

# feedback

Issue 62 / Autumn 2019



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

Waterleat, Ashburton  
Devon TQ13 7HU

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## Diary Dates 2019

**September** - Sat 21st & Sun 22nd - Somerset Show

**November** - Tues 12th & Weds 13th - BOESS Course,  
Thurs 14th - ABOSM Course

**December** - Fri 13th - 9.30am - Winter Bird Walk  
Fri 20th - Office Closes 5pm

**January** - Thurs 2nd - Office Re-Opens 9am  
Fri 10th - 9.30am - Winter Bird Walk

**Join us for practical work with the Conservation Team:**

**Oct** - Tues 1st / **Nov** - Tues 5th / **Dec** - Tues 10th Dec  
**All 9.30am - 4pm**

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

2 - Feedback 62 - Autumn 2019

A very warm welcome to the 62nd edition of Feedback, which is packed with interesting news about the Barn Owl Trust and the work we do with your support. We hope that you enjoy reading about our last six months.

We are so excited about the ongoing success of the Lennon Legacy Project (LLP) which has been running here at our beautiful site for over 18 years. The wildlife at Waterleat is thriving due in no small measure to the work put into the 26 acre plot by the Conservation Team, who have been delighted to spot a great variety of flora and fauna, including many types of butterflies. The display of sunflowers has been absolutely spectacular, creating a delightful blaze of sunshine across the meadow. You can read an update on the project by Matthew, our Senior Conservation Officer on pages 4 and 5.

We have recently welcomed a new recruit, Kaye, who has joined the Conservation Team as an Administrative Assistant. See more about Kaye in Office News on page 23.

In line with the Barn Owl Trust's commitment to conservation and sustainability, we are pleased to have been part of a local climate crisis initiative which supported Dartmoor National Park Authority to make a Declaration of Climate and Ecological Crisis, with a carbon neutral target date of 2025. It is a challenging target but we are pleased that the Park recognised the need for urgent action. We will continue to work with local Town Councils and Climate Emergency groups to ensure that the community at large is working towards becoming carbon neutral by 2025.

This year we are planning a Poetry Competition and are hoping to have enough entries to make up a 6th Volume of our 'Wildlife Words' anthology. Do have a look at the T's and C's on page 8, and then put your pen to paper (or your fingers to keyboard!). We are looking forward to reading great new poetic masterpieces in the very near future.

The centre pages of this issue contains our Annual Report and our Conservation Report which provides a concise overview of the various projects the Conservation Team has been involved in over the past financial year and provides an interesting summary of our activities. We are pleased that we are able to provide information and advice to so many people each year and as you will see, plenty of people take the time to contact us. Your generosity enables us to continue to offer advice to all these people, throughout the year. Costs for us have increased, as they have for everyone, and we are constantly monitoring our expenditure and income to ensure we keep our costs to a minimum, and maximise the amount of work we do with the funds we have available. Our Financial Report for 2018-2019 is covered on pages 14 and 15.

Every year we like to say a huge 'Thank You' to people who support our work. We are saying a particular thank you to organisations and individuals who supported us with grants and sponsorships and we have included a full list of our benefactors on page 16. We also receive wonderful legacies each year, and those generous people are thanked alongside those whose families have gifted 'in memoriam'. Gifts like these are vital to our work, and we are extremely grateful to those who think of us at such times.

Finally, a massive thank you to you for being a supporter of the Barn Owl Trust. This magazine can only hope to give you a flavour of what we do. We hope you find it an interesting read and that you can see what the Trust does with your kind donations.

Enjoy!

**Gill Gant**  
Administration Assistant

# BOT News



*Forest Fire*  
*Photo: Kaibab National Forest - Creative Commons*

## The Unfolding Catastrophe

This year we've had the hottest July day ever recorded (38°C) and the hottest August Bank Holiday ever recorded (33°C). Europe suffered two record breaking heat waves. Paris recorded its hottest day ever (42.6°C) the Netherlands too (40.4°C) and Germany (41.5°C). In July, Arctic Sea Ice fell to its lowest-ever extent.

In August the entire surface of the Greenland Ice Sheet was wet and 250 billion tons of ice were lost to melt run-off. The fact that the Arctic is warming twice as fast as the global average causes high level winds (the Jet Stream) to weaken and meander further south and High and Low Pressure Systems to become locked-in – hence the longer lasting weather events we experience. On top of all that, significant parts of the World are on fire! Alaska has been burning since June, Siberia since July. Even Greenland is on fire! The World's richest wildlife habitat (Rainforest) is also suffering it's biggest ever fires across Brazil, Peru and Bolivia.

Extreme weather events and wildfires are between 2 and 30 times more likely to occur due to the Climate Crisis (mainly caused by the burning of fossil fuels). Welcome to the new normal.

While we've all been working hard to conserve the habitat of the Barn Owl; campaigning, signing petitions, writing to MPs, and donating to environmental causes, Climate Change has turned into a "Climate Crisis" and the gradual loss of habitats and species has become a full-blown "Mass Extinction Event". More than half of all the damage that man has ever done to the environment, and more than half of all greenhouse gas emissions, have happened in just the last thirty years. This unfolding catastrophe is aided and abetted by our own government to the tune of £10.5Bn per year – the highest fossil fuel subsidy rate of any EU member state.

Greenhouse gas emissions are going up, not down, and Life on Earth is in grave danger. 95% of the heat energy we've trapped has been absorbed by the world's oceans. Even if emissions stopped today, the polar ice caps will continue to melt and our climate will continue to deteriorate.

When ecosystems collapse, it's the species at the top of food chains (such as Humans and Barn Owls) that are often the first to go. In the words of the UN Secretary General, we face "total disaster". To give you an idea of the possible solutions to this global crisis you might like to have a look at this interesting website <https://www.drawdown.org/>.

**David Ramsden**  
Head of Conservation

## News Bites

### BOT Charity Concert

A big thank you to everyone who attended our charity concert in Ashburton on Saturday 29th June 2019. A great evening was had by all raising over £500 for the Trust.

Our thanks also go to the wonderful acts Barron Brady, Harping Mad, Kathryn and Steve Collings, Lesley Stuckey and Owly Dave along with Ashburton Arts Centre and Leafie Baumgartner for her generous support.

### Annual Prize Draw 2019

Tickets are now on sale for our Annual Prize Draw. There are some fabulous prizes up for grabs thanks to very generous support from some fantastic individuals and organisations. We have weekends away, holiday vouchers, days out, beautiful nature books, art prints and much, much more!

Check for your book of draw tickets enclosed in this copy of Feedback. A ticket for the draw costs £1 or £5 for a book of 5 tickets. Alternatively you can enter by making a donation via our website - [www.barnowltrust.org.uk/support-us/donate/](http://www.barnowltrust.org.uk/support-us/donate/) putting 'Draw Tickets' as your reason for the donation. We will then send you your ticket numbers by email and enter you in to the draw. Alternatively you can always pop up a cheque in the post made payable to the Barn Owl Trust. The draw is on Thursday 5th December 2019.

### Instagram

The Barn Owl Trust joined Instagram a few months ago! Head on over to [www.instagram.com/barnowltrust](http://www.instagram.com/barnowltrust) to see photos of beautiful young Barn Owl owlets roosting together in an old Oak tree, adult Barn Owls hunting over rough grassland, a nesting Tawny Owl, butterflies, Hazel Dormice, our reserve and a small Tawny Owl owlet climbing a very tall tree!

### UK Barn Owl Population Report

The State of the UK Barn Owl Population 2018 report has now been published and can now be viewed on our website ([www.barnowltrust.org.uk/current-uk-barn-owl-population](http://www.barnowltrust.org.uk/current-uk-barn-owl-population)). The results are based on the checking of 7,190 potential nest sites by 37 independent Barn Owl projects, and ringing groups. The number of contributing groups has grown from 28 in 2013 to 37 in 2018 and we take this opportunity to send a huge thank you to everyone who has worked so hard to gather the data.



# LLP Update

## Wildlife

The first Blackthorn was noted in flower on the 1st March. A pair of Mallards first appeared on the ponds around a week later, and by mid-month 2 male Skylarks were in song at the top of the field along with their respective partners. At about the same time 3 Meadow Pipits, one a male in song, were also in the same general area as a Red Kite drifted over westwards.

By the end of the month a pair of Grey Wagtails was around the ponds and Kingfisher Wall but did not stay to breed. By early June another potential nester, a Kingfisher, was seen several times around the top pond and north along the River Ashburn. Unfortunately, at this late stage in the breeding season it was much more likely to be a dispersing juvenile from nearby. It was still being heard at the end of July.

The area in Kiln Close which usually manages a single Early Purple Orchid flower spike had been strimmed and raked off at the end of last year to try to encourage more flowers. Rather satisfyingly, by the end of April a total of 3 plants and 4 flower spikes had appeared.

A Cuckoo was heard on the 2nd of May but not subsequently. At least 3 male Pied Flycatchers could be heard in song in the orchard from nearby woodland but did not manage to attract a mate. As some compensation however, the first confirmed breeding of Marsh Tit for the LLP was recorded from a cavity in one of the orchard Elders.

The first Dormouse nestbox check took place by our licensed volunteer Tony at the end of May. Three confirmed nests were found with a further 2 possibles partially constructed. Amazingly, one of the nests held a female with 4 pinks (the term for baby Dormice)! At the next check on the 25th June, the box was empty indicating successful breeding, although a non-breeding female was found in another box on the other side of the reserve.

These are the first confirmed young for the LLP but by no means the only firsts this year. After several years of showing an interest, a pair of Swallows finally raised a brood of 2 from the cardboard nest cup in the workshop, and these fledged in June. And after no occupation since its erection in 2006, the Tawny Owl nestbox finally started getting some attention. Following a great deal of noise and activity from assorted Jays, Blackbirds and Song Thrushes in Corner Wood one mid-June afternoon, a large presumed female Tawny Owl was seen several times in and around the box. Later that same afternoon a smaller, paler bird, presumably the male, was in the nestbox entrance.



*Copulating Silver-washed Fritillary pair*  
Photo: Marianne Bryan

Its subsequent check revealed a nest debris covered in lots of Jay and Blackbird feathers.

Two just-fledged Meadow Pipits were at the top of the field with their parents at the beginning of July, no doubt having fledged from somewhere in the immediate vicinity.

Week 14 of the UKBMS on the 5th July revealed 46 Small and 49 Large Skipper, 181 Marbled White, 297 Meadow Brown and 59 Ringlet, along with 1 Silver-washed Fritillary, 4 Painted Lady, 2 Red Admiral, 1 Small Tortoiseshell. The transects cover only 10% of the site which meant that there would have been over 6,000 butterflies on site at the time!

## Practical Work

The Blackthorn scrub removed along the eastern roadside boundary was carefully burnt up by mid-March. The remaining apple trees had their winter prune some days later. The regular University of Plymouth Students' Union group visited and burnt up some hedge-laying brash along North Park.

The bird crop area was mowed on the 20th March to give the arisings time to start breaking down before being ploughed in.

The area in North Park just above the River Ashburn, colloquially known as the 'Cattle Drink', was very prone to cattle poaching at times. Consequently, the start of the Apprentice Path frequently became almost impassable in wet weather. However, since installing a cattle trough in North Park we've been able to fence off this area. As such, some work to make the surface more durable was carried out on the 26th March, without fear of it being destroyed during the annual grazing period.



*Dwarf Sunflower in the LLP*  
Photo: Matthew Twiggs

The marker posts for the Creeping Thistle management study were finished on the 27th March. In total, there are 36 quadrats arranged in 18 double plots, each with a semi-randomly selected method of management; spraying, topping, pulling and no management (control). In the next 3 years we hope to work out the most efficient way of managing this plant, which is listed as an injurious weed and which we are obliged to control.

Our contractor finally came on the 28th March and ploughed the crop area, leaving a 3m margin at the north end. The new seed was sown on the 23rd April and harrowed over a couple of days later. The seed mix consisted of; 40kg of organic 1 year spring sown Wheat/Barley (70%), Spring Triticale (20%),

White Millet (5%), Red Millet (2%), White Mustard (2%), Fodder Radish (1%), plus 2kg Quinoa and 5kg Sunspot Dwarf Sunflower. The wildflower mix comprised 100g Corn Chamomile, 500g Cornflower, 200g Corn Marigold, 100g Common Poppy, all under-sown with 2kg of a non-agricultural variety of Red Clover.

By the end of July the Fodder Radish that had initially swamped the crop with its numerous whitish flowers had gone over, to be replaced by large seed pods. These should ripen in the late winter period just in time to provide food for farmland birds in the 'hungry gap'. The Dwarf Sunflowers are about head height and are a fabulous sight now the flowers have come out. Small areas of the Mustard with its yellow flowers could be picked out, and the cereals were most visible on the field edges as their ears were ripening.

An electric fence was set up around the slope by Corner Wood at the end of May to keep the goats on task in managing the bramble in this area. We're hopeful that they'll be able to make an impact and reduce the number of man hours needed to keep this area scrub-free.

As much bracken as possible was bashed at the beginning of July as usual, with the remainder topped by tractor.

## Events

Bat ecologist Helen Calver undertook bat emergence surveys at the Wildlife Tower on the 18th May, 23rd June and 2nd August. The results were encouraging with Common Pipistrelle, (presumed Brown) Long-eared and Lesser Horseshoe recorded emerging. Other species noted foraging over adjacent hedgerows included Greater Horseshoe, Barbastelle, Noctule and a Myotis species (probably Daubenton's).



*Bat emergence survey  
Photo: David Ramsden*

At the beginning of June a group from Ambios visited for presentations and an LLP tour. They were extremely lucky to see the Kingfisher perched low down on a branch overhanging the river in the afternoon. Had they visited a couple of days later they might well have seen a Hobby hunting low over the top of the field.

A large group of 17 people attended the butterfly walk in lovely, warm, sunny conditions. The usual suspects were on show and included Marbled White, Meadow Brown, Ringlet, Painted Lady and Large and Small Skipper, amongst others.

**Matthew Twiggs**  
Senior Conservation Officer

# Bird News

It has been relatively quiet in our bird hospital and sanctuary during the Spring/Summer 2019. A Barn Owl, found by the side of the A38 at Marley Head on the 13th May was brought in by Leonardo Gubert, an ecologist working for Highways England. It had obviously been struck by a passing vehicle as it could not use its legs, it was quickly diagnosed with a spinal injury and regrettably we had to put the bird down.

On a happier note our next arrival was a Tawny Owl that was brought in after being picked up in a garden in Ottery St. Mary on the 5th June. It had probably struck a window and had appeared concussed. By the time the bird arrived with us it seemed alert and in good health. It spent a few days resting in our bird hospital to make sure it was all right. Thankfully all we could find wrong with the bird was that it was missing most of its tail so we arranged with the finder and he was able to release the bird back into the wild on the evening of 7th June.



*Calli the Tawny Owl  
Photo: Aaron Kitts*

During the breeding season we often get brought owlets that have been found by members of the public and tend to take the birds into care that cannot be immediately returned to the wild close to where they have been found. This year was no exception with three Tawny Owl owlets arriving separately between the 2nd May and the 1st June. They have been nicknamed Calli, Arli and Drake and are all together now in the release aviary where they will remain until August whilst they fully acquire their adult plumage. They will be released when they are deemed ready.

The one-eyed female Barn Owl which was put into the Sanctuary earlier this year has now settled well, and has been attracting attention from the two males Tormund and Tyrion in the aviary next door which was nice to see. All the owls are now moulting as they would in the wild at this time of year. They will each moult a few flight feathers and the majority of their body feathers which they do once a year.

Another one of the older Tawny Owls died this month leaving the sanctuary with a total of 16 Barn Owls and 25 Tawny Owls.

**Rick Lockwood**  
Conservation Officer



# 2019 Breeding Season

For many years the Trust has been undertaking a programme of Barn Owl nestbox monitoring in the late spring and early summer. This provides useful data on nestbox occupancy and absence rates and, where Barn Owls are nesting, productivity data on brood size and egg-lay date. Young are ringed at around 4-8 weeks of age and recoveries of birds ringed at the nest gives information on longevity, dispersal distance and cause of death. This year all 70 current Annual Monitoring Sites were checked.

We are always optimistic of a good breeding season, and this spring was no exception. The weather had been largely benign with no particularly notable events, at least not in the south west in the winter or spring. We hadn't received a particularly high number of reports of birds being found dead in the late winter period either, so we seemed to be set for a reasonable year.

A report of egg-laying at the end of March in Cambridgeshire raised expectations that it would be a slightly early breeding season with decent nesting occupancy and brood sizes. In reality however, it was a slightly disappointing year with both nesting occupancy and brood size below the long-term average.

As can be seen in the table (right), the proportion of sites showing no evidence of Barn Owl occupation (absent) was at its highest in 2019, with both regular and occasional roosting additionally below the long-term average. Nesting occupancy was the 4th worst in the period. These fluctuations are not unusual of course, as is often the case with predators whose prey populations similarly fluctuate. Last year's productivity figures were above average so the below par results this year are not overly concerning as a 'one-off'.

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%
2018	59%	3.0	0%	3%	38%
2019	43%	2.72	7%	4%	46%

**Results of annual monitoring site visits in 2019, showing site status as a proportion of the total number of sites checked compared with the average, and mean brood size.**

However, in light of the potential impact of climate change on the UK Barn Owl population it's more important than ever that breeding seasons are as productive as possible to help build a robust population capable of coping with extreme weather events that are forecast to increase in line with global temperatures.

## Birdfair 2019

Conservation Team members, Matt and Rick, attended the Birdfair this year at Rutland Water, Leicestershire from the 16th-18th August.

This annual event, now in its 31st year, brings together exhibitors from a wide range of bird and wildlife organisations, nature travel companies, and TV wildlife personalities, and in so doing helps to highlight and raise money for conservation causes.

It was a fantastic opportunity to meet people wanting to help Barn Owls and also those working with them and to network with other conservation organisations.



This year they were supporting Birdlife International's project 'Conserving Cambodia's Big Five'.

The event provided a great opportunity for the Trust to showcase its conservation work, and in particular its national role working with many of the independent Barn Owl groups around the country to produce the annual 'State of the UK Barn Owl Population' report and the Barn Owl online Survey that collects sightings nationally.

We were also lucky to be able to watch breeding Ospreys from our campsite! Hopefully we will be back there next year.

# Nestbox Success

Dear Barn Owl Trust,

You've given me advice over the years and I've occasionally donated.

20 years ago we put a Barn Owl box, to your design, in the gable end of our house facing open ground with lots of rough grass for food generation and woodland 100 yards away. This generally produces two fledglings every three years and we get great pleasure from doing so.



*Photo Provided*

This morning I found a baby Barn Owl on the ground 20 feet below the exit from the box (see photo). I put on gloves, picked it up very gently, it wriggled a little but not hard, and its wings and legs were unbroken as I felt as delicately as I could. I took it back up to the attic and returned it to the box. Did I do the right thing?

Yours,

James, Hampshire

Dear James,

Many thanks for your support over the years and your interest in the work of the Trust.

From what you describe, I think you made exactly the right decision. It seems surprising how far the owlets can fall without hurting themselves, perhaps because the developing flight feathers remain hidden beneath the down at the early stages. If you have had nesting there during a number of years it may be the case that the box has started to fill up with nest debris.

Although it usually takes a number of years, eventually the accumulated debris makes the box too shallow, which subsequently increases the risk of fallen owlets because they can exit the box at an earlier age. If this is the case, then cleaning out most of the old material will easily restore the box to a safer depth.

To avoid disturbing the birds at the nest or endangering roosting adults, this job should be done in winter but during a period of reasonable weather, so that any owl that is flushed from the box is not exposed to very adverse conditions as it leaves its refuge.

Best wishes,

Mateo – Conservation and Science Officer

## Rodent Control

Let me introduce myself: I'm David and I live with my wife in rural northern Arizona, USA. We keep about 40 chickens plus a few turkeys. Mice, gophers and the occasional kangaroo rat plus the resultant snake or two have always been a problem.

About a year ago I came across your website and was quite impressed with the information about Barn Owls plus the ideas for various type of nest boxes. I chose to build the nest box on a pole and placed it in the 1 acre lot on the south side of our place having a direct view of the chicken house.



*Barn Owl Trust made poleboxes*

Within a week of the installation of the nest box the rodent population dropped to less than 10% of normal and has stayed there for the last year. I'm hoping to attract a nesting pair this spring. Thank you all for sharing this information and your dedication to this cause.

**David**  
Arizona, USA

## In Memoriam

The Trust has received legacies  
from the estates of

George Zachariah

Dorothy Mavis Cloake

and donations in memory of

Wendy Crabb, Gordon Bowman,

Diane Tower, Robert Kift,

Winifred Stanbury, Brian Woods,

Dorothy M Ellis, Grace Upton,

Richard Spring, Andy Easy,

Mary Borlase, Sylvia Margaret Brown

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

*They all now have a leaf on our Memory Tree*



# Fund Raising News

## Poetry Competition

Calling all Poets! We are delighted to announce our 6th Open Poetry Competition and invite **YOU** to take part. This year's subject is **Protecting Life on Earth**. All profits from the competition will help provide care for casualty birds.

We also hope to produce Volume 6 of our "Wildlife Words" Anthology in the Spring of 2020 using the entries submitted. There will be a First, Second and Third prize.

Six runners-up will also receive a certificate of commendation. The winner of our 2017 competition, Philip Burton has kindly agreed to be the judge of this year's competition.

The closing date is mid-day **Friday 3rd of January 2020**. The competition is open to all writers and there is no entry form required or limit to the number of entries.

- The poem must not exceed forty lines of any style.
- Entries should be in English, typed or neatly hand written on one side only of A4, if emailed - in the body of an email rather than as an attachment.
- Poems must be the writer's own original work, previously unpublished and not currently entered for any other competition.
- If sending by post entrants should include their name and address on a separate sheet with the title of their poem, there should not be any identifying marks on the poem.
- If sending by email the name and address should be included in the body of the email to allow it to be separated from the poem(s) so they can be judged anonymously.
- BOT cannot make corrections or alterations once poems are submitted.
- The closing date is mid-day Friday 3rd January 2020 and the Judge's decision is final.
- Winners will be announced in our Spring 2020 issue of Feedback where the winning poem will be printed.
- Each poem is to be accompanied by a £4 (minimum) fee. Writers can submit multiple poems provided the correct fee is paid (£4 per poem).
- Payment can be made by cheque payable to Barn Owl Trust or via our website.
- Postal entries should be sent to "Poetry Competition" Barn Owl Trust, Waterleat, Ashburton, Devon TQ13 7HU and enclose a SAE if you wish to receive a printed copy of the results.
- Send email entries to [info@barnowltrust.org.uk](mailto:info@barnowltrust.org.uk)
- Email entry fee of £4 per poem to be made via our website [www.barnowltrust.org.uk](http://www.barnowltrust.org.uk) and our 'Give a Donation' page (found under the 'Support us' heading), stating 'Poem' as reason for donation.

Don't forget to include your name and contact details.

We look forward to hearing from you.

Good luck!

## Naked Calendar

A massive thank you goes to all involved with the Ashburton Charity Calendar for their generous donation of £700 to the Barn Owl Trust.

The calendar was the brainchild of Ashburton Postmaster Stuart Rogers, with the aim of raising funds for local charities whilst also raising the profile of Ashburton and its many independent businesses. The project was supported by the Ashburton Chamber of Trade.

Local photographer, Mark Burley, ended up taking pictures of over 50 naked people, one for every week, in almost every shop and business in Ashburton.

The monies raised were shared between the Barn Owl Trust, Dartmoor Search and Rescue, Ashburton Community Care and others. Here's hoping for a 2020 Calendar!



*Trustee Frances Ramsden (right) at the Cheque Presentation at Ashburton Arts Centre*

## Garden Party Fundraiser

What a great idea... invite your friends round for a party and ask each of them to make a £5 donation to BOT!

Many thanks to Susie and Bill Trezise, of folk group Harping Mad, who raised over £200 with their Musical Garden Party.

Guests were treated to a mini folk music concert with Pimms and lemonade in the delightful setting of their back garden, followed by Afternoon Tea with a scrumptious selection of desserts including scones and cream. Proper job.



*Photo: David Ramsden*



# Focus on Fox Farm

**David Moor kindly shares his experience of managing the land and providing nestboxes that have led to Fox Farm in Brigg, North Lincolnshire becoming a refuge for both Barn and Little Owls.**

Fox Farm is part of a 600ha farm growing Wheat, Barley, Oil Seed Rape, Peas, and Sugar Beet. We also grow Maize for an Anaerobic Digester. The main driver in enhancing the farm's wildlife potential came in the early nineties when areas of marginal land were moved over to permanent pasture. Poor areas were planted with assorted trees, and many of the hedgerows were replanted.



*Replanted hedgerows*

In 2000 the farm entered the Entry Level Stewardship Scheme and upgraded to the Higher Level in 2010. These stewardship schemes have enabled the farm to take further conservation initiatives that have included sowing over 20ha with Pollen/Nectar mixes and winter bird crop mixes, creating buffer zones, and areas of rough grassland. Significantly, 5 metre wide grass strips were left beside every water course, primarily to keep any chemicals and fertilizer away from the water, but also to create wildlife corridors around the farm. These strips total 30km in length and there are now 7.5km of hedges and several small woodlands.

To add to what the farm has done, my partner and I put up our first owl box in 2005 and have added boxes either where owls have been seen or in between sites. We saw occasional Barn Owls when we put up the first box in 2005, followed by a second box a year later. A couple of years after this the second box had chicks which fledged, and has had breeding pairs each year since. This year (2018) has been an especially good year for us with 7 out of our 10 boxes being occupied by Barn Owls and one by Kestrels. I think that three boxes contained breeding pairs and 4 were used for roosting. Many local farmers have put up Barn Owl boxes in our area, some in buildings and some in hedgerows. Boxes have also been put up by other organisations to create a large habitat. We are also fortunate that our local gamekeepers are interested and will report what they have seen. David has been ably supported and encouraged by local Barn Owl enthusiasts Bob Sheppard and Allan Ball who monitor populations in the area and ring young birds every year.

We have also tried to encourage Little Owls too by erecting boxes for them. Three out of our six Little Owl boxes have also been used.

A neighbour friend of ours called Simon Denton started putting owl boxes up at roughly the same time, and has worked with Allan and Bob for a long time. He encouraged us to put up more boxes, and to start putting up Little Owl boxes too.



*Pole mounted nestbox  
Photos Provided*

He died suddenly, in 2016, so we have taken over looking after his boxes for him, and are working with Allan and Bob to build on what he achieved. Allan has said that Little Owls are struggling at the moment, but we have a hot spot in this area. This autumn we have put up another 3 Little Owl boxes.

In my opinion there has been a large increase in the numbers of birds of prey over the last fifteen years. Not just owls, but also Kestrels and Buzzards. I put this increase down to the 5m wide grass buffer zones that the farm has put round all the water courses and some hedges. These are mowed only once a year, if needed, to keep invasive weeds such as Hog Weed and thistles at bay. The Stewardship grass paddocks receive no fertilizers or sprays and are mowed once a year. I think these habitats are providing good hunting areas.

I have found that as the number of birds of prey has increased in our area and the number of other predators; the amount of rat poison I use has decreased, probably by 80% over the last fifteen years. I still use poisons if we have an infestation of rats around the yard, but this is occasional as opposed to being on a regular basis.

## Signs Look Good

Hi Barn Owl Trust,

Just wanted to let you know that we put up a box that we bought from you, facing SE. Will let you know if someone moves in. The exciting thing is that when we went to survey the tree, there were droppings and a couple of lovely white soft feathers in the branches below. So maybe a good sign that the tree is already on the visitor list. We have seen an owl hunting all summer around the fields.

Cheers, Jo and John



*Photo Provided*



# 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, Marianne Bryan, Mateo Ruiz

### 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's  
Carlton House  
30 The Terrace  
Torquay, Devon TQ1 1BS

### Bankers:

CAF Bank Ltd  
Kings Hill  
West Malling  
Kent ME19 4TA  
Lloyds TSB  
31 Fore Street  
Totnes  
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  
SENIOR CONSERVATION OFFICER : Matthew Twigg  
CONSERVATION OFFICER : Rick Lockwood  
PA to HoC : Mateo Ruiz  
ADMIN ASSISTANTS : Pete Webb  
Marianne Bryan  
Aaron Kitts  
Vanessa Lewis  
Judith Read  
Gill Gant  
ALSO CLIMATE CRISIS CO.  
LEGACY PROJECT : Judith Read\*  
Lisa Fordham  
PRACTICAL SUPPORT : Jasmin Ramsden  
Joel Turnbull  
Natasha Mihailovic  
SCHOOL VISITS/TALKS : David Ramsden  
Rick Lockwood  
Mateo Ruiz  
ACCOUNTS : Frances Ramsden  
COMPUTER/IT SUPPORT : Alan Lewis

### TRUST VOLUNTEERS

HONORARY SOLICITORS : Wollen's  
VETS : Veterinary Hospital (Estover)  
BTO RINGING COORDINATOR : Keith Grant  
EDUCATION VOLUNTEER : Baley the Barn Owl  
LIVE OWL EMERGENCY HELP & OWL TRANSPORTATION : Margaret Rhodes  
WORK EXPERIENCE : Hattie Couch  
PRACTICAL SUPPORT : Kim Baker  
Tony Hulatt  
Alan Sloman  
FEEDBACK : Frances Ramsden  
Marianne Bryan  
Aaron Kitts  
GENERAL ASSISTANCE :  
Diane Baker  
Di Hawkings  
Harry Hingston  
Ambios Trainees  
Margaret Rhodes  
Jayne Hartley  
Michael Park  
Sandra Reardon  
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 2018 - 2019



Welcome to our Annual Review of the last financial year 2018-2019. During the year covered by this report public benefit was provided nationally (and internationally) by the Trust as we supplied information and advice by email, post, telephone and via our website. Enquiries are a huge part of the work of our Conservation Team. We continued to develop our website; this takes a significant amount of time to keep current, but it does provide a huge amount of information to a large number of people. During the year we received 1,122,623 (1,071,791 last year) page views by 487,789 (444,023) unique visitors, that's an average of over 3,000 page views a day. The ten short films that were launched in October 2017 have continued to be very popular. There were over 94,000 views last year. The films are all available on the Trust's YouTube channel and help to provide step-by-step practical guidance for people wanting to help Barn Owls.

We continue to work on public engagement using the Lennon Legacy Project site and our Norman Alderson meeting room for walks, talks and events. We also ran our training courses there and used the space to host volunteers. During the year we ran eight foundation course training days (BOESS - 2005) for 86 trainees and six advanced course days (ABOSM - 2011) for 67.

We sent out issues 60 & 61 of Feedback, the Trust's bi-annual magazine to our supporters, and 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 15,000 (13,600 last year) and Twitter followers increased from 33,800 to over 35,000.

We've had three new staff join us during the year. In October Natasha Mihailovic joined the team who build our nestboxes and is here two days a week. Gillian Gant joined us in November for three days a week and has taken over writing our fundraising letters from Office Manager Jackie Atkinson who plans to drop her hours to three days a week in April. Gill has also become our 'Climate Crisis Co-ordinator' (a new role for the BOT) and she will oversee the Trust's Green Audit in the next financial year. Lisa Fordham also joined us in November for one day a week to take over the Legacy Leaflet Project from Judith Read who has increased her hours and is now working with the Admin Team. Luckily for us Lisa has desk-top publishing skills which we have been delighted to utilise. Dr Mateo Ruiz, who joined us as P.A. to Head of Conservation/Conservation Assistant in January 18, changed roles in May and has become an Assistant Conservation and Science Officer. Other than this our staff have been with us for between 2+ and 29 years. At the year-end we had 15 staff in post: three full-time and twelve part-time. Volunteers have received training and work experience on placements with the Trust.

## 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. ★

Given the Current Climate & Ecological Crisis and its effects, not only on Barn Owls but on all species of life on Earth including humans, the Trustees have implemented a Green Audit of the Trust and created a dedicated role (Climate Crisis Co-ordinator) to oversee this. We will be looking at everything we do and buy to attempt to minimise our carbon footprint including major sources of pollution such as fuel, energy consumption and where we deposit our money. As those of you that have supported us for some time know we have always given environmental and ethical consideration to our activities and to the purchasing of resources but with the Crisis deepening we feel we need to do more and this will include a dedicated web page explaining how the Barn Owl and other life on earth is being affected.

Our Trustees have been in post for between 9 and 31 years. We have a great team here of both staff and volunteers, together we have achieved a tremendous amount over the last 3 decades. In order to ensure that the team can continue its work of *Conserving the Barn Owl and its Environment* we need to find younger folk with the skills, passion and enthusiasm to guide the organisation through the next decades. Being a Trustee is a voluntary (unpaid) position with the legal and moral responsibility for overseeing the direction of the organisation. The day-to-day responsibility for running the Trust is delegated to the senior staff who are recruited, managed by and report regularly to the Trustees. We'd like to hear from anyone interested in becoming a Trustee in the future.

During the next year we are planning to convert the Trust to a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) which will limit the personal liability for future trustees and may make it easier to find new/younger ones. Part of this process is talking to the Charity Commission about separating the Lennon Legacy Project which we hope will become a separate CIO - the Barn Owl Land Trust (BOLT). The Trust will still be known as the Barn Owl Trust and all our work, aims and objectives will remain exactly the same with the BOT still managing the land.

In addition to our general work of dealing with enquiries, practical conservation such as annual monitoring, site visits and nestboxing, school visits, adult talks, training courses and caring for resident and casualty birds, plans for this year include the on-going development of our two websites [www.barnowltrust.org.uk](http://www.barnowltrust.org.uk) and [www.barnowlsurvey.org.uk](http://www.barnowlsurvey.org.uk). We will also maintain our Barn Owl Directory to enable people to find local contacts for Barn Owl conservation, Barn Owl casualties and local Barn Owl surveys. We will continue to pull figures together and publish the 'State of the UK Barn Owl Population' results annually.

We will also continue:-

- to work with other groups both in the UK and abroad to promote Barn Owl conservation.
- to run our training courses for ecological consultants: the Barn Owl Ecology, Surveys and Signs (BOESS) courses and the Advanced Barn Owl Surveying and Mitigation (ABOSM).
- to monitor the mitigation suggestions for HS2 and the Health & Safety Executive's (HSE) position on the future of second-generation rodenticides (SGAR's).
- to develop educational / training activities and resources.
- to target practical conservation projects whilst trying to ensure that any development is sustainable, thereby reducing the Trust's dependency on legacy income to support core costs.
- to lobby for the implementation of recommendations from research projects.

Environmental and ethical consideration will be given to all our activities during the year and to the purchase of resources.

On behalf of all the Trustees I would like to thank everyone who has supported us during the last year and indeed over the last 30! 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 2019





# Conservation Report

## State of the UK Barn Owl Population 2018

The most up-to-date figures on the UK Barn Owl population were published in our report: State of the UK Barn Owl Population 2018 based on results provided by 37 independent monitoring groups who between them checked 7,190 potential nest sites. Overall, 2018 was a poor year for Barn Owls. The only groups that recorded an unusually high number of nesting pairs were in Shropshire and Staffordshire. All other results, both in terms of nesting pairs and brood sizes, were more or less within the range of typical variation and on the whole quite poor.



*An above average brood*

*Photo: David Ramsden*

Many data contributors flagged up climatic factors as the possible cause of their disappointing results. They blamed two extreme weather events, the 'Beast from the East', eight days of extremely cold/snowy conditions (24/02 to 4/03), and the eight-week drought which was officially declared as a 'heat wave' by the Met Office on 22nd June. Overall, the proportion of sites where birds nested was 13% below the average of all previous years and the number of young in those nests was 4.2% below.

## Lennon Legacy Project (LLP) – our 26-acre Nature Reserve

Since the reserve was created back in 2001 we've managed almost the entire site as rough grassland (primarily for Field Voles) so the thought of intentionally destroying 10% of it was pretty radical. But destroy it we did, for two reasons: 1) farmland birds, particularly seed-eaters, are in serious trouble and 2) mixed arable/grass farmland is generally better for wildlife than purely pastoral. Although a 'winter bird food mix' crop supports fewer voles, it can support a lot more mice which Barn Owls also take. Our Trustees gave the go-ahead on one condition – that we also create a one meter wide nectar strip around the crop (because bees and other pollinators are also in serious trouble).



*Aerial view of our 2.5 acre Winter Bird Food Crop area*

*Photo: David Ramsden*

On 18th April 2018 2.5 acres were ploughed and then harrowed to break up the clods of earth. We broadcast the seed by hand before the soil was harrowed again and by midsummer the crop was well established. Local birds quickly took advantage including Linnet, Pied Wagtail, Chaffinch, Skylark, Mistle Thrush, Stock Dove, Carrion Crow, and Herring Gull. By 26th July there was a flock of Linnet feeding on the crop estimated at about 200 birds and they were still around in August! Needless to say we were delighted. Linnets are a Red-listed species having declined by 60% since 1970 and in November our numbers peaked at over 300. The crop also supported Goldfinch and Reed Bunting and unusual visitations included up to five foxes at once(!) a Yellowhammer, and to top it all our first ever Hen Harrier.

The nectar strip was also a great success – a blaze of colour (Cornflower, Corn Marigold, Corncockle, and Poppy) most of which flowered right through to November attracting 11 species of butterfly along with various bee species and even some crickets.



*Nectar strip of wildflowers*

*Photo: David Ramsden*

Following the erection of a further 25 Dormouse boxes in early 2018 we were delighted when our licensed volunteer Tony Hulatt found three lovely dormice and three newly-built nests on 22nd May. Later in the year a further three nests were discovered but no signs of breeding (yet).

The LLP is managed by our small conservation team with help from volunteers including groups from Plymouth University, and Ambios.net. Thanks also to The Management Team: a small herd of Limousin x South Devon cattle kindly supplied by local farmer Brian Vallance.

Thanks must also go to the Hatcher Animal Welfare Trust who funded the replacement of our ancient Massey Ferguson tractor with a much younger John Deere 5075e.

## HS2

At the start of the 2018/19 financial year we were still extremely concerned about the potential impact on Barn Owls of the planned new high speed railway from London to Birmingham and the inadequacies of HS2's draft Barn Owl Mitigation Plan. These included: a complete lack of mortality monitoring, no commitment to the creation of compensatory foraging habitat, no commitment to mortality prevention screening, and an almost total reliance on the provision of wooden nestboxes on trees projected to last a mere 20 years compared to the 100+ year lifespan of the railway. These inadequacies culminated in all the members of the HS2 Barn Owl Action Group (other than HS2 themselves and their "expert") withdrawing their support in a letter to HS2's Chief Executive Officer: "We have considered, in detail, versions one and two of the Draft Barn Owl Mitigation Plan for Phase 1 of the



HS2 scheme but our comments have not resulted in adequate changes being made. Consequently we, the undersigned organisations, wish it to be known that the above Plan does not have our support. We firmly believe that the Plan as it stands will not reduce the impact of HS2 on Barn Owls to an insignificant level, or achieve an overall neutral/positive effect." The letter was signed by representatives of Warwickshire Wildlife Trust, Staffordshire Wildlife Trust, the RSPB, the Barn Owl Trust, Berks, Bucks & Oxon Wildlife Trust, and the Wildlife Trusts for Bedfordshire, Cambridge & Northamptonshire. Sadly, HS2 refused to address our concerns.

### Climate and Ecological Emergency (CEE)

During the year our awareness of the climate crisis increased tremendously when the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) published its 'Special Report' in October 2018. It became clear that in order to avert climate disaster we only have 12 years in which to reduce carbon emissions by 45% and need to reach zero emissions by 2050. We also became aware that the IPCC has a long track record of significantly underestimating the rate of global warming and understating its likely impacts. The main effect so far in the UK has been the increased frequency of extreme weather events which are already impacting Barn Owls.

Alarming new information was also produced which highlighted the increasing rate of species extinctions and extirpation (range reduction), in particular, massive declines in invertebrates which threaten ecosystem collapse. The widespread decline of farmland birds in the UK (including Barn Owls) is symptomatic of habitat degradation, one of the main causes of the current 6th Mass Extinction Event.

Within the foreseeable future, if a rapid transformation to sustainability is not achieved, the combination of these two global crises will have dire consequences for Barn Owls, and our ability to continue the work of the Barn Owl Trust. This realisation stimulated an internal consultation process and by the year's end we had produced a draft list of 'CEE Actions'. Most importantly, we began exploring ways of highlighting the emergency (and positive actions needed) amongst our many thousands of our contacts.

### Core Activities

#### Incoming Wild Owls

During the year 10 Barn Owls and 15 Tawny Owls were received, of which 18 were released, 2 became permanent residents at our sanctuary and 5 died/were euthanised. 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.



*A Barn Owl in treatment*

*Photo: BOT*

#### Fieldwork

This year, 61 fieldwork trips were conducted which included 35 trips to install nextboxes. Annual monitoring of potential nest sites accounted for a further 14 fieldwork trips during which 131 Barn Owls were BTO ringed. Other fieldwork trips included 15 advisory visits, 9 releases, 1 research trip and 1 survey visit.



*Trainees on our advanced course (ABOSM)*

*Photo: David Ramsden*

### Talks and Shows

A further 8 presentations were given to Schools and Youth Groups, 11 to adult groups, and we attended 9 Agricultural Shows such as the Royal Cornwall which attracts people from all over the country.

### Training Courses

Our one-day foundation course for ecologists and planners entitled 'Barn Owl Ecology Surveys and Signs' was run 8 times (86 new trainees) and our course 'Advanced Barn Owl Surveying and Mitigation' a further 6 times (67 trainees). Once again the comments received from attendees were extremely gratifying.

### Research

Towards the end of the year we began testing different ways of dealing with Creeping Thistle which we are obliged to control under the 1959 Weeds Act. The three-year study is to use a split plot sampling design that incorporates replication, randomisation and a control. The study will compare Grazon Pro, pulling, topping and doing nothing (control).

Annual reports such as these cannot possibly convey just how busy we are most of the time! Communications noted on our office database show that in 2018 alone the Trust was contacted and responded 19,168 times in total.

How much time we can spend on all the above activities is limited only by our resources, money (obviously) but also our wonderful staff and volunteers.

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

**David Ramsden MBE**  
Head of Conservation



*Our stand at the Royal Cornwall Show*

*Photo: David Ramsden*





# Financial Report

The operating results, together with the Balance Sheet and notes are shown on these pages. As you will see the surplus was an amazing £122,485 compared to £810 last year. However this was mainly due to a 346% increase in restricted grants (from £17,825 in 2018 to £61,700) and a huge increase in non-designated donations from Charitable Trusts £103,373 compared to £10,740 last year, an increase of 862%. £75,000 of this came from one charity, unfortunately that's not likely to happen again as the charity concerned was closing down. The total incoming resources for the year to 31 March 2019 were £433,731 an increase of 51% - £146,965 on 2018 (£286,766).

Income from grants, legacies and donations was up 78% on the previous year at £295,290 accounting for 68% of total income (2018 - 58%). Restricted funds allowed us to purchase a new (second hand) tractor and put roller shutters on the barn. We received funds towards the continued development of our website, salaries, shows, and display materials. In addition we have funds designated towards a lift in the barn (as due to Health & Safety legislation we can no longer carry nestboxes up and down the stairs) and a utility vehicle for use in the LLP. We hope to raise the balance of funds needed to purchase these items next year. During the year we have seen a 10% drop in individual donations to £64,486 (£71,287). Our Gift Aid claims have decreased accordingly from £9,040 to £8,056. Volunteer fund-raising also decreased by 40% to £1,761, they raised funds for us in a variety of ways including marathons and plant sales. These figures are somewhat concerning for the future.

Legacy income was 6% down on the previous year at £48,732 but gifts in memoriam increased by 35%, together accounting for 13% of total income for the year, at £55,079 (2018 - £54,692). 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.

We have worked hard during the year to increase our income from our charitable activities in order to be less dependent on grant and legacy income. Our profit on Nestbox sales dropped by 10% to 50% but our sales increased by 30%. We sold 568 (442) owl boxes during the year and 40 (22) small bird boxes in addition to those we used ourselves. We also ran additional training courses and increased our income in this area by 8%.

Our fundraising income dropped by 15% to £2,151 (£2,519) and came almost entirely from our Annual Draw and our 'Lucky Dip' at shows. Income from sales goods dropped by 9% however our purchase costs increased by 11% and our net profit was just 32%, down by 35% on the previous year £4,593 (£7,020). Our solar panels generated £4,422 (2018 -£4,095) an increase of 8%.

Our overall expenditure increased by 9% to £311,246 (2018 - £285,956). The cost of raising funds increased by 13%, (this was made up of an 11% increase in our spend on promotional goods and 14% increase in fundraising costs). Fundraising accounts for 3% of our total expenditure, the same as in the previous year and includes time spent applying for grants.

Because of volunteers we are able to keep our management costs at just 3% of total spend. They continue to be an invaluable asset, assisting in every aspect of the work including practical tasks, admin, clerical work and fundraising, as well as the provision of professional services.

*Continued on page 7*

## THE BARN OWL TRUST

### BALANCE SHEET AS AT 31st MARCH 2019

		2019	2018
		£	£
	Notes		
<b>Fixed assets</b>			
Tangible assets	5	139,088	133,525
<b>Current assets</b>			
Stock	6	15,490	15,486
Debtors	7	2,871	2,725
Cash at bank and in hand		463,763	350,767
		<b>482,124</b>	<b>368,978</b>
<b>Liabilities</b>			
Creditors - Amounts falling due within one year	8	17,194	20,970
<b>Net current assets</b>		<b>464,930</b>	<b>348,008</b>
<b>Net assets</b>		<b>604,018</b>	<b>481,533</b>
<b>The funds of the charity:</b>			
Unrestricted funds	9	547,754	464,451
Restricted funds	10	56,264	17,082
<b>Total charity funds</b>		<b>604,018</b>	<b>481,533</b>

### SOFA Note 2.

	2019	2018
Income	£	£
(a) <b>Donations and legacies:</b>		
Grants and donations	240,211	110,744
Legacies	55,079	54,692
	<b>295,290</b>	<b>165,436</b>
(b) <b>Charitable activities:</b>		
Nestboxes	58,688	45,202
Training courses	37,322	34,435
Other	16,486	15,133
	<b>112,496</b>	<b>94,770</b>
(c) <b>Other trading activities:</b>		
Fundraising	2,151	2,519
Promotional goods	14,406	15,816
	<b>16,557</b>	<b>18,335</b>
(d) <b>Other income:</b>		
Solar generation	4,422	4,095
Bank interest	829	353
Other	137	214
Sale of fixed assets	4,000	3,563
	<b>9,388</b>	<b>8,225</b>



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



		Unrestricted	Restricted	Total	Unrestricted	Restricted	Total
		2019					2018
Notes	£	£	£	£	£	£	£
<b>Income from:</b>							
Donations and legacies	2	233,590	61,700	295,290	147,611	17,825	165,436
Charitable activities	2	112,496	-	112,496	94,770	-	94,770
Other trading activities	2	16,557	-	16,557	18,335	-	18,335
Other Income	2	9,388	-	9,388	8,225	-	8,225
<b>Total</b>		<b>372,031</b>	<b>61,700</b>	<b>433,731</b>	<b>268,941</b>	<b>17,825</b>	<b>286,766</b>
<b>Expenditure on:</b>							
Raising funds	3	17,126	-	17,126	15,192	-	15,192
Charitable activities	3	286,882	7,238	294,120	252,746	18,018	270,764
<b>Total</b>		<b>304,008</b>	<b>7,238</b>	<b>311,246</b>	<b>267,938</b>	<b>18,018</b>	<b>285,956</b>
<b>Net (expenditure)/income</b>		<b>68,023</b>	<b>54,462</b>	<b>122,485</b>	<b>1,003</b>	<b>(193)</b>	<b>810</b>
Transfers between funds		15,280	(15,280)	-	9,869	(9,869)	-
<b>Net movement in funds</b>		<b>83,303</b>	<b>39,182</b>	<b>122,485</b>	<b>10,872</b>	<b>(10,062)</b>	<b>810</b>
<b>Reconciliation of funds:</b>							
Total funds brought forward		464,451	17,082	481,533	453,579	27,144	480,723
<b>Total funds carried forward</b>		<b>547,754</b>	<b>56,264</b>	<b>604,018</b>	<b>464,451</b>	<b>17,082</b>	<b>481,533</b>

## Financial Report continued

Expenditure on Charitable Activities increased by 9%; from £270,764 to £294,120. The cost of practical work increased by 6% to £141,740 (2018-£134,109). The information and advice service costs remained similar at £88,304. Salaries costs have increased by 7% due to pension contributions and wage increases.

Support costs include telephone, repairs, overheads such as insurance, water & electricity, stationery, management, payroll and office cleaning. These necessary costs have increased by 13% over the year to £23,679 (£21,041) and account for 8% of expenditure.

Of the unrestricted funds available to the Trust, the Trustees have allocated £310,746 as a reserve for the next financial year, £48,569 for the Lennon Legacy Project and £3,000 for other projects, leaving a general fund of £185,439. However our fixed assets and stock account for most of this and in light of the regular shortfall in income vs. expenditure (excluding legacies) the Trustees continue to look carefully at all outgoings. It is a

difficult balance - holding reserves to ensure you can continue through the lean times often makes your appeals to Charitable Trusts less attractive than those from charities with smaller reserves, particularly in difficult economic times.

### SOFA Note 3

Expenditure	Activities Undertaken Directly £	Governance and Support Costs £	Total 2019 £	Total 2018 £
<b>Raising funds:</b>				
Fundraising	10,452	-	10,452	9,204
Promotional goods	6,674	-	6,674	5,988
	<b>17,126</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>17,126</b>	<b>15,192</b>
<b>Charitable activities:</b>				
Nestboxes	29,552	-	29,552	16,019
Training course	6,319	-	6,319	6,388
Practical work	141,740	-	141,740	134,109
Information and advice service	88,304	-	88,304	88,717
Grants and donations	3,536	-	3,536	3,500
Support costs	-	23,679	23,679	21,041
Independent examination	-	990	990	990
	<b>269,451</b>	<b>24,669</b>	<b>294,120</b>	<b>270,764</b>

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!

29th May 1961 Charitable Trust  
Ashburton Post Office  
Banister Charitable Trust  
Birds & Bees  
Blair Foundation  
Cobalt Trust  
D'Oyly Carte Charitable Trust  
Diana Symon Charitable Trust  
Ecclesiastical Insurance Office  
Eucalyptus Charitable Foundation  
H B Allen Charitable Trust  
Hatcher Animal Welfare Trust  
Hobson Charity Ltd  
Holbeche Corfield Charitable Settlement  
Ian Askew Charitable Trust  
Jack Patston Charitable Trust  
John Coates Charitable Trust  
Keith Ewart Charitable Trust  
Laura Kinsella Foundation

Leslie Mary Carter Charitable Trust  
M E Woolfe Charitable Trust  
Marjorie Coote Animal Charitable Trust  
Michael W Mann's Charitable Settlement  
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Ofenheim Charitable Trust  
Panton Trust  
P F Charitable Trust  
Save Me Trust  
Sir John & Lady Heathcoat-Amory Charitable Trust  
Sir John Swire Charitable Trust  
Three Owls Sanctuary  
Verdon Smith Family Charitable Trust  
Veterinary Hospital Group  
Walker 597 Trust  
Wildlife Watching Supplies

During this period we received legacies from:

Jean Cowburn, Wendy Pauline Long, Janet Furse, Barbara Donna Boucher,  
M Dodd, John Webber and Joyce Lund

and Gifts in Memory of:

John Hawke Collins, Michael Bush, Gertrude May Barrow, George David Wiseman, Stephen Wright,  
Jean Wordsworth, John Geoffrey McDowell, Marlene Browning, Dorothy Bramall,  
Terence J Codner, George Bramall, Mike Powell-Jones,  
Mervyn Slade, Jenie Allen, Donald Gloyens, Nigel Smedley, Elona Albert,  
Pat Windeatt, Carole Willis, June Boyce, Alexandra Ross and Godfrey Cory-Wright

*Rest in peace*



During the year we received donations from sponsored events and other fund-raising from:

Ashleigh Harrison, Judith Read & Midge - Walking for Wildlife, Jack & Lucy Farrell - Beach Clean,  
Jayne & Tim Hartley - Cream Tea, Dover Christ Church Academy - Cake Sale,  
Shelley Wright & Tracey Morris - sale of jams, Axe Valley Runners - The Grizzly Run,  
and Margaret & Derrick Crocker - sale of plants and jams.

*Thank you all so much for your support*



# Bits and Bobs

## Little Owl



*Young Little Owl found on footpath*

A young Little Owl was lucky to be spotted by walkers in South Norfolk in early June. It was on the ground beside a footpath so Tracey called the Trust for advice on what to do.

Little Owl fledglings leave their nests at quite a young age: three weeks, compared to eight weeks for Barn Owls. However they don't learn to fly until several weeks later and we decided that this one was too young to be out and about.

Tracey lost no time in obtaining a ladder and the youngster was returned to its nestbox, which was nearby.

Little Owls are most active at dawn and dusk, and after dark when most hunting occurs. However, they can frequently be seen during the middle of the day, basking in the sun on an exposed perch such as a telegraph pole, dead tree or isolated building.

Rather than hunting on the wing, Little Owls usually hunt from a perch, like a fence post. When prey is spotted they sometimes 'bob up and down' a few times before a typically short, low, undulating flight to the ground where they sometimes pursue prey on foot. Whilst perched on a post they blend into farmland environments extremely well and are easily overlooked. Their diet consists primarily of crickets, grasshoppers and other invertebrates such as beetles and earthworms, as well as small mammals. Small birds are also taken during the breeding season. Visit our website for more Little Owl facts.



*The Little Owl is returned to the nestbox  
Photos: Tracey Taylor*

## T-shirt Designs Needed!

# Teemill

We are very excited to announce that the Trust will be launching a Teemill clothing store later this year. Teemill are a fantastic company making clothing from organic and sustainable materials in an ethically accredited wind-powered factory. All their products are designed to be recycled and remade into new clothing. They have a freepost address you can send your clothing back to once it is worn out and they will make new products from them, and then the cycle begins again, meaning nothing ends up in Landfill.

The Trust will have their own clothing page through Teemill ([www.barnowltrust.teemill.com](http://www.barnowltrust.teemill.com)) and there will be links to this from the shop on our main website. Teemill will deal with all the orders and send them direct to the customer and BOT will receive a percentage of the sales on a monthly basis.

We are raring to get the site up and running. Before we can do that however we need some eye catching designs for t-shirts, vests and hoodies that will appeal to a wide audience. This is where we are hoping you can help! Do you have an eye for design? Or do you know a designer or artist who might be willing to donate an image? We would love to hear from you. Please do drop us an email at [info@barnowltrust.org.uk](mailto:info@barnowltrust.org.uk) with any ideas.

## Caught On Camera



*The Mullein Moth Caterpillar*

This lovely photo of a Mullein Moth Caterpillar (*Cucullia verbasci*) was taken by Mateo Ruiz in our LLP nature reserve. It was spotted feeding on a Mullein plant bordering our Wild Bird Crop. In caterpillar form it really is quite stunning with its bright yellow patches and black spots; they are fully grown within about 30 days when they travel down from the plant to pupate in the soil, forming a very tough cocoon. The cocoon may overwinter several times and the Mullein Moth may not emerge for several years!

Facts from <http://www.wildlifeinsight.com>

See all the latest LLP news by heading to our Wildlife Diary at <http://www.barnowltrust.org.uk/wildlife-diary/>

# International Owls

## Eswatini, Southern Africa

Hi Barn Owl Trust!

We just wanted to say thank you for your work and all the information you share through your website. My 7 year old daughter, Lilly, and me have successfully been rearing 3 gorgeous barn owlets after they fell down our neighbours chimney one by one at around 3 weeks old.



*The 3 owlets at around 9 weeks old*

Today, at around 9 weeks old, they are just starting to hop-fly around our house. We'll be relocating them into our new owl house designed using your outdoor specs and made by our friend and artist, Fela Dlamini. Lilly has nicknamed the birds Tayana, Tyto and Una.



*Tree nestbox built to BOT design  
Photos Provided*

We learnt what we needed to know from your site and wonderful videos and are so grateful for the opportunity to raise them and release them at our home in a nature reserve here in Eswatini, Southern Africa.

We may be far away, but thanks to your website, you're having a positive effect on the welfare of Barn Owls, even here!

Sending gratitude and best wishes,

Emma and Lilly

## La Ruche, Northern France

On 20th May we received a call from Sam in La Ruche, Northern France to say two owlets had appeared in the upper floor of their pigeonnier, a traditional dovecot of the region.



*Owlets on the pigeonnier floor*

She thought from our photo guide that they were about a month old. Upon further investigation they discovered a nest site inside on the flat wall top from which the birds had fallen. The birds initially looked subdued and hungry and neither of them had seen any adult birds so it was not certain the birds were being fed. We instructed Sam and her partner Lee to put the birds back on the wall top and advised them on how to supplementary feed with dead day old chicks at the nest.



*The owlets at 7-8 weeks old  
Photos Provided*

After an initial teething period when the birds kept being found on the floor and then returned to the nest, their health improved as they fed on the supplementary food. It was then discovered the parents were still feeding the young but it was decided to continue feeding as a precautionary measure. The owlets also largely remained in the nest and both eventually fledged successfully at the end of June.

Over the winter Sam and Lee are going to put up a nestbox which the adults will hopefully prefer to the wall top. At BOT we get many enquiries from overseas and this story illustrates how we can help people, even in remote locations, help Barn Owls and make a difference.



# Buenos Aires, Argentina

Because the Barn Owl is one of the most wide-spread species of owl, its plight in faraway places brings an opportunity to learn about many different environmental challenges that are being faced in other parts of the world. In the autumn of 2018, I received a message from Dr. Federico Weyland, an Argentinian researcher from the Province of Buenos Aires, who works at the Agronomy Faculty of the National Institute of Agricultural Technology. Federico's description of how he worked towards Barn Owl conservation with the help of a farming Cooperative was intriguing and drew attention to the interface between agriculture and the Pampas grasslands of central Argentina.



*Hard at work making nestboxes*

The natural vegetation of the Buenos Aires region is Pampas, which is a warm, grassland ecosystem, where trees are scattered. In 1774 the British topographer Thomas Falkner described the Pampas as 'One immense sea of grasslands, with scattered forest islands'. The familiar Pampas Grass (*Cortaderia selloana*) that is found in English garden centres is just one of many native species of perennial grass that grow there. Unsurprisingly, the former ocean has now been seriously depleted by a vast livestock industry and a rapid increase in arable farming, and is considered by some to currently be one of the most endangered ecosystems on earth. Indeed, at least fifteen mammal species, twenty bird species, and fifteen plant species are at serious risk of extinction there. This loss of so much Pampas has been detrimental to the Short-eared Owl, which also occurs in the UK. On the other hand, there has been some suggestion that a shift from cattle production to crop production may have been beneficial to Barn Owl and Burrowing Owl, which may find more prey as a result of the change in farming practices.

Through what Federico described it became apparent that in the Buenos Aires region the Barn Owl is perceived as a beneficial presence by the members of the rural communities that cultivate the land. Over the course of our correspondence, Federico explained that the group he worked with had collaborated on a grand scale with a farming cooperative that aimed to turn the tide of disappearing biodiversity and deteriorating ecosystem functioning.

As part of their plan, they established 178 hectares of biodiversity refuge and put up 20 Barn Owl nest boxes. Students from a High School constructed the boxes and they were known in the community as 'casitas', or 'little houses'. When some of the casitas became occupied by breeding Barn Owls, Federico's team tried to take a 'citizen science' approach by involving the farmers in monitoring activities. Furthermore, the appreciation of these birds grew amongst the people. In addition to protecting crops and grain stores, the Barn Owl's role as a biological control of rodents became very important to them because of the diseases transmitted by these small mammals.

The Barn Owls in the Buenos Aires province rely heavily on long-tailed pygmy rice rat and drylands vesper mouse. Hantavirus is transmitted by the long-tailed pygmy rice rat and the brown rat, and this has sadly claimed a number of lives among the farmers. There are also cases of Argentine hemorrhagic fever in the region, which is transmitted by the very abundant drylands vesper mouse.

Prior to this experience, Federico and his colleagues had used the Barn Owl Trust cutting plan to build two tree boxes for Barn Owls. These were put up on a 40 hectare research station within the campus of Federico's Faculty. While this earlier project was hampered by poor materials and lack of advice, the process of upgrading the boxes soon got underway. The team saw providing nest sites for Barn Owls as an opportunity to integrate a natural predator of small mammals into an agroecological system where they carry out extensive monitoring and experimentation. Although Barn Owls had been observed breeding in derelict building at the station, owlets had fallen from the nest site there during previous years and it was hoped that the pair would begin to use a suitably deep box, where there would be no further mishaps.

The owls in question are members of subspecies of the American Barn Owl (*Tyto furcata tuidara*) and this distinction means they represent part of the species' genetic diversity. So what are the challenges faced by the Barn Owl in the Buenos Aires province? Just as in Britain, road casualties are a major hazard to the Barn Owl; one study from Argentina found that 7% of all birds killed on roads were Barn Owls, with a staggering 35% being composed of the Rufous-legged Owl. Looking further ahead, climate change is becoming synonymous with the future in the world of environmental concern. The recent average temperature in the Buenos Aires region (20.9°C during the hottest month and 12.2°C during the coolest) is already considerably higher than in the UK (18.7°C during the hottest month and 3.1°C in the coolest) and one report predicts that under extreme emissions scenarios the temperature in Argentina is set to rise by 3.5°C by the end of the century. As much of the territory is arid or semi-arid, increasing temperatures would seem to pose a threat to plant life, on which the Barn Owl prey species depend.



*A tree nestbox is installed  
Photos Provided*

In recent decades there has been an increase in precipitation in Argentina, but also an increase in the intensity and frequency of heat waves, since 1961 to date. Predicting changes in rainfall pattern is highly uncertain and caution is called for, rather than assuming that higher levels of precipitation will continue.

**Dr. Mateo Ruiz**  
Assistant Conservation and Science Officer

*If you'd like to learn more about the work of the Agro-ecosystems and Rural Landscapes Study Group from the National University of Mar del Plata, please visit [www.geap.com.ar](http://www.geap.com.ar).*



# More International Owls

## Orosztony, Hungary

The Barn Owl Foundation (BOF), Hungary, is a Non Governmental Organisation established in 1997. The aim of the organisation is to embrace a wide spectrum of nature conservation and related social matters. Apart from the protection of endangered species and their habitats the Foundation is dedicated to tackling sectoral issues such as education, communication and employability challenges in the environmental sector. Through previous projects BOF has strong links with UK, Polish, Portuguese and Norwegian organisations working with environmental communication and education.

The BOF operates in the rural countryside across Hungary. Embedded in the less developed regions the Foundation can sensitively recognise social, educational and employment challenges. Most of the BOF's initiatives address these problems in a holistic manner.



*Some of the team pose for the camera*

BOF employs 4 members of staff and has a pool of 42+ volunteers. One of the strengths of the Foundation is its ability to manage projects in an agile and proactive way. The organisation works closely with National Parks, local authorities, HEIs and other NGO's both in Hungary and Europe. The rich network provides a robust background to find solutions and answers to various questions. This makes it possible to form teams that can provide specific input into different projects as required.

The Foundation will open its Owls and People Sustainability Centre this summer. The foundation recently announced an international call to gather funds for the final restoration of the one hundred year old stable building that will accommodate the exhibition and sustainability training room. Our words reached the Barn Owl Trust in the UK (Devon) and the Trust decided to support this initiative with £3,306.



*The Owls and People Sustainability Centre*

This donation event counts as a first in the lives of both organisations. The Barn Owl Foundation has never received such a generous donation since its establishment. At the same time, this has been the first time that the Barn Owl Trust has given a grant to another organisation.

Achieving sustainability through an eco-socially sensitive, completely transformed economy is our shared responsibility.

We are very grateful to the Barn Owl Trust for finding our initiative a worthwhile project to support. With their financial help we are nearing the completion of the centre. We hope that the Owls and People Sustainability Centre will host thousands of people for life-changing experiences.

**Ákos Klein**

Barn Owl Foundation, Hungary

*If you'd like to learn more about the work of the Barn Owl Foundation please visit [www.gyongybagoly.hu](http://www.gyongybagoly.hu).*



*Work continues on the Centre  
Photos Provided*

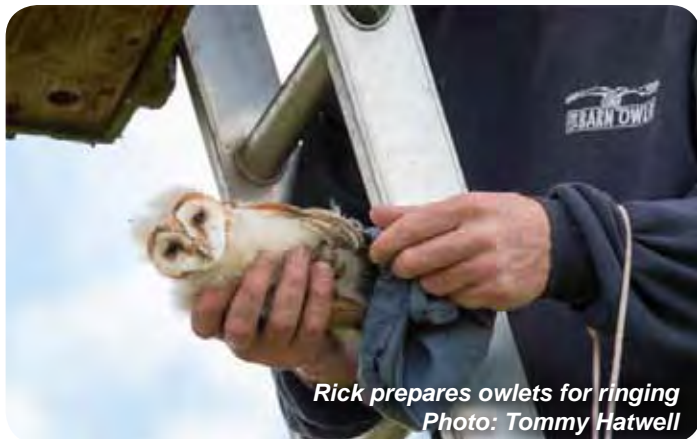


# Westmoor Barn Owls

In 2009 we were approached by The Barn Owl Trust who were conducting a survey of Barn Owls in our area. There had been an 87.5% decline in numbers between 1993 and 2003 in the Westmoor area and, with a view to reducing mortality and increasing Barn Owl re-population, we were asked whether we would consider locating a pole box in our garden. As part of the two year Westmoor Survey the Trust had funding for a box atop a disused electricity pole and had waited until the end of the survey to decide on the most favourable location. Western Power had agreed to erect the box and it just needed our permission.

Of course we were honoured to be asked and jumped at the opportunity. The pole box was installed in July 2010 and we waited for barn owls to move into this des-res the following spring... or maybe the one after that... or the one after that. And we waited and we waited. Worryingly we were no longer seeing Barn Owls either so after nine years we had all but given up hope. Imagine our surprise when in March this year we saw a Barn Owl flying into the nestbox. We had been hearing screeching noises in the evenings for several weeks and had mistaken it for foxes, but there followed a couple of weeks of intense and very noisy activity as Mr Barn Owl announced his presence and pleaded with a passing Mrs Barn Owl to move in (or maybe it was the other way round). We have watched every night since seeing both owls for several weeks and since early April, just one.

Initially he was roosting in the pole box and would pop out at about 8.30pm then head off hunting, returning to the nest box frequently. Now we think he roosts elsewhere and returns every night at dusk with food. We hear the occasional whirring noise as he goes in but little else. Standing underneath the box by day, we might occasionally hear Mrs changing position but otherwise it is very quiet.



*Rick prepares owlets for ringing*  
Photo: Tommy Hatwell

It was at the beginning of June 2019 that we started to hear very distinctive noises coming from the box; never during the day, only at dusk (or the dimpsy as we call it in these parts) and rising to a clamour whenever an adult approached with food. Sitting out each evening, tucked out of sight against the hedge we would watch four or five incoming flights with a vole or similar held in the claws. As the adult landed on the platform this would be picked up in its beak, the owl would hop into the box, cue much joy from wheezy little voices, hop out again and fly off.

In mid-June, at about 9pm we were regularly seeing the female emerge from the box, sit on the platform and survey the world before flying off. Likewise we would see her at dawn, again sitting on the platform but this time hopping back into the box and staying there for the day.

A visit from The Barn Owl Trust in July was a very exciting day. After months of watching the box almost every evening (yes, we got nothing done for weeks) and marvelling as these silent birds flew around, quartering fields and swooping low, we were finally going to know how many owlets there were. It was triplets and Rick and Mateo from the Trust skilfully extracted them, plus the female, from the box for weighing, measuring and ringing before placing them carefully back inside. They assured us that this did none of the Barn Owl family any harm and that they would settle back down again very quickly. Indeed it was back to the usual routine that evening.

The next hurdle will be fledging in about a month's time when we might need to keep an eye out for 'fallers' and maybe we need to be braced for nature to take its course whatever happens. But what a joy and a privilege it is and has been to have something so special in our garden and how grateful we are that finally, after a nine year vacancy, our desirable Barn Owl residence has occupants.

**Lynne Hatwell**

## **Rick Lockwood continues the story...**

In the spring I received a call from an excited Lynne telling us that the polebox was finally occupied... only a nine year wait, which must be food for thought. I often get questioned at the shows by people who have put up nestboxes and want to know why they don't have Barn Owls and how long they will have to wait for them to arrive. Not easy to answer, my reply often involves the words 'ball of string'. But in Lynne and David's case it was a fairly long time. We decided to visit in the first week of July to ring the three young which were between 4-6 weeks old and we were lucky also to find the female still roosting with them and ringed her as well.



*The owlets are returned to the box*  
Photo: Tommy Hatwell

A close neighbour arrived who had also seen Barn Owls visiting another building close by and asked us whether we would be able to have a look. The entrance to the nestbox was high up on the gable end of a converted barn and I was able to reach in and take a picture with my phone –the result of which showed a second brood of two nearly fledged young. These were only 170 metres from the polebox. Two broods so close together is unusual and points to good food availability in the surrounding farmland habitat, which has been managed for shooting interests so lots of cover and cover crops and which in the last two years has largely been left fallow due to changes in ownership thereby making it highly suitable for small mammals and Barn Owls.

**Rick Lockwood**  
Conservation Officer

# Judith's Journal

## An Introduction to Ringing...

You have probably read about my antics walking with Midge and raising funds for various charities including the Barn Owl Trust. However, another of my passions is bird ringing and I have been asked to write a bit about it for Feedback. First of all, a bit of background. Each bird ringer is licensed to undertake a level of ringing (it is known as banding in many other countries) based on experience and assessment. The license is issued through the BTO – British Trust for Ornithology - under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 and we have to apply for the license to be renewed every year.

In the United Kingdom a ringer can ring anywhere with land owner permission and taking care not to encroach on another ringer's site. However, the ringer purchases his or her own rings and pays a permit fee each year. This differs from many other countries where all the ringing is project based but the rings are issued free of charge.

In May and June, a lot of my time is taken up with nest boxes. I monitor two nest box sites. One has 49 boxes in ancient woodland. The boxes on this site this year were mainly occupied by Blue Tits and Great Tits. However, Coal Tits took up residence in two of the boxes which has never happened before.

The other site takes up a bit more time. Again, it is woodland but this time on the side of a valley and it has 60 boxes. This site attracts Pied Flycatchers – a migrant that comes to this country from Africa to breed. A few years ago a group was set up – *[piedfly.net](http://piedfly.net)* which co-ordinates all the Pied Flycatcher nest box sites in the Southwest. Our main aim is to ring all the young in the box and to try and catch the adults as well. Generally it is relatively easy to catch the females. Pied Flycatchers are remarkably tolerant birds and highly unlikely to desert the nest. The females are 'lifted' off the nest whilst incubating. Then they are ringed, weighed and a wing measurement taken before being 'posted' back into the box to resume incubation. The whole process takes a matter of minutes. This year I have made a dismal job of catching the females (although I will eventually catch most of them) due to the ground being very dry and all the leaves making a rice crispie type noise. You just get to the box and the female shoots out!



*Starling ring*  
Photo: Judith Read

A different technique is used to catch the males. They cannot be caught until they start feeding the young. Then half a squash ball attached to a length of button thread is used to keep him in the box by pulling the squash ball up to close the hole once he is safely inside. He is then extracted from the box and processed.

This method has the advantage of allowing the ringer to be



*Male Pied Flycatcher*  
Photo: Tom Wallis

selective as to which bird is trapped. So, if the female has already been caught she can go in and out of the box without hindrance. This year the woodland has 16 boxes occupied by Pied Flycatchers which is higher than the usual number. Most clutches have been about 7 eggs and in most cases at least 6 have hatched. As at the 8th June at least two broods had fledged whilst another box had a brood that was just hatching. This gives an idea of season time span.

There is nothing pretty about baby Pied Flycatchers or, indeed any baby bird, until they are about to fledge.

By monitoring these sites on an annual basis we can learn some interesting and important facts. Many of the adults have already been ringed. Thus, we can identify the age at which they come back to breed, whether they come back to the same site or disperse. Details also start to emerge showing that the more experienced birds occupy the better positions in the wood. So a first year breeder is likely to be at the edge of the wood.

The ring is key to collecting the data. Each ring has an individual number and once the ring is put on the bird the information is submitted to the BTO along with the data collected. The ring gives the address of the Natural History Museum so that a finder can submit the details either direct to the Museum or to the BTO at <https://app.bto.org/euring/lang/pages/rings.jsp>. Both the ringer and the finder will then receive details as to where and when the bird was found and originally ringed together with the distance covered and the length of time between each recovery.

Different species of birds require different sizes of rings. The smallest is an AA which would be put on a Goldcrest or Wren whilst a Grey Heron would take a J. The majority of passerines (including Pied Flycatcher) take an A ring. The weight is equivalent to one of us wearing a plain ring on our finger. Different habitats and the likely lifespan of the bird will dictate what the ring is made of. So, an A ring will be made from a light soft-metal alloy whereas a harder metal will be used for a bird with a longer lifespan so that it lasts. Sea and water birds require rings made of metal that will last in those particular habitats.

In the meantime, the Slapton season has started. This is a migration site with a reed bed on the coast in South Devon. The most common species are Reed Warbler, Sedge Warbler, Blackcap, Chiff Chaff and Willow Warbler, amongst other species but you just never know what is going to turn up. At home I am targeting Starlings with a walk-in trap. Most of them are young birds that are just starting to go into adult plumage. They are real characters with a lot of 'attitude'!

There is no lack of variety in bird ringing!

**Judith Read**

Administration Assistant and BTO Ringer



# Office News

## Welcome Kaye!

Hi everyone! My name is Kaye and I began working for The Barn Owl Trust as the Admin Assistant to the Conservation Team on the 1st of May this year.

I love my new job and feel extremely lucky to be working with such passionate, dedicated and hard-working individuals! My role includes organising the BOESS & ABOSM training courses and taking bookings for talks & guided walks, along with a variety of other responsibilities.



## Green Audit

Climate change is real, and is man-made. That's what the science is telling us. Every part of society, whether government, business or individuals, is being encouraged to operate in more environmentally friendly ways, to help sustain not only the quality of life we expect today but for generations to come. We all need to start to think in terms of sustainability and not economic growth.

In 2019, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) which is the UN body for assessing the science related to climate change, its impacts and potential future risks, brought to the attention of the world the crisis now facing us - uncontrolled global warming. The latest IPCC report highlights a number of climate change impacts that could be avoided by limiting global warming to 1.5°. Regrettably, if truly drastic changes aren't made to the way we all live, we are heading for an average temperature increase of over 3° by 2050 - which will be hugely damaging to all life on Planet Earth.

The Barn Owl Trust has always tried to be as 'green' as possible and fully supports that action to reduce global warming should be taken by individuals, organisations and government at all levels, now rather than later. We support the bringing forward of the Carbon Neutral target to 2025, and the need to reverse greenhouse gas emissions, because of the seriousness of the crisis facing us. So, on top of the normal conservation work the Trust does, this year we have decided to undertake a full Green Audit of all our activity. This should allow us to reduce our 'carbon footprint' as a charity at a time when we are all becoming increasingly aware of the climate and ecological crisis facing the world.

We are looking at all aspects of our work to ensure we are proactively protecting the environment whatever our activities. Not only the energy we use in our day-to-day work, but also looking at the things we buy, sell and manufacture to ensure we reduce our use of plastics, increase our use of organic or renewable resources and reduce any harmful effects of our activities on the environment. As an existing member of the team I have taken on the role of Climate Crisis Co-ordinator to ensure that the audit is completed and that the agreed actions are implemented. We already recycle paper and cardboard - wherever possible our sales goods are dispatched using pre-used materials. We encourage all staff to recycle at work and at home. We buy organic and/or fair trade products where we can; we buy our electricity from Ecotricity and we pay a carbon offset for our mileage.

Having started the audit (and it's huge as it will be an ongoing project) we are now looking into how we might replace some of our vehicles with electric equivalents. We are doing an audit of fuel use for the vehicles to ensure we are being as energy efficient as possible. We are also looking into how we might increase the number of solar panels we have, and whether it might be possible to store the power we generate on site. We are replacing our lightbulbs with LEDs to reduce energy use as well as encouraging a 'power-off' policy for all equipment not in use. On top of the efforts we are making 'in house' we are working with local Climate Crisis groups in Devon to support the work being done in local communities. This includes supporting moves to encourage local authorities to adopt a target of 2025 to become carbon neutral - a tough but necessary aim if we are to mitigate against the effects of global warming as fast as possible. We are talking with local groups, including farmers and others, about what the science is telling us, and the likely effects of global warming on the environment. This will affect not only Barn Owls, but all life on earth, including humans.

As our Parliament, District, and Town Councils have declared, this is an Emergency. We are going to try our very best to use our choices and our actions to be part of the solution, not part of the problem.

**Gill Gant**  
Administration Assistant

## Chagford Show



Many thanks to the organisers at Chagford Show for putting on a great event on Thursday 5th August 2019.

Conservation Team members Mateo and Kaye attended with the BOT trailer in tow. The weather was lovely so the show was quite well attended. We also won a rosette! Thank you to the judges for our first place stand in the charities category.

Mateo's enthusiasm was the winning feature! We had lots of lovely chats with local people about their Barn Owl sightings and discussions about how to build nestboxes.

Here's looking forward to next year!

# Thanks and Things

We are very lucky to have such wonderful supporters who, over the past few months, have taken the time to send in their used stamps, postcards, coins and many other items for us to recycle or to sell to raise funds. A big thank you goes out to them and also all those who have fund raised for us, donated draw prizes or given their time and talents in aid of our work:

Ashburton Traders, Axe Valley Runners, Jackie Atkinson, Diana Baker, Kim Baker, Barron Brady, Leafie Baumgartner, Gavin Bickerton-Jones, Mr & Mrs T Bird, Buckfast Butterflies Farm and Otter Sanctuary, Jackie Campbell, Sophia Colkin, Kathryn & Steve Collings, Margaret & Derrick Crocker, Dartmoor's Daughter, Dartmoor Magazine, Dartmoor Zoo, John Doswell, Eden Project, Lynne Green & Michael Becker, Mr RG Hamar, Harping Mad, Mrs A Harrell, Diane Hawkins, Gill Hepworth & Oscar Graham, Harry Hingston, Tony Hulatt, Craig Jones, Juniper Products, Harvey Kendall, John Francis Lavelle, Lost Gardens of Heligan, Mark Lyddy, Pauline Mann, Lucinda McCance, Kim & Ed McNeil, Mole Valley Farmers, Nigel Morley, Becky O'Malley, Our Katie's, Michael Parks, Pennywell Farm, Plymouth University Students, Sylvia Precious, Jaz Rivers, Janet Rutter, Guy & Geetie Singh-Watson, J. Dilnot Smith & Sons Ltd, Mrs D Spong, Storey Publishing, Jess & Russ Steer, Lesley Stuckey, Ian Thomas, Phil Thorogood, Clare & Matthew Tinnyunt, Susie & Bill Trezise, Heather Tyrrell, Simon Wantling, Melanie White, Woodlands, Liz Woollard (Friends of Kilminorth Woods), Judy Wotton and Mrs Joyce Young.

We must also say a big thank you to City Vets (Exeter), Estover Vets (Plymouth) and Penbode Vets (Holsworthy) for kindly treating injured Barn Owls.

## 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
- Wood for making outdoor nestboxes - sheets of 9 / 12mm tanalised ply and lengths of 25 x 50mm tanalised batten
- Green Oak rough-sawn planks for making bat boxes
- Anabat detector
- Padded envelopes (new or used)
- Socket set (48 pc 1/2 inch drive)
- Extra long drill bits (3,4 & 5mm)
- Empty 35mm Film Cannisters
- Wire cutters
- Drill & screw driver bits
- Quick grip clamps
- Fiskars/Felco loppers & shears
- Garden forks & spades
- Caravan levelling ramps (for our new trailer)
- Box Trailer (minimum 2.4m x 1.5m x 1.8m high)
- Small plate compactor
- Winter Barn Owl images for Christmas cards
- Prizes for Grand Draw 2020 (postable i.e. not heavy or bulky)

Thank you for your help.

## Tail Piece ...



What amazing weather we have had for the August Bank Holiday. Weather records being broken yet again!

As I took a break from working in my garden and sat watching the bumblebees buzzing and the dragonflies hovering, I could hear the wood pigeons cooing and the sparrow chattering and I felt a range of emotions. Amazement at the incredible diversity of the natural world, gratitude that I have had the opportunity to be surrounded by such beauty, and great sorrow that the World is changing very fast. Here in our valley we have Ash dieback, a fungal disease that was first described in Poland in 1992 and has since swept westwards throughout Europe. It was first identified in Britain in 2012 in nursery stock then in the wider environment in 2013, although it could have been in the country much longer. A 2014 report by the Joint Nature Conservancy Council gave a worst case scenario of more than 95% of Ash eventually dying. This will have a huge effect on how our countryside looks, on wildlife and on water and air purification and carbon sequestration.

This Summer Bank Holiday Weekend the streets of Madrid were turned into rivers as flash flooding and hail inundated Spain's capital. In one of the worst affected neighbourhoods cars were washed away in the torrents of water while huge piles of hail built up along some streets. Several metro stations and highways closed due to the destructive impact of the weather. But Madrid wasn't the only city to be affected by the intense weather - about 500km south of Madrid an ominous tornado hovered over the town of Campillo.

The record number of fires burning in Brazil have made the international news, they rose by 84% from the same period in 2018, with more than 70,000 fires detected in Brazil's Amazon rainforest so far this year. They can be seen from space and politicians at the recent G7 conference described them as an "international crisis". However on the 23rd August 'Weather Source' recorded 6,902 fires in Angola (Africa) in 48 hours as farmers employed slash and burn agriculture to clear land for crops. There were 3,395 in the Democratic Republic of Congo and 2,127 in Brazil. This year there have also been huge areas of burning forests in Siberia which have filled the air with smoke over much of the Pacific side of the Arctic Ocean. These fires are a result of the very warm and dry spring and summer conditions over the eastern Siberian Arctic.

Climate change is happening now. If they survive, my grandchildren and yours are going to have to deal with a very different world.

Last year the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), the United Nations body, said we needed to reduce net greenhouse gas emissions by 45% by 2030 in order to stand any chance of keeping global warming below 2°. As if that wasn't bad enough, earlier this year, the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) reported "The health of ecosystems on which we and all other species depend is deteriorating more rapidly than ever. We are eroding the very foundations of our economies, livelihoods, food security, health and quality of life worldwide." "Ecosystems, species, wild populations, local varieties and breeds of domesticated plants and animals are shrinking, deteriorating or vanishing. The essential, interconnected web of life on Earth is getting smaller and increasingly frayed," said Prof. Settele. "This loss is a direct result of human activity and constitutes a direct threat to human well-being in all regions of the world."

It is a very dismal picture, and recycling and reducing our use of plastic is not enough to change the outlook. I've been environmentally aware for 40 years and trying personally to reduce my environmental impact but, it just doesn't do it. We need to work together as communities and persuade our politicians that economic growth is less important than sustainability. Over the last six months the Trust has been working with the local community to raise awareness of the Climate and Ecological Emergency. Our local, district and county councils have all declared emergencies but we now need to see action at local and particularly national and international levels.

We are not alone; people all over the world are becoming aware of the situation and demanding action. One of the most heart-warming examples recently was a 'School Strike for Climate' in Afghanistan.

Life is going to change, we all need to work together to ensure those changes are the best we can do for our children, our wildlife and everyone that shares our planet - *Together we can make a World of difference.*

Frances Ramsden