



Issue Number 31 - Spring 2004



# FEEDBACK

Waterleat, Ashburton, Devon TQ13 7HU - (01364) 653026 - [www.barnowltrust.org.uk](http://www.barnowltrust.org.uk) - Registered Charity: No: 299 835

- **Lennon Legacy Project News**
- **Devon Barn Owl Survey Update**
- **Hungarian Barn Owl Conservation**



Printed on

**THE BARN OWL TRUST - CONSERVING THE BARN OWL AND ITS ENVIRONMENT**

# Welcome to Feedback

Welcome to Feedback - the last six months here at the Trust have been dominated by field work and data entry for the Devon Barn Owl Survey and work in the field.

It's been amazing to see the restoration of an existing hedge bank and the creation of a new one. Right outside the office we have seen the old stone wall alongside the drive restored and it looks amazing. Diana the contractor doing the work has been really careful to rescue and replant as much of the native flora as she can. The fencing contractors have been here for more than a month. The field is now stock proof which we hope means we won't have sheep breaking in this year. We have nine new gates to control the cattle that will come in for a few weeks in the late summer. Two areas of woodland and an area of scrub have been fenced to further control the grazing.

In December we held a well attended volunteer event in the field and the participants had a conducted tour of the site before beginning work. Amy Oliver writes about the day on page 5 and David Ramsden brings you up to date on page 4. We hope to welcome more of you to see the field in July when we hold

the next practical task - bracken bashing - see below for details.

Our Information and Advice Service has also been really busy with enquiries about all sorts of (mostly) Barn Owl related topics from all over the UK and beyond. Most enquiries used to be received by post or telephone but these days we receive a huge amount by email.

Those of you who have access to the internet but haven't yet visited the BOT website really should make the effort. There is loads of info. All our leaflets and the Major Road report are up there to look at or download and there are some really informative family pages. Also there are excellent colour pictures of our sales goods if you want to see what our cards and sweat shirts really look like before you buy them.

In February we had our first visitor from Hungary and on pages 12 & 13 Ákos Klein introduces you to Hungarian Barn Owls in our 'Around and About' feature.

Our appeal following the publication of the Major Roads Research Project raised over £1,600 so thank you to everyone

who sent us donations. On pages 8 & 9 we have reproduced a section of the report which is an interpretation of the dispersal of an imaginary "brood" of 101 Barn Owls based on what actually happened to 101 real wild birds that fledged successfully and were subsequently recovered.

Thinking ahead, we are now looking forward to the completion of the Devon Barn Owl Survey Report and planning for the Cornwall Barn Owl Survey and a busy summer of events and site visits.

We hope you enjoy reading this issue of Feedback and that you feel it keeps you in touch with the Trust.

Thank you for all your support. **Eds**

## In this Issue...

Welcome to Feedback	2
Owl Trust News	3
Field News	4
Hedge Coppicing Day	5
Devon Barn Owl Survey Update	6
Owl News	7
The Brood of 101 - More from the Trust's New Report	8-9
Team Talk	10
Misconceptions and Musings	11
Around and About visits Hungary	12-13
Fundraising Feedback	14
Focus on Friends	15
Thanks and Things	16
Tail Piece	16

*Cover Photos: John Howells and David Ramsden*

*Main picture: the field when we bought it in 2001*

*Inset: Fencing on hedgebank; putting in the gateposts; view from the new gateway; restoring the stone boundary wall*

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

*Many thanks to everyone who provided words and pictures for this issue.  
Editorial team: Frances Ramsden and Sandra Reardon.*

*Copy date for issue No 32 is 1st September 2004*

*Send your contributions - news, letters, pictures and information to:  
Feedback, Barn Owl Trust, Waterleat, Ashburton, Devon TQ13 7HU  
email [info@barnowltrust.org.uk](mailto:info@barnowltrust.org.uk)*

## The Cornwall Barn Owl Survey

**2004 is the year of the  
Cornwall Barn Owl Survey**

If you are interested in  
volunteering for the survey  
or have a Barn Owl sighting  
to report please contact the  
conservation team on

**01364 653026**

## Cornwall Nestbox Workshop

Our next nestbox workshop is  
to be held at the Victory Hall,  
Indian Queens in partnership  
with Cornwall Farming and  
Wildlife Advisory Group on

**Saturday  
13 November 2004**

If you would like to spend a day  
with Trust staff and volunteers,  
learn about Barn Owls and build  
your own nestbox to take home  
please contact the Trust for  
further information

# Barn Owl Trust News

## Sleeping Beauties

In November 2003, I was working in north west Devon, checking sites for the Survey. South West Lakes Trust manage quite a few reservoirs around there, and one of these was on my agenda. We had previously recorded a number of sightings at this particular reservoir, and a few years ago, a ranger erected a nestbox in an old pump house nearby.

So my goal was to find the pump house and check for any signs of occupation. Simple I thought. It took a while to discover the building. It was surrounded by waist high brambles that extended out for tens of feet. Well at least the site is well protected, I thought, but I was still faced with the problem of getting in myself.

When I eventually got inside I noticed a number of very old Barn Owl pellets on the floor. They were around 3 years old (very disintegrated). This evidence coincided with a previous report. So, no fresh evidence on the floor, but it was possible there might be something in the nestbox, which hung from a beam directly above me. I fixed the ladder in position and climbed up. The nestbox tray was void of any pellets or poo, so I lifted the lid. I waited for my eyes to adjust to the darkness as the initial flurry of flies died down. I could just make out a series of geometric looking shapes inside. I turned my torch on and it took me a few seconds to realise what I was looking at. The inside panels were covered in hibernating butterflies! Being reluctant to disturb them, I had a quick study of their wing pattern and replaced the lid. There must have been at least 20. They all had their wings up, so I could only see the undersides which were dark, therefore it was very difficult to identify them without a guide at hand. Having completed the search I began the arduous journey back to the van.

It is quite common not to find any recent Barn Owl evidence on a site visit, and this can often be disappointing. Where Barn Owls are absent however, it is always pleasing to find that another species is making use of a nestbox. We have never recorded use by butterflies before, and it was a delightful sight. Checking this site was quite physically demanding, and I left with legs looking like they had undergone an over enthusiastic acupuncture session, but it was definitely worth it. It's these kind of unpredictable incidents that make the job so interesting. I later confirmed they were Peacock butterflies.

**Amy Oliver**



## Painting Owls

In February some of our staff and volunteers got a chance to participate in an unusual training course. Ex BOT office manager Sue Williams came into the Trust and showed us how to transform humans into Barn Owls; in the days before she worked for the Trust Sue was a professional face painter.

We are planning to offer children the opportunity of having their faces painted as Barn Owls at this year's events.

"Children love face painting and this is

a great way to attract them and their parents to our stand which will help to get our conservation and educational message across," says Fundraising Manager Sue Booth. "It will also help to raise funds to support our work".

*Sue painting receptionist Lesley Ford, and inset volunteer Jamie Sutherland displaying Amy's handiwork.*  
Photos: Sue Booth

## Valentine Owls



In February the Barn Owl Trust received a very special Valentine delivery of three Barn Owls by a gentleman called Mr Valentine – honestly!

When a lady in Coventry had come out to collect her milk in the morning a few months earlier she found a box on her doorstep. When she looked inside it there were three Barn Owls looking up at her. She took them in and tried to find them a new home. Sue Wright who helps with the rehabilitation of wild birds for the RSPCA took them on but did not have the room to give them permanent homes.

Sue said "I wanted them to go somewhere where they would be looked after properly. So I called Jackie Meads at Safewings in Northants". Jackie runs a short-term intensive care sanctuary for all types of birds. Captive bred Barn Owls can't be released into the wild so Jackie

contacted the Barn Owl Trust to help find a permanent home for them. When the Trust said they could come here it was just a question of working out how to get them from Northamptonshire to Devon. Jackie contacted the local radio station and asked them to put an appeal out on the radio for help. Within ten minutes Mr Valentine offered to give the Barn Owls a lift to Devon!

We already have a resident Barn Owl called Valentine so we couldn't name one of these birds after their "knight in shining armour". However, thank you Mr Valentine on behalf of our three newest residents for bringing these very lucky birds to their new home.

# Field News

## Our Lennon Legacy Project Update...

The Trust's 26-acre field, purchased in 2001 with the Lennon Legacy, used to be eight fields, but back in 1970 the internal hedges were grubbed out for the sake of "agricultural improvement". We can only imagine how much wildlife was lost as a result. Certainly the numbers of small mammals (the amount of owl food) must have been significantly reduced along with birds, insects, and wild flowers.

Fortunately for the local wildlife, the Barn Owl Trust now owns the field and the priority has changed from lamb production to nature conservation. Our aim is not only to establish resident Barn Owls but also to encourage as much other wildlife as possible. When we mentioned the possibility of re-creating one of the missing hedgerows to the previous owner he must have thought we were mad! It certainly seems ridiculous that he was paid by the government to remove them and now the government is paying us 80% of the cost of putting them back!

When the field was first purchased we became very excited about the possibility of putting back the hedgerows.

However, ALL of them would be a massive task and Barn Owls don't actually NEED hedgerows providing there are enough small mammals in the grassland. We decided initially to

content ourselves with recreating "Kiln Close", one of the original fields. The news is we've done it...

we've built a hedge! And we've restored one of the boundary hedge banks. As I write we are just about to plant 1,600 hedging trees, mainly Hawthorn, Blackthorn, and Hazel. The hedgerows will be managed for maximum wildlife benefit – lots of flowers, insects,



*Creating a space for our new barn. We used the soil to create the new hedge bank*



*Our contractor faced the bank with scraped-up turf - the disturbed ground should be great for wild flowers*



*Kiln Close in snow - the southern end of the Trust's land showing Kiln Close (one of the original eight fields) enclosed by a brand new hedge bank*

*All Photos: David Ramsden*

mower to keep a circular path mown and control scrub invasion. We've also just ordered a small modern barn – timber-framed for minimal environmental impact. It's all really exciting! As you can imagine we have great plans for the building. Although its purpose is agricultural we're going to incorporate as much provision for wildlife as is humanly possible. We've got bat boxes waiting to go up. We want to try and establish House Sparrows. Although there are some only a mile down the valley they've been absent here for at least 22 years and have declined nationally by 50%. We want Swallows to nest – they are often seen but currently lack a nest site. We could have Wrens, Robins, Pied Wagtails, Blue Tits, Great Tits, Blackbirds, Little Owls, and even Kestrels! We've come across all these species nesting in farm buildings over the years. However there is one species above all, which we'd most like to have in our barn... I don't need to tell you what it is! Fingers crossed.

**David Ramsden**  
**Senior Conservation Officer**

*This whole project has been made possible by the generosity of Vivien Lennon who remembered the Barn Owl Trust in her will.*

*On behalf of all the wildlife and the humans that will benefit over the years from your gift - Thank you Vivien.*

*ED.*

nuts and berries, birds, and (yes, you guessed it) small mammals. We also have Dormice on part of the site and once our hedgerows have Bramble and Honeysuckle (as well as Hazel) these lovely little mammals should start to increase. Once the trees are big enough we'll be able to erect dormouse boxes and small bird nest boxes too! Don't worry; Barn Owls don't usually eat small birds or Dormice.

Apart from the hedge bank work, we're part way through creating a new perimeter fence and fences to keep stock out of the wooded areas. We've bought a small second-hand tractor and

# Hedge Coppicing Day

Regular readers will be familiar with the Lennon Legacy Project and our plan to create 26 acres of Barn Owl heaven here at Waterleat. The drive up to BOT offices from the main road runs alongside part of the field formally known as Kiln Close. There are roughly 160 metres of hedgerow that line the drive, with Kiln Close on the other side. The side facing the drive has been flailed once a year to allow for clear access. This is the only method of management the hedgerow has received in recent years; traditional methods have not been applied for decades.

This has led to a rather sparse and 'gappy' hedge structure, with stems that are not suitable for laying. Traditional methods of hedge management were originally used to produce a thick, dense structure that was effective in stock proofing. A well-maintained hedge also provides food and shelter for a wide variety of insects, birds and small mammals. We know that Barn Owls are sometimes seen hunting along hedgerows, so the idea of encouraging small mammal populations in our hedge seemed really worthwhile. We were all decided that something needed to be done to restore its value to wildlife.

A new management strategy was agreed between \*DEFRA and BOT within the \*\*ESA agreement. The hedge is in great need of rejuvenation, and we were advised the only way to achieve this was to start again. Therefore we have agreed to coppice one quarter (40 metres) of the hedge each year. Coppicing involves cutting the stems down to between 7.5 and 15 centimetres from the ground to promote vigorous regrowth that will be suitable for laying after 3 or 4 years. Once we have coppiced the whole length, we will lay one quarter each year in the same succession.

Coppicing should be done during winter months when the hedge is dormant, and completed before the onset of the bird-nesting season. Seeing the enormity of the task ahead, we thought it would be a good idea to invite volunteers to help, so a 'Hedge Coppice Day' was arranged for Saturday 6th December. Far from revelling in the thought of the hard work involved, I found it very hard to believe people would volunteer themselves, especially in the depths of winter! People were asked to book in advance as places were limited to around twenty. So a list for names was put up above Lesley's desk. I wasn't surprised to find that by November only two charitable

souls had signed up. Having been asked to run the event, I couldn't help feeling a sense of dread, imagining two volunteers and me miserably hacking away in the rain for an eternity. I was also very nervous in case there was a sudden surge of interest leading to a greater responsibility for making sure everybody actually enjoyed themselves!

As it turned out, about a week before the event over twenty people had enlisted.

I was really surprised and thought they must all be bonkers. I was even more amazed on the day when everyone turned up. Such was the enthusiasm that one lady, Mandy, turned up on crutches! I found this really encouraging and for the first time thought that the day might actually turn out to be fun.

David began by giving everyone a tour of the LLP field, with commentary regarding



Photos: Amy Oliver

the progress and future plans for different landscape features. Despite the drizzle and cold wind, the level of interest was high, and even I learned a few things.

So the task in hand was upon us. David gave a demo with instructions for coppicing, and guidelines for health and safety. He then had to leave, handing the event over to Pete Webb and me.

Everyone was raring to go so we got straight down to allocating roles. We had recently acquired a wood chipper to deal with the plant material cut from the hedge. There is a pathway through Corner Wood at the other end of the field, which was rocky, slippery and unstable. So the plan was to spread the chippings on the path to make it safer and more comfortable to walk on. The chipper had to be manned by two people all day, and as this didn't involve too



much walking around, it was a perfect role for Mandy.

So the coppicing got underway with swift enthusiasm. Unfortunately the rain grew steadily heavier, but this didn't seem to dampen anyone's spirits. The job was getting done at a remarkable speed. Early on in the day Di pointed out that we had uncovered an age old gateway no one had realised was there. Unfortunately it can't be reinstated as the ground behind it is too steep, but it was very exciting to see all the same.

The mood was jovial throughout the day and everybody was really enjoying themselves (including me!). A short break was taken for a communal, chatty lunch, then everyone got straight back out to finish the job. The coppicing was completed well before home time so everyone mucked in to clear the debris. As darkness approached people gradually collected their things and said their goodbyes.

Everyone who attended put in such a lot of effort, and thanks to such a marvellously thorough job, this part of the field now looks incredibly different. I can recommend the day to anyone who enjoys being outdoors and meeting new people. It was great to work as part of a team, and to acquire new practical skills. For those of you who want to get involved: Bracken Bashing Stage 2 is happening on **Saturday 3rd July at 10.00am** please phone the office for details .

**Amy Oliver**  
**Assistant Conservation Officer**

\*DEFRA – Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs

\*\*ESA – Environmentally Sensitive Area

---

---

# Devon Barn Owl Survey Update

---

---



John Howells Photo: Holly Morgenroth

Hello again everyone! You may remember me from my introduction in the Autumn 2003 Feedback. Well, my contract as Survey Officer finished at the start of January – but brilliantly I have been asked to stay on as Conservation assistant! (Hazel expressed her joy by screeching 12 inches above my ear one evening!). So my involvement in the Devon Barn Owl Survey has now been extended, this is excellent as the survey work was great and I will now have a chance to see the project through to completion!

We have just started to enter the vast amounts of data collected during the survey which was quite a long and sometimes complicated process (for example, when an owner told us about another site that was a definite nest site, when you get there, the barn had

collapsed 3 years previously. However those people were certain that the next farmers barn, etc, etc.... I'm sure you get the picture!). On the plus side it's really interesting having the chance to 'revisit' sites and also read about sites that the other members of the team surveyed!

On top of the data collected from the 1100 plus sites that we visited, we also received information from people who had heard about the survey from other organisations and the media. This extra information means we have plenty to add to the database! So far we have managed to enter about 1,200 individual items of data for 2003, but there are many more yet to add - which is really good news. When we come to do the number crunching, we'll have loads of information to work with!

It is still very early to start making predictions about the state of the Barn Owl population in each of the Devon districts, as we have yet to begin any data analysis. In East Devon the numbers of nesting sites confirmed in 2003 appear to have increased in comparison to the number confirmed in 1993 – we do have to be careful when analysing the data as the 2003 survey was larger and more comprehensive than the earlier survey, therefore we cannot make a direct comparison.

It does appear that some sites may have been abandoned by Barn Owls, but of the new sites that have been used, seven of them are actually nestboxes that we erected as part of our East Devon Barn Owl Scheme, another three sites are also using nestboxes that we erected. This is excellent as it

means that although the population of Barn Owls in East Devon is dynamic, it is increasing – the number of known nesting sites appears to have increased by about 20% from 1993!

As soon as the majority of the data is entered and checked the analysis will begin in earnest. This is the most comprehensive county Barn Owl survey which has ever been carried out in the UK - possibly the world! We plan that the next issue of Feedback will have more information and the welcome news that the report is complete!

Thank you to:

Simon Bishop, Cyril Cole, Len and Sue Couch, Stuart Dawber, Susan Dorling, Roger Hocking, Mary Houldsworth, Pete Kerten, Julie Laing, Holly Morgenroth, Alan Pomroy, Philip O'Doherty, John Randall, Christine Robinson, Mike Tyler, Pat Williams, Graham Willson, and all other organisations and individuals that provided additional help and information.

We would be delighted to hear from anyone who would like to be involved in this year's Cornwall Barn Owl Survey – please contact the Conservation team.

**John Howells**  
**Conservation Assistant**

---

## You Can Help - Owl Collectors Needed

---

If you live in south west England and have transport you could really make a difference. The Barn Owl Trust receives Live Bird Emergency calls, mainly from across the south-west.

Typically, an injured Barn Owl may be discovered on a remote farm or picked up on a road. In many cases injured birds are taken to the veterinary hospital in Plymouth or brought to the BOT by whoever found them. However in some cases the finder is unable to move them and the Barn Owl Trust then has to try and find a local volunteer.

**Can you help?**

If you live in Devon, Cornwall, Dorset or Somerset and would be happy to occasionally transport an injured owl we'd love to add you to our list of Owl Collectors.

We may never need to call on you or we may need you several times in a year. It could be any time of day or evening. It's impossible to predict when or where your help will be needed but knowing you are available would be a great help to us. Please give us all your contact details including a mobile number if you have one.

Many thanks.

---

## Xmas Puds

---

Fortunately Christmas is a long way off but this is advance warning that if you want our delicious Xmas puds this year will need to order them as early as possible directly from us. The Ultimate Plum Pudding Company will continue to make the puddings but will no longer post them directly to customers.

We need to know how many to order so it would be really helpful if you can give us some idea of how many you are likely to want. If you haven't tried them yet they come very highly recommended. We hope prices will be similar to last year (1lb - £6.47 2lb - £11.22 inc p&p, extra for overseas) with a small increase for inflation and postage.



---

---

# Owl News

---

---

A rather grey day last November was health check day for the birds in our sanctuary and this time it was a baptism of fire for Isabel, our new student on placement – her first day with the Trust. I think she was hoping for some 'hands on' experience so already her big chance had arrived.

David chose Willow as a guinea pig to show her the procedures involved and Willow, a captive bred Barn Owl, behaved extremely well and put up with having her beak and talons trimmed and being wormed, sprayed and weighed without a murmur. Because we have a mix of captive bred and wild owls they do react very differently to being handled. The wild Barn Owls tend to play dead in the hope that we will go away and leave them alone and if you are not used to it you might feel that a bit of CPR is needed. They literally freeze and when you put them down remain exactly how they have been placed which can be quite disconcerting. The captive owls, some are fairly tame and others rather less so, range from fairly gentle to extremely aggressive when being handled so great care needs to be taken to avoid talons and beaks, and bottoms of course when they get a bit excited!

All birds were found to be fit and healthy although a question mark hangs over Mrs Cornish. She is our oldest inhabitant and has been at the Trust for about 17 years. We think she is probably approaching twenty but being a wild Barn Owl we do not know how old she was when she came to us. Mrs Cornish has begun to look her age over the past couple of years and doesn't bother too much with personal hygiene these days. However, her quality of life seems fine and who are we to condemn her just because she is a bit grubby and not very pretty, so we will continue to keep a careful eye on her. The other interesting discovery that day was about Poppy a female captive bred Barn Owl that has been with us for two or three years now. David finally pronounced her a male Barn Owl – in our defence it is sometimes quite difficult to tell and she/he was quite a pale female or dark male. I'm sure he/she knew what sex they were and so Poppy is now Poppleford.

Since the last issue of Feedback we have had many wild birds coming in for treatment and convalescence and subsequent return to the wild and one wild Barn Owl that will remain at Waterleat as its injuries were too serious

for complete recovery.

Last month we received three captive bred Barn Owls from Warwickshire. They had been left on the doorstep of a lady living in Coventry. She woke up one morning to find a cardboard box on her doorstep containing three young Barn Owls. She passed the birds over to another lady who helps the RSPCA with wild birds and here they stayed for nearly six months. She had hoped to be able to release them into the wild. However as they were captive bred it is no longer possible without a licence from DEFRA, which is only granted in exceptional circumstances. She could not continue to look after the owls indefinitely and contacted a wildlife sanctuary who got in touch with us, so here they are. The alternatives were fast running out and ultimately the owls would have had to

be destroyed. The owls had obviously been well looked after and were clean and well fed. After a period of quarantine the three owls were introduced to some of our other residents and seem to be settling in very well. I think it would be fairly appropriate to call the male Barn Owl Earnest as in 'The Importance of Being Earnest' by Oscar Wilde – as I'm sure you will remember he was found in 'A HANDBAG!'

On a more personal note, I was walking up the road leading to my house a few weeks ago and found a Sparrow Hawk wrapped around a barbed wire fence. Sadly it was dead but the suffering it must have endured whilst struggling on the barbed wire does not bear thinking about – I wonder how many other people in the country came across other similar incidents on that day. The week previously somebody had brought in another Sparrow Hawk, which had flown into a window and seemed to be quite lively. However by the time they reached us it also had died.

We have to say goodbye to two of our resident Barn Owls this year: Dart and Braveheart. Both owls had been with us for over ten years as have so many of



*Earnest in the Snow*

*Photo: John Howells*

the rescued birds at Waterleat. Dart had been our breeding male for many years when he and Gloss made such a good job of bringing up their owlets in the hide aviary which we were later able to release into the wild. This is not longer a possibility since the changes in the licensing laws by DEFRA.

There seems to be a lot of doom and gloom in this article so to end on a more positive note I'm sure you will be delighted to hear that I'm reliably informed by our conservation staff that parts of our field are now positively riddled with vole holes so any passing Barn Owls looking for easy pickings will hopefully be moving in before very long.

**Sandra Reardon**  
*Office Manager*

---

# The Brood of 101:

---

In November 2003 the Trust published its biggest-ever research report - *Barn Owls and Major Roads: results and recommendations from a 15-year research project*. In the last issue of Feedback we summarised some of the findings.

Each year we fit around 120 nestling Barn Owls with tiny metal rings that ask anyone finding the bird to report the circumstances. Most of the resulting "recoveries" include the finding date, place, and circumstances. During the fifteen years we ringed 1,163 Barn Owls and by combining ringing and recovery data we were able to monitor movement and mortality; how far they went, how long they lived, and how they died. The 109-page report looked at the life span of major road victims and compared these to birds recovered away from major roads. We also looked at the movements of individual birds in relation to the network of major roads – fascinating stuff!

Scientific reports tend to be full of tables, graphs, charts, and scatter plots. It's easy to forget that we're talking about real birds that really lived. Whilst deeply engrossed in producing the scientific stuff I had an idea. Why not tell a story about what happened to all these beautiful young owls? Why not imagine that the 101 birds that were later recovered had started life as one enormous brood? Thus the concept was born. Not 101 Dalmatians but 101 nestling Barn Owls!

So here we go. What follows is a chronological interpretation of the dispersal pattern of an imaginary "brood" of 101 Barn Owls based on what actually happened to 101 real wild birds that fledged successfully and were subsequently recovered. For each bird,

the life-span (days between ringing and recovery) and the distance (from hatching place to finding place) are given in brackets.

## Day 6 to day 30 (summer)

Most of the 101 fledge in this first 30 day period. After only six days one drowns just near the nest site (6d/<1km). Another one leaves almost immediately and is found many kilometres away starved to death (10d/13km). Another starves too (20d/3km). Two die from flying into wires just near the nest (10d/<1km, 21d/<1km). Two more drown just near the nest (24d/<1km, 30d/<1km) and one chokes on a sharp bone (21d/<1km). Three are killed on local minor roads (11d/2km, 17d/2km, 25d/5km). One is killed by a predator (25d/<1km) and another accidentally trapped in a building (27d/<1km). The rest are still really inexperienced, only just beginning to be independent and most have not started to disperse yet.

*88 are still alive.*

## Day 31 to day 60 (late summer)

Four more are killed on minor roads and three of these had started to disperse and must have crossed lots of country lanes before they were hit (35d/1km, 43d/8km, 55d/4km, 60d/7km). One is killed by a predator close to the nest site (38d/<1km). One must have dispersed soon after it fledged because it went quite a long way (57d/11km) and was the first to be killed on a major road. By now all 101 have fledged, some are still inexperienced but many are now independent and in dispersal.

*82 are still alive.*

## Day 61 to day 90 (early autumn)

Surprisingly, four birds are still less than a kilometre from the nest; two fly into wires (62d/<1km, 62d/<1km); one starves (71d/<1km) and one dies on a minor road (88d/

<1km). One dies on a railway line quite close to the nest site (64d/1km). There are two more minor road casualties, one was only a few kilometres from the nest (69d/3km) but the other one had dispersed a really long way and must have successfully crossed lots of minor roads before being killed on one (72d/23km). Another turns up drowned in a cattle trough after dispersing a similar distance (90d/21km). Four birds that managed to avoid flying into wires, drowning, or being hit during numerous minor road crossings, are killed on major roads (76d/9km, 81d/30km, 82d/1km, 88d/12km). By now all 101 birds are almost certainly independent and most have dispersed away from the nest but by day 90, 31 are already dead.

*70 are still alive.*

## Day 91 to day 120 (autumn)

Two birds are still fairly close to the nest even a couple of months after fledging. One is accidentally trapped in a building (99d/2km) and the other dies on a major road that was unusually close to the nest (106d/<1km). Two die on minor roads (118d/8km, 110d/12km) and the rest are all major road casualties (109d/13km, 113d/30km, 120d/4km). We are now well over half way through the dispersal period.

*62 are still alive.*

## Day 121 to day 150 (late autumn)

We are now running up towards the end of the dispersal period and very few birds are left near the nest. One is drowned in the nest area (121d/<1km) in spite of the fact it has avoided drowning around here for several months. Another drowns a long way away (145d/13km) and one flies into wire (129d/7km). Five birds that managed to avoid starvation, drowning and flying into wires become major road casualties (127d/17km, 129d/11km, 145d/34km, 146d/7km, 147d/13km).

*54 are still alive.*

## Day 151 to day 180 (early winter)

The dispersal phase is drawing to a close and some birds have already adopted a more sedentary life style. Amazingly, one bird is still around the nest and becomes a minor road casualty (152d/<1km). Another becomes a minor road casualty (167d/7km) and one starves (179d/13km). Five more birds become major road casualties (159d/6km, 159d/12km, 161d/33km, 165d/19km, 172d/10km). More than half of the "brood" of 101 are now dead.

*46 are still alive.*

## Day 181 to day 270 (mid winter and early spring)

During this longer (90 day) period the birds are generally sedentary but may forage up to 5km from their main roost, trying to get through their first winter. One is shot (205d/17km); five become minor road casualties (217d/4km, 218d/10km,



*The Owlets were all fitted with BTO rings*

*Photo: Muzz Murray*



# - More from the Trust's New Report



*The British countryside is dissected by major roads making it almost impossible for many young Barn Owls to disperse from their natal sites safely*  
Photo: David Ramsden

256d/9km, 257d/1km, 258d/5km) and ten die on major roads (190/15km, 210d/17km, 215d/10km, 229d/10km, 230d/17km, 230d/33km, 237d/16km, 246d/14km, 249d/33km, 258d/8km).

*30 are still alive.*

## **Day 271 to day 365 (mid spring and early summer)**

In this 90 day period most of the birds have probably found a mate and their foraging range contracts as nesting gets underway and prey numbers start to increase. Amazingly, one bird is still at its natal site but even so, it starves (280d/<1km). Unluckily, many choose home ranges too close to major roads; seven die on major roads (280d/5km, 283d/25km, 289d/10km, 289d/10km, 300d/9km, 340d/12km, 358d/10km) and one on a minor road (333d/39km). Out of the brood of 101, eighty have died before their first "birthday".

*21 are still alive and move into their second year, experienced survivors and "valuable" birds.*

## **Day 366 to 730 (their second year)**

Once nesting is over, their foraging range increases once more with the usual result. Major roads claim another seven victims (396d/20 km, 430d/4km, 433d/18km, 450d/17km, 551d/18km, 583d/19km, 724d/4km); four die on minor roads (475d/12km, 483d/1km, 567d/8km, 645d/21km); one starves (590d/8km) and one flies into wire (625d/6km).

*8 are still alive and move into their third year, highly experienced survivors and very "valuable" birds.*

## **Day 731 to day 1095 (their third year)**

In spite of their extensive experience, third year birds fall victim to the same fates as the rest of the "brood". Two die on major roads

(767d/3km, 1015d/17km), two on minor roads (819d/5km, 974d/9km) and one flies into wire (1072d/8km).

*3 are still alive and they become the veterans, moving into their fourth year.*

## **Day 1096 and beyond**

Interestingly the last three birds are all found relatively short distances from "the site" where "the brood" originally hatched. One died soon after its third "birthday" on a major road (3 km), one was predated just after its fifth "birthday" (7 km).

*The last one died on a minor road aged six (2 km).*

This article is based on recoveries of real birds, which are almost always found dead. It should be remembered that only 14% of ringed Barn Owls are reported and that there are some Barn Owls out there that survive longer than these. The oldest recorded wild Barn Owl in the UK was 13 years old.

**David Ramsden**  
*Senior Conservation Officer*



*When a Barn Owl attempts to cross this type of road the result is almost inevitable*

---

---

# Team Talk

---

---

We are delighted that several new volunteers have joined us since the last issue of Feedback.



Jennie, Tanja and Thursday

Photo: John Howells

Student Darren Brown is helping us one day a week with practical work and has been focused mainly in the field. We have two new aviary cleaners, Tanja Brown and Jennie Richards. Tanja says "I am an artist with a love of Dartmoor, where I live and wanted to contribute to the conservation of wildlife as living so close to nature and wildlife deeply inspires and enriches my life. I do aviary cleaning a few hours every couple of weeks and the close contact with the owls is amazing, they are often flying overhead while cleaning which is a spectacular sight – and working with a lovely bunch of people makes it really enjoyable!"

Jennie added "I am very interested in all animals and wildlife so any close contact with them is wonderful. I used to watch a wild barn owl hunting near woods whilst living near Holsworthy in 2003 and that was great; but words can't describe how great it is to be so close to the owls here. I do aviary cleaning every fortnight, and the owls more than make up for the job!"

Student Kim Fawcett is doing a diploma in animal care at Paignton Zoo and comes in one day a week and works

mainly with the conservation team. Pat Williams volunteered to help with the Devon Barn Owl Survey and has also become involved in helping with practical work, aviary cleaning and fundraising activities.

In November 2003 we were joined by student Isabel Vacas on her industrial placement year. Isabel who is with us four days a week until late August introduces herself below.

Jeanne Silvestri, Dawn Ford and Stacey Sewell are all helping out in the office with admin and fundraising. Jon Stobbs has assisted with fundraising events and Roger Hocking helped with a street collection as well as being a Devon Barn Owl Survey volunteer.

We are always pleased to hear from people who may be interested in volunteering for the Trust so if you have some free time and some skills you can share do please give us a call. □

---

From a very young age I was always interested in animals. Growing up on a smallholding in Surrey, I was constantly in contact with and caring for animals. This interest remained with me, though I never really saw it as a career I might pursue.

After completing my 'A' Levels, I knew I wanted to pursue a career in science, but was not completely sure which path to follow, so I took a couple of years out working to try and decide. One of these years I spent in Madrid, mainly to brush up on my Spanish but also to experience a different culture and way of life. Being half Spanish I thought it would be a good opportunity to get to know my Spanish family properly.

A year out in Spain really clarified in my mind what degree I wanted to pursue and I secured a place at Plymouth University on the BSc Animal Science (Behaviour & Welfare) Course. I have found this immensely interesting and look forward to completing it. It's thanks to my degree that I came to work at the Barn Owl Trust, as part of my course requires that I work for a year.

After completing my second year I had to start searching for a work placement; something the university leaves entirely to the student. I applied for numerous jobs and training schemes, but was unsuccessful because I had no previous experience and only required the work for one year. I really wanted to stay in the

South West and as the start of the academic year was approaching I was becoming extremely concerned about whether or not I would find a placement. It was then that I contacted the Barn Owl Trust and after an interview with David Ramsden was offered a work placement. The Barn Owl Trust has really opened my eyes to conservation. I had no idea the amount of time, effort and detail that goes into it.

I was fortunate to start whilst DBOS was still going on and have been trained to carry out survey work. This has been one of the main highlights of my job. Not only have I been lucky to see wild Barn Owls, but have also gained the skills and knowledge to search sites, some of which have been very challenging. I have also had the chance to see many areas of Devon and met many different people on the way. My map reading has also improved greatly! I work four days a week and my responsibilities at present include dealing with simple enquiries, DBOS site surveys, DBOS data entry, captive owl feeding (shared with John) and practical support. I feel very fortunate that I have had a chance to be involved in wildlife conservation, which has greatly improved my skills and knowledge in this area. Everyone at the Barn Owl Trust has been really supportive and helpful and such a friendly atmosphere has made my time



Isabel

Photo: John Howells

here really enjoyable. I'm keeping a diary of my year at the Barn Owl Trust, which will be great to look back on when I've finished! Other interests of mine include reading and films, especially from other cultures and travelling. I also enjoy walking, swimming and tennis.

**Isabel Vacas  
Conservation Trainee**

# Misconceptions and Musings

## Popular Misconceptions

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

### No. 9

"The Barn Owl Trust is looking for sites to release Barn Owls" – **WRONG!**

Back in the 1980's and early nineties, the release of captive-bred Barn Owls was going on all over the UK with lots of different groups and individuals involved. Back in those days the Barn Owl Trust and its forerunner the Devon Barn Owl Scheme were looking for sites with good Barn Owl habitat and willing volunteers who were prepared to adapt their buildings and undertake nightly feeding of owls prior to their release.

Barn Owl Trust release sites were very carefully selected and enough of the released birds survived to make the scheme worthwhile. However many releases across the UK were not so carefully planned and due to concerns over the poor survival rate of released birds, statutory controls were introduced.

From the 1st of January 1993 the release of captive-bred Barn Owls became illegal without a licence and release operators were required to

follow government guidelines, which the Barn Owl Trust helped to draw up. The introduction of controls greatly reduced the number of birds being reared and released across Britain. During the 1990's the BOT became increasingly involved in the problems associated with barn conversions and began directing its efforts towards the remaining wild Barn Owl sites. We haven't been actively looking for release sites since about 1990.

We do still release Barn Owls, but these are rehabilitated wild casualties rather than inexperienced captive-bred birds. Rehabilitated Barn Owls are usually released where they were found or somewhere close by. Familiarity with their surroundings maximises their chance of survival. So if you're thinking of offering your site as a potential release site think again. We'd suggest that you do everything you can to encourage WILD Barn Owls to move in. In any case, birds that choose to roost in your shed, are much more likely to stay than birds you release! □

## Cats' Tails

Cats are really common in most farmyards and can lead to interesting encounters; we often came across them on our surveys for DBOS and other work. At one site near Honiton where one of our nestboxes was erected a couple of years ago and the barn has quite a lot of straw in - every time it fills up close enough to the nestbox one of the farm cats uses it to sleep in... needless to say there were no signs of owls in or near the box, so it will be moved this year to a more suitable barn that has since become available!

Another site had about 6 kittens all playing in the drive with their mother. The owner was really careful not to let any of the cats into the barn where the Barn Owl roosted every winter, hopefully the owl can be tempted into staying throughout the year when a nest box is put up!

At one site I visited we had to look in a hay loft for signs of occupation - no signs of owls but every entrance seemed to have a cat - at least two must have been pregnant and not at all happy to leave their nice sunny entrances to let us in!



Dunkle

Photo: Frances Ramsden

Here at Waterleat there are lots of cats and when I make the rounds to feed the resident birds I usually have a procession following me. They hang about in the hope that when I'm unlocking the aviaries I'll put the food bucket down and they'll have an opportunity to pinch some of the owl food.

They're not lucky so often now that I am wise to their ways but they do make quite an entertaining sight trouping up the field after me when we have birds in the mobile aviary.

John Howells

## Bracken Bashing

**Saturday 3rd July  
10.00am - 4.00pm  
(approx)**

Join us in July for a volunteer event in the field

This is an opportunity to get involved in a practical conservation task and to see the Lennon Legacy Project in action

We will provide tea and coffee

Bring a packed lunch, and if it's hot a hat and sun lotion

**Places are limited so telephone the office to book  
01364 653026**

*If you don't live locally but fancy coming along and having a weekend in Devon we can help you to find local accommodation*

## In Memoriam

The Trust has received a legacy from the estate of the late  
Jessie Waddington

and donations in memory of  
Jessie Muirhead,  
Winifred Joan Palmer  
and  
Peter Swaine

*Our thanks and sincere sympathies go to their families and friends.*

# Around and About

Around and About is a regular Feedback feature taking a look at Barn Owl conservation carried out by groups and individuals. We usually hear from people in the UK but following a visit to the Trust from Ákos Klein in February we felt it would be interesting to bring you news of Barn Owls in Hungary.



Photo: Frances Ramsden

My name is Ákos, I am 23 and I am a PhD student at Eötvös University where I study the Barn Owl and I work for The Hungarian Barn Owl Conservation Foundation as a volunteer. In February 2004 I took part in a four-week-long English course in London. Before I travelled to Britain I wrote to the Barn Owl Trust to ask whether I could visit them. David encouraged me to look the BOT up when I'm in England and fortunately I did it.

## Introducing Hungary

Hungary is one of the least known European countries it is situated in middle Europe and neighbours Austria, Slovakia, Ukraine, Romania, Serbia, Croatia, and Slovenia. The 40-year-long



communist dictatorship and the closed borders may explain this isolation from Western Europe. It has a population of 12 million and a land area of 93,000 km<sup>2</sup>, Great Britain is 245,000 km<sup>2</sup>. The capital is Budapest with two million inhabitants.

The landscape is mostly flatland with averagely 600 m height hilly areas, Agriculture: Field-lands (cc. 50%), grass-lands (cc. 15%), wood-lands (cc. 19%), vine-lands and gardens (cc. 6%). The climate is continental; the highest temperature can be up to 34°C and the lowest lesser than minus 17°C. The average amount of rain is quite poor, the summers and winters are usually very dry. There are frequently harsh winters with lasting snow coverage.

## The Hungarian Barn Owl Conservation Foundation

The story of this young and tiny organisation began in 1993, when about six enthusiastic students tried to find every potential Barn Owl breeding-site in a small sample area. The results were disappointing – breeding was found at only eight sites in 400 surveyed buildings, although there were lots of buildings full of older pellets and signs. It was not too difficult to find an explanation for this: most of the investigated sites had been closed off for many years and there was no access for the owls. This preliminary investigation emphasised the importance of Barn Owl conservation and encouraged us to continue the work. So in 1997 about 10 volunteers established the Hungarian Barn Owl Conservation Foundation. The most important purposes were

- to curb the decreasing of Hungarian Barn Owl population
- to increase the number of suitable breeding-sites
- to get knowledge of other threatening factors
- to inform people about the Barn Owl and general nature conservation

Our study area was expanded from year to year and in 1999 we had 1162 settlements and visited more than 800 buildings. Also in that year we started to build an aviary for injured owls and had a non-stop mobile number, which was



Photos provided by Ákos Klein

especially for emergency calls countrywide. In the year 2000 we dealt with 200 wild breeding pairs, ringed more than 800 individuals, and created access into 147 buildings (mainly church spires). There were 48 breeding pairs, which occupied some of the 147 newly opened buildings.

From 2001 we tried to improve the quality of the fieldwork and we wanted to become a professional organisation. It is a really huge disadvantage that we don't have any paid employees and it might be the barrier of the development. Nowadays the Foundation has two more important aims: we'd like to have at least one salaried employee, who could coordinate the conservation work; we must increase the effort of applying for money. These are the keystones to the Foundation surviving.

## Owls, clutch-sizes, breeding-sites and causes of mortality in Hungary -

Both subspecies (the white *T. alba alba* and the rusty *T. alba guttata*) exist in Hungary. According to a new Ph.D. survey based on DNA, the population is made up of *guttata* (84%), *alba* (8%) and *hybrid* individuals (8%). The population size is 800-1000 pairs. The mean clutch-size is about 6 eggs. Extreme value can be 12 eggs, but 7-9 eggs are quite common. It might be interesting that 20% of all recorded breeding attempts (over 1000) were second broods! It's not rare that the female is breeding the second clutch of eggs while there are 40-50-day-old owlets in another corner of spire. The scientists presume that this behaviour may be necessary for the long-term survival of the population in a continental climate, where the winters are very hard. At least a half of the young individuals can die during their first winter if it's freezing and the ground is snow covered. Other causes of mortality, which are



---

---

# Visits Hungary

---

---



particularly important factors in Hungary, are winter starvation, road deaths, electrocution and predation by raptors. Also the death of the whole brood used to be a quite frequent occurrence as well, due to the blocking-up of the owl-entrance by humans, nowadays it is rarer.

In Continental Europe the proportion of breeding in tree-cavities is very low. In Hungary the main reason for this is that in the 19<sup>th</sup>–20<sup>th</sup> century the size of woodland declined from 80% to 11% coverage. Currently woodland coverage is 18-19 per cent, but these forests do not usually satisfy either the criteria of natural woodlands or the need of Barn Owls. With the passing of time, the Barn Owl population in the Carpathian Basin has started to breed in buildings, especially in church towers, so at present the most typical breeding-sites are the spires. Hungary used to be a really religious Christian country and for that very reason each settlement has at least one church. Also barns, stables, hay-bales, lofts of farm-houses and the water-towers are characteristic sites.

## Conservation methods, main problems

There is no particular trouble with the quality of hunting areas for the Barn Owl. But the lack of safe breeding-sites is a constant problem. The Hungarian Barn Owl population mainly depends on the number of suitable and available breeding-sites. The traditional method of Barn Owl conservation has been the provision of exterior-entrance nestboxes. But in the case of church towers, which can be 30-40 m high, it's often not the most appropriate method, because the

owlets can easily fall out of the box. If this happens these chicks die usually in a short time because of predation (by a dog or cat) or road traffic. Instead of providing an exterior nestbox we often choose either the complete or the partial reopening of the spire with a nestbox inside of the dome not on the window.

A few years ago we tried to widen the range of the conservation methods. So we started erecting pole-boxes (15) on a sample area. The results were really encouraging. Each of them was used during the first winter by Barn Owls and we recorded 3 successful breeding sites in the following summer. For this reason we aim at installing more and more pole-boxes year by year. With this kind of breeding-site we intend to avoid the only dependence on the kindness of the building owners, which is a risk in Barn Owl conservation.



## Visit to the Barn Owl Trust

There is not enough space here to write down how much I enjoyed the weekend I spent at the Barn Owl Trust. We watched a Barn Owl hunting above a meadow, which was being managed as recommended by the Trust. We also found some pretty fresh pellets under a nestbox, which hadn't been occupied for a long time. We had a long chat about English and Hungarian experiences. I also got an impression how a professional NGO should function and this has helped me very much, because I have been charged with developing our organisation into a professional one in a very short time.

I'd like to give many-many thanks to David and Frances and everyone at the Barn Owl Trust for their kindness and help (and the delicious supper as well!). I feel very lucky to meet them.

Dear Owl-friends! Please, don't forget that our organisation welcomes everybody that is interested in Barn Owl conservation to Hungary with pleasure.

**Ákos Klein**  
*Hungarian Barn Owl Conservation Foundation*

*If you would like to find out more about this project or to contact Ákos you can write to him c/o the Barn Owl Trust - Ed*

# Fun - draising Feedback



Photo: Sandra Reardon

## Join us and Walk for Wildlife

This year our annual sponsored walk and picnic will be taking place on Sunday the 6th of June on the Flete Estate by kind permission of Anthony Mildmay-White. Kick off will be at 11am. All regular walkers will be provided with full details during the next week or so. Please contact us for more information if you're looking for a great day out in beautiful scenery.

Just to show what a wonderful day is had by one and all you can see people in the photograph at the start of the walk actually wearing shorts and I can assure you that by the end of the walk you will have a warm feeling of well-being and a great sense of achievement.

If you don't live locally but fancy coming along to join in and have a weekend in sunny Devon we can help you to find local accommodation. If you can't join us or would prefer to have Megan the office golden retriever do the walking for you

then please, please fill in the enclosed sponsorship form for her - she managed to raise £988.50 last year and is hoping to top that figure in June.

We look forward to seeing you there.

Sandra Reardon

## Leisure Barn Owls

The Barn Owl Trust will be at Woodlands Leisure Park, Dartmouth during the week of the 12<sup>th</sup> to the 16<sup>th</sup> of April. We will be painting Barn Owl faces on children, organising fun competitions, lucky dips and handing out information in the falconry centre at Woodlands.

This is a good opportunity for both adults and children to come along, meet some of the team, collect some information and support the Trust.

## Paper Work

If you see the Barn Owl Trust mentioned in your newspapers and magazines please can you cut the items out and send them in.

People keep saying to us that they have seen us in the papers but we don't always know which papers we are in.

Unfortunately people often can't remember where they saw the piece and if we bought every paper every day the bill would be huge, so it would be a great help if you could look out for us.

Don't forget to include the name and date of the publication the cutting is from. Thanks.

## Outdoor Adventure

The Barn Owl Trust and River Dart Adventures have teamed up to provide fun and games throughout the summer holidays. From the 19<sup>th</sup> July till the 30<sup>th</sup> August you can visit River Dart Adventures and help conserve the Barn Owl too.

River Dart Adventures are offering the public (children and adults) a special price on a limited number of entry tickets if bought in advance.

For only £5 you can have entry to the park and two Daredevil activities. This is a saving of £2.95 on the usual ticket price and River Dart Adventures are donating half of the proceeds to the Barn Owl Trust. Tickets are available from the Trust (01364 653026).

## Grand Draw 2003 & 2004

Last years' Grand Draw was held at the Barn Owl Pub in Exeter on Friday 5<sup>th</sup> December 2003. Thank you to Mark and his team for the delicious buffet they provided; all proceeds from the ticket sales came to the Trust. Wildlife artist Pollyanna Pickering very kindly gave her time to draw the winning tickets.

The winners included Friends from as far away as Sutton Coldfield. The top prize, two tickets to a West End show of your choice, was Concetta Gray from Pullborough. A very big thank you to everyone who bought tickets and those who came to the buffet evening and to Pollyanna and the Barn Owl Pub.

It really is worth buying tickets for this year's draw. We have some really fantastic and interesting prizes for 2004. You could win a Panasonic CD player, a mobile phone (Nokia 6100), two tickets for Kew Gardens, an introductory day at Cedar Falls Health Farm, a two course Sunday lunch for two at Trenyhton Manor in Cornwall, a child's seasonal membership for Crealy Adventure Park or a Falconry experience with Dartmoor Hawking.

Tickets are enclosed with this issue of Feedback, if you can help out by selling more please phone the office and we can put them in the post for you.



Photo: Sue Booth



# Focus on Friends

Kevin Keatley lives in mid Devon with his wife Yvonne and daughters, Anya 12 and Eloise 10. They have a cat called Sean, a tortoise they inherited from their neighbours and two African land snails that started out pea size and are now 3" which is just over half their full size.

Kevin first heard about the Trust in 1991 when he went to a 'Restoring the Balance' talk by Senior Conservation Officer David. He felt that David was so passionate about the Barn Owl and its environment that after the talk he felt inspired to do something to help. Kevin runs a rope company, [www.kjkropeworks.co.uk](http://www.kjkropeworks.co.uk) making various products including rope dog leads. A few days after the talk Kevin sent the Trust some leads and rope to sell at shows and raise funds.

Kevin has always been interested in wildlife and wildlife photography. Throughout his various careers he has used a camera as a photo diary. When he worked as a diver in the North Sea and during his time in farming he always managed to find the opportunity to watch and photograph wildlife.

In 1992, frustrated because he couldn't find the right gear for his hobby, he set up a company making equipment for wildlife photography and filming. Then the only thing available on the market was old ex-army camouflage. Now his company sells products around the world and via the web



Photos: Kevin Keatley

*I wish I was a Barn Owl  
A Barn Owl's nice and light.  
How can you be unhappy when  
You're capable of flight.*

Anon



to photographers, filmmakers, naturalists and even sells camouflage to the British Army. See [www.wildlifewatchingsupplies.co.uk](http://www.wildlifewatchingsupplies.co.uk)

Over the years Kevin has helped out on various photo projects for the Trust. On one occasion he can remember waiting with his camera ready and finger on the button for a Barn Owl to fly out of the mobile aviary. The hours passed as David and Kevin watched the comet Hale-Bopp in a crystal clear night sky. It was about one o'clock in the morning when the Barn Owl finally flew out encouraged by the calling of its partner.

Another more recent project was to photograph a pair of Barn Owls in North Devon. David asked if Kevin could take some photos of the adult owls feeding their young. As the young owlets were much darker than normal Kevin felt it was a fantastic opportunity. Over a period of three weeks in the summer he converted a 15' ladder into a photo hide and spent many hours (usually 4 or 5 at a time) watching with only a few split seconds of photography. He got some great photos - see last issue of 'Feedback'

For the past four years Kevin has been photographing pond life by taking frog spawn from his garden pond and using a tank in his home to watch and photograph the transformation into tadpoles and then froglets which are then returned to the garden pond.

He has also been photographing badgers at the

same site in the South Hams for many years and has some amazing pictures. In the early hours of the morning in October last year Kevin took a series of wonderful photographs of the aurora borealis when it appeared over his home in Devon, these were featured in a local paper.

Fortunately Kevin says he is looking forward to more photo assignments and opportunities to work with the Trust because we are certainly looking forward to working with him and seeing the pictures. Thank you Kevin for all your support.

Kevin's company is donating the dog leads which appear on the Trust's website, at events and which will be in our new sales leaflet. The BOT receives 100% of the proceeds from each sale so you can support the Trust and treat your canine friends to a new lead. □

## Amateur Entomologists' Society

Founded in 1935 the Society promotes the study of entomology, especially amongst amateurs and the younger generation. It produces six bi-monthly highly acclaimed *Bulletins* and for the younger enthusiast, the *Bug Club Magazine*.

The Society is also a post-war leader in the field of insect conservation and publishes *Invertebrate Conservation News* three times a year.

Along with these publications the Society also publishes a wide range of books, leaflets and pamphlets.

For more information please contact the Registrar at  
P.O. Box 8774 - London SW7 5ZG  
[www.amentsoc.org](http://www.amentsoc.org) - email: [aes@amentsoc.org](mailto:aes@amentsoc.org)



---

---

# Thanks and Things

---

---

This is the point in Feedback when we say a big **Thank you** to all of you who have generously supported the Trust since the last issue. We also list the things that we are looking for that you might possibly have lying around unused that we could reuse or recycle.

Please consider supporting us by donating something on the list or by purchasing some of this year's draw tickets. Alternatively you might like to come along to one of our events or even volunteer to find a home for a donation box and leaflet dispenser .

Thank you to Cathy Pole who raised £35 selling her pumpkins in aid of the Trust, she sold out in 24 hours and said she will try growing even more next year.

Special thanks to those who responded to our last wants list. We received used postage stamps from Dulcie Hunter, Ros Branchett, Jacqueline Webb, Westmoor Veterinary Centre, Nicholls & Sainsbury Solicitors, Paul Rendell, Iris Galley and Tony Dennis. Chris and Mrs Moncrieff and Kate Rogers sent in stamps and also sent us a variety of stationary. Briony Blades of Ingleside School collected £30 worth of used stamps and sent us the money. We received a corner unit computer desk from Kathy and Phil Richards. Sarah Hewitt sent us 4 washing up bowls for owl baths and Pat and Jenny Ford donated a computer workstation. We received a desk and office chair from Graham Willson, and desks from Roger and Jeanette Phillips

and from Kathy Richards. Mrs Hayward brought us a box of 400 frozen chicks (owl food) and Pat Williams gave us an electric chainsaw .

Thanks also to: Anne Deebank (North Yorkshire), John Parkes (Ashburton) and Carrie Story (Noss Mayo) who are providing collection points for old mobile phones, stamps and printer cartridges - we make money from collecting these so don't throw your old ones in the bin. If you would like to help by collecting these items locally or if you want to take items to these folks please contact Pete in the office on 01364 653026  
Thank you all for your support

## Can You Help?

We are looking for:  
Dark green material *for tablecloths at events*  
Heavy-duty metal shelving *for our new barn*  
4" galvanised nails  
Quantity of 4"x2" tanalised timber and sheets of 18mm ply  
Rechargeable torches  
'A' size batteries *for torches*  
Office stationary – *please talk to Pete to find out what we need*  
New postage stamps  
A Powerpoint projector!  
Office chairs *with five wheels*  
Filing cabinets – *2,3 or 4 drawers*  
Petrol chainsaw – *in good condition*

We are also looking for a badge making machine or somebody who has one and is willing to make a few badges for us

We are still trying to get hold of a copy of

the out-of-print Hamlyn book *Butterflies of the British Isles - ISBN 0 600 57513 6*

Farmers - We want some waste grain for encouraging small mammals and wild birds in the field

## For recycling /fundraising

Used stamps - *If you are sending large boxes of stamps please phone Pete first as they can be sent directly to the stamp dealer*

Used toner and ink cartridges  
Old mobile phones and accessories

## Volunteers

**Locally** - consider giving us a few hours regularly to work in the office or the field, clean aviaries or help at events. Think about how you can share your skills and experience to benefit Barn Owls.

**Regionally** - would you be prepared to move live birds in an emergency - see page 6.

**Nationally** - Can you help us to raise awareness and or funds. Find a home for a BOT leaflet dispenser or a donation box or both. Hold a fundraising event, a coffee morning for your friends or take part in a sponsored event to support the Trust. □

---

---

## Tail Piece



Today I came across a book that I had used for keeping notes about ten years ago and in amongst the shopping lists and contact details I found some inspirational phrases that I had copied down. I can't remember where I found them but reading through them again I felt like I had rediscovered some of the profound truths of life and wanted to share them with you.

"The secret of happy living is not to do what you like, but to like what you do".

We are an incredibly privileged society, we have freedom from starvation and choices about how we spend our time that our ancestors would never believe. The downside of this incredible state of affairs is the stress of living in the 21st century. We are bombarded with bad news and out of touch with the natural world. Consumerism is the new religion and far too many people work simply to afford their holidays or their overdrafts. Wouldn't it be wonderful if everyone could feel fulfilled and get satisfaction from their work. It's interesting that these days an increasing number of people are choosing to downgrade or

make radical career changes in order to find fulfilment.

"Use the talents you possess..... for the woods would be very silent if only the best birds sang".

So many of us avoid things we really want to do because we are fearful of failing or appearing foolish. If we are afraid to try new things we potentially deny ourselves a great deal of satisfaction. Over the years many people that have come along to the Trust have discovered talents they didn't know they had when they overcame their anxiety and tried something different. We can't all be fantastic musicians or artists and if we constantly compare ourselves to other people we will of course feel inadequate. I can remember my mother telling me years ago "comparisons are odious" and "count your blessings." Trite phrases they may be but very true and life is so much better if you think about what you have rather than what you want.

"People are lonely because they build walls instead of bridges".

These days people move around so much, families are often widespread and communities are fragmented. The news is constantly about disaster and people don't talk to strangers because they are afraid of rejection or hostility. Maybe we all need to make more of an effort to connect with the people who pass us by. Try smiling or a cheery word and you never know it might make someone's day, it's really important for human beings to receive positive feedback.

The common thread with all of these phrases is that whatever you choose you can make a difference.

I hope you have enjoyed hearing about our work and sharing our experiences and news. I really hope that it helps you to feel connected to the Trust and that the connection gives you satisfaction - your support is much appreciated by the team here at Waterleat - thank you.

*Together we can make a world of difference* **Frances Ramsden**