

Issue Number 56 - Autumn 2016



# FEEDBACK

& the

**Barn Owl Trust Annual Report 2015 - 2016**

WATERLEAT, ASHBURTON, DEVON TQ13 7HU - (01364) 653026 - [www.barnowltrust.org.uk](http://www.barnowltrust.org.uk) Reg Charity No: 299 835



**2016 Breeding Season**

**BOT's first ever Bat Walk**

**Barn Owl habitat is great for Butterflies**

*Conserving the Barn Owl and its Environment*

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Cover Photo: - Paul Smith

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

Many thanks to everyone who provided words and pictures for this issue.

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## Diary Dates 2016 - 2017

**October** - Thursday 6th - 2.30pm - Autumn Colours Walk

**November** - Tuesday 15th - 10am - LLP Hedgelaying

**December** - Thursday 8th - 2:30pm or 7:30pm

Festive Wreath Making Workshop

**January 2017** - Tues 17th, **February** - Tues 21st &

**March** - Tues 21st - 10am - 4.00pm

join us for Practical work with the Conservation Team

**April** - Friday 21st - 5:00am - Dawn Chorus Walk

**May** - Thursday 11th - 2.30pm - Wildflower Walk

Contact the office for more details or to book a place at an event - booking is essential as places are strictly limited. There may be a charge for some of the events. Check out our 'Events Diary' on our website for more details & dates of other LLP events.

[www.barnowltrust.org.uk](http://www.barnowltrust.org.uk) ★

Welcome to the 56th issue of Feedback containing our 2015-2016 Annual Report. We've produced these two publications together again to reduce our printing and postage costs.

Unfortunately this year's breeding season's results are not great with reduced nest occupancy and brood sizes at our annual monitoring sites and 42% of the sites had no recent sign of Barn Owl occupation - see more on page 5.

Those of you who receive Feedback by email will be able to see photographs of the butterflies in the Lennon Legacy Project in full-colour on pages 18-19 (and all of the other photographs). Anyone receiving the postal copy printed in black and white can contact the office for an email version if you would like to. There is also a gallery of 'Butterflies of Rough Grassland' available on our website for those with internet access.

Our article 'Conservation in Action - Encouraging Barn Owls' on page 20-21 is an inspirational tale of how a couple wanting to have Barn Owls on their land succeeded by creating the right habitat. It all started with a Barn Owl Trust butterfly walk!

Recently we held our first Bat Walk on the Lennon Legacy Project and discovered an exciting new species that we had no idea was using the land; find out more on page 9.

There are monthly opportunities to visit the site throughout the year with a variety of events and activities, see our Diary Dates at the bottom left of this page. There is something for all ages and abilities, we provide refreshments in our lovely Meeting Room and we can organise bespoke events for groups. It's always great to meet our supporters face to face, see 'A Day-Out with the Owls' on page 21.

As usual at this time of the year we are including a Sales Goods leaflet with Feedback. It features four new Christmas Card designs and a 2017 Calendar with some wonderful photographs including the amazing picture from Paul Smith featured on the front cover of this issue. There are also our traditional plum puddings, a new gift wrap pack and a new mug, all of which will help make your Christmas colourful and support our work.

As you will see from our Annual Report on pages 10-16, we made a small surplus in the financial year of £5,271 which was a great improvement on the £99 last year. However, this was mainly because our income from legacies doubled during the year. Without these thoughtful gifts to support our work the Trust simply wouldn't be able to operate the way that it does.

Changes to the Charity SORP (Statement of Recommended Practice) have meant that the format of the SOFA (Statement of Financial Activity) has had to change for this financial year. However, a direct comparison with the previous financial year has been provided.

We are always delighted when someone contacts us and wants to fundraise to support our work. This autumn Ali Ramsden is taking on a personal challenge of running the Exeter half marathon and raising funds for the Trust. It would be great for Ali and for the Barn Owl Trust if you felt able to sponsor her and we've included a flyer with details of the ways you can do this. If you feel inspired to fulfill a long-term goal or ambition, or tick something off your bucket list and support our work, we would be thrilled to hear from you. For an easy way to set up your own online fundraising see page 23.

As always, when we send out this issue of Feedback we seem to be on the countdown to Christmas and the New Year, where does the time go? We'd like to take this opportunity to wish a happy, healthy festive season and New Year to you, your friends and family, and to all the owls, wildlife and indeed our beautiful planet.

We hope you enjoy reading this issue of Feedback. Maybe when you've finished with it you can pass it on and spread the word about our work. Thank you for supporting the Barn Owl Trust, we really do appreciate all of you, after all we couldn't do it without you.

Marianne Bryan, Frances Ramsden & Aaron Kitts ★



Tawny Owl rescued from A38  
Photo: Aaron Kitts

## News Bites

### Website Proving Popular!

Our main website, [barnowltrust.org.uk](http://barnowltrust.org.uk), was re-launched in April 2015 and has been receiving a staggering average of 60,000 hits per month! In February this year the Trust launched the first ever UK Barn Owl Directory (BOD) listing Barn Owl Conservation groups, carers & rehabilitators and Barn Owl Surveyors by region. This has been viewed 6,339 times since its creation, on average about 528 hits a month, 122 a week.

### Barn Owl Mini-Film Awards

**Now Accepting Entries.** Our mini-film competition opened to entries on 1st May 2016 and will close on 16th December 2016. TV presenter and naturalist Chris Packham, and Robbie Hill, creative director of Hilltribe Media will be on the panel of judges. We have some stunning prizes up for grabs including a break for up to four people in a Cornish Tipi, a Dome Hide Tent from Wildlife Watching Supplies and a day out with Wildlife Photographer Russell Savory. Contact us or see our website for all the details of how to enter [www.barnowltrust.org.uk/BOMFA/](http://www.barnowltrust.org.uk/BOMFA/).

### Acoustic Café

A big thank you to all of those who attended our 'Acoustic Café' event on Saturday April 30th 2016 in Bovey Tracey. A fantastic evening was had by all. The night included six sets of live music and even a few songs from our very own Head of Conservation, David. A special thank you goes to Mark and Jane Bailey who have run this event for many charities over the years and to the volunteers who helped on the night. We are delighted to announce that the event raised £616.50 for the Trust.

### Nestcam Owls

After a promising start to the breeding season, with six eggs laid and all hatching, things went horribly wrong at the end of May when the female disappeared for almost 18 hours. By the end of June there were just two owlets left alive in the nest. These were both healthy and fledged successfully with the last reported visit to the box in August.

### Brexit

Following the referendum in June when 51.9% voted to leave the EU we are waiting to see what the Brexit implications are for Barn Owl, and indeed wildlife, conservation. The UK review of the use of rodenticides in 2014 was the result of EU directives and about 70% of our environmental safeguards and legislation is European legislation – and this is now at risk. ★

## Social Media - Action for Good

On a sunny Thursday in July this Tawny Owl was spotted on the central reservation of the A38 near Ashburton by a passing motorist unable to stop. She raised the alarm via the Ashburton Facebook Community page. People responded with suggestions of who to contact, and a member of the group called the Barn Owl Trust to pass on the details. Being only a ten minute drive away, Conservation Assistant Rick and regular volunteer Kim donned some hi-vis jackets and drove to the location.

They met a chap at the side of the road contemplating the dangerous crossing to get to the owl, thankfully BOT arrived just in time to take over and safely retrieve it. When our guys reached the owl it was barely moving, very subdued but with no obvious signs of injury. It was most likely hit by a fast moving vehicle. Unfortunately the owl passed away a few hours later from suspected internal injuries caused by the collision; sadly this tale is not uncommon, particularly for Barn Owls:

- \* In a typical year, Britain's 4,000 pairs of Barn Owls produce roughly 12,000 young and it is estimated that a staggering 3,000 – 5,000 of these are killed on roads.
- \* Less than 2% of Britain's roads are major roads (e.g. motorways and dual carriageways) but that's where over 90% of Barn Owl road casualties are found.
- \* Most deaths on major roads happen in the autumn and involve young Barn Owls in post-fledging dispersal.
- \* Some people think that the high numbers of young Barn Owls dying on major roads is not important, because so many young die anyway (i.e. even if they hadn't been killed on a road they probably would have died some other way). This is not true.
- \* All birds that use a road verge will sooner or later cross the road to hunt on the opposite side and most major roads have long stretches or frequent sections that are un-screened. Screening is created by planting high hedges or lines of closely-spaced trees next to the road surface on both sides thus encouraging birds to fly higher over the road. You can read more about the hazard that major roads cause to wild owls on our website: <http://www.barnowltrust.org.uk>.

Despite the outcome, this story is a great example of how social media can be a great resource and used for the greater good. If you see an injured bird in an unsafe location please do not put yourself at risk in attempting to rescue it, we have a list of UK wide contacts accessible via the homepage on our website. ★

# More BOT News

## E.U. Co-operation



*Ambios students with Poppy the dog  
Photo: Lexie New*

In July the Trust welcomed a group of conservation trainees (pictured above) from Spain, Portugal and Britain on placement through Ambios Ltd. on an EU-funded project.

They spent 3 days with us, starting with some presentations from our Head of Conservation, David, and a walk through the Lennon Legacy Project (LLP) to show them ideal UK Barn Owl habitat. Here they saw first hand the flora and fauna which can result from managing land for Barn Owls. On the other days they eagerly participated in various tasks including helping to complete the new 'webcam' aviary and habitat management in the LLP.

Ambios Ltd. is a not for profit organisation running UK and European training projects that help people achieve their goals in nature, science, education and employment. These types of projects will now be severely under threat with Britain leaving the EU. The Trust has been working with Ambios for almost 15 years. For more information on the fantastic work that Ambios does please have a look at their website - [www.ambios.net](http://www.ambios.net). ★

## Two Nests One Site!

One of the wonderful things about working with wildlife is that there is always something new to discover. When John and Heather Vincent walked into our stand at the Yealmpton Show this year and said they had 2 active Barn Owl nests in one building we were sceptical to say the least!

Although historically this was not a first, the previous closest nests we'd recorded were 250 metres apart. Having now visited the site in Cornwall and seen the evidence we are delighted to announce that this site holds the record for the closest simultaneous active Barn Owl nests we've ever recorded.

This converted dairy had a space for Barn Owls built in to each end and this year both ends contained nestlings at the same time. Amazing! ★



*John and Heather's converted dairy  
Photo: David Ramsden*

## Training for Ecologists



*BOESS attendees searching for evidence of Barn Owls  
Photo: David Ramsden*

We have now trained over 700 ecologists, consultants and Barn Owl workers on our Barn Owl Ecology Survey and Signs (BOESS) and Advanced Barn Owl Survey and Mitigation (ABOSM) courses. BOESS is our foundation course. During the course, we teach attendees what signs to look for when surveying for Barn Owls, their basic ecology and introduce the subject of mitigation.

After a delicious homemade lunch (thanks to Barbara and Debbie) our attendees jump onto a minibus for a field trip to a working farm where they survey two barns for evidence of Barn Owls. This part of the course is always popular and gets great feedback from our attendees.

Some of the participants on the July courses this summer were in for a double helping of Barn Owl training as 13 of them also attended our Advanced course the following day.

Held here at the Barn Owl Trust, our Advanced course takes the techniques and methods learnt at BOESS and expands upon them. Mitigation is a huge part of the course, minimising impact on Barn Owls during development work and providing for them once the building is complete.

During a field trip just up the road, attendees survey the site and design a mitigation strategy, giving them a taste of all the things they will need to consider when out on a job. After another fantastic lunch there are a selection of case studies with lots of group interaction.

A walk in the LLP shows how rough grassland habitat can be created and the amazing wildlife diversity that it hosts, they also see our Wildlife Tower with provision for all of the species that might be found in a traditional barn. Our attendees then return to our meeting room for an assessment of how much they have learnt.

Overall, it is a busy four days for staff and a great training experience for the ecologists that we now recommend in our directory. We run both training courses three times a year, more details can be found on our website. ★

# 2016 Breeding Season

Recent breeding seasons have been a bit hit and miss so expectations for this year were somewhat mixed. The mild winter was a blessing with few birds reported to us dead or emaciated. However, the reluctance of the spring to get going resulted in temperatures remaining low into April when Barn Owls typically lay their first egg.

Preliminary visits to a handful of sites in late May suggested that it would be a late year as most pairs had either yet to lay or were still incubating. We therefore delayed further visits at this time to reduce potential disturbance. When we did eventually start our annual monitoring in mid-June it soon became obvious that it wasn't going to be a good year. As well as being late in terms of First Egg-laid Date (FED) other productivity indicators were also below average.

As you can see from the table (right) 2016 was below average in all respects with reduced nesting occupancy rates and brood sizes, and above average absence. Indeed, 2016 has been the joint worst year with 2013 for finding untenanted sites and is, again behind 2013, the second worst for nesting attempts. ➔

Year	Nesting (%)	Mean brood size	Regular roosting (%)	Occasional roosting (%)	Absent (%)
Ave. 1990-2015	52%	3	14%	5%	29%
2007	58%	4	12%	4%	27%
2008	62%	3	11%	2%	25%
2009	61%	3	7%	3%	30%
2010	60%	2	12%	1%	27%
2011	42%	3	17%	5%	36%
2012	68%	3	6%	2%	25%
2013	17%	2	27%	14%	42%
2014	46%	4	12%	7%	35%
2015	59%	3	10%	1%	29%
2016	39%	2	17%	3%	42%

Not great news then this season. We'd like to think that next year's going to be a better one but that does rather depend on what the small mammal cycle does and what part the weather has to play in the coming seasons. ★

**Matthew Twiggs**  
Senior Conservation Officer



## Dippers on the Ashburn

*Dipper with breakfast*  
Photo: Lexie New

As in previous years, this year has seen Dippers nesting on the river Ashburn that passes through the LLP. A Dipper box was erected in February 2011 under the bridge in Corner Wood, more in hope than expectation that it would ever get used. In 2013 Dippers nested in the box for the first time and produced 3 young. In 2014 a further 2 young were produced. In 2015 the female laid 5 eggs, with 3 youngsters surviving to fledging and this year a site record of 4 young were produced. All broods were BTO ringed.

As a keen photographer, I thought getting images of the Dipper would be a fantastic opportunity. First we set up a trail camera on the bridge to identify what rocks the adults would most likely use to perch on before or after leaving the nestbox. After a few days, we retrieved the camera to find a selection of photographs of a Grey Heron's head but no Dippers!

After sourcing a photography hide from one of our Trustees, Kevin Keatley, who runs Wildlife Watching Supplies, I set up along the river bank one afternoon. While inside checking everything, I got my first glimpse of the Dipper – success! I now knew what rock they stood on prior to entering the nestbox. A couple of early mornings saw the Dipper frequenting the box with food allowing me to get some interesting pictures. The bottomless hide allowed me to adjust my position while remaining hidden. I moved upstream as this is the direction I always saw them heading in. By the time I got the opportunity to head up for my third session, the young had unfortunately already fledged leaving me to take down the hide for this year. Here's hoping that next year they nest again and I get the opportunity to photograph the young. ★

**Lexie New**  
PA to Head of Conservation

## Up - cycling

Reusing second-hand British climbing equipment in Hungarian nature conservation.

English Health and Safety regulations sometimes are stricter than the Hungarian ones. The Barn Owl Trust has to replace its protective kit every fifth year. These equipment are still safe and in good condition.

The BOT has kindly donated these useful equipment to the Barn Owl Foundation (Hungary) for further usage. The kit has already proved its adequacy in action; while installing the Barn Owl nest box on a pole. This nice example of the interaction between the two organisations will provide all the necessary protection for the workers of the Barn Owl Foundation in the upcoming years. Many thanks go to the Barn Owl Trust! ★

**Akos Klein**  
Director  
Barn Owl Conservaton Foundation - Hungary



Photo: Provided

# All Things Planning

## Planning Emergency!

On Friday 15th July I received a phone call from a builder, working on a cob-walled barn conversion in Mid Devon, who had discovered an owl chick inside a cob wall he was demolishing. He immediately stopped work and then spoke with his boss. His boss told him to 'deal with the situation or he would'.

The builder was concerned for the owlet's welfare and called us for advice. After getting as much information as possible and having a photo sent through to confirm the owlet was a Barn Owl, I decided in the first instance to call 101 and report the discovery in order to try and prevent any further disturbance to the nest and to avert anything untoward happening to the owlet.

Here at the BOT office the Conservation Team then set about finding out more about the location by searching for the relevant planning application. This was soon found online and in particular the wildlife survey was scrutinized for references to Barn Owls. Concluded in 2014, the wildlife survey had found a lot of evidence to suggest a pair of Barn Owls was present at the site and were roosting there regularly, although no evidence of breeding was found.

Following BOT advice given in our publication 'Barn Owls and Rural Planning Applications' the authors of the wildlife survey had set out a number of mitigation measures or conditions that needed to be incorporated into the permission to renovate and convert the building. Specifically these were:

- Condition 1 Provide alternative provision
- Condition 2 Immediate pre-development re-survey
- Condition 3 Timing restriction
- Condition 4 Permanent provision within building

It was immediately apparent that Condition 3, a timing restriction on any development works taking place between March 1st and August 31st, hadn't been adhered to. It was also unlikely that Condition 2, an Immediate pre-development re-survey, had been carried out, or if it had, it failed to notice the presence of breeding Barn Owls. I therefore informed the Planning Case Officer at Mid Devon Council that a breach of planning consent had clearly taken place.

A planning meeting was arranged with the site manager, the Case Officer and myself from BOT for the Monday morning to assess the situation and work out the best way forward for the owlet and the nest. Meanwhile having been alerted, the Police Wildlife Crime Liaison Officer visited the site, took photos and interviewed the builder with regard to the immediate situation.

At the meeting on Monday 18th July, I checked on the nesting site and discovered two owlets in a cavity in the cob wall. They were approximately 4-6 weeks old. The back of the cavity had been opened up by the builders the previous Friday and the entrance to the cavity had also been enlarged. The owlets looked healthy and like they had been fed over the weekend.

This visit confirmed that no immediate pre-development re-survey had been carried out and the builders professed to being unaware of the timing restriction. The tin roof had been removed around eight weeks previously and the scaffolding around the barn was then put up about a week later. This must have been around the time that the female would have been laying her eggs. The rest of the roof timbers were removed and development works commenced. The female must have remained incubating the eggs during all this activity, the young hatched and the parents continued to feed the birds despite the building being surrounded by scaffolding and plastic sheeting.



*The two owlets huddled in the nest cavity*  
Photo: Rick Lockwood

The alternative provision (a tree box) had been put up in a nearby tree but was not placed appropriately and when inspected was full of squirrel or Jackdaw debris.

As a result of the meeting it was agreed that the back of the nest cavity would be filled in again with cob and some fine sand put at the entrance to identify whether the parents were indeed still feeding the young. It was also agreed that the area where the nest was located would be cordoned off and be completely off-limits until the end of September when the birds will have fledged. The site manager agreed to relocate the tree box higher up another tree, and it was agreed between all parties that work could proceed at the site, as long as the cob wall was left undisturbed, and work restricted to daylight hours. This decision was taken having considered that the adult birds had already shown a great propensity for adapting to the activity at the site and it was felt they would tolerate a similar level of activity as long as the nest site was left well alone.

I visited the site again on Wednesday 20th July to check on the owlets. The back of the nest cavity had been filled in again, and most importantly, there were at least three dead small mammals in the nest indicating that the adults are still visiting at night to feed the young. I also cleared out squirrel debris from the tree box. A record of the meeting and the Action Plan agreed to protect the owlets and ensure that they fledge successfully was duly sent to the Planning Case Officer and to the Police Wildlife Liaison Officer. I believe having an Officer visit the site helped to ensure that no harm came to the owlets and encouraged a good working relationship with the site manager. ★

**Rick Lockwood**  
Conservation Assistant

## Enforcement Delayed

It's not unusual to be contacted by members of the general public with planning queries. Usually this involves a planning application for development where Barn Owls are at risk of losing either a roost/nest site or habitat over which they've been seen foraging. The most common misconception is that the presence of a protected species will result in the refusal of planning consent for building projects, and people are often quite dismayed when we explain that this is rarely the case.

What's more unusual is to be contacted by someone whose Local Planning Authority had served them with an Enforcement Notice requiring the removal of a building which had been erected without planning consent. Unfortunately the Barn Owl nestbox inside the building had previously been used by Barn Owls for nesting and the Enforcement Notice was due to expire on the 16th May, slap bang in the breeding season. ➔

# A Visit from an 'Old Friend'



Iñigo with an Egyptian Vulture  
Photo: Provided

In August we had a visit from an 'old friend' Iñigo Fajardo from Spain. Iñigo first visited the Trust in 1990 whilst a student at Madrid University and then spent 3 months in the UK working for the Barn Owl Trust in 1991. Eds.

For the last 8 years I have been the Head of the Wildlife Crime Programme (anti-poison, anti-poaching and trade) in Andalusia. This includes two K-9 units specialising in poison detection (the first in the world). I am a wildlife forensic specialist, in a field of conservation where not many specialists are available. As a result, we are required by many police bodies (and Governments and Institutions) from other Spanish regions and Europe for training at official levels. So far, more than 2,000 police agents and wildlife managers from 16 countries have been trained in Portugal, Italy, Germany, Israel and African countries (Namibia, Botswana, South Africa, Ethiopia, Kenya, Nigeria).

It feels like yesterday, when actually it was closer to 30 years ago I wrote this in my diary: "I feel so so excited now. It is a dream come true. I am going to take a flight to the UK and spend some days at the BOT, the best place I have been told to learn about Barn Owls and conservation techniques".

It was a hot summer day in my country, but dark, cold and rainy when I first landed in London. Everything was new and fascinating to me, as I was just in my early twenties. After an eventful journey in a foreign country, I finally made it to the Trust. It was not long before I started feeling at home. It was only a few minutes to realize those I then met were not only the most experienced and professional guys, but more importantly, extraordinary people, just the kind of people that conquer even the stones' cold hearts. Needless to say I learnt about Barn Owls and their conservation.

Last week, some 26 years after I wrote those joyful lines in my old notebook, I came back once again. It was a hot summer day in my country and it was raining again too in the UK. I met the same people, today my very close friends and I noticed all so many changes, all for good at the Trust.

However, the BOT is far more than owls and wildlife; it is about making this world a better place to live in; a place where no matter where you are from, there will always be a smile and a helping hand ready for you.

Thank you! Your fan number one :-))!!! ★

Iñigo Fajardo  
Sevilla, Espania



The female on eggs  
Photo: Matthew Twiggs

The Conservation Team flew into action and agreed to visit the site to establish what was going on. The subsequent box inspection found a female incubating two eggs, confirming that the birds were in fact nesting. Like most wild birds, Barn Owls, their nests and eggs are afforded protection against injury, killing, taking, damage and destruction, under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended).

In addition, Barn Owls are afforded a special level of protection under Schedule 1 of the same Act against intentional or reckless disturbance whilst nesting. Working under the appropriate licence we checked the nestbox by taking a photo with a mobile phone through the access hole (see above) to evidence the nesting attempt.

The female did not flush at any time and disturbance was successfully kept to a minimum.

A phone call was made and a couple of emails (with photos attached) were sent to the local authority, and it was agreed that no enforcement action would be taken until breeding was over and the last dependent young had stopped returning to the nest. Fortunately we were able to be quite specific about when a return visit would be required; a 2 egg clutch would be highly unusual, meaning that the female was still laying, and that she must have started no more than 6 days before we visited. It was decided that a mid-September return be scheduled to check they were finished prior to the building being removed in October.

Since our inspection a number of alternative nest/roost boxes have been constructed and erected nearby following Barn Owl Trust best practice guidelines; all within 200m, with a clear line of sight of the existing provision, and to recommended design. This will give ample time for the resident Barn Owls to find and familiarise themselves with the new provision so that when the current site is removed its impact will have been mediated as much as possible. One of the new sites is significantly higher and bigger than the existing site so it is hoped will prove an attractive substitute.

For more information on how to mitigate the impact of proposed development on Barn Owls please see our guide: 'Barn Owls and Rural Planning Applications' available at [www.barnowltrust.org.uk](http://www.barnowltrust.org.uk). ★

# Bird News

Since our last Bird News we have had several injured birds coming into the Bird Hospital. Following his appointment in February Rick has taken over the responsibility for the Bird Hospital and the Owl Sanctuary. Eds.

## Bird Rehabilitation

'Jenny' a Barn Owl mentioned in the last issue of Feedback arrived here on 6th January with no obvious injuries and when weighed was found to be very underweight. She was cared for until she was ready for release and then put into a mobile release aviary close to where she had been found on a farm near Winkleigh. She was released on 5th February and supplementary feeding continued for the next few weeks. Our thanks to the helpful farmer who kindly gave permission to site the aviary and the volunteer who continued to supplementary feed her.

Another Barn Owl was collected from a farm near Totnes on 23rd March. As it had a badly broken wing it was immediately taken to the Veterinary Hospital in Estover where it unfortunately died while being anaesthetized to pin its wing. This bird had been ringed as a nestling by us in June 2014 and was found some 12 miles from where it had hatched.

A Tawny Owl was picked up in Buckfast and brought to the Trust on 7th March. It was heavily infected with Avian Trichomoniasis, and unfortunately had to be put down. Trichomoniasis is caused by a parasite that lives in the upper digestive tract of the bird, and its actions progressively block the bird's throat making it unable to swallow food, thus killing it by starvation. Potentially any bird can be infected, including pigeons and doves and some birds of prey. Greenfinches are particularly susceptible and the apparent decline in their population seems to have been caused by this.

After a call to our office reporting a live Barn Owl at the side of the A38 near Plympton, the bird was found and collected by Rick. It was taken straight to the Veterinary Hospital in Estover, where it was x-rayed and found to have a spinal fracture. The bird was euthanised by the vet.

At the end of April another injured Barn Owl found on the east side of Dartmoor was brought into the hospital. The bird was



*Hal the Tawny Owllet - waiting for release  
Photo: Lexie New*



*Willow on arrival at the Trust  
Photo: Lexie New*

very underweight and was found to have a damaged wing that hindered its ability to fly. It was taken to the wild bird specialist at Estover Veterinary Hospital where its health deteriorated and it was put down. Another Barn Owl arrived at the end of May, after being collected from a field near to the M5 at West Clyst, and again this bird had to be put down at the Veterinary Hospital as its condition worsened.

In early May one of our supporters captured 'Merle'; an injured recently-fledged Carrion Crow. Merle had a damaged eye, was unable to fly and was severely underweight. Merle stayed with us for around 6 weeks and regained good health. As we could not accommodate the bird long-term we were able to take it to Secret World in Somerset. However, the condition of the bird's eye deteriorated and 'Merle' eventually had to be euthanised.

On 14th June a young Tawny Owl was brought in to us after being found on the ground at Bickleigh, South Hams. We named it 'Hal' and it is currently being looked after and will be released once it has its adult feathers.

After a call from a member of the public another Tawny Owl was collected from the central reservation of the A38, near Ashburton on 22nd July. It died shortly after being rescued. For more on this story see Page 3.

A few days later a Barn Owl was found near Winkleigh and was assessed by a local vet before arriving with us. Despite the vets having found no injury the bird was very subdued and in poor condition. At the time of writing 'Willow', as we have named her, has made it through the first two nights and seems to be on the mend. More news on her development in Feedback 57.

## Sanctuary Owls

We have lost 2 Tawny Owl residents since January, one had developed a foot and leg infection, which despite treatment, meant the bird had to be put down and another was found dead from natural causes.

We gained 6 more permanent residents when five Barn Owls and one Tawny Owl were collected from foster carer Anne Gush on the 11th April, after Anne decided she was no longer able to keep them. The birds were health checked and wormed and re-housed in the appropriate aviaries here at BOT. We now currently have 22 Barn Owls and 34 Tawny Owls in our sanctuary.

We would like to take this opportunity to say a big thank you to our aviary cleaners Kim and Tony, all the volunteers, site owners and vets who have assisted with our rehabilitation and release work, especially the Veterinary Hospitals Group. ★

**Rick Lockwood**  
Conservation Assistant



# Birds & Bats!

## Another Fallen Owlet

I was ten minutes into my first day of work experience at the Barn Owl Trust when Conservation Assistant, Rick, received a call from a member of the public reporting a Barn Owl chick that had fallen out of a nestbox. The person in question was on Dartmoor, near Princetown and the owlet had come down from a nestbox inside a nearby barn. Rick and I quickly grabbed the equipment needed: a pole excluder, a couple of hard-hats and some owl food, before setting off with a ladder on the roof towards Princetown.

On arrival at this rather unusual location (Barn Owls rarely breed on the moor) we set about investigating the old barn and its surroundings to check for any sign of a fallen nestling. The Barn itself was full of strong indications of the presence of Barn Owls; there were many pellets, feathers and droppings but no sign whatsoever of a chick. Rick then decided to check the nestboxes to find the brood, so we set up the ladder and had a look inside.

The female owl was flushed immediately and all that was left was one very downy chick sleeping in the corner of the box. We called the woman who had first reported the owlet to ask for a few more details on its whereabouts, and after receiving the information set about looking everywhere around the perimeter of the barn. Things were looking bleak however as it was raining extremely heavily and there was no sign of it at all, so eventually we decided to collect up our equipment and think about heading back. ➡



Fallen owlet retrieved and safely returned to nest  
 Photo: Tom Michie

As we were leaving though Rick suddenly spotted a small speckled blob crouched in the middle of the path to a renovated barn nearby. To our utter surprise it happened to be the Barn Owl chick that we had been looking for! We rushed for the net and captured the soggy owlet. Although it was thin, it was still alert and showed no signs of injury so we made the decision to return it to the nest box, along with a few dead day-old chicks. A fantastic experience for me on my first day of work experience and a very lucky Barn Owl chick indeed! ★

Tom Michie

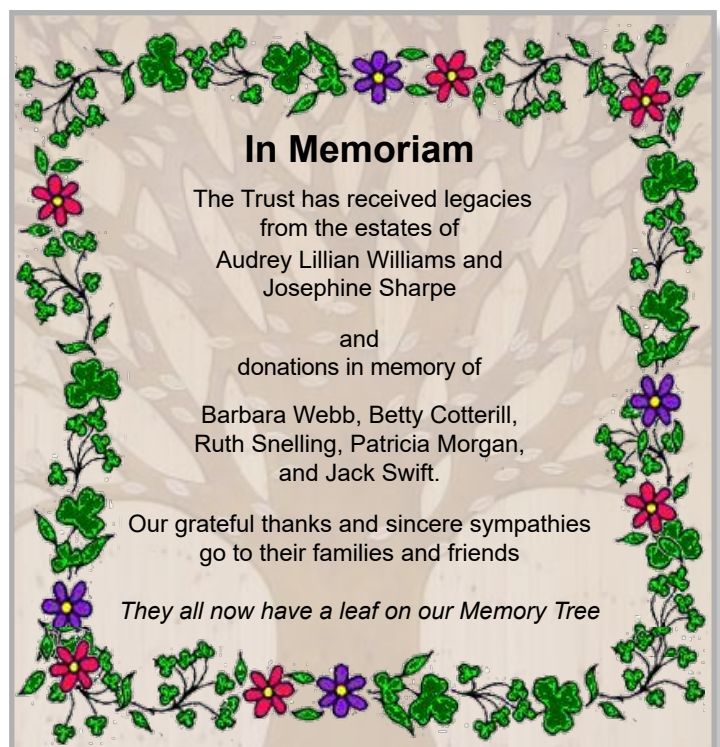
More on Tom Michie's time with the Trust on Page 23.

## BOT's First Bat Walk

The LLP's first evening Bat Walk event was attended by five lucky people on 16th August and led by Devon Consultant Ecologist and bat expert Louise Woolley. The weather couldn't have been much better with a hot sunny day followed by a clear still night and an almost full moon. Following a presentation by Louise on bat identification and ecology and once heterodyne detectors had been distributed to participants, the walk began just after sunset at 8.30pm.

Riverbank Walk, Corner Wood, Pennsland Lane and Forde Orchard were all visited in a route that took about an hour and a half. During that time several Common Pipistrelles (*Pipistrellus pipistrellus*) were actually seen foraging flying insects and their 'wet slap' calls picked up on the bat detectors, whilst a greater number of Myotis species were recorded. This group of commonly tree roosting bats include Daubenton's (*Myotis daubentonii*), Natterer's (*Myotis nattereri*), Whiskered (*Myotis mystacinus*) and Brandt's bats (*Myotis brandtii*). Their calls sound a bit like machine guns on a heterodyne detector but are so similar to each other that the bats can only be identified in the hand.

Pride of place however must go to the two passes over Corner Wood and the Holly Hedge by at least one Barbastelle (*Barbastella barbastellus*), one of the UK's rarer bats, constituting the first record for the LLP. If that wasn't enough, and as the group walked down the long path towards Kiln Close a Nightjar (*Caprimulgus europaeus*), another insect eater, floated past low over the grassland, visibility aided by the near-full moon. This is only the second record of this fantastic species for the LLP. We plan further bat walks next summer, further details will be in Feedback 57. ★





# Charity Information

## Barn Owl Trust

Waterleat Ashburton Devon TQ13 7HU  
01364 653026 info@barnowltrust.org.uk  
www.barnowltrust.org.uk

Registered Charity number 299 835 BOT Environmental Enrolment Number 203 178

Trustees: Keith Grant (1990) Frances Ramsden (1988) Chris Robinson (2007)  
Simon Wilson (2000) Kevin Keatley (2010) Hon Treasurer: Mark Pountney (2002)

Secretary: Jackie Atkinson Minutes: Aaron Kitts, Joanna Plant

### Management Team:

David Ramsden - Head of Conservation Jackie Atkinson - Office Manager

### Independent Examiners:

Francis Clark LLP  
Chartered Accountants  
Sigma House, Oak View Close  
Edginswell Park  
Torquay, Devon TQ2 7FF

### Solicitors:

Wollen Mitchelmore LLP  
Carlton House  
30 The Terrace  
Torquay, Devon TQ1 1BS

### Bankers:

CAF Bank Ltd Lloyds TSB  
Kings Hill 2 East Street  
West Malling Ashburton  
Kent ME19 4TA Devon TQ13 7AH

The stated objective of the Trust *'is to advance the conservation of wildlife, especially the Barn Owl and other endangered species, to provide them with a safe breeding environment, with the object of encouraging the re-creation and preservation of appropriate ecological conditions that they may be provided with the means to continue and flourish in as natural an environment as possible'*.

The main areas of the Trust's work are practical conservation, education, provision of information and research. The Trust also responds to live owl emergencies and provides a sanctuary and rehabilitation facility for injured owls. The Trust became a registered charity in 1988.

Practical conservation and rehabilitation work takes place in South West England (mainly Devon and Cornwall), but all other areas of work have national (and sometimes international) significance: e.g. the free information and advice service is available by post, email, telephone and via the worldwide web. Our research work is relevant throughout the UK and beyond.

The Trust also owns 26 acres of land purchased with a legacy and known as the Lennon Legacy Project, this is managed entirely for wildlife. What was once intensively grazed pasture has become a haven for birds, butterflies, flowers and insects under BOT management. Monitoring and recording the ever increasing biodiversity and promoting habitat creation by others is a significant part of the Trust's work.

### TRUST STAFF

OFFICE MANAGER : Jackie Atkinson  
HEAD OF CONSERVATION : David Ramsden MBE  
CONSERVATION OFFICER : Matthew Twigg  
ASSISTANT CONS OFFICER : Rick Lockwood  
Stuart Baker\*  
PA to HoC : Lexi New  
Joanna Plant\*  
ADMIN ASSISTANTS : Pete Webb  
Marianne Bryan  
Aaron Kitts  
Emma Moxham\*  
Vanessa Lewis  
LEGACY PROJECT : Judith Read  
PRACTICAL SUPPORT : Jasmin Ramsden  
SCHOOL VISITS/TALKS : David Ramsden  
Jo Plant\*  
ACCOUNTS : Frances Ramsden  
COMPUTER/IT SUPPORT : Alan Lewis  
STUDENT WORK PLACEMENT : Mark Ellison

### TRUST VOLUNTEERS

HONORARY SOLICITORS : Wollen Mitchelmore LLP  
VETS : Veterinary Hospital (Estover)  
BTO RINGING COORDINATOR : Keith Grant  
EDUCATION VOLUNTEER : Baley the Barn Owl  
LIVE OWL EMERGENCY HELP  
& OWL TRANSPORTATION : Cathy Pitt  
Bill Bishop  
Kim McNeil  
Margaret Rhodes  
WORK EXPERIENCE : N/A  
PRACTICAL SUPPORT : Kim Baker  
Tony Hulatt  
Alan Sloman  
FEEDBACK : Frances Ramsden  
GENERAL ASSISTANCE : Diane Baker  
Nic Butler  
Phil Collins  
Aram Compton  
Bill Macdonald  
Margaret Crocker  
Jayne Hartley  
Di Hawkings  
Michael Jennings  
Martin Overy  
Michael Parks  
Sandra Reardon  
Margaret Rhodes  
Bethany Smith  
Rachael & Diana Smurthwaite  
Sandra Stewart  
University of Plymouth  
Volunteers

Barn Owl Trust staff and volunteers often have several roles, only their main areas of work are listed here. Conservation task helpers are not included but not forgotten. \* Indicates those leaving during the period of this report.

## BOT Environmental

BOT Environmental is an Enrolled Body under the Landfill Tax Credit Scheme. It was set up in 1998 to allow the Trust to apply for grants from landfill operators who can give money to community or environmental projects rather than pay tax to central government. There was no BOT Environmental activity in the year and both the opening and the closing balance of the fund at the year end was £0.

# Annual Report 2015 - 2016



Welcome to our Annual Review of the financial year 2015-2016. This is where we look back over the last year and plan for the future.

Public benefit was provided nationally (and internationally) by the Trust as we continued to supply information and advice by email, post, telephone and our website. Dealing with enquiries is a huge part of the work of our conservation team. Every year our staff spend a huge amount of time dealing with enquiries and putting people from all over the UK in touch with local people who can help them with their Barn Owl issues. A major achievement during this year was the launch of our 'BOD'. The Barn Owl Directory can be found on our website and contains three categories of Barn Owl contacts throughout the UK. There is more about this and our other conservation work in the Conservation Report overleaf.

As you will see from the Conservation Report, a significant amount of our work these days has a national perspective but as always, we like to keep our practical, grass-roots approach to conservation. Our annual monitoring visits, practical conservation work and our own nature reserve 'The Lennon Legacy Project' (LLP) ensure that our small team spend some time in the 'field' and aren't constantly at their desks! The live owls in the sanctuary are also a constant reminder of the species we are working to conserve.

In March the third issue of our publication, the 'State of the UK Barn Owl Population' summarised the 2015 Barn Owl breeding season as 'A poor year almost everywhere'. This was particularly disappointing given that 2014 was an exceptionally good year for Barn Owls almost everywhere in the UK. Copies of 'State of the UK Barn Owl Population' for 2013, 2014 & 2015 are all available free of charge on our website: [www.barnowltrust.org.uk](http://www.barnowltrust.org.uk)

On the international front, we continued to liaise with Barn Owl workers in other countries and have hosted volunteers from Hungary and Portugal as well as UK students giving them all a taste of working with the Trust.

At the time of writing this, the referendum result to leave the EU has unknown implications for our country's wildlife. Much of the protection afforded to British birds comes from European law. In fact all of the work we did and the progress we made with our Rodenticide Campaign only happened because of EU directives. As with many others in the world of conservation we await developments with some trepidation.

## Management Information

The Barn Owl Trust was constituted in December 1987 and became a national registered charity in July 1988, it is governed by a Trust Deed. The objectives of the Trust, as stated in our Deed, are 'the conservation of wildlife, especially the Barn Owl and the preservation and re-creation of appropriate ecological conditions to provide a natural environment for wildlife to flourish'.

The Trust has five Trustees. The year of their appointment is listed next to their names in the Charity Information. New Trustees are chosen by the existing Trustees, when required, on the basis of their relevant expertise.

The number of Trustees is required to be between three and five, and in the event of the number falling below three the remaining Trustees may only act for the purpose of appointing additional Trustees and for no other purpose.

The Trustees have full and unrestricted powers of investing monies as decided by a majority. The Trustees have adopted a formal policy on general financial reserves (see page 16).

Day-to-day running of the Trust is the responsibility of the Management Team (Senior Staff) who are line-managed by and liaise regularly with individual Trustees and report at quarterly Trustees meetings. ★

The Lennon Legacy Project (LLP) continues to be an inspiration, providing a habitat not only for Barn Owls but for a myriad of other wildlife too. Many bird species, mammals, insects and flora have benefited from the management regime. Recording and monitoring the increasing bio-diversity is ongoing with monthly monitoring photographs, a butterfly transect and a monthly on-line LLP diary to share the information we gather. We ran a series of events open to the public including themed walks and talks during the year and continue to work on public engagement using the site and our Norman Alderson Meeting Room.

Our Memory Tree is a stunning feature in the room which provides a wonderful warm and dry space in which to talk to our visitors and provide them with a cup of tea and information about our work. In addition, several groups booked visits to the LLP site for guided walks following adult talks.

We produced and sent out 'Owl e-news', a monthly email, to people in Devon informing them of forthcoming events and news. The mailing list for this continues to grow as people in and outside Devon ask to be added. Issues 54 & 55 of Feedback, the Trust's bi-annual magazine were produced and mailed out to our supporters during the year. Back issues are available on our website. We continue to use Social Media to promote Barn Owl conservation, during the year our Facebook 'likes' have increased to over 9,000 (previously 7,000) and to 29,600+ Twitter followers (20,000).

We've had some staff changes during the year. In August Judith Read joined the admin team one day a week to work on our legacy leaflet project. In September Marianne Bryan returned from maternity leave cutting her hours from full to part-time, Aaron Kitts who had been providing the maternity cover stayed on as our only full-time admin team member to help cover the increasing workload.

Stuart Baker left us in October after six and a half years as part of the conservation team. He was replaced in February when Rick Lockwood joined us as an Assistant Conservation Officer. Jo Plant left in March and Lexie New took over as PA to the Head of Conservation. Other than this our staff have been with us for between 7 and 26 years. At the year-end we had 11 staff in post; six full-time and five part-time. Volunteers have received training and work experience on both long and short-term placements with the Trust. Environmental and ethical consideration has been given to all our activities during the year and to the purchase of resources.

Looking ahead, plans include the creation and launch of ten *Instructional Videos* covering a wide range of Barn Owl conservation measures and the publication of two major research reports. The first will present data gathering during the Radio Tracking of dispersing juvenile Barn Owls and the second provides results based on 25 years of population monitoring.

Two more of our aviaries will be replaced thanks to grants, we hope to secure enough funding to replace our exhibition trailer for shows and events. We have designated funds to allow us to continue replacing unsafe nestboxes and we will continue with the provision of free information and advice, practical and educational work, research and care for casualty and resident owls. If and when funds allow, we would like to increase the size of our conservation team again.

Managing a small charity is quite a commitment for the Trustees, all of whom are volunteers, so I would like to take this opportunity to thank my fellow Trustees for the time and effort that they all put in. Although we delegate the day-to-day running of the organisation to our senior staff who do a great job, they report regularly to us and ultimately policy and financial decisions rest with the Trustees.

On behalf of the Trustees I would like to thank everyone who has supported us during the year. I would also like to thank our wonderful team of staff, volunteers and all of our Friends for continuing to believe that, *together we can make a world of difference* - thank you all. ★

Keith Grant

Chair of Trustees, July 2016



# Conservation Report

## National roles

What started out as a hobby in 1982 and grew into a county-wide volunteer project in 1985 has now evolved into a national conservation body, albeit a very, very small one.

During the 2015-16 financial year, the self-propelled growth of our national role reached three further milestones: our new main website was finished, the 'State of the UK Barn Owl Population' became an annual report, and we produced the first-ever directory of Barn Owl contacts across the UK.

## New website

Launched just four days before the start of the year, our completely new main website barnowltrust.org.uk was completed in April 2015. During the year it was visited a staggering 446,625 times which equates to a daily average of 2,453, or, over 100 times an hour! There is no doubt that we are the main source of Barn Owl information in the UK and this is probably our most important national role.



## State of the UK Barn Owl Population 2015

Originally conceived as a one-off report in 2013, the State of the UK Barn Owl Population has become a yearly publication simply because of the willingness of independent Barn Owl monitoring groups to voluntarily send us their results.

During the year, data and comments kindly submitted by 32 contributing groups and individuals were collated showing that 2015 was a poor year for Barn Owls almost everywhere. 5,963 potential nest sites were visited of which 1,224 had nesting, 26% lower than the all-years average. The average number of young in nests in 2015 was 2.34 which is 18% lower than the all-years average of 2.84.

The UK data included our own monitoring visits to c.75 nest sites in Devon and East Cornwall during which we discovered 38 nests.

No other organisation has pulled-together this type of information from across the UK and published it on behalf of independent Barn Owl monitoring groups. Therefore it represents, a unique national role for the Barn Owl Trust.



## The first Barn Owl Directory

Since the Trust was established in 1988 we've been pretty fanatical about record keeping. This has enabled us to build up a huge database of contacts (currently standing at 63,458) so in most parts of the UK, finding a local contact is relatively easy for us. However, for the general public it's much more of a challenge so we spend a lot of time putting people in touch with each other – hence the idea.

Our new UK Barn Owl Directory, launched in February 2016, contains three types of contact: Barn Owl Groups and Projects (87 of them), Owl Carers and Rehabilitators (209), and Professional Surveyors trained by us (222). So anyone who wants to contact their local Barn Owl group, find a trained surveyor for their development site, or find someone local who is willing to take in an injured owl, can go to the directory (on our website) and click on their county.

Dealing with enquiries and putting people in touch with each other is certainly not a new national role for the Trust. However, our unique directory is a milestone that will hopefully reduce the burden of enquiries. Indeed, in its first eleven weeks the Barn Owl Directory was visited 3,573 times.

Other national roles for the Barn Owl Trust that were maintained throughout the year included the public reporting of sightings, roosts and nest sites via www.barnowlsurvey.org.uk – a further 2,290 records, the continuation of our Rodenticide Campaign, and continued provision of training courses for ecological consultants from all over the UK.

We are the leading UK provider of specialist Barn Owl training for the ecology sector. During the year 60 trainees attended our foundation course (BOESS) and 32 our advanced course (ABOSM).



## Rodenticide campaign

As you may know, according to the most recent government figures, 87% of Barn Owls, 100% of Kestrels and numerous others including 94% of Red Kites, 20% of Tawny Owls, 35% of Peregrines, 89% of Sparrowhawks, and even 56% of hedgehogs contain rat poison. In an effort to reduce this, the regulators (HSE) have agreed to the implementation of a 'Stewardship Regime' prepared by the rodenticide industry in consultation with numerous 'stakeholders' including the Barn Owl Trust.

In July 2015 the HSE announced that Stewardship Regime will be phased in by March 2017. This will require pest controllers, farmers, and gamekeepers to hold certified 'proof of competence in rodent pest control' before being allowed to buy and use professional anticoagulant rodenticides. The required training will cover techniques to reduce the unwanted contamination of non-target species.

The new Stewardship Regime only restricts the purchase and use of large quantities of rat bait and excludes smaller 'amateur use' products. However, during the year, the EU classified all anti-coagulants (including first-generation ones) as 'toxic to reproduction'. This might result in an eventual ban on the sale of all anti-coagulant rodenticides to amateur users from June 2018.

In February 2016 we responded to an EU European Chemicals Agency consultation on 'potential candidates for substitution'. We recommended that the best alternative to the use of anti-coagulant rodenticides was improved environmental management and that where rodents had to be killed the best (most humane) option was electrocution.

### Research

Most Barn Owl deaths occur during the post-fledging dispersal of juveniles and yet this is a part of their life-cycle about which very little is known. During the year we carried out the analysis of data we hold on the radio-tracking of 19 juvenile Barn Owls and at the end of the year this was in the final stages of being written up, primarily by a degree student on placement with us from Plymouth University.



*Radio tag being fitted to a wild Barn Owl*

After several years of delay, due to the pressure of other work, we finally published the Devon Barn Owl Survey 2013 report during the winter. The report not only highlighted what a terrible year this was for the birds, it also drew attention to the ongoing failings in the planning system. The report revealed that a significant number of traditional sites were converted without provision for Barn Owls despite 'policies being in place to ensure protected species are considered'. These sites are now lost to Barn Owls forever.

### Our nature reserve

The 26-acre site we purchased with a legacy from Vivienne Lennon (The Lennon Legacy Project) is still developing. The John Woodland Wildlife Tower had a roosting Kestrel for the first time and a Brown Long-eared bat photographed inside brought the total number of bat species recorded in the tower to five. A Cuckoo was heard during the year (now a very rare occurrence) and we recorded our first Purple Hairstreak butterfly.



*Our Wildlife Tower is providing a home for several species*



We started to lay hedges that we re-created in 2004 in order to thicken them up to provide more nesting habitat for birds. The ponds we created back in 2005 have had a visiting Kingfisher every year. We've also been battling leaks in the lower pond and blockages in the river-water abstraction system.

At the year's end, quotes had been received and works agreed that would sort all the problems and provide a 'Kingfisher Wall' with suitable nest cavities also for Grey Wagtail and Sand Martin, both of which had also been recorded on site.



*Porridge the Tawny Owl*

### Live owls

During the year a total of 10 Barn Owls, 9 Tawny Owls, and 2 Little Owls were received of which 14 were released back to the wild, 3 died, and 4 joined the other owls in our sanctuary. Of particular note was the release of 'Porridge' the Tawny Owl on 21st May originally found inside Dartmoor Prison on 25th February 2015. Also a Barn Owl that was reported alive and injured on the side of the A38 dual carriageway that (remarkably) was still there and still alive when we arrived to collect it. It was taken straight to The Veterinary Hospitals Group practice at Estover, Plymouth who kindly treated it free of charge as they do so many of the birds we receive.

Our bird-keeping facilities received a boost when our oldest aviary (the 'Main Aviary') was demolished and completely rebuilt thanks to funding from the Norman Family Charitable Trust, Chapman Charitable Trust, and St Mary's Charity.

We plan to replace two more of the aviaries during the next financial year thanks to more grant funding.

### Nestboxes

12 additional nestboxes were erected and numerous unsafe old-style shallow nestboxes with a history of fallen owlets were taken down as part of an on-going project - thanks in part to funding from the Belsize Charitable Trust and Hatcher Animal Welfare Trust.

### Talks & Walks

Presentations were made to a total of 15 adult groups including the RSPB and we carried out a further 19 school visits introducing the next generation to the subject of farmland wildlife conservation. Monthly conservation team days throughout the year provided an opportunity for volunteers to join us and get involved in practical conservation on the Lennon Legacy Project land. Guided walks open to the general public gave people the opportunity to see the wildlife and flora throughout the seasons.

We would like to express our sincere gratitude to all our supporters without whom none of this work could have been carried out. Thank you very much indeed. ★

**David Ramsden MBE**  
Head of Conservation



# Financial Report

There have been significant changes in the presentation of the annual accounts this year due to the Statement of Recommended Practice (SORP) applicable to charities when preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102) (effective 1 January 2015). This means that our Statement of Financial Activity (SOFA) on page 15 looks very different to those of previous years so we have included Notes 2 & 3 to provide the detail on income and expenditure.

The total incoming resources for the year to 31 March 2016 were £244,489, slightly lower than in 2015. Despite this we saw a net surplus for the year of £5,271, better than last year's £99 but not nearly as impressive as 2014's £124,810 which was due mainly to legacy income.

Income from grants and donations was down 22% on the previous year at £113,798, accounting for 47% of total income. Within this, designated grants from Charitable Trusts to support specific areas of our work dropped by 7% to £23,750. The majority of these designated funds were for the erection of nestboxes and the replacement of aviaries; however we also received funds towards the replacement of our telephone system, display materials and the purchase of a new display trailer which we hope to do in the next financial year. We are very grateful for all of the grants we have received.

During the year we have seen a 13% drop in general donations (to £61,962) and we think this is in part due to losing regular supporters when the payment gateway on our old website failed, as well as problems establishing regular payments in the early days on our new site. We've seen a 31% drop in our Gift Aid claims due to a drop in donations generally.

Legacy income and gifts in memoriam accounted for 24% of total income for the year, at £59,579 (2015: £26,759). We are always extremely grateful for the legacies and the gifts in memoriam we receive. It is previous years' legacies that enable us to bridge the difference between our income and our expenditure and to have the reserves to survive the years we have a deficit.

Legacies not only enable the Trust to continue to achieve so much of our general conservation work, they also allow us to invest in special projects, currently the Kingfisher Wall. Previous projects have included the building of our new website, the purchase of the Lennon Legacy Project land, the creation of the two ponds in the LLP, the Meeting Room and the Solar Project.

Fundraising income came almost entirely from our Annual Draw and our 'Lucky Dip' at shows. Our solar panels generated £4,519 during the year.

Our overall expenditure decreased by 5% to £239,218. The costs of practical work increased from £108,205 to £111,535. We had lower staff costs despite salary increases due to a smaller team for a while because of a delay in recruitment; we spent significantly more on practical work and training and had lower motoring costs.

Provision of our Information and Advice service cost £72,221, a 15% saving on last year's costs of £85,253. This was largely accounted for by reduced overhead costs following last year's expenditure on the new website. Salaries remained almost the same as the previous year, but postage costs more than doubled and our spend in all other areas increased.

THE BARN OWL TRUST				
BALANCE SHEET		2016		2015
AS AT 31st MARCH 2016		£	£	£
	Notes			
<b>Fixed assets</b>				
Tangible assets	5		<b>137,161</b>	151,663
<b>Current assets</b>				
Stock	6	<b>15,479</b>		15,133
Debtors	7	<b>2,558</b>		3,256
Cash at bank and in hand		<b>337,671</b>		310,615
			<b>355,708</b>	329,004
<b>Liabilities</b>				
Creditors - Amounts falling due within one year	8	<b>22,545</b>		15,614
<b>Net current assets</b>			<b>333,163</b>	313,390
<b>Net assets</b>			<b>470,324</b>	465,053
<b>The funds of the charity:</b>				
Unrestricted funds	9		<b>451,978</b>	452,830
Restricted funds	10		<b>18,346</b>	12,223
<b>Total charity funds</b>			<b>470,324</b>	465,053

SOFA Note 2.	2016	2015
Income	£	£
<b>(a) Donations and legacies:</b>		
Grants and donations	<b>113,798</b>	146,117
Legacies	<b>59,579</b>	26,759
	<b>173,377</b>	172,876
<b>(b) Charitable activities:</b>		
Nestboxes	<b>24,212</b>	30,040
Training courses	<b>20,530</b>	17,180
Other	<b>6,345</b>	7,911
	<b>51,087</b>	55,131
<b>(c) Other trading activities:</b>		
Fundraising	<b>2,401</b>	3,939
Promotional goods	<b>11,762</b>	13,209
	<b>14,163</b>	17,148
<b>(d) Other income:</b>		
Solar generation	<b>4,519</b>	4,218
Bank interest	<b>1,091</b>	1,080
Other	<b>252</b>	567
	<b>5,862</b>	5,865

Continued on page 15



	Notes	Unrestricted £	Restricted £	Total 2016 £	Unrestricted £	Restricted £	Total 2015 £
<b>Income from:</b>							
Donations and legacies	2	149,627	23,750	173,377	147,476	25,400	172,876
Charitable activities	2	51,087	-	51,087	55,131	-	55,131
Other trading activities	2	14,163	-	14,163	17,148	-	17,148
Other Income	2	5,862	-	5,862	5,865	-	5,865
<b>Total</b>		<b>220,739</b>	<b>23,750</b>	<b>244,489</b>	<b>225,620</b>	<b>25,400</b>	<b>251,020</b>
<b>Expenditure on:</b>							
Raising funds	3	12,275	-	12,275	14,504	-	14,504
Charitable activities	3	211,319	15,624	226,943	212,973	23,444	236,417
<b>Total</b>		<b>223,594</b>	<b>15,624</b>	<b>239,218</b>	<b>227,477</b>	<b>23,444</b>	<b>250,921</b>
<b>Net (expenditure)/income</b>		<b>(2,855)</b>	<b>8,126</b>	<b>5,271</b>	<b>(1,857)</b>	<b>1,956</b>	<b>99</b>
Transfers between funds		2,003	(2,003)	-	6,711	(6,711)	-
<b>Net movement in funds</b>		<b>(852)</b>	<b>6,123</b>	<b>5,271</b>	<b>4,854</b>	<b>(4,755)</b>	<b>99</b>
<b>Reconciliation of funds:</b>							
Total funds brought forward		452,830	12,223	465,053	447,976	16,978	464,954
<b>Total funds carried forward</b>		<b>451,978</b>	<b>18,346</b>	<b>470,324</b>	<b>452,830</b>	<b>12,223</b>	<b>465,053</b>

## Financial Report continued

We are able to keep our costs down because of our volunteers who have continued to be an invaluable asset to the Trust, assisting in every aspect of the work including practical tasks, administration, clerical work and fundraising, as well as the provision of professional services.

Of the unrestricted funds available to the Trust the Trustees have allocated £222,739 as a reserve for the next financial year, £59,469 for the Lennon Legacy Project and £10,680 for other projects, leaving a general fund of £159,090. However our fixed assets and stock still account for most of this and in light of the regular shortfall in income vs. expenditure (excluding legacies) the Trustees continue to look carefully at all outgoings. It is a difficult balance - holding reserves to ensure you can continue through the lean times often makes your appeals to Charitable Trusts less attractive than those from charities with smaller reserves, particularly in difficult economic times.

To complete my report I would just like to say a big thank you to everyone who has supported our work during the year, with grants, donations and legacies. We are especially grateful to those who give us regular

### SOFA Note 3

#### Expenditure

	Activities Undertaken Directly £	Governance and Support Costs £	Total 2016 £	Total 2015 £
<b>Raising funds:</b>				
Fundraising	7,217	-	7,217	7,433
Promotional goods	5,058	-	5,058	7,071
	<b>12,275</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>12,275</b>	<b>14,504</b>
<b>Charitable activities:</b>				
Nestboxes	9,439	-	9,439	9,841
Training course	5,036	-	5,036	5,145
Practical work	111,535	-	111,535	108,205
Information and advice service	72,221	-	72,221	85,253
Support costs	-	27,776	27,776	27,037
Governance costs – independent examination	-	936	936	936
	<b>198,231</b>	<b>28,712</b>	<b>226,943</b>	<b>236,417</b>

donations through our Friends Scheme and Adoptions as this income helps us to plan ahead. ★

**Mark Pountney MAAT**  
Honorary Treasurer



# Thank You

We are very grateful to the following charities, businesses and other organisations that have supported our work with grants, sponsorship or donations in kind during this financial year. Thank you!

Ashburton Post Office  
Blair Foundation  
Cemlyn Jones Charitable Trust  
Chapman Charitable Trust  
Church's Hardware Store  
Cobalt Trust  
Dr & Mrs Alfred Darlington Charitable Trust  
Dumbreck Charity  
Diana Edgson Wright Charitable Trust  
Eucalyptus Charitable Foundation  
Fowelscombe  
Ian Askew Charitable Trust  
John Coates Charitable Trust  
Jack Patston Charitable Trust  
J Swire Charitable Trust  
Keith Ewart Charitable Trust

K M Harbinson Charitable Trust  
Leslie Mary Carter Charitable Trust  
Marjorie Coote Animal Charitable Trust  
Marsh Christian Trust  
Norman Family Charitable Trust  
Pennycress Trust  
Roger & Sarah Bancroft Clark Charitable Trust  
Save Me Trust  
Seven Pillars of Wisdom Trust  
St Mary's Charity  
The Aviary Society  
Verdon Smith Family Charitable Trust  
Veterinary Hospital Group  
Wildlife Watching Supplies  
William Armstrong Charitable Trust  
William Dean Educational Trust

During this period we also received legacies from:

Brian Mitford Campbell, Juanita Zeelander and Eileen J Fradgley

and Gifts in Memory of:

Muriel Bellingham, Pamela Bellingham, Yvonne Bennett, Toni Bunce, Edna Caplen, Emma Ann Cave, V R Collins, Florence Coogan, Barry Davies, Elsie Evans, Pat Ford, Una Gaston, Sheila George, Mavis Heath, Denise Holder, Terry Hunt, Philip de Leon, Mrs Mathias, Patricia Morgan, Ida Ramsden, Brenda Tully, Jocelyn Underwood and Agnes Mary Youngman.

*Rest in peace*

and donations from sponsored events and other fund-raising from:

Axe Valley Runners, Margaret & Derrick Crocker, Nic Butler, Mel Storey, Dartington Morris Men, Sonya Raybole - Blackdown Environmental, UKC Hogwarts Society, Shelley Wright & Tracey Morris, Darren & Lucy Wheeler at Merlin Farm Eco Cottages, Gwyneth Parish via Pink & Greene, Kingsbridge Information Centre, Eco Chic Cottages, Shelton Infant School, Zingo Warde from Denbury Primary School, Barley Sheaf - Gorran, and Waitrose Torquay.

*Thank you all so much for your support*

## Looking Ahead

The Trustees and Management Team continually review both the financial situation and the outputs of the charity's work in relation to its aims and objectives. Changes to pension contributions and the 'living wage' will increase our outgoings considerably over the next few years, but we continue to hope to attract more grant funding and donations and when finances allow we hope to be able to increase our conservation team again and take on new projects.

In addition to our general work of dealing with enquiries, practical conservation such as annual monitoring, site visits and nestboxing, school visits, adult talks, training courses and caring for resident and casualty birds, plans for this year include the on-going development our two websites [www.barnowltrust.org.uk](http://www.barnowltrust.org.uk) and [www.barnowlsurvey.org.uk](http://www.barnowlsurvey.org.uk) and to ensure they continue to benefit wild Barn Owls both nationally and internationally.

We will also maintain our Barn Owl Directory to enable people to find local contacts for Barn Owl conservation: independent groups & projects who encourage / monitor wild Barn Owls / erect nestboxes / give land management advice / BTO ringing. Barn Owl carers: take in casualty owls / assess / treat / rehabilitate / release / provide sanctuary. Barn Owl surveys: ecological consultants trained by the Barn Owl Trust to assess development sites, design mitigation strategies for Barn Owls and produce reports to aid planning applications. We will continue to use social media presence to raise awareness both of the species and our work.

Plans for the year ahead include the creation and launch of ten short Instructional Videos covering a wide range of Barn Owl conservation measures and the publication of two major research reports. The first, a collaboration with Ambios Ltd and Biotrack, will present data gathered during the Radio Tracking of dispersing juvenile Barn Owls and the second provides results based on 25 years of Population Monitoring.

The three 'State of the UK Barn Owl population' publications we have produced have been so well received that as long as we receive the data we will continue to pull UK figures together and publish the results annually.

The county shows in Devon and Cornwall provide an opportunity for us to meet people and to increase awareness of Barn Owls and their conservation. This year we plan to use the allocated resources to attend several smaller shows within Devon again. Lennon Legacy Project events are planned for every month throughout the year. Once again there are several events with different themes planned to allow visitors to the site to experience the increasing bio-diversity at first-hand throughout the seasons.

We are also continuing to allocate one day a week of staff time to facilitate the distribution of leaflets and posters throughout the South West in an effort to raise awareness of this beautiful bird, its plight and our efforts to help restore the balance.

We will continue to work with other groups both in the UK and abroad. In July we will be running our next training courses for ecological consultants, the Barn Owl Ecology, Surveys and Signs (BOESS) courses we have been running since 2005 and the Advanced Barn Owl Surveying and Mitigation (ABOSM) course we started in 2011. On a practical note, two of our aviaries will be rebuilt during the year and there is maintenance needed on the office before the winter.

We will continue to monitor the Health & Safety Executive's (HSE) position on the future of second-generation rodenticides (SGAR's). We will also continue to lobby for the implementation of recommendations from research projects, and to develop educational / training activities and resources, to target practical conservation projects (e.g. nestbox provision) whilst trying to ensure that any development is sustainable, thereby reducing the Trust's dependency on legacy income to support core costs. ★



# LLP Update



*The new Kingfisher Wall Photo: Lexie New*

A large tree came down along Riverbank Walk in February and smashed some branches off neighbouring trees as it fell, eventually landing over the Apprentice Path and upper boardwalk. Fortunately it did no significant damage, and access along the path was restored a few days later, when the branches were cut back off the path. The remains will stay in situ and provide a great habitat for invertebrates as they rot down.

Also in February a group of volunteers from Exeter started laying the hedge above the barn, which they continued when they revisited in March, as did a small group from Hungary. The bramble on the slope towards Corner Wood also got some attention from our regular group of Plymouth students, and despite working in torrential rain they managed to finish the whole slope.

The pond abstraction, which had caused problems throughout the winter finally got some planned remedial work in April. The old abstraction pipes in the Ashburn were replaced with two significantly bigger diameter pipes. The egress from the lower pond back into the Ashburn was filled in and a new one built, surrounded by a bentonite trench along the whole length of the lower pond. Finally, a Kingfisher Wall was built by the top pond using funds from the legacies from the estates of Brian Mitford Campbell and Eileen J. Fradgley. This has a dozen or so pipes inset which will be packed with sand leading to nestboxes for both Kingfishers and Sand Martins. Three stones were also left out of the top row specifically for Grey Wagtails. Some work was also undertaken along the 'waterfall' between the two ponds.

The first injurious weed control started in May with Creeping Thistle, Dock and Nettle being targeted. This continued throughout the spring and into the summer, when areas of bracken inaccessible to machinery were bashed by the Conservation Team with the help of two volunteers from local schools.

The first frogspawn was noted on the 2nd February in the Oakley Pond, which had to be moved into the Flo pond due to dropping water levels, a product of continued abstraction issues.

A stag and hind Roe Deer were by the roadside polebox on the 3rd February, with over 20 Meadow Pipits at the top of the field the same day.

At the very end of February, after one of the few nights of the winter with sub-zero temperatures, a Kingfisher was watched sitting on the exit pipe in the lower pond first thing in the morning. Probably pushed off the moor by a widespread freeze it then spent about 20 minutes hovering over the lower pond and sitting on a branch in the hedge by the River Ashburn before moving on.

On the 18th March a pair of Stonechat appeared briefly in and near Kiln Close hedge constituting the LLP's 2nd and 3rd records of the species. The male was in full song throughout, though this lasted for no more than 15 minutes before they disappeared to the north. On the 24th a pair of Mandarins turned up on the ponds

as they tend to do in the spring. They stayed until 14th April then disappeared, presumably to breed, site unknown. They certainly didn't use either of the duck boxes erected for them, even though the box by the cattle drink had the remains of the old bees' nest cleaned out a month earlier. Another successful nesting attempt by the Dippers resulted in a brood of 4 young being ringed in May (see Lexie's article on page 5).

Another nesting attempt was unfortunately not quite so successful. By the 13th April a Grey Wagtail had built a low nest in the implement shelter. Only about 1 metre from the ground, she stoically incubated then brooded her offspring despite being just off the main path. On the 3rd May, and no more than a few days before fledging the nest was found destroyed and the young gone, presumably predated. Probably the same pair then built another nest much higher in the same building but seemed to abandon that to build a further 2 nests in the at-the-time-unfinished Kingfisher Wall later on in May. She laid in one and managed yet again to get another brood to within a few days of fledging but unfortunately the whole nest had gone by the end of June. Although sad, such failure is apparently not uncommon in the species.

A Peregrine was seen over the field on the 28th April and a male Redstart was captured on our Trail Camera sitting on the wildlife tower on the 30th. At least one Pied Flycatcher was in song in adjoining woodland at the start of May and was audible from the orchard throughout the month. A pair of Skylark was recorded on the 5th of May, with the male singing until at least the 16th. A pair of Meadow Pipits was also a regular feature at this time. In fact, one was seen with a bill-full of caterpillar on the 26th June so was probably feeding young nearby. A Tree Pipit was accidentally flushed from the field on the 6th May and was still present on the 9th.

A Barn Owl was heard to give a single loud screech over the field on the night of the 15th May and signs of occasional roosting were found in one of our pole boxes. Sadly, two dead Barn Owls were found on the A38 about 1 mile apart in March and none have bred here this year.

An Early Purple Orchid made an appearance in Kiln Close in May but was a subtly different hue and in a slightly different location to orchids previously recorded in Kiln Close.

Butterflies were slow to start with the first Orange-tip recorded on 19th April. Good counts were however recorded on the 13th July with 77 Small Skipper, 155 Marbled White and 83 Ringlet being the most notable. Despite the pond works, a male and female Broad-bodied Chaser were on the Oakley Pond in mid-June with several Large Red and Common Blue Damselflies. The annual guided Butterfly Walk was conducted in kind weather on 14th July for 12 members of the general public when the first 3 Silver-washed Fritillaries were recorded on the bramble patch in Corner Wood. ★

**Matthew Twiggs**  
Senior Conservation Officer

# Barn Owl Habitat is

*In our first-ever leaflet, Habitat for Barn Owls, in 1988, we said "if you create the habitat for Barn Owls you will at the same time be providing habitat for lots of other wildlife including flowers and butterflies". Well, as the old adage says "the proof of the pudding is in the eating". In this, the second of two feature articles, our Head of Conservation David Ramsden MBE explores:*

## The Butterflies of Rough Grassland

Everyone loves that fairy tale image of a flowery hay meadow, ablaze with colour and covered in butterflies. Indeed, almost all grassland managed for wildlife involves the re-creation of the traditional hay meadow; annually mown short and all the cuttings removed to reduce nutrient levels so the wild flowers can compete with the grasses. Permanent rough grassland, on the other hand, is not known for its butterflies and words like 'rank' and 'unmanaged' convey a mental image of something undesirable. In truth, rough grassland can be a fantastic habitat for butterflies as well as voles, shrews, mice, Barn Owls/Kestrels etc., reptiles, amphibians, and a vast array of flowering plants.

In our own nature reserve (the Lennon Legacy Project) we carry out a weekly survey following a standard methodology promoted by the national organisation Butterfly Conservation. So, we have accurate records dating back to 2002 showing when new species were recorded. We can also quantify variation in numbers through the course of each year and from one year to the next.

### Sampling the species list

Our own site (the LLP) comprises about 23 acres of rough grass and around 3 acres of scrub/hedgerow/orchard/woodland. Our butterfly survey concentrates almost entirely on species that occur in the grassland, however in some parts the close proximity of big bushy hedgerows means that we do record some woodland species as well.

The total number of species recorded since we started monitoring in 2002 is an impressive 31 – far too many to write about in detail. So, in this Complete Species List, those described in this article are shown in bold:

**Small Skipper**, Large Skipper, Dingy Skipper, Clouded Yellow, Brimstone, Large White, Small White, Green-veined White, Orange-tip, Green Hairstreak, Brown Hairstreak, Small Heath, Purple Hairstreak, Small Copper, Common Blue, Holly Blue, White Admiral, Red Admiral, Painted Lady, Small Tortoiseshell, Peacock, Comma, Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary, **Ringlet**, Dark Green Fritillary, Silver-washed Fritillary, Speckled Wood, Wall, **Marbled White**, Gatekeeper, Meadow Brown.

### Small Skipper



*Small Skipper*  
Photo: Tom Williams

With its forewings angled behind its hind wings, the bright orange Small Skipper has benefitted from a substantial increase in numbers at the Barn Owl Trust. In 2002 the annual count was at 0, by 2006, we recorded 40, 2007 saw a further increase to 81 and 2015 saw 106 individuals (approx. 1,060 on the whole site).

This Butterfly mainly feeds on Yorkshire Fog but has been known to use other plants such as Cock's-foot and Timothy. The Small Skipper is found where grasses are allowed to grow tall, typically unimproved grassland, grass verges and woodland clearings among others. While Small Skipper can be found in small patches of suitable habitat they can also congregate in large groups where the habitat is perfect. The Small Skipper can obtain nectar from a variety of plants but preferentially chooses those it has previously visited eliminating the need to learn how to extract the nectar from different plants. This particular butterfly lives in colonies and the individuals don't seem to be particularly mobile. A High Summer butterfly, the Small Skipper spends most of its time basking in the sunlight or resting but is a superb flyer; with excellent manoeuvrability skills and it is this flurry of activity that often alerts passers-by to its presence.



*Marbled White*  
Photo: Lexie New

### Marbled White

With its distinctive patterning, it is not hard to spot this monochrome insect. The Marbled White has also benefitted from the habitat created at the Barn Owl Trust with a significant increase in numbers. The annual count was 1 in 2002, increasing to 178 in 2006 with a further increase in 2007 to 302, 2015 saw 401 individuals (approx. 4,010 on the whole site).

Marbled Whites mainly feed on Red Fescue and Sheep's-Fescue, Yorkshire Fog and Tor-Grass amongst others but the full range is not known. They inhabit unimproved grassland, where there is a variety of species of grass that is infrequently cut. Marbled Whites typically can be found on Chalk or Limestone habitats but do use a range of others including road verges, woodland rides and railway embankments. Typically seen on the wing in June, July and August the Marbled White forms large colonies, thousands strong on suitable grasslands. These butterflies are thought to be quite mobile as they have been seen traversing unsuitable habitat. The Marbled White has a marked preference for purple flowers such as Wild Marjoram, Field Scabious, Thistles and Knapweeds.

### Ringlet

The Ringlet butterfly is named for the circular pattern on its wings. Like the Small Skipper, in 2002 there were no Ringlets on the Trust's land; by 2006 this had increased to 42 and 2007 saw a small decline of 2 before jumping in 2008 to 59 and 2015 saw 79 individuals (approx. 790 on the whole site). It favours coarser grasses such as Cock's-Foot, False Brome and other meadow grasses. Typically this butterfly inhabits shady, tall grassland in

# Great for Butterflies!



*Ringlet*  
Photo: David Ramsden

damp situations and on heavy soils where grasses are luscious, including woodland rides and glades, commons, verges, and riverbanks especially on clay soils.

The Ringlet takes to the wing in June, emerging looking very velvety and almost black in colour. They are at their peak in July and rapidly decline in early August. Their wing colour fades to a brown colour the longer the butterfly is out. They live in colonies the size of which can vary hugely from a few individuals in a field corner to many hundreds in areas with scrub and rough grassland. The Ringlet is a sedentary butterfly and individuals can look quite different. The circles on its underwing can vary in size and number, can be elongated, enlarged or reduced to small white spots. They can occasionally lack the black ring.

## So why the increase in butterflies?

Since the Trust bought the 26 acres of land in 2001, there has been a huge increase in the diversity of species of grasses. Yorkshire Fog, Cock's-foot and Timothy, three of the species that these butterflies feed on now grow in abundance.

*NOTE: A full colour version of this article is available on line. If you have a computer, why not ask to receive FEEDBACK by email? Simply phone 01364 653026 and give us your email address or email [info@barnowltrust.org.uk](mailto:info@barnowltrust.org.uk)*

*Find out more about the Lennon Legacy Project and read our monthly Wildlife Diary on our website: [www.barnowltrust.org.uk](http://www.barnowltrust.org.uk) ★*

**David Ramsden**  
Head of Conservation



*Gate Keeper*  
Photo: Lexie New

## A Tale from Nepal

*In the Spring we received this short article about the release of rescued Barn Owl *Tyto alba stertons* in Chitwan National Park, Nepal.*

Eight babies/fledglings of Barn Owl (*Tyto alba*) were rescued from Bharatpur Municipality-10, Chitwan on 30 December. It was believed that their parents had hatched them under the roof of a temple, an old building where there is top floor difficult for owner to approach at Bharatpur municipality -10. Their parents used to hunt pigeons for food and one day the owner of the building noticed them. He was thought to be very angry with the owls as pigeons were killed daily. So, he threw out all eight fledglings from their brood into the street.

In fact the building owner keeps pigeon in the hut of wooden boxes as the symbol of peace and prosperity. All fledglings were rescued by Kalpana Thapa and Dr. Navaratna Pradhan who are working for Vulture Conservation breeding Center in Chitwan National park.



Photo: Provided

During transferring of them from rescue box to aviary in the Gharial Conservation and Breeding Center (GCBC) one immediately escaped and flew to the forest area. The remaining seven were kept in a small aviary, on the next day one was found eaten by Mongoose.

The remaining six, were transferred again to a small secure baby turtle pen and reared under the plastic cover around pen for the maintenance of warmth. They were fed by buffalo meat 750 gm per day and also sometimes fed with 750gm fish instead/ alternative of Buffalo meat. The birds were kept for rehabilitation in the GCBC from 30 December to 14 February.

Barn Owls were released into premise of GCBC forest of Chitwan National Park (CNP) on 14 February as they were fully grown. Three owls visited the area during the evening time, identified by the staff by their call. From their sharp call and behaviour it was felt that they were hungry, so our staff provided some buffalo meat to them which is believe to be eaten by them regularly, but none of us has directly observed them while eating. They stayed around the GCBC premise for one week.

It seems that the owls were habituated with the captive feeding behaviour showing incapable of hunting and feeding by themselves without support. ★

**Bed Bahadur Khadka**  
(Assistant Conservation Officer)  
Chitwan National Park, Kasara, Chitwan

# Conservation in Action -

When Jane Gillett first contacted us back in 2007 to arrange a talk for her local WI, we had no idea what it would ultimately lead to: a fantastic example of habitat improvement and a new breeding site. So here it is, the perfect illustration of what we do; what we are here for and what (with your help) can be achieved.

**2012 - 11th July** - Jane and Peter attended our Butterfly Walk here at the Trust and witnessed first-hand the creation of rough grassland and the resulting benefits for wildlife – including butterflies.

**2013 - 9th October** - For the first time Jane and Peter actually saw a wild Barn Owl at their home near Diptford in South Devon. Then, on 21st November, they came on our Autumn Colours Walk and signed up as regular supporters (becoming Friends of the Barn Owl Trust) perfect! Having logged their owl-sighting, Peter and Jane invited us to come and look at their 5 sheep fields, totalling 33 acres, and advise them on encouraging Barn Owls.

**2014 - 17th January** - Our Head of Conservation (David) visited the site. The options were discussed whilst Jane and Peter showed David around their land and buildings. David provided advice on the creation and management of rough grassland and erected a nestbox in their barn even though, at the time, there were no signs that a Barn Owl had ever been in there.



*An aerial view of the 5 fields that had been annually cut/ grazed and were not particularly good habitat – 2014  
Photo: David Ramsden*

**2015** - Peter and Jane had already started creating a substantial area of rough grassland by excluding sheep from a 4-acre field and on 12th January, they started finding owl pellets in their barn!

**4th August** - Whilst visiting Yealmpton Show, they came into the Barn Owl Trust's stand and reported that the nestbox was now occupied! Peter had set up an automatic camera that faced the nestbox which confirmed that 2 Barn Owls were regularly going in the box. However, Peter and Jane were not at all sure if the owls had nested or not.



*The two Barn Owls on the box  
Photo: Peter Gillett*

**2016 - 20th May** and again on 17th June Peter reported that they were pretty sure their Barn Owls were nesting! On 14th July they attended another Butterfly Walk here at the Trust and provided an update on the 4 acres of rough grass they'd created for the owls. This was now in its second summer of grass growth and no grazing or cutting has taken place. David said that this sounded perfect for Field Voles and its creation was probably one of the main reasons they now had Barn Owls nesting!

**21st July** - David visited the site once more and was delighted to see how the habitat had developed. The four acres had a really good litter-layer (perfect for small mammals) and looked beautiful with wildflowers and butterflies – particularly Ringlets. David, a licensed bird ringer, did a quick nest inspection and confirmed that there were three white fluffy owlets in the nest.



*Jane and Peter spotting butterflies in the rough grassland they have created  
Photo: David Ramsden*



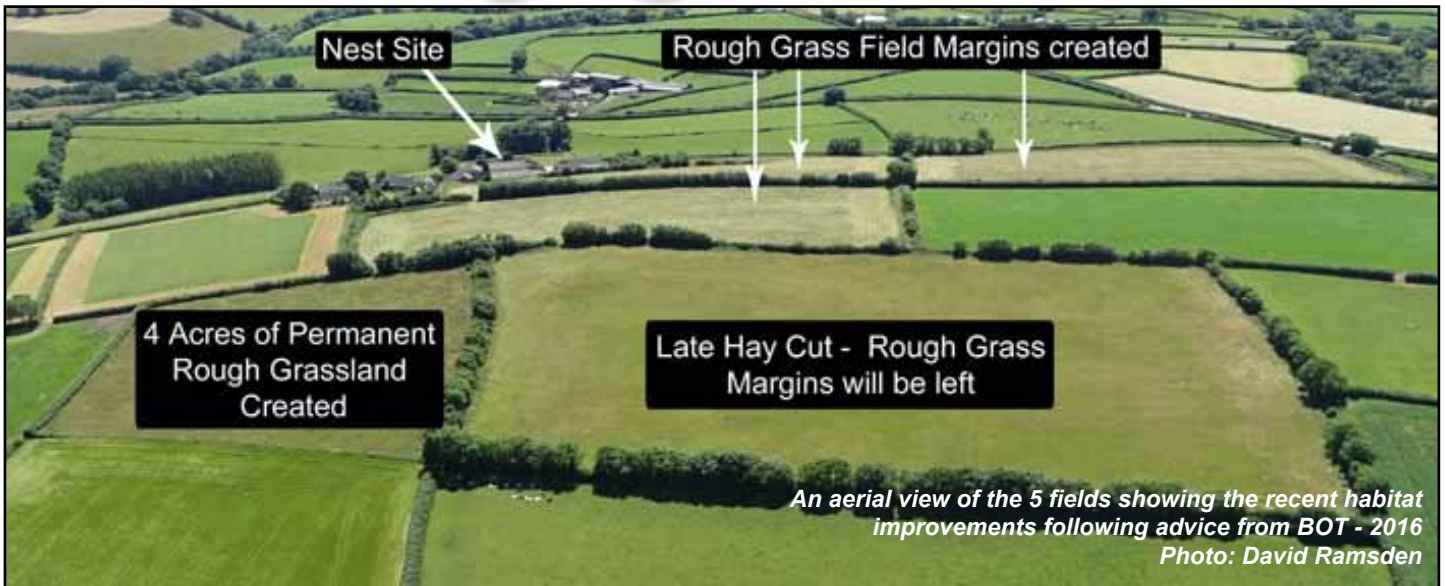
*The brood of 3 small owlets in the BOT nestbox  
Photo: David Ramsden*

As well as creating a whole field of permanent rough grass, Peter and Jane had left uncut strips around the edges of their hay meadows – perfect! ★



*Jane and Peter's uncut field margins  
Photo: David Ramsden*

# - Encouraging Barn Owls



As keen supporters of the Barn Owl Trust for many years, my husband and I were delighted to be offered the chance to spend a day with David Ramsden, MBE who is the Head of Conservation.

Our day included visiting three sites where Barn Owls were thought to have young, although this was not guaranteed. This was to enable David to ring the young owlets, which is something that not many people have the chance to witness as there are strict laws protecting all nesting birds; you have to be trained and hold a licence to approach the nest and carry out ringing. In addition to ringing the owlets, David wanted to gauge their well-being, record wing length, weigh them and estimate their gender - not as easy as it sounds, as David explained. Young female owlets have small black dots on the undersides of their wings, but these dots don't appear straight away, so a number of other diagnostic signs are looked for. However, with very young owlets the dots won't have appeared yet, so guess work is sometimes required.

We were very fortunate to find one healthy and full owlet in the first nestbox and even see the two adults flying out of the barn. This was while David put the ladder up to the nest box. He explained that it was very unusual to actually see the adults when going to ring the owlets, so we were especially lucky. The next site was on a fantastic nature-friendly farm where the farmer is very keen on helping wildlife. Here there were two healthy owlets, one slightly older than the other.

Our third site was an isolated barn in the middle of a corn field - this meant getting the ladder and equipment over the 4ft fence to start with, and then carrying the ladder to the barn over the tops of the 3ft + high corn, was interesting (I let the guys do this)! Here we found another single owlet, younger than the other three earlier in the day, but more feisty. Whereas owlets usually 'play dead' when handled, this last one was certainly having none of that and stared back at us, open-eyed, head lifting up and extending a taloned foot at us.



David was rather concerned that there had only been a small number of eggs and therefore owlets in each nest, but at least each egg had developed. He explained that normally you would expect to see three to five eggs in a nest, with some of the eggs not always producing young.

I cannot explain the excitement and absolute privilege at being able to hold a young Barn Owl, having been taught the correct way to do this, in the palm of your hand. One or two of the owlets were still nearly completely covered in white soft down, whereas the older ones had distinct facial discs already apparent.

Anyone who knows David will know he has an amazing way of sharing information about the Barn Owls with you, without you even realising he is educating you, in his enthusiastic and gentle style. I challenge anyone not to become as besotted and interested in "all things nature" as he is, after spending a short time in his company.

We had high hopes for the day, but these were easily exceeded (and then some!), so thank you once again David, Jackie and all the team. ★

**Kim & Ed McNeil**  
Friends of the Barn Owl Trust

# Team News



**Lexie New**  
Photo: Phil New

Hello – I'm Lexie. I started at the Trust in March of 2016 as Jo's replacement – what a learning curve! Having previously only been in office-based environments including, most recently, a car garage this is the opposite end of the scale.

I have always been interested in wildlife, which led me to Falmouth University where I studied for a degree in Wildlife Photography. In January 2016, my husband and I moved from Sussex to Devon to pursue careers in conservation and the environment.

Four months into this job and I have certainly learnt a lot and been involved in all kinds of things from feeding the owls, organising the training courses and counting butterflies to helping with rehabilitation and offering advice to the public. ★

**Lexie New**  
PA to Head of Conservation



**Adam & Jo on their wedding day** Photo: Hannah Hall Photography

We want to wish many congratulations to our former PA to Head of Conservation, Jo Clark nee Plant. Jo left us back in March, moving on to work at Paignton Zoo as their education officer.

In June this year she married her partner Adam back in her home county of Leicestershire. She popped into the office not long after to show us all her stunning wedding photos, we wish her all the best in her new job...and marriage! ★

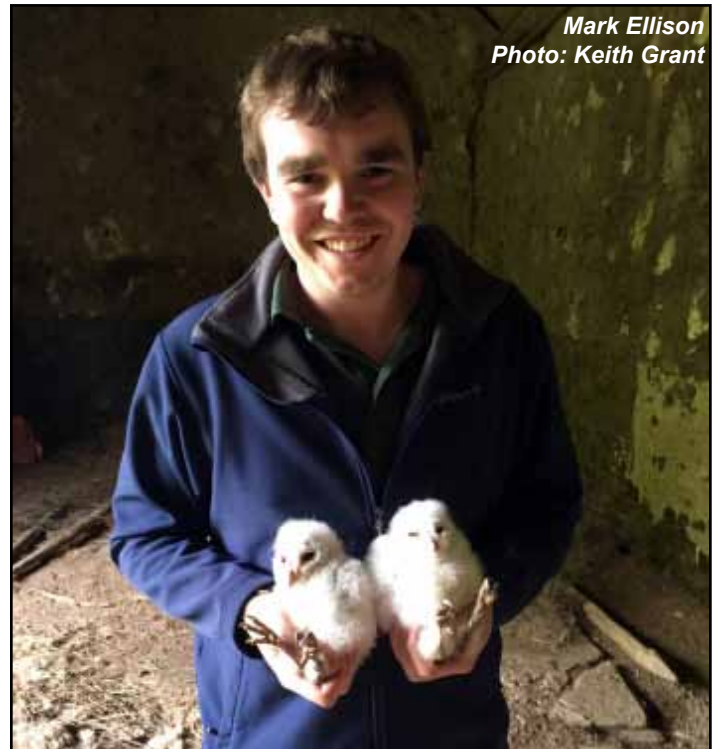
After 11 months at the Barn Owl Trust, my placement has come to an end. I've really enjoyed my time here; from answering telephone enquiries to erecting nestboxes there has always been something new and exciting happening.

Over my placement, I've analysed and written up a study conducted in 2008 and 2009 looking at juvenile dispersal patterns. This paper should be published by the Trust soon. Other things I've been involved in include helping to rebuild 2 aviaries with Jasmin the handy-person, erecting a number of nestboxes over Devon and Cornwall, helping to manage the Lennon Legacy Project, answering enquiries, attending local shows and helping collect annual nest site monitoring information.

My dissertation in my final year of university will be written from the data the Trust has collected over the last 25 years in relation to nest sites and ring recoveries; I'm really looking forward to starting to write up this very large dataset.

Thank you very much to the Barn Owl Trust for allowing me to undertake my placement with them, I've learnt a huge amount and will never forget the time I've spent here. ★

**Mark Ellison**  
Student Placement



**Mark Ellison**  
Photo: Keith Grant

## Owl Aid Gifts

Stuck for ideas?  
Give a gift with a difference!

Help us care for injured Owls with this unique Owl Aid Gift.

The recipient will receive a gift certificate with your personalised message by email or post.

Visit our website for details.

# Be Inspired...

The Trust has had 3 students visiting on work experience in June and July this year. They have each written a small piece about their time with the Trust and what they enjoyed. Eds.



Harry with Baley the Barn Owl  
Photo: Lexie New

When I was three years old I remember David coming to my nursery with Dusty the Barn Owl, and so helping take an owl into a primary school with David and Lexie and listen to the talk about how Barn Owl habitats have been destroyed and how the Trust is helping to conserve them was a great way to start the week. This was followed by helping feed the Tawny and Barn Owls.

On a couple of days Rick and I went with Keith, a qualified ringer to several sites around Devon, and I had the amazing opportunity to watch baby owlets being ringed, and climb ladders to see the boxes. I learnt a lot about the owls and other birds, just from talking to Rick and Keith. We also saw many other birds such as Kestrels and Jackdaws, and Rick identified many others by their call.

I was also able to dissect an owl pellet, and put together the skeleton of a Field Vole. Later on Lexie and I carried out a butterfly transect, to count the population of butterflies in a certain area. I am now able to identify Meadow Browns, Marbled White and Small Skippers!

My time at the Barn Owl Trust was even better than I had hoped, and talking to all the friendly and knowledgeable staff has convinced me that wildlife conservation is a career path I would like to follow. ★

**Harry Hingston**

I chose to visit the Barn Owl Trust from the 11th – 15th July for Work Experience from Okehampton College. I had a great week and all the staff made me feel very welcome. Everyone was very friendly and I thoroughly enjoyed working with them over the week. Some of the best experiences were helping Rick with the rescue of a young Barn Owl chick, feeding the owls, completing a butterfly transect with Matt and helping with the construction of a new aviary.

Some work was extremely challenging and other work very relaxing and enjoyable. Either way, everything was very rewarding and a fantastic experience for me. I would like to thank David Ramsden, the Head of Conservation, for providing me with this opportunity and everyone else at the Barn Owl Trust for their kindness and hospitality. I have learnt a lot as well from all the knowledgeable staff about conservation and nature. It was a fantastic week and it has only made me more interested and passionate about conservation and owls. ★

**Tom Michie**

I liked my time at the Barn Owl Trust, it was great fun. The first day I went on a walk and counted Butterflies. There were nearly 300 of them in 10% of the field. I also liked working with the conservation team - it was fun and I was busy with lots to do. I helped to feed the resident birds every day and it was not nice at first but I got used to it all. I cleaned up the meeting room, and helped to make up some of the packs that they sell. I did lots of different things at the Trust; it has been a good week at work with the staff, I even helped out the admin team with some of their tasks.

I have really liked my time here and would love to be a volunteer at the Barn Owl Trust as I love Barn Owls and Tawny Owls. Seeing Baley was also a highlight of my week here. ★

**Katie Barrington**

## New Ways to Fundraise

Many of you will have heard of JustGiving and even used it to raise money for charity when doing a sponsored event. Supporters have asked us in the past why we have not joined up with JustGiving and after looking into it ourselves we discovered the monthly fees to be too great to make it profitable for us. However we have always given alternative methods such as EveryClick. Now we are pleased to announce we have registered with two more charity fundraising websites BT MyDonate and CharityChoice.



Both of these not-for-profit online fundraising services enable supporters to be able to set up their own sponsorship pages. These organisations have lower fees and no monthly charge for the Trust and take no commission on the original donation. If you are planning to undertake a sponsored event please do check out their websites and find the Barn Owl Trust: [www.charitychoice.co.uk](http://www.charitychoice.co.uk) and [www.btplc.com/mydonate](http://www.btplc.com/mydonate). ★



**CharityChoice**

## All Wrapped Up!

Designed by Aaron here at the Barn Owl Trust using an illustration by Phil Knowing, this gift wrap pack is hot off the press!

A pack consists of four full-size sheets (50cm x 70cm) of luxury wrapping paper with a unique owl stamp design with four matching tags. The sheets are professionally printed on premium recycled paper. Single sheets with tags are also available.

After the success of our first Barn Owl Trust mug last year we have decided to add another to the range. We've produced a robust white ceramic mug with our new colourful stamp design. We think it makes the ideal gift for any bird lover!



Mug - £6.50  
4 sheets with tags - £5.00  
Single sheet with tag - £1.50

Visit our online shop at [www.barnowltrust.org.uk](http://www.barnowltrust.org.uk) to purchase or see our enclosed sales leaflet. ★

# Thanks and Things

We would like to say a big thank you to all our supporters. As well as supporting us by adopting an owl or becoming a Friend of the Trust many of you also donate items for us to use as draw prizes, to sell on ebay or recycle. A huge thank you to:

Gwyneth Parish, Claire Sellers, Honey Ingram, Annie Rhodes, Mark Lyddy, Bernice Phillips, Jo Winfield, Lynne & Brian Larard, Ann & Peter Stansell, Nina Coombes, Alan Sloman, Rich & Leigh Boucher, Ashburton Post Office, Kevin Keatley, Russell Savory, Chris Packham, Robbie Hill from Hill Tribe Media, Pelagic Publishing, Elizabeth Tom at Cornish Tipi Holidays, Yeo Valley Farms Ltd, Melanie White, Kim & Ed McNeil, Elizabeth Graham, Hilary Jane Davies, Keith & Lyndsay Owen.

We also have some marvellous volunteers who have given up their time to help in the office, at events, Feedback mailings, transport birds for us and much more:

Nic Butler, Aram Compton, Michael Parkes, Michael Jennings, Heather Buswell, Kim Baker, Tony Hulatt, Alan Sloman, Harry Hingston, Louise Woolley, Margaret Rhodes, Diane Hawkings, Martin Overy, Finn Brinkley, Diane Baker, Valerie Lurcock and a group of volunteers from a major telephone supplier who requested to remain anonymous.

Let's not forget those fantastic fundraisers:

Paul & Rachel Carter, Ilington Community Market, Shelley Wright & Tracey Morris, The Acoustic Cafe in Bovey Tracey and the Axe Valley Runners.

Please have a look at the list opposite for items we take for recycling and particular goods we are in need of.

## Can you help with:

- ✧ Postcards and pre1970 envelopes with stamps on (they are worth much more to us intact)
- ✧ Any used stamps, including any foreign stamps & currency
- ✧ Wild Barn Owl pellets (we can never have too many)
- ✧ Wild bird food - mainly sacks of black sunflower seeds, also peanuts & plain canary seed
- ✧ Wood for making outdoor nestboxes - sheets of 9 / 12mm tanalised soft ply and lengths of 25x 50mm tanalised batten
- ✧ Green Oak rough-sawn planks for making bat boxes
- ✧ Anabat detector
- ✧ A4 and A3 recycled paper both coloured and white
- ✧ A4 recycled card 250/280g
- ✧ Metal detector
- ✧ Pliers
- ✧ Drill-driver bits (for screwing)
- ✧ Quick grip clamps
- ✧ Small plate compactor
- ✧ Emulsion paint (pale colour) sufficient to paint an office
- ✧ Brown packaging/parcel tape 50mm x 66mm
- ✧ Heavy duty A3 rotary trimmer for paper and card
- ✧ OS Explorer maps of Devon, particularly Bideford, Ilfracombe, Barnstaple and Dartmoor

Thank you for your help ★

## Tail piece ...



I've just been sitting outside enjoying the sunshine. Isn't it wonderful to have a summer, it feels like this is the first one in a long time. The sparrows are working their way along the hedgerow, chirruping at each other. Ten years ago there were no sparrows in this part of our valley and now we have a large flock taking advantage of the habitat that has been created here. Like the butterflies, the bats and so much other wildlife the sparrows have really benefited from the Trust managing its 26 acres of land for Barn Owls.

The Lennon Legacy Project has also provided a huge amount of pleasure for the people living nearby, those who work here and those who visit. Every day and every walk is a new adventure with something different to see or experience. Today the blackberries are ripening, the sloes are turning glossy purple and the apple trees in Forde Orchard are bowing under the weight of the fruit that will provide food for over-wintering wildlife. What an amazing honour to be able to see the changes that have happened since the Trust bought the land back in 2001. What a wonderful legacy for Vivien Lennon to have left behind her.

Meanwhile in the rest of the world..... What human beings are doing to each other and to the planet defies belief. Surely there are enough natural disasters that bring death and destruction without humans creating more?

Around the world 65.3 million people have been forcibly displaced from their homes. Among them are nearly 21.3 million refugees, over half of whom are under the age of 18. 54% of refugees come from 3 countries, Syria, Afghanistan and Somalia (*figures from UNHCR - The UN Refugee Agency*). In addition to the wars going on around the globe there is the exploitation of natural resources for profit. This is displacing native people and destroying vast tracts of natural habitat and the creatures that live there.

You would think that with our access to information, human beings would learn from history; that instead of using our technology to create weapons of destruction we would want to create a safe and healthy environment for future generations. Unfortunately the

love of power, fanaticism, intolerance, greed, fear and indifference are all human characteristics that work against this.

The European Union was created after the Second World War with the aim of ending the frequent and bloody wars between neighbours. From resistance fighters to lawyers, the Founding Fathers were a diverse group of people who held the same ideals: a peaceful, united and prosperous Europe.

In June this year Britain voted to leave the EU, 52% to 48%. The referendum turnout was 71.8%, which means 28.8% were indifferent or decided not to vote. I have to say I was shocked by the outcome. I really believe that we can only solve the World's problems by working together. We have yet to see what the long-term effects of the Brexit decision will be on day-to-day life in Britain, but we now know that much of the rhetoric, from both sides, in the run-up to the referendum was hype, designed to sway our votes.

On a more positive note, this year was also the year of the Rio Olympics. Congratulations to all the athletes who competed and everyone who worked together to make the event such a huge success. Just think what could happen if we humans put that kind of energy and resources into World peace or environmental issues.

In the 30+ years I've been involved with conservation I've been lucky enough to meet many wonderful people who care about the planet and its protection. To see projects that improve life for people and for wildlife. Whether it be a national park or a wildflower border, a recycling project or a donation to charity, all of these things help to make the World a better place. We all need to be aware of the 'big picture' but rather than just feel impotent when we see the massive global problems that face us, we can all do our bit to make things better for other people, for wildlife and for the natural world.

*Together we really can make a world of difference.* ★

**Frances Ramsden**