and to all of you who send in used envelopes for us to recycle, especially Jeannie Stevens and folk from Creative Technology in London who always neatly slice theirs across the top! Judy, who does the post, has specifically requested C5 size.

Our Wants List has proved to be a very popular way of supporting the Trust.

We would be very grateful for donations of any of the items we have listed below either recycled or new:

Spade, small crowbar
Used C5 envelopes (slit not ripped)
Post driver
Big rechargeable torches
12 volt rechargeable drill
Ladder clamps for roof racks
Blank video tapes
New hard hats (BSS)
Maglite torches (size C, bright colours)
Rechargeable batteries LR20 or D size
Climbing harness
Flip chart

We could also make excellent use of the following more expensive visual aids articles so would appreciate any donations towards their purchase:

Video camera
Digital camera
Good quality colour printer
Video recorder

Thank you

Tail Piece



Have you ever noticed how, just when you think you've got life sorted, something unexpected comes along. You organise your time so you can cope with projects and deadlines and then suddenly a crisis looms or a someone somewhere has an abrupt change of plan. Most of the time it's something as simple as the car not starting, an appointment being altered at short notice or the computer developing a problem on the day the final proofs for the newsletter need to be printed, but sometimes it's something more serious like an accident or illness in the family or amongst your friends.

Life can be a high pressure experience in our society where we are bombarded with information and have too many demands on our time and resources. Little wonder then that so many people retreat into a lifestyle dominated by television and the

dreams of escape that doing the Lottery may bring.

For most of us, personal crisis is often the only thing that shakes us out of our busy ruts and forces us to re-evaluate our lives, to stop for a while and review what really is important to us as individuals. If we are really brave and we decide to change our lives to give these things priority we must be aware that it is all too easy to fall back into old routines and lose our focus.

One of the advantages we Homo sapiens have that Barn Owls are not so blessed with is the ability to change and adapt. We have evolved as opportunists and have developed ways of coping with changes in the weather and seasonal variations in food supply to which Barn Owls are particularly vulnerable. In the last century we radically changed the

rural landscape by increasing the productivity of farmland, building developments and expanding the road network. These changes dramatically affected our Barn Owl population along with many other kinds of wildlife that were forced out or failed to adapt.

There are many demands made on us in our society but we are usually able to make choices about how we deal with them. Wildlife doesn't have that luxury and it is important that we humans consider the impact that our activities have on other species. No matter who we are, where we live and what we do we all have a role to play in the unfolding future of planet Earth.

Frances Ramsden

Together we can make a world of difference.