

feedback

Issue 58 / Autumn 2017



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

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In this issue ...

Welcome to Feedback	2
Diary Dates	2
BOT News	3
More BOT News	4
More BOT News Continued...	5
LLP Update	6-7
2017 Breeding Season	7
Poetry Competition	8
Barn Owls and Water	9
BOT Annual Report 2016-2017	10-16
Barn Owl Trust Turns 30!	17
A Day in the Life...	18-19
BOMFA Winner & More...	20
Bird News	21
Pete's Coastal Marathon	22
Office News	23
Thanks & Things	24
Tail Piece...	24

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Website: www.barnowltrust.org.uk

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Diary Dates 2017-2018

October - Thurs 19th - 2:30pm - Autumn Colours Walk

November - Tues 21st - BOESS Training Course
- Thurs 16th & Fri 17th - BOESS & ABOSM Courses

December - Tues 12th - 2:30pm & 7:30pm - Wreath Making

Join us for practical work in the LLP with the Conservation Team:

January - Tues 16th - 10am-4pm

February - Tues 13th - 10am-4pm

March - Tues 13th - 10am-4pm

Contact the office for more details or to book a place at an event - booking is essential as places are strictly limited.

Please visit www.barnowltrust.org.uk for details.

Welcome to Feedback issue 58 including our Annual Report 2016-2017. Inside this issue you will find a very important insert regarding the change in Data Protection law coming into effect in May 2018. We need your consent in order to continue sending you our bi-annual magazine, by post or email. Please see page 5 for more information on the implications of this new regulation and how you can give your consent.

It has been a busy summer at the Trust with the arrival of our new exhibition trailer, see page 3, and subsequently the attendance of more local country fayres and shows. The Conservation Team have been out and about checking nestboxes, ringing owlets and giving advice to landowners as well as undertaking the weekly butterfly transect, running training courses, answering emails and countless phone calls. If you've ever wondered what being a member of the Conservation Team here at the Trust entails, turn to page 18 for an outline of a typical day in the conservation office.

Barn Owls seem to be doing better in 2017 compared to 2016 but the figures are still below average and certainly not as positive as 2014 and 2015. It appears they're still having a bit of a rough time. We've had fewer casualty birds at the sanctuary this year. That may sound like a good thing but, our thinking is, if we're seeing fewer injured Barn Owls at the Trust there must be fewer Barn Owls out there in the wild. Turn to page 7 to read more about the 2017 breeding season.

It's great to see so many of our supporters interacting with our social media pages. We regularly post updates on how we're doing on Facebook and Twitter. We also have an active YouTube channel full of Barn Owl related videos, see *News Bites* on page 3 for an update on the 10 new instructional videos nearing completion. Back in Issue 52 of Feedback we proudly announced we had 6,000 followers on Facebook. We now have over 12,000. More than double! We also have almost 33,000 Twitter followers. That really is a lot for a small charity. Perhaps we can get that to 35,000 by the end of the year? Thank you for liking, sharing and retweeting our posts. In doing so you are helping to raise awareness of our vital conservation work.

As you know the Barn Owl Trust is based in Ashburton, Devon. This means our reach for practical conservation is limited to the southwest of England. Over the years we have built up relationships and contacts with Barn Owl groups and individuals from all over the country. That is why we created the Barn Owl Directory on our website. It lists details of Barn Owl groups, ecologists, surveyors, vets and owl rehabilitators based in the UK. The creation of this fantastic resource has led to the rescue and release of numerous wild Barn Owls. See *BOT Directory Rescue* on page 4 to read about the Directory in action.

We are lucky to have 3 new images of Barn Owls in snow for this year's Christmas cards, take a peek at page 5 to see them featured alongside our brand new cotton bags. Many thanks to Jan Taylor for the use of her beautiful Barn Owl illustration and to Phil Summerscale at Dartmoor Screen Printing for producing the fantastic bags with a charity discount. These can be purchased via the enclosed sales leaflet or through our website shop where you can find many other gift ideas for Christmas.

The Barn Owl Trust turns 30 next year, a milestone that certainly deserves celebrating! Who would have thought, from our humble beginnings back in 1988, we'd be where we are today. As part of the celebrations for our anniversary we intend to host some special events in the LLP next summer and are hoping to inspire our fantastic supporters to raise £30 for our 30th year, see page 17 for a glimpse of the first ever BOT office and some inspiration for your own fundraising.

It is your support over the years that has enabled the Trust to expand, grow and develop into the organisation it is today. We are proud to be doing our bit to protect the Barn Owl and its environment and hope you are proud too...because without you none of this would be possible. Thank you for all your support.

Marianne Bryan, Aaron Kitts & Frances Ramsden ★

BOT News



Photo: Kevin Keatley

New Exhibition Trailer is here!

Summer is an exciting time of year for us at the Trust with annual monitoring site visits and all the shows we attend. Summer 2017 has been made even more exciting by the arrival of our new display trailer.

Paid for by grants from various charities and legacies this trailer is light-weight and comes with solar panels and a TV – so we can show supporters some of what we do, plus we've added some new display material. We will be visiting lots more shows this year and with the new trailer it's easier for us to transport and set up. The trailer's first outing was the Devon County Show – despite some rain over the three days, it didn't stop people braving the weather to visit the Barn Owl Trust stand for conservation advice, to watch Nestcam on our TV, buy some owl-themed goodies or just to see if they could find the 'Barn Owl Egg' in our lucky dip nestbox.

June saw the arrival of the Royal Cornwall Show where a damp Thursday and Saturday sandwiched a dry and warm Friday, with lots of people stopping by the BOT stand. By the time you read this, BOT staff, volunteers and our new trailer will have attended Yealmpton, Totnes, Okehampton, Holsworthy, Mid Devon and the Dorset Shows. Sadly the North Devon Show was cancelled due to poor ground conditions.

Our old 'barn on wheels' trailer has been dismantled and the parts recycled on various projects. The base of the trailer has now been sold on. Legacies provided the funds for the bulk of this new purchase but also our thanks go to those charitable trusts whose contributions were greatly appreciated.

A big thank you must also go to Mike Hughes for the eye catching exterior artwork, and all those who have generously supplied images for the interior display boards; Kevin Keatley, Nigel Morley, Russell Savory, Craig Jones, David Pearson, Ed MacKerrow, Paul Smith, Mike Read, Melanie Lindenthal, Gavin Law and Helier Mason.

We look forward to many more outings for the trailer in future years. ★



The trailer's first outing
Photo: Kevin Keatley

News Bites

Breaking Butterfly Numbers

We have been doing butterfly counts in the LLP every week between April and October since we first took over the site back in 2001. We recorded only 1 individual of the beautiful Marbled White butterfly over the 26 acres of intensively-grazed sheep pasture in 2002. On the afternoon of the 27th June 2017 a staggering 280 individuals were recorded during a 45 minute transect walk covering 10% of the site! This is roughly equivalent to 2,800 individuals across the entire site, smashing the previous high of 155 recorded on the 15th July 2016. See *LLP Update* page 7 for a wonderful pic of a Marbled White.

New BOT Films – Exciting News!

All 10 of our new films are very nearly ready! Each one is just having its final editing and the credits are being added. By the time you read this they may be already up on YouTube. Eventually there will be lots of links to them on our website. In the meantime, if you'd like to try searching for one simply search our YouTube channel www.youtube.com/BarnOwlTrust1.

Yeo Valley Yeokens

Many thanks to all our supporters who donated their Yeokens to the Barn Owl Trust whilst we were one of the 3 nominated charities to win a charitable donation from Yeo Valley Farms Ltd. Out of the 3 charities, we collected the most Yeokens and received a fantastic £1500 cheque! A special thanks must go to Vanessa Farbrother for putting our name forward for the scheme.

Training Courses Fill Up Fast!

It was a bit of a surprise for Lexie (PA to conservation) when after only a few days, our training courses, which are set for November, were over half full! We send out an email to those who have previously expressed an interest in our courses a week before the dates are put on our website. Within 3 days of the email being sent 11 people had booked onto the course - this must be a new record! At the time of writing, our combined course is fully booked and only 6 spaces remain on the first day of BOESS, we've had to add new dates! We must be doing something right!

Nestboxes Fly Out!

2017 is set to be a record year for the sale of our quality handmade nestboxes. As of August we have already sold more Tree boxes in 2017 than we did in the whole of 2016! We also sell nestboxes suitable for barns and both designs are handmade on site; for those wishing to build their own the plans are available for free on our website. We started selling nestboxes back in 2009 and you can see a graph showing how our sales have grown in our *Annual Report*, page 13.

More BOT News

One day in June...

May and June are busy months for the Conservation Team. As well as responding to increased numbers of enquiries, we have County Shows to attend and nestboxes to monitor. We typically check some 80 sites across Devon and south east Cornwall and have done so at the majority for many, many years. In this way a pattern of occupation is built up, allowing us to make informed estimates of nesting occupancy rates. It's one of the highlights of the job, and so it was with some excitement that I prepared to head out for a day of nestbox monitoring and owl ringing.

Site 1 – a pole barn on a hill, about 30m from the farmhouse. Barn Owls have nested here in 18 of the last 24 years, and 2017 is no exception. Kestrel and Stock Dove have also nested in the barn. 5 owlets, 1-3 weeks old. Fantastic!

Site 2 – an isolated cob barn over 450m from the nearest road. Earliest monitoring of Barn Owls nesting here is 1991, and they have nested for 14 of the subsequent years, including 2017. It has also hosted Kestrel, Stock Dove, Jackdaw and Little Owl. 3 owlets less than 2 weeks old. Terrific!

Site 3 – an isolated pole barn with adjoining stone barn across a field 200m from the nearest road. Barn Owls have nested in all but 2 years since monitoring began in 1998. This year is no exception. 4 owlets up to 10 days old. Stupendous!



An example of owl provision in a barn conversion

Very interesting I hear you say. So why the article ?

Well, of the 5 long-term monitoring sites I checked on that day the 3 detailed above may very well be lost to development. And although planning guidance exists to conserve and enhance protected species, the Local Planning Authority responsible doesn't have a particularly good track record of doing this. And that was before the General Permitted Development Order (2012), which allows for the conversion of agricultural buildings without the need for a wildlife survey. Even with our involvement, the LPA is under no obligation to adopt our recommendations and so I fear these sites are likely to be lost forever, not only to Barn Owls but to all the other species that have benefited from them over the years as well.

The most frustrating thing is that making provision for Barn Owls is neither onerous nor expensive; just take a look at our Planners' Guide on our website with details of how to mitigate the loss of a roost or nest site, and the nestboxes tab for details of how to incorporate a Barn Owl space within a building project. ★

Matthew Twiggs
Senior Conservation Officer

BOT Directory Rescue

Earlier this year Elaine from Plymouth saw something moving behind the glass panels of her fireplace. After a while she realised it was a Barn Owl. When she tried to rescue it, every time she got near, the owl would go back up the flue.

Using our online directory she found Bruce Taggart from Tamar Wildlife who lived only a few minutes away. Bruce went round to Elaine's but the flue was too narrow for Bruce to get his hand in to retrieve the bird.



A sooty Barn Owl!
Photo: Elaine Dye

Thankfully Bruce's wife was on hand and managed to reach the bird. Elaine was very thankful and subsequently became a Friend of the Trust. ★

Prints Make Presents!

BOT Supporters!
Spend £20.00
(excluding postage)
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Christmas with Strix
Editions and the
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donation equivalent
to 10% of the value
of your order.

You will also receive
a Barn Owl-related
gift with your order as
a thank you.

There is a wide
selection of prints
available including
exclusive works by
the UK's best loved
Bird Artist *Terance
James Bond*, who has
painted the RSPB's
calendars for many
years.



Visit www.strixeditions.co.uk to view the whole range of prints on offer. Please remember to quote BOT when ordering.

For more information or assistance please contact Strix Editions by email strixsales@btinternet.com or call John Gray at Strix Editions on 01206 853388.

The striking image above is "Barn Owl-Rope Makers" by *Terance James Bond*. ★

More BOT News Continued...

New Nestbox Builder



Hi everyone, I'm Joel and I started working at the Trust in July. I was born in Devon and have had a mostly rural upbringing. I was a member of the YOC (Young Ornithologists Club) as a child and I'm particularly keen on birds of prey. I have

spent most of my working life in rural jobs and have developed many practical skills through the years.

I recently attended a short woodcarving course and would like to pursue that interest in the future. From the age of 20 to 21 years I spent my time around a Tibetan Buddhist centre in Scotland helping with improvements on the property and met some very interesting people.

I have two passions outside of work...music and motorcycles. In my spare time I am working on one of my bike projects or riding. I hope one day to have a small patch of land of my own to live on in a handmade timber home. ★

Joel Turnbull
Nestbox Builder

Photo provided

Barn Owl Bags

We are very excited to have just taken delivery of our brand new long handled bags! Featuring a stunning black and white line drawing of a Barn Owl by Jan Taylor and screen printed by local business, Dartmoor Screen Printing, we are really pleased with them.

They are made ethically with 100% cotton and are now available to purchase for £3 plus P&P. A great gift idea for any Barn Owl lover this Christmas!



Three new Christmas card designs are also now available, including beautiful photos from Mark Summers and Mark Hancox capturing Barn Owls in snow, along with a reprint of the popular 'Peek a Boo' by Russell Savory. These four cards can be purchased



individually or as a pack of 12 (3 of each 4 designs) for £6.60 plus P&P. Both of these new items can be found in the enclosed sales leaflet or ordered via our website shop online at www.barnowltrust.org.uk/shop/. ★

Data Protection & You!

Data Protection law is changing and WE NEED YOUR CONSENT. In May 2018 a new General Data Protection Regulation comes into force under which:

- We will not be able to keep your contact details without your consent
- We will not be able to phone or email you without your consent

Please see the enclosed IMPORTANT INFORMATION sheet. Subject to expert advice, we need to obtain new consents from every private individual for whom we hold contact details. This includes every Friend of the Trust, all those who have an Owl Adoption, and all other supporters – everyone who receives our magazine Feedback.

Specifically, we need your permission to keep your name, your address, phone numbers and email address, and we need permission to contact you by phone or email. Unless you contact us and give your consent we will be unable to send you our bi-annual mailings, owl updates for adopters, or Owl E-News. We will also be unable to seek your consent by phone or email.

To make sure we comply with the new Regulation by May 2018, we are now putting in place new practices within the office to record whether or not we have received specific consent. With over 60,000 contacts on our database this is a massive project and we really do need your help!

By Post

Please sign the "Consent" on the enclosed IMPORTANT INFORMATION sheet and return it to us.

By Email

Please email admin@barnowltrust.org.uk. We will then email you a consent form which you can email back to us.

By Phone

Consent over the phone is acceptable. However, we will need you to confirm all your contact details, even if you are calling to say you do not want to be contacted again, as we need to check the details on our database and update it accordingly.

We thank you in anticipation of your help. If you do not want us to contact you again please just let us know. ★

In Memoriam

The Trust has received a legacy
from the estate of

Michael Jennings

and donations in memory of

**David Bayley, Marjorie Ashley Dunn,
Terence Thorpe, David Warwick, Dennis Waterman
and Hilda Dorothy Yeomans**

Our grateful thanks and sincere sympathies go to
their families and friends

They all now have a leaf on our Memory Tree

LLP Update



Marbled White and 6 spot Burnet moth in flight
Photo: Lexie New

The beginning of February saw some hoped-for Kingfisher sightings in and around the ponds, with an individual watched fishing from branches over-hanging the Oakley Pond one mild, wet morning. These sightings extended into March with a group of volunteers witnessing a flash of blue disappearing up the Ashburn. Unfortunately, the spring came and went without any further observations, and the Kingfisher Wall remained unchristened, at least by the Kingfishers. As the autumn approached the usual presumed dispersing juvenile was heard several times on the Ashburn on the 20th July before flying straight up and over the field at lunchtime heading north.

Grey Wagtails, on the other hand, had carried nesting material into all three cavities in the wall by March, and appeared to have finished building a nest in one by April, but sadly did not stay to breed there. Also on the ponds, the now annual appearance of a pair of Mandarins culminated in the male being seen to fly up to, and perch on, the duck box erected on the Sycamore stump in the winter. As usual however, nothing more was seen of them thereafter. In August three large Brown Trout showed well in the Flo Pond on the afternoon of the 10th when it was in shade. Unsurprisingly, the only good numbers of froglets are being seen around the Oakley Pond.



Froglet sat on a stone by Oakley Pond
Photo: Marianne Bryan

A rather disappointing breeding season for birds along the Ashburn also resulted in an absence of Dippers in the nestbox under the top bridge for the first time in 5 years. Other notably empty boxes included all those for Dormouse which were checked in June in Riverbank Walk and adjacent hedgerows. On the plus side at least 2 male Pied Flycatchers were in song in nearby woodland from the end of April onwards. Sadly, the nesting attempt failed.

On a more positive note, a Skylark was in song over the top of the field by mid-March, with two others chasing each other nearby. This went on until the beginning of April, when all went quiet, only to resume in June for several weeks. Is this typical of nesting behaviour, we wonder? At least two male Meadow Pipers were singing and displaying above the solar panels around the same time in March.

The Wildlife Tower showed signs of a visitor in February with 10-12 black Barn Owl pellets in and around one of the provisions. Whether these were from a wild bird, or one of the youngsters released here in December is a moot point, but the fact the pellets were black indicated a wild diet. Unfortunately, there was little other evidence of any Barn Owls on site up to the end of June.



Meadow Pipit with food
Photo: Lexie New

Inside the tower, a check of the bat boxes in the lower void by licensed bat workers revealed a roosting Brown Long-eared Bat. Further checks in June showed that all internal areas appeared to be in use, with droppings found in the upper and lower voids, and in the hibernaculum and maternity roost spaces. A *Myotis* species was even partially visible at roost behind the ridge beam in the upper void. It could not be identified specifically, but was thought most likely to be a Daubenton's due to the proximity of the tower to the ponds and the River Ashburn.

After our successful Bat Walk last August when a Barbastelle was seen to make multiple passes over Corner Wood, three newly constructed bat boxes suitable for this species were erected on a tree there; one facing east, one west and the other south. This should provide multiple options for roosting bats, whose individual requirements for temperature may vary throughout the day. **Continued right >>>**



The annual bracken bashing
Photo: David Ramsden

LLP Update Cont...

Other notable wildlife sightings included early Peacock butterflies in March, joined in April by Comma and Small Tortoiseshell. The first Silver-washed Fritillary was recorded at the end of June when a record-breaking 280 Marbled Whites (see *News Bites* Page 3), and 201 Ringlets, were recorded during Week 13 of the Butterfly Monitoring Scheme transects. A newly-arrived Hobby was seen thermalling above the LLP at the end of April whilst a hungry Magpie busily devoured a Slow Worm just above the weather station. In May a swarm of bees headed north towards the orchard but could not be relocated. The second record of White Admiral for Waterleat occurred on the 7th July when an individual spent 15 or so minutes nectaring on bramble flowers just outside the office.

The Belted Galloways were finally taken off on Valentine's Day. A week or so later most of the saplings were removed from the island in the Flo Pond, and the somewhat invasive reed mace was also pulled and left on the pond side so that any invertebrates could crawl back into the water.

The orchard trees received their annual pruning late winter, and North Park hedgerow was relieved of its bramble growth in preparation for the replacement of its fence posts, many of which have started to rot through at the base. More hedge-laying was conducted along the North Park double-comb but had drawn to a close by the end of March. A loud crack echoed around Corner Wood on a very hot, dry, calm day in June, in conditions quite unlike what you might expect to cause tree damage. After investigation it was found that the top section of the tree that had blown over by the top boardwalk along Riverbank Walk had decided to part company with the stump holding it up.

The annual bracken bash was undertaken a little later than usual on the 18th July. Although quite hard work compared with other methods of control such as topping by tractor, it's much more

selective and less destructive for wildlife; an approximate total of a dozen Great Green Bush Crickets was counted in one area alone on the slope outside Corner Wood.

Some replacement daffodils and snowdrops were planted in the orchard in April after the original bulbs sourced and planted in 2015 failed to perform for the second year in a row. Hopefully these will be more successful.



Silver-washed Fritillary butterfly
Photo: Lexie New

The weather in May for the Wild Flower Walk was rather horrendous with frequent, heavy showers. Nevertheless, a small group enjoyed a selection of the flora on offer. The Mid-Summer Walk was held on a beautiful, balmy evening in June, and was much better attended. Other events included two Butterfly Walks conducted in July when the whole range of LLP butterflies were recorded in gloriously fine conditions. The LLP's second Bat Walk was held in August when Pipistrelle, a Myotis species, Greater Horseshoe and Barbastelle were all recorded in Corner Wood. Many thanks to Louise Woolley for leading the event. ★

Matthew Twiggs
Senior Conservation Officer

2017 Breeding Season

From late May onwards the Conservation Team is tasked with visiting our Annual Monitoring Sites (AMSITES) across Devon and south-east Cornwall, recording what we find and BTO-ringing broods of owls. Since the Trust has been doing this for many years, we are able to gauge annually how well Barn Owls have done in comparison with their average productivity. As you can see from the table to the right, it's been a bit 'swings and roundabouts', despite the comparatively kind weather we've so far experienced this spring and summer.



Nesting occupancy (the proportion of sites recording a nesting attempt in relation to the total number of sites checked) was below average again. That means fewer pairs nesting at AMSITES in 4 of the last 5 years than the average since recording began. Furthermore, the proportion of sites where Barn Owls were absent was correspondingly above average,

whilst roosting figures remained largely stable. However, where there was a nesting attempt, brood size was above average, the first year this has been the case since 2014 and the 3rd best in the last 11 years after 2007 and 2014.

In summary, another disappointing year, not quite as bad as last year but by no means as good as 2007, 2012 and 2014. ★

Year	Nesting (%)	Mean brood size	Regular roosting (%)	Occasional roosting (%)	Absent (%)
Ave. 1990-2015	52%	2.9	14%	5%	29%
2007	58%	3.7	12%	4%	27%
2008	62%	2.6	11%	2%	25%
2009	61%	2.5	7%	3%	30%
2010	60%	2.35	12%	1%	27%
2011	42%	2.63	17%	5%	36%
2012	68%	3.23	6%	2%	25%
2013	17%	2.13	27%	14%	42%
2014	46%	4.15	12%	7%	35%
2015	59%	2.67	10%	1%	29%
2016	39%	2.42	17%	3%	42%
2017	48%	3.24	7%	11%	34%

Results of annual monitoring site visits in 2017, showing both site status as a proportion of the total number of sites checked compared with the average, and brood size.

Matthew Twiggs
Senior Conservation Officer

Poetry Competition 2017

We are delighted to announce the winners of our 2017 Poetry Competition. With 45 entries in total, Mary Woodward, our judge and winner of the 2015 competition, had plenty to read! The theme was Wildlife / Conservation and the winner of the First Prize, a year's Barn Owl adoption, was Philip Burton with 'Raven in the Margin'. Congratulations Philip, your prize will be winging its way to you soon!

Here is the full list of prize winners:-

1st Prize – Raven in the Margin – Philip Burton

2nd Prize – The Owl – Desley White

3rd Prize - She Cracks the River's Belly – Virginia Griem

Highly commended:

Rooks – Anthony Watts

Sky Dancer – Peter Branson

Sighting – Eleanor Vale

Poem of the swallow – Virginia Griem

Remake me as a harrier – Tim Ellis

Titchwell Marsh – Haibun – Phil Hawtin

Well done to all of those who took part and thank you to Mary for judging this year's poems. Here are a few words from our judge about the winning poems:

I liked the winner – "Raven in the Margin" – all the way through – found it interesting in many ways and admired its adeptness in moving from a small local detail – a fragment of local etymology – to a whole argument about 'civilisation' and the life of the sea. I loved the unexpected and intriguing human detail of Sybil and her raven set against the depressing industrial horrors of the final stanza. A finely clear and arresting poem.

Raven in the Margin

by Philip Burton - 1st Prize

Hraefnes Geat ... Raven's Gap ... Ramsgate

I look for traces, floated feathers,
clay-pipe bones, outline of a razor clam.
Each day the tide sets out its wares.
One raven has left a bone – an illium –

long hidden, now exhumed, eased
from time – sifted sands to a cartwheel life,
shifted by storms, thinned and cleaned
of unkindness. Here's Sybil, a fishwife,

with a raven so tame it's absurd.
Syb's last of a line of women – piercers,
toppers and gutters of herring – who fed,
age after age, raven and seabird.

No More, says the feathered beast,
will the tides rinse as clean as you suppose.
The fish are dead, my family up and gone.
The sea feeds on your conspiracies.

Industry triggered a fish glue works'
sulphurous whiffs, plumes of ammonia,
quicklime in white heaps, coal from Dover,
sand to make glass from washing soda.

The Owl

by Desley White - 2nd Prize

There is an owl
In the wooded valley below our field
Where the river scrambles down from the moor
And grassland and hoary woodlands mix
With the horticultured edges of the village, with their
Blowsy old garden trees from Asia
Where ragged oaks, and ash, and goat willow
Cross root with rhododendrons
And the old moor men and the elegant old money
Mingle. A genteel garden party
Gate-crashed by the scrumpy-sluggers.

Here, in the field above the valley, level with the canopy
Head in the tree-clouds
Where the air can be so wild with bird song
A spoken word cannot be caught,
In broad-leafed day, I often hear the owl.
No shrill cry-screech, but a hooting wail
A soft, loud, urgent, worry
Where are you... ?
Seemingly alone, and confused
About the hour he should be due.

But one night, with head torch batteries fading
In the seven o'clock November darkness
He came on time. He flew, silent and low, over my head
Coming from behind, passing over me as fast heavy air
Like an encounter with a warm-bodied ghost
I felt his weight in the shifting flux around me
And a spirit wind, a blowing shawl around my head
And the half-sound, heard by the soul of my skin,
Of his wings, his feather-fur, his air-displacing body.
No other senses knew.
The owl was there.

'The Owl' took second place because it gave a strong sense of the magic we all hope to find in our contact with wildlife – but more than that it is the force of the sudden physical sense of the power of the owl in this setting, part wild, part domesticated, which makes the poem work – a strong realisation of how wildness exists very close to us and will come unexpectedly near if we are patient enough. A poem which rewards several readings.

I think the 6 highly commended are very well written poems on wonderful subjects. Overall there was not a poem in the whole entry which I felt I could reject outright immediately which says a lot about the quality of the entries.

I was very impressed and touched by how much feeling and anger there was... if only the whole human race thought and felt like these writers.

A big thank you to all who entered our 2017 Poetry Competition. We are always bowled over by your talent and enthusiasm.

Wildlife Words Volume 5, an anthology with 18 of the poems entered into this year's competition (including the winning poems and highly commended) is available for purchase from the Trust for £5 plus P&P, by post or via our website shop.

Back issues of Wildlife Words Volumes 1-4 also available. ★

Barn Owls and Water



Photo: David Ramsden

Drowning is a real risk for Barn Owls, summer and autumn being the worst times of year for this with adult females attempting to bathe after weeks of incubation and brooding and juveniles being susceptible to the hazard through inexperience.

This summer we have received some sad tales of people finding owls dead in their water troughs. We had one call where thankfully, despite at first glance it appearing that the Tawny Owl was dead, the owl was rescued and with some advice from BOT over the phone and via our website was released back into the wild. Everyone who got in touch was grateful to hear they could help prevent this in the future by installing a floatation device in their cattle trough, the float is easy to make and will support the weight of an owl but still allow the cattle to drink easily.

Alex Wells, a BOT supporter from Essex, kindly sent us this photo of Daisy, Doris and Daphne drinking from a water trough fitted with a BOT design float along with a small piece about the nature reserve where he volunteers:



Photo: Alex Wells

My name is Alex and I volunteer for the RSPB at Wallasea Island wild coast project, a nature reserve under construction on the Essex coast. Due to the range of habitats (saltmarsh, saline lagoons and wet grassland) it supports good numbers of prey species including Peregrine, Kestrel, Marsh Harrier, Hen Harrier, Sparrowhawk, Hobby, Merlin, Short-eared Owl and of course the ever majestic Barn Owl.

Focusing on the Barn Owl we have plans to erect a number of nestboxes across our 700 hectares in the near future. So when I read an article in the Barn Owl Trust's newsletter on an owl that had flown from Belgium only to end up drowning in a trough here in the UK, and that this happens more often than you would think, I immediately browsed the Barn Owl Trust's website and came

across the water trough float device, what a great idea! Such a simple device that can really make a difference. I spoke with the wardens, Rachel and Simon, who agreed and gave me the go ahead to build the floats (the grazing marsh of the reserve has a herd of cattle using 4 water troughs). So I set to work and with a little time, patience (and many cups of tea) - they were made, and I'm pleased to say I feel I've done my bit for the safety of the raptors of Wallasea. Within a week or so we checked the trough floats and found a couple of feathers (unidentified) in one of the troughs, so it's possible they have already proved their worth.

Thanks to the Barn Owl Trust for your help and advice throughout, and I hope my short story prompts others to dig out their tool boxes (put the kettle on) and make a trough float for their local birds of prey. ★

Alex Wells

BOT Supporter & Volunteer at RSPB Wallasea Island

'Swimming' Barn Owl

These unique photographs below of a 'swimming' Barn Owl came to us from our Spanish friend Iñigo.

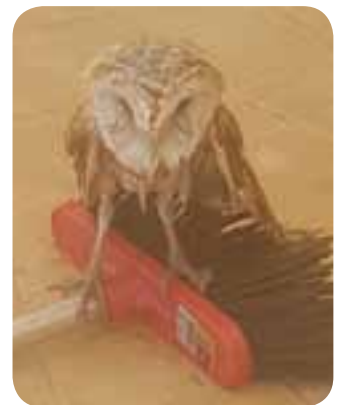


The Barn Owl reaches the steps but cannot get out

During the heat wave in southern Spain at the beginning of August (2017) this breeding male took a dip in a neighbouring swimming pool. Unfortunately for the owl the steep sides of the pool meant that he couldn't climb out. Luckily the family that live in the house spotted the owl as it swam towards the steps and used a broom to lift the waterlogged bird out of the water. Thankfully the bird was unharmed. It even went on to rear a second brood of young this year. Head to the news section of our website to see a video of the Barn Owl 'swimming'.

Like most birds, Barn Owls need to wash themselves in water. Natural places for birds to bathe, like ponds, have shallow edges and rough sides meaning they can easily get out of the water. Man-made water sources (such as water troughs) are deep, high sided and made from slippery materials, trapping the birds.

Incidents such as this can be easily prevented. On our website you can see a design for a simple float designed to be fitted to water troughs. We are currently nearing completion on the 10 new instructional videos mentioned in the last edition of Feedback, including one on 'how to prevent owls drowning' so keep an eye out for those too. ★





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, Lexie New		

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	31 Fore Street
West Malling	Totnes
Kent ME19 4TA	Devon TQ9 5HH

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
PA to HoC	:	Lexie New
ADMIN ASSISTANTS	:	Pete Webb Marianne Bryan Aaron Kitts Vanessa Lewis
LEGACY PROJECT	:	Judith Read
PRACTICAL SUPPORT	:	Jasmin Ramsden Michael Park
SCHOOL VISITS/TALKS	:	David Ramsden Lexie New
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	:	Michael Jennings Margaret Rhodes
Martin Overy		
WORK EXPERIENCE	:	Lucy Dufall Harry Hingston
PRACTICAL SUPPORT	:	Kim Baker Tony Hulatt Alan Sloman
FEEDBACK	:	Frances Ramsden
GENERAL ASSISTANCE	:	Diane Baker Nic Butler Aram Compton Bill Macdonald Margaret Crocker Di Hawkings Harry Hingston
		Jayne Hartley Michael Parks Sandra Reardon Margaret Rhodes Rachael & Diana Smurthwaite 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 2016 - 2017



Welcome to our Annual Review of the financial year 2016-2017. This is where we look back over the last year and plan for the future.

During this financial year public benefit was provided nationally (and internationally) by the Trust as we continued to supply information and advice by email, post, telephone and via our website. Dealing with enquiries is a huge part of the work of our Conservation Team and keeping the website current also takes time. The time and money spent developing our website in the last financial year has paid off; during the year we received 1,095,335 page views by 437,427 individual users, this compares to 737,983 page views by 241,898 individual users in the previous financial year.

As you will see from our Conservation Report, our Video Project has taken a good deal of our staff time this year. These will be available on-line later this year via our website and will provide advice and guidance to people all over the world interested and engaged in Barn Owl conservation.

Students from the University of Plymouth visited monthly between September and March to do practical work on the Lennon Legacy Project (LLP) and European trainees on placement with Ambios spent time here and helped with the completion of one of the two aviaries demolished and rebuilt during the year.

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. This 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. We also ran our popular Wreath Making Workshop there again in December and our ABOSM training courses.

Each month 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 56 & 57 of Feedback, the Trust's bi-annual magazine, were produced and mailed out to our supporters during the year. Back issues are available on the website. We continued to use social media to raise awareness of Barn Owls and the Trust and during the year our Facebook 'likes' topped 12,500+ (9,000 last year) and Twitter followers increased from 20,000 to over 32,000.

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. ★

We've had one staff change during the year. Mark Ellison finished his one day a week contract with us in July and in November Michael Park took up the role of helping with our nestbox production. Other than this our staff have been with us for between 1+ and 27 years. At the year-end we had 12 staff in post: five full-time and seven part-time. Volunteers have received training and work experience on both long and short-term placements with the Trust.

During the year we 'broke new ground' when we ran the BOMFA's (the Barn Owl Mini-Film Awards). Entrants were asked to make a short film that would raise awareness of the iconic Barn Owl and we had some wonderful entries. Our panel of judges included TV presenter and naturalist Chris Packham, Robbie Hill, creative director of Hilltribe Media, Barn Owl Trust Trustee Kevin Keatley, wildlife photographer and MD of Wildlife Watching Supplies and wildlife photographer Russell Savory. We had some great prizes donated and unique trophies made by Tansy Barton from Plymouth College of Art. Thank you to everyone that supported the awards and to all our entrants. Links to the winning films are available on our website.

Environmental and ethical consideration has, as always, been given to all our activities during the year and to the purchase of resources. Examples of this include the continued use of recycled paper, envelopes and packaging, sales goods from recycled material and ethically sourced materials: organic tea, coffee and milk are purchased for the office.

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 launch of our ten new videos and the on-going development of our two websites www.barnowltrust.org.uk and www.barnowlsurvey.org.uk 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. We will continue to pull UK figures together and publish the 'State of the UK Barn Owl Population' results annually. Attending the county shows in Devon and Cornwall and several smaller shows within Devon provides an opportunity for us to meet people and for us to increase awareness of Barn Owls and their conservation. There will be opportunities for people to visit the LLP with events being 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 biodiversity first hand throughout the seasons.

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. In September we will attend the World Owl Conference in Evora, Portugal where we will deliver two papers and liaise with international Barn Owl workers.

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 2017



Conservation Report 2016 - 2017

State of the UK Barn Owl Population 2016

During the year, we collated data received from 32 independent groups from around the UK who between them monitored a staggering c. 6,058 potential nest sites and recorded c. 1,558 nests.

Overall 2016 was another poor year. The number of nesting pairs in the UK was 6% below the all-years' average and the average number of young in the nest was 7% below. Barn Owls had a poor to very poor year in SW and S England, Jersey, N Norfolk, parts of Lincs. and E Yorkshire, parts of Powys in Wales and West Galloway in Scotland. Conversely, Barn Owls in the west of England (from Cheshire down to Buckinghamshire), and in North Northumberland, Suffolk, and the Isle of Wight had a quite good to a good year.

Data are provided to us entirely voluntarily and we wish to express our thanks to all the contributors and acknowledge the huge amount of effort they put in.

Video Project

For many years the internet has been the main source of information and in more recent times it seems that video-watching has become a much bigger source than the reading of web pages. If 'a picture paints a thousand words' then a video can surely paint many thousands, if not millions.

Our video project commenced in March 2016 and filming continued throughout the entire year through to April 2017. In all, we filmed for ten separate videos, nine instructional and the 10th educational as follows:

- How to build a Barn Owl nestbox to go inside an outbuilding
- How to build a Barn Owl nestbox to go on a tree
- How to choose the best Barn Owl nestbox (design criteria)
- How to erect a Barn Owl nestbox in a building
- How to erect a Barn Owl nestbox in a tree
- How to create Barn Owl foraging habitat (UK)
- How to prevent owls drowning
- How to pick up and examine a starving or injured owl
- How to towel-wrap, re-hydrate and feed a starving or injured owl
- Flight of the Barn Owl – an owl's-eye view of the countryside

At the year's start we had all ten scripts drafted and some idea about the various locations we wished to use. The amount of organisational effort required to make it all happen was considerable and quite often complicated by the vagaries of the weather, in some cases the birds, and the logistics of coordinating multiple staff and landowner consents.

Filming has so far involved four BOT staff and thirteen locations.



Filming How to build a Barn Owl nestbox to go inside an outbuilding Photo: Lexie New

Particular attention was paid to the detail of the nine 'How to' films because they depict lots of things that directly impact the welfare and survival of birds. The issues around human Health and Safety were also treated most carefully given the inherent dangers of many of the activities portrayed and the pervading culture of blame and litigation. One particularly novel aspect was our first use of an aerial drone for filming habitats and landscapes which will hopefully give the viewer an owl's-eye view of the countryside they struggle to survive in and some of the hazards they face.

We are keen to acknowledge significant funding received from the Ernst Kleinwort Charitable Trust along with contributions from the Tanner Trust, PF Charitable Trust, Chapman Charitable Trust, The Ratcliffe Foundation, Alice Noakes Charitable Trust, the Cobalt Trust, and the William Dean Trust, who between them have covered the cost of engaging our fantastic production company Hill Tribe Media (hilltribe.tv). At the time of writing (May 2017) the films are being rough edited with one last day of filming still required.

Lennon Legacy Project (LLP)

Our 26-acre nature reserve named after Ms Vivien Lennon is both a wonderful sight and a wonderful site. Nestled in a wooded valley on the edge of Dartmoor is a great place to be and Vivien's lasting legacy is now home to a vast array of flora and fauna. In July 2016 approximately 1,550 Marbled White butterflies were admired by an RSPB supporters' group along with all the flowers and beautiful grasses that support them.

2016 was also the first year that we are sure that Meadow Pipits stayed and nested (rather than just wintering here) and also the first year to have Skylark present and singing right through the spring. And, both species were present again in spring 2017. The John Woodland Wildlife Tower continues to be a great success. During the year, a Barn Owl roosted in it followed by a Kestrel, then a visiting Redstart caught on camera and nesting House Sparrows, along with the five species of bats that have been recorded using it.

Talking of bats, on August 16th we held a Bat Walk complete with a volunteer Bat Ecologist and Bat Detector during which a very, very rare bat, a 'Barbastelle' was recorded for the first time and just after that a Nightjar was spotted! Amazing. 2016 was also the year of the 'Kingfisher Wall'. Using funds from legacies received from Brian Mitford Campbell, Richard Mervyn Bocking and Eileen Fradgley, we've made a wall on the edge of the Flo Pond housing nesting chambers for Sand Martin and Grey Wagtail as well as Kingfisher. No sooner was it finished than a pair of Grey Wags nested(!) and on Jan 10th, believe it or not, a Kingfisher was seen flying from the wall and close inspection revealed the beginnings of exploratory excavation!

2016 was the fourth year in a row that Dippers nested underneath the top bridge. In May we heard a lone Barn Owl give a single screech whilst it was visiting the LLP but sadly we didn't have a nesting pair. Two months earlier we had found two Barn Owls dead on the A38 dual carriageway and suspect that this was why.

Health and Safety Review

Some of our activities, such as erecting large nestboxes, are potentially very dangerous and it is essential that all our working practices and H&S documents are kept up to date. During the year, we embarked upon the considerable task of re-writing all our Risk Assessments in a new format and devising a Rescue Plan for Working at Height. This has involved the purchase of additional training and equipment. At the year's end, fifteen new RA's received Trustee approval and a small number of important documents such as the Rescue Plan and COSHH Assessment were still in progress.

Core activities

Incoming wild owls

During the year five Barn Owls and ten Tawny Owls were received, of which only five died, nine were released back into the wild, and one became a permanent resident in our sanctuary. Once again, our thanks go to the Veterinary Hospitals Group practice at Estover, Plymouth who kindly treat many of the birds we receive free of charge.

Aviary improvements

Our bird-keeping facilities received a boost when two of our aviaries were demolished and completely rebuilt. The aviary just outside our office was completed thanks to funding from the Marjorie Coote Animal Charitable Trust. The main part of this new aviary houses permanent resident birds (we had 19 Barn Owls and 35 Tawnies in sanctuary) and doubles up as a 'studio aviary' for filming and photography. The remaining part is home to 'Baley' the tame captive-bred Barn Owl who accompanies us on school visits of which a further seven were carried out during the year.



*New aviary complete
Photo: David Ramsden*

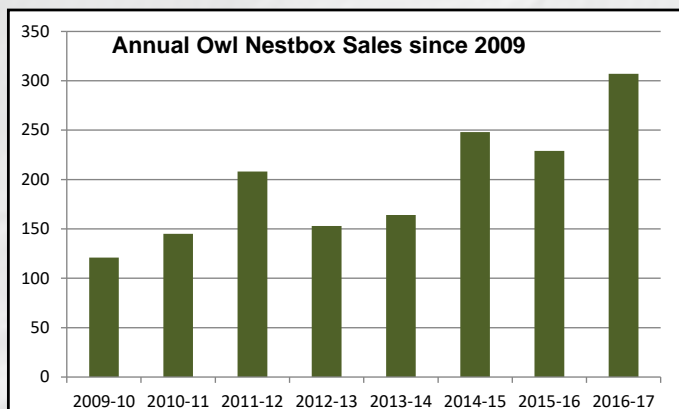
Fieldwork

19 fieldwork trips were conducted during the year to at least 50 sites during which a further 23 nestboxes were erected. Core work included a further 26 site visits covering things like the replacement of unsafe nestboxes and the provision of on-site habitat management advice. Our annual monitoring of potential nest sites accounted for another nineteen fieldwork trips to 78 sites during which 64 Barn Owls were BTO ringed.

Nestbox building

All the nestboxes we erect are purpose-made by us and in 2009 we started selling nestboxes to the public. Nestbox sales have grown (see graph) and become a significant source of income which helps support the cost of running our Conservation Team.

However, for the Barn Owl Trust, selling nestboxes is not a commercial venture but a way of delivering conservation objectives. Our nestboxes are much better for Barn Owls than many of those we come across during fieldwork where nestling Barn Owls have fallen and died. In supplying well-built and well-designed nestboxes, we are helping to ensure that birds are provided with longer-lasting and, above all, safer nesting places.



*16 handmade nestboxes being collected by Parcelforce
Photo: David Ramsden*

Shows

To raise awareness of Barn Owls and the Trust we attended a variety of local and county shows such as the Royal Cornwall Show that attracts people from all over the country. Shows are also a great opportunity to provide face-to-face advice on habitat creation, nestbox provision, and issues such as rodent control. During the year we also designed and commissioned a new Display Trailer ready for the 2017 show season. This was funded by grants and legacy income and the graphics were created by Devon artist Mike Hughes.



*Our new display trailer arriving ready for the show season
Photo: Lexie New*

Research

Work carried out during the year included a lot of number-crunching and the production of numerous maps and charts by our undergraduate student on placement, Mark Ellison. By the year's end, Mark had done the bulk of the work for the writing up of our major study looking into Juvenile Barn Owl Dispersal due for publication in 2017. This is based on the radio tagging of 19 birds carried out in partnership with Ambios and Biotrack.

Annual reports such as these cannot possibly convey just how busy we are most of the time! Perhaps one year we will try to quantify how many phone calls and emails we respond to? The Conservation Team office is almost constantly busy responding to enquiries and often referring people to our website which received a staggering 1+ million page views during the year.

How much time we can spend on all these activities is limited only by our resources. Please rest assured we do our very best.



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

David Ramsden MBE
Head of Conservation



Financial Report

The operating results, together with the Balance Sheet and notes are shown on these pages. The total incoming resources for the year to 31 March 2017 were £284,350, a 16% increase of £39,861 on 2016 (£244,489). We saw a net surplus of £10,399 for the year, better than last year's £5,271 but not nearly as impressive as 2014's £124,810 which was due mainly to legacy income.

Income from grants and donations was up 22% on the previous year at £138,982 accounting for 49% of total income. Within this, designated grants from Charitable Trusts to support specific areas of our work increased by 40% to £33,225. The majority of these designated funds were for the replacement of a vehicle and our video project; however we also received funds towards salaries, tools, welfare, display materials, the purchase of a new display trailer and volunteer costs.

During the year we have seen a 37% increase in general donations to £105,757 (£61,962) which includes a 28% increase in non-designated donations from Charitable Trusts and a 37% increase in donations from individuals. Our Gift Aid claims have increased accordingly from £8,616 to £9,464. Volunteers raised funds for us in a variety of ways including marathons and plant sales.

Legacy income and gifts in memoriam dropped by 16% accounting for 18% of total income for the year, at £50,062 (2016 - £59,579). 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 the latest being 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.

Our profit on Nestbox sales remained around 60% but our sales increased. We sold 327 owl boxes during the year and 30 small bird boxes.

Our fundraising income was up 26% to £3,015 and came almost entirely from our Annual Draw, our 'Lucky Dip' at shows and an Acoustic Music evening. Our solar panels generated £3,776 (2016 - £4,519) a drop of 16%.

The new format of our Annual Accounts adopted in 2016 separates expenditure between raising funds and charitable activities. Our overall expenditure increased by 15% to £273,951 (2016 - £239,218). The cost of raising funds increased by 27%, (this was made up of an increase of 37% for promotional goods and 19% fund raising). Fund raising accounts for 3% of our total expenditure, the same as in the previous year and includes time spent applying for grants.

Expenditure on Charitable Activities increased by 14%; from £226,943 to £258,324. Within this, the costs of practical work increased from £111,535 to £142,105 a rise of 27% whilst the information and advice service costs increased by 6%. Salaries costs have increased by 8% due to pension contributions and wage increases.

THE BARN OWL TRUST

BALANCE SHEET AS AT 31st MARCH 2017

		2017		2016	
	Notes	£	£	£	£
Fixed assets					
Tangible assets	5		153,160		137,161
Current assets					
Stock	6	15,477		15,479	
Debtors	7	2,799		2,558	
Cash at bank and in hand			345,810		337,671
			364,086		355,708
Liabilities					
Creditors - Amounts falling due within one year	8		36,523		22,545
			327,563		333,163
Net current assets			480,723		470,324
Net assets			480,723		470,324
The funds of the charity:					
Unrestricted funds	9		453,579		451,978
Restricted funds	10		27,144		18,346
Total charity funds			480,723		470,324

SOFA Note 2.

	2017	2016
Income	£	£
(a) Donations and legacies:		
Grants and donations	138,982	113,798
Legacies	50,062	59,579
	189,044	173,377
(b) Charitable activities:		
Nestboxes	29,303	24,212
Training courses	31,783	20,530
Other	11,714	6,345
	72,800	51,087
(c) Other trading activities:		
Fundraising	3,015	2,401
Promotional goods	13,681	11,762
	16,696	14,163
(d) Other income:		
Solar generation	3,776	4,519
Bank interest	1,169	1,091
Other	260	252
Sale of fixed assets	605	-
	5,810	5,862

Continued on page 15

S.O.F.A. Statement of financial activity



	Notes	Unrestricted £	Restricted £	Total 2017 £	Unrestricted £	Restricted £	Total 2016 £
Income from:							
Donations and legacies	2	155,819	33,225	189,044	149,627	23,750	173,377
Charitable activities	2	72,800	-	72,800	51,087	-	51,087
Other trading activities	2	16,696	-	16,696	14,163	-	14,163
Other Income	2	5,810	-	5,810	5,862	-	5,862
Total		251,125	33,225	284,350	220,739	23,750	244,489
Expenditure on:							
Raising funds	3	15,627	-	15,627	12,275	-	12,275
Charitable activities	3	236,134	22,190	258,324	211,319	15,624	226,943
				273,951			
Total		251,761	22,190		223,594	15,624	239,218
Net (expenditure)/income		(636)	11,035	10,399	(2,855)	8,126	5,271
Transfers between funds		2,237	(2,237)	-	2,003	(2,003)	-
Net movement in funds		1,601	(2,237)	10,399	(852)	6,123	5,271
Reconciliation of funds:							
Total funds brought forward		451,978	18,346	470,324	452,830	12,223	465,053
Total funds carried forward		453,579	27,144	480,723	451,978	18,346	470,324

Financial Report continued

Support costs include telephone, repairs, overheads such as insurance, water & electricity, stationery, management, payroll and office cleaning. These necessary costs of £21,033 account for 8% of expenditure.

Because of our volunteers we are able to keep our management costs at just 3% of total spend. They continue 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 £273,951 as a reserve for the next financial year, £55,923 for the Lennon Legacy Project and £3,000 for other projects, leaving a general fund of £120,705. However our fixed assets and stock account for more than 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 appeal to

SOFA Note 3

Expenditure

	Activities Undertaken Directly £	Governance and Support Costs £	Total 2017 £	Total 2016 £
Raising funds:				
Fundraising	8,613	-	8,613	7,217
Promotional goods	7,011	-	7,011	5,058
	15,624	-	15,624	12,275
Charitable activities:				
Nestboxes	11,954	-	11,954	9,439
Training course	5,493	-	5,493	5,036
Practical work	142,105	-	142,105	111,535
Information and advice service	76,789	-	76,789	72,221
Support costs	-	21,033	21,033	27,776
Governance costs – independent examination	-	950	950	936
	236,341	21,033	258,324	226,943

Charitable Trusts less attractive than those from charities with smaller reserves, particularly in difficult economic times. ★

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!

Alice Noakes Charitable Trust
 Animal Friends Pet Insurance
 Ashburton Carnival
 Ashburton Post Office
 Birds & Bees
 Blair Foundation
 Cecil Pilkington Charitable Trust
 Chapman Charitable Trust
 Church's Hardware Store
 Cobalt Trust
 Cornish Tipi Holidays
 D Symons Charitable Trust
 Dumbreck Charity
 Ecclesiastical Insurance
 Ernest Kleinwort Charitable Trust
 Fowelscombe
 H. & C. Community Trust
 Hatcher Animal Welfare Trust
 John Coates Charitable Trust
 Jack Patston Charitable Trust
 Jean Sainsbury Animal Welfare Trust
 L J Walker Charitable Trust
 Mackintosh Foundation
 Marsh Christian Trust
 Martin Wills Wildlife Maintenance Trust

Mitchell Trust
 Norman Family Charitable Trust
 Ofenheim Charitable Trust
 P. F. Charitable Trust
 Panton Trust
 Pennycress Trust
 Robert Clutterbuck Charitable Trust
 Roger & Sarah Bancroft Clark Charitable Trust
 Russell Savory Photography
 Save Me Trust
 Seven Pillars of Wisdom Trust
 Sir John & Lady Heathcote Amory Charitable Trust
 Sir John Swire Charitable Trust
 St Mary's Charity
 Stella Symons Charitable Trust
 Teignbridge District Council
 Valerie White Memorial Trust
 Verdon Smith Family Charitable Trust
 Veterinary Hospital Group
 Waterloo Foundation
 Wildlife Watching Supplies
 William Armstrong Charitable Trust
 William Dean Educational Trust
 William Haddon Charitable Trust
 Yeo Valley Farms Ltd

During this period we received legacies from:

Fiona Nicol, Josephine Sharpe, Audrey Lilian Williams, Dorothy Twigge, Jeanette Audrey Manton and Mary Gwendoline Bridge

and Gifts in Memory of:

Barbara Ellen Mary Webb, Betty Cotterill, Ruth Amy Snelling, Maurice Spong, Adrian David Williams, Donald (Don) Woodridge, Eva Ellen Easter, David John Burton, Gillian Kendall, Russell Lee Cartmell, Gary Alan Reid, Vera May Little, Craig James Buckley, Charlie-Marie French, Di Paterson and David Bayley

Rest in peace



*Hazel & Valentine
Photo: David Ramsden*

In September 2016 one of our long-standing residents died; Valentine arrived at the Trust in 1997 and was 20 years old when she died. In December she was followed by Hazel, our oldest resident Barn Owl at 22. Hazel spent her early years on display to the public in a small cage in a London Garden Centre before arriving at the Trust in 2002. They had lived together in the same aviary for many years.

RIP Valentine and Hazel.

We also received donations from sponsored events and other fund-raising from:

Axe Valley Runners, Margaret & Derrick Crocker, Mark & Jane Bailey of Bovey Tracey Acoustic Cafe, Ali Ramsden, Pete Webb, Jennie Webber, Steven Joiner, Victor Cannon, Sir Jeremy Sullivan, Kimble engineering World Indoor Rally Championship, Henrietta Twose, Ken May, Shelley Wright & Tracey Morris, Gwyneth Parish via Pink & Greene and Kingsbridge Information Centre.

Thank you all so much for your support

Barn Owl Trust Turns 30!

Next year the Barn Owl Trust will be celebrating its 30th Birthday! BOT was founded in 1984 by a small group of volunteers passionate about Barn Owls, who shared the belief that they could reverse Barn Owl decline through practical conservation work and that they could use people's interest in Barn Owls to increase environmental awareness too, subsequently 'Conserving the Barn Owl and its Environment' became our mantra.



The original BOT headquarters 1989

The Trust became a registered charity back in 1988, and 30 years on it has expanded from a small group of volunteers working out of one very small caravan to an office (with 2 flushing toilets!) and a staff of 12, an owl hospital and sanctuary, an extensive website giving access to a huge range of Barn Owl information and 26 acres of perfect Barn Owl habitat. We are still a small charity having kept to our grass-roots of caring for individual birds hands-on, advising farmers face-to-face, erecting nestboxes, and conducting practical land management tasks.

We count ourselves incredibly lucky to have such amazing supporters; your generous donations have helped the Trust to get where we are today. We do not receive any government funding and all our income comes from supporters like you, charitable grants and legacies. It hasn't been easy, we've had hard years (and still do!) where our income has dropped and we have struggled to raise funds. We are thankful for our supporters who donate regularly and for those who have fundraised especially for us; it is such a privilege to be chosen as your nominated charity.



BOT's current offices and meeting room

In celebration of our 30th year we hope to hold a series of special events in the Lennon Legacy Project (LLP) next summer, a chance for you to visit the Trust and meet some of the team, more details will be available in Feedback 59.

£30 for 30 Years

It would be fantastic if we could inspire people to raise £30 for our 30th birthday in 2018. It could be as simple as baking cupcakes to sell at your work place, a sponsored book read or fancy dress day, holding a coffee morning, jumble sale or a wine & cheese evening. Maybe you have a secret ambition to run a half marathon like Ali Ramsden featured in Feedback 57, or walk a coastal marathon like our own Pete Webb (see page 22 for his fundraising story). Whatever your personal challenge, why not raise funds for BOT at the same time.

If you would like to hold a sponsored event for our 30th year please do get in touch at info@barnowltrust.org.uk or give us a call and we can provide you with sponsorship forms and other literature. We would love to feature some of our fab fundraisers in future issues of Feedback...so don't forget to take photos of your fundraising in action! If you want to collect donations online by setting up a fundraising page we recommend BT MyDonate (btplc.com/mydonate) as it is easy to use and asks for no subscription fees from the Trust and does not take commission on the donations.

*Pete Webb walking for BOT
Photo: Luke Webb*



Photo: Michelle Poynter

Michelle Poynter made these fab cakes for her partner to sell at work, they went down a treat and all funds raised went to BOT.

There are other great ways to support the Trust which cost nothing at all! You can use Give as you Live (giveasyoulive.com) when you shop online, raising donations for BOT when you shop using any of the 4,200 retailers listed on their website including Amazon, eBay, M&S and John Lewis.

As you may be aware most large supermarkets including Sainsbury's, Waitrose, Co-op, Asda and Tesco run a charity donation scheme where you're usually given a token at the checkout. Why not nominate the Trust at your local supermarket? Other businesses have similar schemes such as Yeo Valley from whom we received a charitable donation of £1,500 in August after being nominated by a supporter for the initiative last year.

Thank you so much for all your enthusiasm and support, goodluck in your fundraising and we really hope to meet some of you at our special LLP events next year... let's make the Barn Owl Trust's 30th year one to remember! ★

A Day in the Life...

A typical day in the Conservation Office is often rich and varied and the following describes the kinds of things that happen on a fairly regular basis, though admittedly perhaps not all on the same day.

A standard day usually begins before 9am with a cup of tea whilst reading and answering emails. Just after 9am one of the Conservation Officers heads out with a volunteer. In the winter, this involves visiting a number of sites that have been identified throughout the previous year to give habitat advice and erect or replace nestboxes; a standard trip would involve up to 5 sites being visited with up to 4 nestboxes being erected. In the summer we swap erecting nestboxes for checking them and BTO-ringing any young found.



Young Barn Owls are BTO ringed

At 9am the answerphone is switched off and the phone begins to ring. Someone has found an owl. In the spring this could be a fallen owlet, in the autumn a dispersing juvenile and at other times it may be an injured or emaciated adult. Earlier this year we had two such phone calls in the same day, both involving adult Tawny Owls. One was found in a chimney flue and the other in the road. The owl from the road had been kept overnight by a member of the public; it turned out she was a female – she laid an egg! Both owls were brought to BOT for a check-over. Typically the number of injured owl calls varies from year to year but we can have around 10 fallen Tawny Owl calls, 15 fallen Barn Owl calls and even a couple of calls about Little Owls, from across the country. If the owl is local to us, we will suggest the owl goes firstly to the vets for a check-over and is treated for any injuries, we then rehabilitate the bird at our site. As often as possible, we release the owls back into the wild where they were found.

Back to the emails that have come in; two are for our training courses for ecological consultants, one requesting an application form and one returning their forms. The first gets an email explaining what needs to be completed to reserve their space on the course. The returned forms from the second email need to be printed out and saved on the PC and an invoice needs to be issued.

Next job of the day is cleaning out the Tawny Owl Aviary and replacing the dirty wood chip. Shovels and wheelbarrows at the ready, this is generally a team event and all the Conservation Team participate. Quite a smelly job, you need to watch your head as owls come from all directions! Once the aviary is clean, if it's the winter, we might lay some of the LLP hedges. It's very hard work but at the end of the day when you can see just how much you have done you feel very rewarded.

Back in the office, another call comes in, this one is someone requesting a local contact to come and check their barn as they think they have nesting owls.

Our Barn Owl Directory on our website is very useful for finding local contacts near you, whether they are surveyors, trained by us, Barn Owl workers who monitor nest sites or rehabilitators and carers who will look after injured birds.



Carrying out a butterfly transect

During the summer once a week, one of the team carries out the Butterfly Transect. Done on days with at least 60% sun and a minimum of 13°C the transect walks 10% of the 26 acres of land at the Trust and helps to monitor the butterfly population. During the peak in early July, we can have such huge numbers of Marbled White butterflies, Ringlets and Meadow Browns, that sometimes you feel like you might step on one. The transect typically takes around 40 minutes and the results are sent to Butterfly Conservation.

In the first week of every month, one of the team visits the 13 camera posts dotted around the site to photograph the changes that occur month to month. When we are out in the Lennon Legacy Project, we keep an eye out for unusual wildlife which is then recorded in our Wildlife Diary.

Back in the office, an owl arrives for rehabilitation and the phone continues to ring. One team member receives the owl and checks it over whilst another takes the call. The caller says they are hearing owls and wants to know what nestbox to buy. Generally we ask a couple of questions to help us identify the owl. It was a Tawny Owl. Now we have identified the bird, we send the call back to our colleagues in the admin office who will then be able to take the order.



Baley the Barn Owl on a school visit

One of the staff members is off to deliver a talk at a local school. Taking Baley, our captive bred tame Barn Owl with them. The talk covers how farming practises have changed and how this has affected Barn Owl populations.

The talk is written for primary school age children. The appearance of Baley at the end of the talk is always popular with the children, who are enthralled as he flies around the classroom.

Over the year, we monitor our Nestcam, a live stream on our website from a nest site in Cornwall, and provide updates on what is going on in the Nestcam Diary. In the spring and summer, the updates become more and more regular as eggs are laid, owlets hatch and then eventually fledge.



Adult Tawny Owl just before a 'flight check'

The owl that came in has been checked over and other than mild shock we can't find anything physically wrong with the bird. We have fed the owl and it has been flight tested. After seeing that the owl can carry out a vertical take-off we are happy for it to be released that same day at the finding site. One of the Conservation Team will head out later that evening to release the owl.

There are lots of other projects generally going on in the background in the Conservation Team: reviewing scientific papers, checking for new Barn Owl groups, updating webpages, inputting sightings into our database, calling contacts with nest sites to arrange visits and much more.



Ecologists on a Trust training course

Three times a year, we run our training courses, a real team effort; the set-up takes two days and involves moving lots of samples, laying out displays and collating course packs. Ladders have to be set up at our farm sites where attendees inspect nests and learn the correct techniques to survey for Barn Owls. While the course is running, three staff members attend, two to deliver presentations and a third to ensure everything runs on time and to keep the tea and coffee topped up!

The final member of the Conservation Team doesn't get away easily either, collecting ladders from the farms and moving them to the second site for the advanced course.

Back in the office, the phone rings again; it's a planning enquiry. The caller is concerned that a barn is going to be converted and the Barn Owls that live there will lose their home. These types of calls usually mean a lot of work. We need to find the planning application, read the wildlife survey report and check to see if appropriate measures have been recommended to ensure Barn Owls remain on-site and a permanent space is provided for them in the development.

At the end of the day, one of the team feeds the owls. This also involves cleaning the feeding tables and filling water baths.

Our Conservation Officer comes back from his successful day checking nestboxes and even has a fresh pellet to add to our collection. His visit today ended the season and all owlets for this year have been ringed.

The day ends with the Conservation Officer heading out to release the owl that came in earlier that day. What a fantastic feeling, seeing the owl fly off back into its habitat! ★

Lexie New

P.A. to Head of Conservation
All photos BOT Staff



Tawny Owl setting off to be released

Caught on Camera!



Our wildlife haven - known as the Lennon Legacy Project or LLP - is home to more than just Barn Owls! Our Head of Conservation, David, snapped this fab pic of a Roe deer right here at the Trust.

Head to the News & Events section of our website to read more from our LLP Wildlife Diary. ★

BOMFA Winner & More ...

Words from the Winner

Twelve year old Jack Farrell was winner of the Young Film Maker Award in our Barn Owl Mini-Film Awards (BOMFA) earlier this year. He writes about his film making and about the prizes he won in the competition:

This is my week for winning a BOMFA. I got into animation when I was eight years old, using Lego. I progressed to using Newplast (non-drying modelling clay), and the program 'Dragonframe'. I made the Barn Owl animation to raise awareness of the plight of the Barn Owl. I also wanted to teach younger children about conservation, and I figured this was the best way. For four weeks our dining room table was taken up by the set of my animation. It seemed like four years to me! The film had many takes, and it was with frustration that I had to restart/edit because of the stray hand in front of the camera, or the wrong lighting. I could rename the film Blood, Sweat and Tears!

I was so lucky to be given a number of prizes, and first I met Wildlife Photographer Russell Savory at Stow Maries Aerodrome in Essex, who gave me some great advice on photography. I thought the combination of history and nature at the site was beautiful. Thanks to Russell, I was lucky enough to see a Green and Greater Spotted Woodpecker, Pied and Yellow Wagtails, lots of swifts, a Kestrel, a huge number of rabbits, and, best of all, a Barn Owl. This beautiful creature was the one that I really wanted to see, and actually seeing this perfect hunter filled my heart with joy and compassion.



Meeting Russell Savory



Tipi Camping in Cornwall

Next, we headed west to the Cornish Tipi Holidays. The thing I enjoyed the most was lighting fires [don't worry, it was in a fire pit!], cooking dinner over the fire, and going out on the lake that Cornish Tipi's owned. The site is absolutely brilliant, and as I love camping and nature, it was perfect! When it came to the last day, I was sorry to leave.

On the way home we visited the Barn Owl Trust (by invitation), which my younger sister Lucy was thrilled at as she got to meet Baley the Barn Owl, she had adopted for her birthday. Mum, Dad, Lucy and I felt really privileged to be there. We saw a kestrel brought in by a member of the public, and a Tawny Owl ringed by Rick. It made us all realise how important the work of the Trust is. Any owls or raptors which can be released are driven by the team to where they were found to be safely released. Lexie, who showed us around, said one day they had two tawny owls found separately by well-meaning members of the public. ➔

But both owls were actually fine to be released once they'd been checked over, on the same day. This we learnt all adds to the running costs of the Trust, and takes time away from other duties. One thing that my Dad asked was if the Barn Owl Trust had ever had a stall at The Birdfair, but funding a stall for three days and two staff salaries would also take away from the running costs of the Trust.

Lastly, thank you to the judges who chose my animation, and to Russell, Cornish Tipis and Lexie, Rick, Frances and David at The Barn Owl Trust - the whole experience was brilliant!! ★

Jack Farrell

Photos provided

Winner of BOMFA Young Film Maker

Volunteer News

Regular supporter Aram Compton visited us for two days again this summer and joined the Conservation Team in bracken bashing in the LLP. He also helped with feeding the owls and some conservation management research whilst he was with us.

Aram first volunteered with the Trust back in July 2014 and has travelled from London to help us for a few days each year since then. He has, with enthusiasm, turned his hand to a variety of tasks including aviary demolition, wood work, habitat management and other jobs around the site. A big thank you to Aram for his continued support and thank you also to all our other volunteers.



Aram, a BOT Volunteer

We have groups of students from Plymouth University who come on a regular basis to help with practical habitat management in the LLP. We've also welcomed trainees from Hungary and Portugal through Ambios.net who have come here to learn more about conservation and also helped with habitat management and specific site tasks. Some work experience students enjoyed their week with us so much they came back to help in their own time and let's not forget the long standing volunteers who have for years been on hand to help with the transportation of injured owls, aviary cleaning, Feedback mailings, administrative jobs and much much more. They are all stars, Thank you! ★



Volunteers from Hungary building nestboxes

Bird News

Bird Rehabilitation

In Feedback 57 we told you the story of the Bedford Barn Owls; two young Barn Owls that arrived from Bedfordshire Wildlife Rescue in November 2016 and were released from our static release aviary on the 5th December. They were fed for a few weeks whilst they started hunting for themselves. One of the birds was subsequently seen roosting in the Wildlife Tower and both birds were seen collecting chicks put out in the aviary until at least the middle of February.

A Devon vet brought in a Tawny Owl on the 16th February that had been found on the ground and was thought to be concussed. After a day at the vets and two days in our bird hospital the bird was assessed and released back close to where it was found.



Kestrel ready for release

On the 20th March a Tawny Owl was brought to us that had been trapped in a chimney flue for several days. As the bird had no injuries it was released at the place of finding on the same day, despite being a little underweight. On the same day we had another Tawny Owl brought in that had been found dazed at the side of the road in Shaldon. Having checked the bird over we deemed it healthy enough to be released the same day.

A male Tawny Owl was brought into us on the 12th April 2017. It was thought to be dead when it was found in a drain having thought to have flown into a window the previous night. The bird was kept in the hospital and initially was not interested in eating food and had to be force-fed daily for around a month.

We decided to move it to an outdoor aviary and it then started to eat the food left for it. With the bird now eating we were able to then move it to a release aviary where we could monitor its flying ability and get it ready for release. It was finally released back into the wild at the same location it was found on the 8th June – a whopping 57 days after being brought in to us.

On the 2nd June we had a call from a member of the public who had picked up a non-flying and bedraggled male Kestrel from off the ground at the Bowling Green Marsh RSPB nature reserve. As the finder lived locally in Ashburton he brought the bird here to be looked after. We put the bird in our release aviary and when it eventually dried out we determined it was flying perfectly well. As this was the breeding season we took the decision to release the bird straightaway, aware that it may be provisioning a nest somewhere. Rick drove back to the reserve and released the bird at the viewing platform where it flew off strongly.



RIP Vinny

BOT Sanctuary

One of our resident Tawny Owls died of unknown causes on the 17th February and 'Vinny', a captive-bred male Barn Owl and one of our oldest resident birds, estimated age of 21 years, was sadly found dead on the 10th March. With no new additions during the period this means we now have 19 Barn Owls and 31 Tawny Owls currently at the Sanctuary. ★

Rick Lockwood

Assistant Conservation Officer

All photos BOT Staff

Nestcam Barn Owls

Well, this year has been a successful one for our Cornish Barn Owls, raising three young owls who have all fledged from the barn. March 30th saw the first egg of a clutch of 7 being laid with the first owlet hatching on the 2nd May. Subsequently the following 5 eggs hatched at around 2 day intervals with the 7th egg remaining unhatched which is common. The owls suffered a few losses due to wet weather which impeded their hunting resulting in three owlets growing to maturity. The three owlets were ringed and their details were: Owlet no. 1; male, weight 397gms, wing length 222mm, Owlet no. 2; female, 369gms, 185mm, Owlet no. 3; indeterminate, 392gms, 173mm.

3 months on from the owlets being ringed, they have all now fledged and are no longer returning to the barn. It was a surprise to see on the 21st August two unringed owls in the barn. Our resident female is ringed but the male isn't.



The three Owlets at about 8 weeks old

There was a bit of a scrap and the intruder was seen off. Keep an eye on activity in the barn over the winter. We expect to see our owls reconvene their love story in early Spring 2018. ★

Pete's Coastal Marathon

During a Tuesday evening back in January, after a short run with our local running group, in a weak moment I decided to take part in the Salcombe Coastal Marathon. This event is in its 7th year, covers 26.2 miles with 4,500 feet of ascent and is open to both walkers and runners. It would be my first marathon since running several in the 1980s. My last one was the Torbay Marathon in 1990 in just under 4 hours but that was over fairly flat road.



Even though I am still fit enough to walk, run (slowly) and cycle fairly regularly in my late 60s, I was unsure about running the whole marathon but was confident I could walk it. My youngest son, Luke, was also going to take part with me and on Thursday 16th February we had our first long training walk. We walked 11.5 miles in 5 hours on the North Devon Coastal footpath from Clovelly to Westward Ho. When I thought about it taking over 10 hours to do 23 miles and even longer to do 26, I decided I needed to do some serious training! At the same time I thought that if I was going to take part in this event, I should do it for charity and raise some money and I chose the Barn Owl Trust.



I set out to walk/jog at least 20 miles per week with a long weekend session of about 8 to 10 miles. My favourite run was from Ashburton up to Buckland Beacon (involving 400 metres of ascent) with various routes back. This was often in the rain until we got into March but I was now jogging part of the session and doing just over 10 miles in 3 hours 30 mins. By this time I was doing about 30 miles most weeks.

On the morning of the Salcombe Coastal Marathon Event, Luke and I left Ashburton early to get to Bantham for 7.30am. We arrived and set off at about 8.30am, just after the Lannacombe checkpoint I stopped at a bench to remove a small stone from my shoe. When I sat down Luke noticed it had Barn Owls carved into it, a perfect photo opportunity!



The next check point was at Prawle Point with a small curious herd of cows to negotiate first. Salcombe was the next rest, with lots of curious walkers going the other direction wondering why all these runners were going the other way. Lots of happy memories along this section where we had many family camping holidays at Prawle and walks along the coast path to various beaches.



After catching the ferry at Salcombe we climbed the steps to the Ferryboat Inn and stopped for a quick shandy and a spot of lunch. We then headed back onto the coast path. By the time we got to the next checkpoint at Hope Cove I was flagging, but we knew we were close when we started to see Burgh Island.

For the last mile I had been trying to persuade my son to go faster as I was trying to finish by 5pm. What I didn't know was he had secretly arranged for my daughter to be at Bantham Beach, the finish line, to greet us and she was stuck in traffic! My other son and grandchildren were camping half a mile up the lane which is where we headed after finishing, however on arrival they were nowhere to be seen – it was so nice down on the beach that they had forgotten the time but they soon arrived and were excited to congratulate Uncle Luke and Grandad.

We completed the Marathon in 8 hours 25 minutes with about 7 hours moving time after stops and ferry crossings were accounted for. The fastest full marathon runner was 3 hours 49 minutes and some walkers came in at around 11 hours. We had sore legs but were very happy to have completed. The weather and scenery of the South Devon Coastal Footpath were stunning. By early June, we had raised about £1,600 including Gift Aid for the Barn Owl Trust. ★

Pete Webb
Administration Assistant

Office News

Walking for Bardsey

Judith, who runs our Legacy Leaflet Project, has taken up a personal challenge of walking 1,000 miles in one year in aid of Bardsey. She's doing really well, despite an unexpected set back!, and we're all really proud of her - well done Judith.

When one of the walking magazines (Country Walking) set a challenge of walking 1,000 miles in a year it seemed a good idea. The benefits included getting more exercise, losing some weight, seeing more of our beautiful countryside, a bit of birding and lots of exercise for Midge (the dog).

Then, one day, as I was walking and putting the world to rights in my mind, it struck me that this mad venture could also benefit others, such as Bardsey. Those

who know me are aware of my love of birds, for the island of Bardsey and in particular for Bardsey Lodge and Bird Observatory. This charity's main objective is to monitor and census the breeding and migratory birds which use the island. It is one of only two accredited bird observatories in Wales and is one of a network of 20 around the coast of the UK and Ireland. As with many small charities the Observatory runs on a shoestring and is always grateful for contributions towards its funding.



One very swollen ankle!

A birthday walk in February took us out on to Dartmoor starting at Bennett's Cross and going up Birch Tor and back finishing at Warren House Inn – the highest pub on Dartmoor for a very welcome mulled wine. The scenery was absolutely beautiful but it was cold; a typical winter's day on Dartmoor with tiny patches of icy snow.

Into March and there are not as many miles on the clock as there should be. February is always a difficult month with other commitments.



Judith and Midge on the Exe Estuary

Towards the end of March we went on a canal holiday along the Llangollen Canal. Midge and I took on the locks and did a lot of walking along the tow path clocking up about 44 miles during the week.

We have walked in glorious sunshine and along the coast as well as in some pretty wet and unpleasant conditions both locally and at Parke in Bovey Tracey. We have seen wild miniature daffodils in Devon and fantastic bluebell woods in Wiltshire. Semi-retirement at the end of April meant that there was more time for walking, in theory at any rate. May has had its own problems with a considerable amount of time being taken up tramping around woodland and checking nest boxes – all good training!

Then, on the 28th May there was a bit of an accident. I sprained my ankle. We were walking from Moretonhampstead to Cranbrook Castle. Typically this happened at the furthest point from the car so it was a three mile walk back! However, the advice from the hospital is to keep it elevated when sitting and .. keep walking! It is now just about back to normal and being treated with care.

So, it is all an amazing adventure and I cannot wait to get back out walking properly again. The present total is 603 miles so there is a bit of work to do. A donation can be made by visiting the website: bbfo.org.uk. Who knows – next year I may be walking for the Barn Owl Trust! Many thanks. ★

Judith Read
Legacy Support

Photos provided

Work Experience

From the 3rd to the 7th of July I chose to visit the Barn Owl Trust for work experience, and spent most of the week working with the Conservation Team. I spent the first morning working in the conservation office and in the afternoon I assisted with a butterfly walk through the Trust's land with Lexie and David on a guided walk.

On Tuesday I spent the morning with Rick and Keith owl ringing, this was one of the highlights of my week as I got to see and hold plenty of young owls! Wednesday I was able to help out in the admin office, which was a great experience, and went on a butterfly transect (counting butterflies) with Matt in the afternoon (working here has vastly improved my knowledge of butterflies and owls, which is always a plus!) and in the evening I was able to feed the owls, which was a great experience. Thursday, I spent a whole day with Rick and Keith owl ringing.

We went to visit various places in Devon, and I got to see many more owls and was able to record their data myself, which was a useful and unique experience!

Friday was my final day and I was able to help out preparing for the BOESS and ABOSM courses commencing the week after I leave. This gave me a deeper insight into how the Trust works and educates people about how to identify if or when a Barn Owl has been present. It was useful for me too as I learnt even more about Barn Owls through helping out to set up this course.

I would like to thank all the staff for being very friendly, welcoming, enthusiastic and being willing to pass on their experience and knowledge to me and in general for giving me a fantastic week, experience and insight into a possible future career path! ★

Tom Crowle
Work Experience Student

Thanks and Things

Thank you to all our supporters who sent us items from our Wants List, bits for recycling, goods to sell on eBay and prizes for our Grand Prize Draw:

Louise Anquetil, Jill Armstrong, Roger & Lorna Bailey, Rich & Leigh-Anne Boucher, Philip & Eileen Crowther, Elizabeth Graham, Honey Ingram, Ed & Kim McNeil, Mrs Nimz, Gwyneth Parish, Janet Rutter, Ann & Peter Stansell, Deborah Sterling, Jan Taylor, Tribe of Mog, N Wallis, Phil Webb, Reginald Welsh (deceased), Melanie White, Jo Winfield, Mary Witt, Nicola Wood, Tracey Morris & Shelly Wright and Margaret Wright.

We must also extend a big thank you to all the lovely people who have given up their time to volunteer with us:

Kim Baker, Diana Baker, Karrie Dashwood, Diane Hawkings, Harry Hingston, Tony Hulatt, Michael Park, Margaret Rhodes, Alan Sloman, Louise Woolley and the Plymouth University Students.

Let's not forget our Fantastic Fundraisers!:

Pete Webb raised over £1,600 for the Trust by walking the Salcombe Coastal Marathon. The Axe Valley Runners donated £100 from their Grizzly Run. We received a percentage of card sales through Pink & Greene; the Trust was nominated by BOT supporter Gwyneth Parish. Caroline Squire auctioned a taxidermy Barn Owl to raise funds for us. Thank You!

We are so thankful for all your contributions, they really are greatly appreciated.

Can you help with:

- Postcards and pre1970 envelopes with stamps on
- Used stamps, including any foreign stamps & currency
- Mobile phones for recycling/sale
- 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 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
- Padded envelopes (new or used)
- Parcel tape 50mm wide
- A3 sized laminating machine
- Socket set (48 pc 1/2 inch drive)
- Empty 35mm Film Cannisters
- Wire cutters
- Drill-driver bits (for screwing)
- Quick grip clamps
- Fiskars/Felco loppers & shears
- Garden forks & spades
- Powerful LED rechargeable headtorches
- Caravan levelling ramps (for our new trailer)
- Small plate compactor
- Wintery Barn Owl images for Christmas cards
- Prizes for our Grand Draw (postable i.e. not heavy or bulky)

Thank you for your help. ★

Tail Piece ...



As you will have read elsewhere in Feedback, next year the Barn Owl Trust will have been a registered charity for thirty years! Excuse the pun, but those years have just 'flown by'. Back in the 1980's we never imagined that our combined concerns for the environment and Barn Owls would develop into an organisation that would employ twelve people, own a wildlife paradise, train environmental consultants and have a website visited by hundreds of thousands of people.

In 2007, Modbury in South Devon, became the first town in the UK to stop handing out free plastic carrier bags. The initiative was started by local resident Rebecca Hosking, a wildlife camerawoman. She came up with the idea having seen the effects of plastic waste on sea life in the Pacific. Ten years on, her idea has spread throughout the country.

There are estimated to be more than five trillion pieces of plastic littering the seas, including carrier bags - increasingly breaking down and entering the food chain. Estimates put the debris field located between the coast of California and the Hawaiian Islands at between 700,000 square kilometres and 15 million square kilometres. Similar patches of waste blight other oceans, but the one in the Pacific is the most expansive. And every year, a further eight million tons of plastic is dumped into the world's oceans, which is the equivalent volume of two Empire State Buildings every week.

For the last six years, Boyan Slat a twenty two year old Dutch man has been working towards a revolutionary system that is designed to clean the world's oceans of discarded plastic. He hopes to be able to remove fifty percent of the Great Pacific Garbage Patch in just five years.

The moral of these stories is that despite the damage that the human race has done to the Ocean, its wildlife and the food chain, these individuals have made or are making a difference.

As we all know it's not just the oceans that are seeing the effects of human consumerism. Thirty years ago, a wide belt of rainforest circled the earth, covering much of Latin America, south-east Asia and Africa. Today, it is being rapidly replaced by great swathes of palm oil trees and rubber plantations, land cleared for cattle grazing, soya farming, expanding cities, dams and logging. Right now the Polish government have said they will keep logging in the ancient forest of Białowieża despite an order from the EU's top court to halt the felling of this Unesco world heritage site.

In our local community there are people who always pick up rubbish when they go for a walk and who car-share to reduce expense and emissions. Recently a small group of Ashburton residents got together to clear an overgrown and debris littered footpath. Fortunately there are lots more examples of how when people work together or make a stand for the environment, things can change, and sometimes even make governments take notice. In August this year Kenya introduced the world's toughest law aimed at reducing plastic pollution. Kenyans producing, selling or even using plastic bags will risk imprisonment of up to four years or fines of \$40,000 (£31,000). The east African nation joins more than 40 other countries that have banned, partly banned or taxed single use plastic bags, including China, France, Rwanda, and Italy.

We all have the power to make our World a better place even if we don't want to pick up other people's litter or protest against the destruction of green spaces. We can all still use the power of our purchasing to help ensure that what we buy is not damaging the environment or the communities that produce it. We can reduce and recycle our waste, use recycled products and we can take our own bags when we shop. We all share a wonderful planet and...

Together we really can make a World of difference

Frances Ramsden ★