

Feedback



& the

Barn Owl Trust Annual Report 2023-2024

Issue 72 / Autumn 2024



Charity No: 1201419
www.barnowltrust.org.uk

Waterleat, Ashburton
Devon TQ13 7HU

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Cover Photo: Barn Owl in tree cavity by Tara Simms - see [page 19](#) for more of Tara's photos.

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

A big thank you to everyone who provided words and pictures for this issue.

Proofing: The BOT Team & Ali Ramsden

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Send your contributions - news, letters, pictures and information to: Feedback, Barn Owl Trust, Waterleat, Ashburton, Devon TQ13 7HU

Email: feedback@barnowltrust.org.uk

Website: www.barnowltrust.org.uk

Telephone: 01364 255256

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Diary Dates

Guided Walks

October

Weds 30th 2.30pm - Autumn Colours Walk

December

Tues 10th 10am - Winter Bird Walk

January

Fri 17th 10am - Winter Bird Walk

February

Fri 21st 10am - Winter Bird Walk

March

Fri 7th 10am - Winter Bird Walk

Join us for practical work in the LLP

All tasks 10am - 4pm:

October

Tues 22nd & Thurs 24th

November

Tues 12th & Thurs 14th

December

Tues 17th & Thurs 19th

January

Tues 14th & Thurs 16th

February

Tues 11th & Thurs 13th

March

Tues 11th & Thurs 13th

For more information, visit the [Events Diary](#) on our website. Contact us on info@barnowltrust.org.uk or call the office to book a place - booking is essential as places are strictly limited.

Summer, what summer? Here in Devon, like many parts of Britain, summer has seemed somewhat elusive. It's been very wet, and cooler than we'd like, and there's been a distinct lack of bright, happy, sunny days. What's more, we find ourselves missing the sight and sounds of the bees and butterflies we would normally expect to see and hear in this season (see News Bites on [page 3](#)). However, work at the Barn Owl Trust goes from strength to strength, as we pursue our mission through the seasons, come rain or shine! I hope that you have a chance to enjoy nature, whatever the weather has given to you, and that this autumn's Feedback magazine brings a large ray of sunshine into your lives!

Welcome to the latest edition of Feedback.

Firstly, on [page 3](#), you can read about our change from being a registered charity to becoming a Charitable Incorporated Organisation with a new charity number. We are hopeful that this will help us attract new Trustees in the future. The journey to the switch was interesting and hard work, and we are very glad that it was successfully completed.

The Bird News on [pages 4 and 5](#) proved a very good read, which we hope you'll enjoy! It's packed full of information about the rescue and rehabilitation work we've done this year - I'm sure you'll enjoy reading about the various birds that have come into our care. Particularly lovely is the story on page 5 about Newton the Barn Owl, who spent time with us in the spring.

We know from your feedback that you love to hear about our Nature Reserve (the LLP) and you can find out all about the exciting sightings and events on [pages 6 & 7](#). We all love working here and one of the particular attractions is having the LLP a hop, skip and jump away from the office! It's a little slice of Devon heaven!

Our Legacy Officer, Sam, is tasked with encouraging people to consider leaving the Barn Owl Trust a gift when making their wills. Sam has written an article describing the wonderful projects we have undertaken funded by generous legacies from people far and wide. Do have a read of [pages 8 & 9](#) and, if you haven't done so already, maybe you might consider doing something similar. We'd be very grateful for your kind support, and we do appreciate each and every wonderful legacy we receive.

The centre section of this edition includes our Annual Report and Statement of Financial Activity which we hope you will find interesting. It includes the Chairman's report on the overall state of the Trust.

Other pieces in this Feedback include articles on how the staff and our supporters have spent the year so far, including marching to support nature, raising funds, rescuing birds and much, much more. As usual we include a hello to new staff, and a farewell to those who have moved on to other things on [page 23](#) and finally a big thank you to everyone who has supported our mission by donation of their time, money, draw prizes, and 'wanted' items. We are, as always, very grateful.

I hesitate to mention Christmas this early but as usual with our autumn issue we have included our Christmas sales leaflet highlighting some of our new products, and the old favourites too! We hope that you might support us by purchasing your Christmas cards and maybe some gifts from this selection. You can view our whole range of sales goods on our webshop: www.barnowltrust.org.uk/shop.

And finally, a reminder that if you'd like to read a full colour Feedback, you can opt to receive it by email, rather than through the post. Cost constraints prevent us being able to print this in colour, but our colourful e-version is available to you if you drop us an email at info@barnowltrust.org.uk.

Thank you for all your support of the Trust and our work, it really is greatly appreciated.

Gill Gant
Office Manager

BOT News



Photo: Mark Harder

From Registered Charity to CIO

After several years of preparation, on the 1st April 2024, 'The Barn Owl Trust', which received its registered charity number in 1988, began operating as 'Barn Owl Trust', a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) with a new charity number. The reason for the change was to future proof the Trust and to limit liability for future Trustees, hopefully making it easier to find new ones. Previously the Trustees were personally liable, but now as a CIO the charity can own property and sign contracts in its own name.

We received the Order from the Charity Commission authorising the transfer of assets from one charity to the other on the 25th July 2023, this was completed at the end of the financial year on 31st March 2024. The aims of the Trust, the work and the staff all remain the same and outwardly the transfer has been seamless, but behind the scenes lots of work had to be completed. During the last year, all the staff had to be issued with new contracts with the CIO. The legal documentation for the transfer had to be drawn up and completed and our suppliers had to be notified of our change of legal identity. We needed to draw up two sets of accounts at the end of the financial year, one for The Barn Owl Trust showing the income and expenditure for the last financial year and the transfer of assets for the year end showing a zero balance after the transfer to the CIO, and a second for the CIO showing the transferred assets.

ORDER OF THE CHARITY COMMISSION FOR ENGLAND AND WALES
To authorise the transfer of assets and liabilities and the granting of an indemnity under section 105 of the Charities Act 2011
dated the
25 July 2023
for the charities known as
THE BARN OWL TRUST: 299835
and
BARN OWL TRUST: 1201419

In keeping with our minimum waste ethic, rather than throwing out leaflets and other items with our old charity number, volunteers have been helping us by adding labels with the new one. Fortunately, we have been able to keep our VAT number.

As of 1st April 2024, BOT has been using a Co-op bank account for all new Friends and Adoption standing order payments. Historically we have used Lloyds Bank, and this account is still active, but as they continue to finance the fossil fuel companies that are driving climate change we would encourage our supporters to please consider switching to our Co-op account if you can.

We need your help : Please drop us an [email](#) or give us a call to get our new account details if you have a regular monthly or annual standing order payable to the Trust and are prepared change your payment to our Co-op account.
Thank you for your help and support.

News Bites

A Note from the Head of Conservation

Believe it or not, I've been conserving Barn Owls for over 40 years and what a journey it's been. When we applied to register a new charity called 'The Barn Owl Trust', back in 1987, we had no idea how long that might take or what it would become. What we wanted was to be able to help more people help Barn Owls and luckily for us, that's exactly what's happened. One of them was a young lad who volunteered for us in 1988. Little did we know that he'd go on to study Barn Owls, join the Trust as my Personal Assistant in 2018, and work his way up to Senior Conservation and Science Officer. I'm delighted to announce that when I retire next April, Dr Mateo Ruiz will become leader of the Barn Owl Trust Conservation Team. It couldn't happen to a nicer bloke! - **David Ramsden MBE, Head of Conservation.**

Where are all the insects?

Gardeners may have rejoiced at the lack of large and small whites descending on their cabbages this year. However, their reduced numbers, alongside many of our other common species, is a worrying sign. Poor weather has played its role with a cold and wet spring, however this year's obvious reduction forms part of the many years of long-term decline being observed. It should be noted that it is not just butterflies that are struggling, we are also seeing reduced numbers of bees, hoverflies, moths and even aphids alongside many more species. There are many studies clearly documenting this long-term decline, with one looking at insect splatter on number plates showing a 78% reduction between 2004 and 2023! We need to be going further to keep our green spaces a bit 'untidier', creating wilder gardens, parks, edges and hedges. Reducing pesticide use across all sectors is also needed. These actions will help provide some resilience in populations that are all going to be continually impacted by the Climate Crisis, extreme weather and the changing seasons we are going to continue to experience.

Radio Devon Interviews

John Acres, a BBC Radio Devon presenter, visited BOT in June to interview five members of staff and a Trustee. The interviews covered various aspects of the Trust's work, including research, conservation efforts, a helpline service, educational initiatives, and the distribution of owl boxes across the country. Additionally, listeners gained insights into the lives of some of the dedicated staff members who contribute to the Trust's mission. You can hear these interviews by visiting: www.barnowltrust.org.uk/bbc-radio-devon-at-the-barn-owl-trust.

ABOSM Progress

Our first 'script' for one of the sections of the ABOSM course is being finalised this week and we've now done voiceover tests ready for recording to begin. It won't be long before we can start putting modules together! There are still a lot more scripts to finalise but we're excited to be putting together the first video for the course!

Bird News

Thus far, 2024 has seen the arrival of 15 casualty owls coming to the Trust for rehabilitation and (at the time of writing) we're still awaiting the usual influx of orphaned Barn Owl chicks which typically come in mid-summer.

During winter and early spring, we had several cases of emaciated starving owls, which is sadly quite common for the season. At that time of year, small mammal abundance is at its lowest and so a few nights of heavy rain preventing hunting, combined with less prey about when they do manage to get out, can be lethal. At particular risk are those inexperienced first year birds who have less knowledge of reliable hunting grounds and safe roost sites. When bad weather persists, an underweight owl can become too weak to hunt and at that stage they can be found grounded.

This year, we had one Tawny Owl and four Barn Owls that were found emaciated and wound up at the Trust, either brought in by members of the public or passed to us by local vets after initial assessment/treatment. If coming direct to us, the first course of action is always to hydrate the owl because rather than dying of starvation, it is actually the lack of fluids that will cause organ failure. After administering fluids we focus on getting food into the owl. Days following the arrival of an emaciated bird are always a delicate balance of feeding and regular weighing, whilst also trying to encourage the owl to start picking up food for itself. We are very pleased to report that four out of the five emaciated owl casualties recovered well, put on weight and were able to be released back into their home range/territory within a few weeks. See Newton's story ([page 5](#)) for an in-depth description of this process and the effort involved!



Peter getting oil rubbed meticulously through each feather

During the early months of the year, we also received four birds that had been struck by vehicles on the road (two Tawny Owls and two Barn Owls). Again, we do tend to find a spike in road traffic casualties during the winter months, probably because there is less daylight and more traffic around during the times when owls are active. Of these cases, two were successfully rehabilitated, spending a few weeks at the Trust overcoming their concussion before being released back into their home territories. Sadly, the other two had extensive injuries and were euthanised to prevent further suffering.

On 9th May, we received a call from a lady just outside Plymouth who had found a grounded Tawny Owl in a horse stable. While Tawny Owls tend to stick to wooded areas, they will sometimes take refuge in a building and unfortunately for this Tawny, it managed to get caught up in fly tape which was hanging from the

ceiling. The owl's wings were covered in incredibly sticky glue. All its feathers were sticking together, rendering it unable to fly. The Tawny Owl came in for a good clean; firstly with olive oil to remove the glue, then with dish soap to remove the oil and finally with water to remove the soap. We had to meticulously rub the oil and then soap into each flight feather but after a several hours of this careful work, the owl (now named Peter) was no longer sticky and probably the cleanest he had ever been! Twenty-four hours of rest and a good meal later, he was dry, glue-free and released back into his territory at dusk. The stable owners planned to reposition the fly tape to reduce the likelihood that this might happen again.



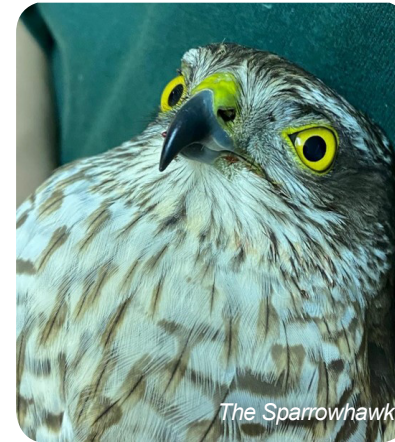
Two of the four Tawny Owlets about 4 weeks old

As spring continued, we saw the arrival of four Tawny Owlets. In all these cases the owlets were perfectly healthy and did not actually need 'rescuing'. Young Tawny Owls leave the nest at a very early age (around four weeks old) before they are able to fly and go through a stage called 'branching'. During this stage, the owlets will clamber about, often along tree branches but sometimes on the ground and they will call to their parents at night who track them down and feed them in situ. The owlets, being unable to fly, do look very vulnerable and so it is understandable that people might think they are in trouble or have been abandoned. Indeed, each spring we get a huge number of phone calls from concerned folk who have found Tawny Owl chicks on the ground – our advice is to leave the owl where it is unless it is obviously injured or starving. If on the ground, then placing the owl on a nearby branch or shrub will give it some protection from ground predators. Unfortunately, our four Tawny Owl chicks had been handed into an overnight emergency vets, so no one knew exactly where they'd been found meaning we couldn't immediately return them. All ends well though as these



The four Tawny Owlets (about 12 weeks old) getting ready to practice flying in the hospital release aviary.

adorable little fluff balls (affectionately termed 'The Groovers' by the Conservation Team) are all being raised together in a big aviary on site. Raising them as a group is ideal as it mimics them fledging with a sibling(s) and helps prevent them from imprinting on humans. Come July/August time, they will be ready for release, and so we will lift the aviary lid at dusk on a fair-weather day. We'll continue to put food out for these youngsters for several weeks while they learn to hunt independently.



The Sparrowhawk

As is the way of the world, the cases kept coming during our busiest months and on 25th June we had a phone call from our neighbour concerned about a grounded Sparrowhawk in their garden. We managed to catch the hawk and could see she was holding her wing at a slightly funny angle and was underweight too. Sparrowhawks are notoriously harder to rehab than owls, but amazingly she started accepting the food we offered her and within a few days was processing whole prey items herself. On close inspection we also discovered she had Trichomoniasis, which causes creamy lesions to form in the gape and is typically caught from eating finches that have the disease. Luckily as she was in our care, we successfully treated her for the disease and she is currently in one of our hospital aviaries to build back some muscle strength before we can hopefully release her. She has been a firm favourite with all the staff here and we can't wait to see her fly off back into the wild.



The Sparrowhawk in her specially adapted hospital aviary

Rehabilitation can be fairly time consuming and it is only with the regular donations provided by our wonderful supporters that we are able to care for and release these birds. Whilst the rehabilitation side of our work makes up a minority of the conservation work we do, and while we may only deal with relatively small numbers of birds each year, we feel this work is vitally important. Providing a second chance to birds that have usually come in as a result of human activities is crucial and it is truly rewarding to see a successfully rehabbed bird fly off back into the wild. So thank you to all our supporters for enabling this.

Pip Laker
Conservation Officer

Successful Release!



At the beginning of April, a starving Barn Owl came to us for rehabilitation from Cornwall. He was very small, felt very bony and as he looked fairly pale we assumed he was a male.

On arrival, he was severely underweight, weighing just 225g (a healthy weight for a male Barn Owl is at least 300g).

Luckily, he was ringed so this meant we could gain valuable insight into his story so far. We found out he was born and ringed as a chick last summer, in 2023, and had travelled all the way from his natal site in Somerset to Cornwall where he was found.

Newton Faulkner was playing in the car when we picked him up, so we named him... "Newton" of course.

It was touch and go for a few days. At first, we gave him fluids and had to hand feed him. He refused to swallow and also couldn't keep his food down which is never good news.

However, quite suddenly he made an amazing turnaround. He began feeding himself and gobbling lots of food. He improved every day and was quickly able to progress from his box into our specialist hospital aviary where he could fly around.

Eleven days after he arrived, the lovely people who had originally found him emaciated and starving, happily collected him, excited at his recovery, and did the release themselves. He was let go at dusk into the same place he was found. It was a great success. He was very alert as he was carried into position, looking around and hopefully recognising where he was. He looked as though he was itching to fly away, which he did as soon as he could! You can see the release video on our social media.

In his eleven days of rehabilitation here at the Trust, he snaffled a total of 44 chicks, taking his weight from a precarious 225g to a much healthier 325g.

Good luck in the wild Newton!

Kate Jellyman
Assistant Conservation Officer

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LLP Update - News from our Nature Reserve

Blackthorn was in full blossom at the beginning of March. On the 4th, we had a LLP first, when a pair of Mandarin ducks were seen at the cattle drink, accompanied by the first Teal drake recorded on the reserve. The ploughing of the winter bird crop started on the 8th and blackthorn clearance by the roadside hedge resumed on the 14th. By the 16th, two of the plum trees in Forde Orchard were in blossom. A Chiffchaff could be heard singing loudly from the hedge between Kiln Close and the Top Field, and also in the Top Field a Meadow Pipit was seen displaying. The dead Birch tree covered in bracket fungi, with a Woodpecker hole, had fallen down on the 21st. Cracking in two, it revealed a large hollow with the remains of a large Hornet nest inside. A female Wheatear was spotted on the ploughed bird crop area in the Main Field on the 25th. Inclement weather conditions occurred overnight on the 27th– 28th. Rain, then snow that settled, then heavy rain again at dawn which melted most of the snow.



Wood Mouse in a nest on the LLP

At the start of April, a Wood Mouse was discovered under a corrugated sheet, by the 3rd there was a nest. A solitary male Pied Flycatcher was spotted on an Oak tree outside the office on the 8th. The roof and exercise platform on a Polebox in the North Park hedge were replaced later this month and we also checked the Polebox in the Main Field at the same time. We were surprised when an adult Tawny Owl flew out as the ladder went up. Three young Tawny Owlets were discovered in the box and later that week they were fitted with BTO rings. Bat droppings were spotted underneath the doorway upstairs in the Barn, looking up you could see at least five Brown Long-eared Bats roosting there. A Willow Warbler was singing on the boundary of the LLP, next to the solar panels on the 17th, this is the first one heard at Waterleat since 1983! A dozen Meadow Pipits were seen flying out of the rough grassland alongside the Long Path on the 18th. A flight of twenty or so Swallows were seen hunting low, over the newly harrowed bird crop on the 20th and on the 24th, staff hand broadcasted the winter bird crop and nectar strip. The Early Purple Orchids in Kiln Close were counted this month – 194! An increase of 48 from the previous year.

By 1st May, the orchids were still looking magnificent, as were the Bluebells, and the large patches of Greater Stitchwort in the grass. The trail camera on the Flo Pond caught some really exciting footage on the 3rd - a female Mandarin with eleven ducklings arrived, staying for a few hours. On the 5th, a pair of Mallards turned up just after dusk. Late morning on the 12th came another first for the LLP when a solitary Canada Goose flew up out of the rough grassland beside the Wiggly Wobbly Path. On the 15th, volunteers burnt up all brash in Forde Orchard and started a second fire near the roadside edge to burn off the

previously cut Blackthorn. A Kestrel was seen, for around ten minutes, hunting over the rough grass on the roadside edge. On the 17th, volunteers hand pulled creeping thistle within North Park and Kiln Close. On the 22nd, a flat area in Forde Orchard was made for the Beehives. A trail camera on the small mammal feeder showed that the local Wood Mice were enjoying the Sunflower seeds provided in the First Field Shelter. Another first for the LLP on the 26th when a female Goosander was picked up by trail camera, diving on the Flo Pond. A Skylark was seen on the 28th over the central part of the Main Field.



Early Purple Orchid

The month of June began dry, and the Lesser Stitchwort and Bird's-foot Trefoil had begun flowering in the grassland. The Skylark was seen and heard again on the 1st over the Main Field. On the 7th, the new goat bed was complete for the second Field Shelter, and the goats were shut in Kiln Close to get used to their new home. Volunteers helped pull Creeping Thistle on the 11th and 13th and saw many Garden Chafers, crickets, and grasshoppers whilst working. We were excited to discover white (Barn Owl) droppings that had appeared at the back of the First Field Shelter on the 14th! An inspection of the pond in torchlight on the 15th revealed at least two Trout, 8" and 6", in the Flo Pond despite it being murky. There have been noticeably fewer butterflies around this year, even the Small and Large Whites which usually appear in April have been noticeable by their absence. We have recorded more rain than usual here every month since July 2023 and the mean temperature here for June (to the 20th) is 1.6°C less than our 19-year average, which is likely to have affected them.

There was a very exciting walk on the 20th, bringing great views of a Red Kite soaring over the LLP for approximately 10 minutes, before it was chased off by a flock of Gulls. Two small bird boxes were erected on the east side of the Kiln Close Field Shelter on the 24th, and a Kestrel was seen flying over the Main Field. The first Marbled White was spotted on the 25th. An injured Sparrowhawk was seen in the drive and later caught in a neighbour's garden and brought in for treatment.



Pied Flycatcher spotted outside the BOT office

A Butterfly Walk on the afternoon of 2nd July revealed more butterflies than during June but numbers are extremely, and worryingly, low compared to other years. Species spotted included Small and Large Skippers, Marbled Whites, Ringlets, Meadow Browns and one Gatekeeper. We also saw a few Six Spot Burnet Moths and their cocoons on the grass stems, and several half-grown Great Green Bush Crickets and a few Grasshoppers. The Forage Rape was bright yellow in full flower in the winter bird food crop and Cornflower and Corn Camomile were beginning to flower in the nectar strip. As we walked down the Long Path we heard a lot of buzzing and saw Bees disappearing into the soil at the base of the Forage Rape and Oats.

Volunteers joined Harry on the 3rd and the 4th for a day of Bracken Bashing. This weakens the rhizomes and reduces the spread. On a lunch time walk on the 5th, a Hobby was seen hunting over the top of the Main Field. Slowworms were under one sheet of corrugated and a Field Vole nest under the other.

House Martins joined the Swallows hunting over the top of the Main Field on the 7th, most noticeable because of their calls and feeding their young on the wing.



Teal drake by the River Ashburn

Slender Mullein, Musk Mallow, Musk Thistle, Chicory, Oxeye Daisy, Birdsfoot Trefoil and White Campion flowers could all be seen dotted among the rough grass in the old winter bird crop area. Unfortunately in this year's winter bird food crop, the 12kg of Sunflower seeds we planted have produced very few plants. However, we have high hopes that the other plants will produce an abundance of seeds for the over wintering birds.

All photos by BOT

Breeding Season 2024

Monitoring Barn Owl nest sites across Devon and eastern Cornwall is a vital aspect of the Trust's work, and this year our initial checks began on May 20th. Every year we aim to visit our established sites at least once to find out which ones are being used and, in particular, whether the owls are nesting. If we find eggs or young, then a follow up visit is usually necessary so that the owlets can be accessed while they are between 4 and 7 weeks of age. We aim to find them at around that age so we can fit them with a small leg ring, which will identify them if anyone ever finds them in the future.

The leg rings are made of metal and are issued by the British Trust for Ornithology (BTO). Needless to say, all the Barn Owl Trust's ringing activity is carried out under the necessary Bird Ringing Permit and Schedule 1 Disturbance Permit. In the course of her training to apply for a Ringing Permit, our Conservation Officer Dr Pip Laker ringed 36 owlets this year, all under the supervision Trustee and ringing trainer Keith Grant. Bird ringing helps us understand why bird populations are changing for the better or the worse, but fitting a ring is only half the story; You will complete the job if you find a ringed bird and report it to the BTO via the Euring website!

By checking the same established sites each year, we can get a better idea of how the Barn Owl population is changing in our region. That's why our Annual Monitoring Sites (AM Sites) are so important to our work, and we give massive thanks to everyone who welcomes us onto their land, or even into their homes when the nest site is in the roof space. This year we added 5 new AM Sites to make up for sites we unfortunately had to take off the list in 2023. As a result, we checked 79!

Barn Owls attempted to breed at 65% of our AM Sites this year, which is above a previous average of 52%. Furthermore, at one site there were actually two simultaneous nests, which pushes up our nesting rate to 66%! The 5 new AM Sites we visited were chosen because of known Barn Owl activity, which could introduce some bias in our results. However, the nesting rate based on our 74 pre-existing AM Sites is still 65%, which confirms an above average number of breeding attempts in 2024. This is the fourth consecutive year in which we have found that the percentage of sites where nesting took place has been above average, and it is the best result we've had since 2018.

The 2023 brood size of 3.41 was clearly above average, although

it followed some much more mixed results from the preceding years. 2024 was the second consecutive year with good numbers of owlets in broods, and the average brood size of 4 was well above the 2007 – 2023 average of 2.90. In fact, 2018 is the only other year since 2007 with such a good brood size. Combined with the good percentage of sites with nesting attempts, this remarkable result tells us that 2024 was a very good year for Barn Owls in Devon and eastern Cornwall.

Dr Mateo Ruiz
Conservation and Science Officer

Year	Nesting (%)	Mean brood size	Regular roosting (%)	Occasional roosting (%)	Absent (%)
2007-2023 mean	52%	2.90	10%	5%	34%
2024	66%	4.0	5%	2%	28%
2023	58%	3.41	8%	6%	28%
2022	55%	2.63	3%	3%	39%
2021	54%	2.97	2%	6%	38%
2020	-	-	-	-	-
2019	43%	2.72	7%	4%	46%
2018	59%	3.0	0%	3%	38%
2017	48%	3.24	7%	11%	34%
2016	39%	2.42	17%	3%	42%
2015	59%	2.67	10%	1%	29%
2014	46%	4.15	12%	7%	35%
2013	17%	2.13	27%	14%	42%
2012	68%	3.23	6%	2%	25%
2011	42%	2.63	17%	5%	36%
2010	60%	2.35	12%	1%	27%
2009	61%	2.5	7%	3%	30%
2008	62%	2.6	11%	2%	25%
2007	58%	3.7	12%	4%	27%

Results table of annual monitoring from 2007 to 2024, showing site status as a percentage of the total number of sites checked, mean brood size, and the averages obtained over the last 16 years of monitoring. (Sixteen from which averages were calculated and doesn't include 2020).

Leaving a Legacy for Barn owls



View from the LLP orchard - looking up from the ponds towards the Wildlife Tower in North Park

Have you seen a Barn Owl? It is a rare privilege to see these beautiful birds in the wild. Intensive farming practices, road traffic accidents, and loss of nest sites are all huge factors in their decline. Since the 1980's, The Barn Owl Trust has been working 'to conserve the Barn Owl and its Environment'

What is a Legacy and why should you think about it?

A legacy is a gift or an inheritance that you leave when you die. It's tax free and is taken off the value of your estate before Inheritance Tax is calculated, or it can reduce your Inheritance Tax rate if 10% or more of your estate is left to charity. It doesn't affect any gift you may want to leave to relatives or friends. You can donate a fixed amount, an item, or what's left after other gifts have been given out. A legacy enables you to leave a gift to support the things that were important to you or had an impact on your life. Leaving a legacy in your Will to the Barn Owl Trust helps us to plan ahead and do what Barn Owls need – habitat improvement in areas where Barn Owls are struggling to survive due to lack of food and places to nest, educational resources for both adults and children, research projects to maximise the effectiveness of our conservation work... the list goes on. With large legacies we always create something really permanent. There are so many things we'd like to do if the funds were available.



The Norman Alderson Meeting Room

Leaving a legacy in your Will to the Barn Owl Trust is a very worthwhile way to make a difference to nature and to be remembered in years to come. Many people now also ask their families and friends to make a donation to charity rather than send flowers to a funeral. You may like to suggest that donations are made to the Barn Owl Trust in your memory. This is, after all, an opportunity to have a positive influence and a long-lasting impact on the heritage we leave for future generations. We have had some amazing generous legacies left to us:

The Lennon Legacy Project (LLP)

In 2001, we were able to buy 26 acres of intensively grazed sheep pasture, which is now a nature reserve managed for Barn Owls and other wildlife, thanks to a legacy from Vivien Lennon. "The Lennon Legacy Project: transforming 26 acres of intensive farmland into 26 acres of Barn Owl heaven".



The Wildlife Tower

The Wildlife Tower

Our second Wildlife Tower was constructed in 2010 in memory of Friend of the Trust, John Woodland. It now provides a permanent home for a wide variety of insects, amphibians, bats and birds.



The Flo & Oakley Ponds

The Wildlife Ponds

Legacies from Major Charles Oakley and Florence Parsons enabled us to add two large ponds, the Oakley Pond and the Flo Pond, to the LLP, significantly increasing the biodiversity of the site.

Solar panels

In 2012, a legacy from Peggy May Fullman provided an array of Solar Panels. These generate most of the electricity we use and also raise funds for our conservation work.



The Solar Panels

The Meeting Room

Following a legacy from Norman Alderson we were able to build a much-needed Meeting Room in 2011 which is used for training, educational sessions and nature events.

Office rebuild

On 15th May 2023, the long-awaited office rebuild began with the demolition of our old office building. The rebuild was funded by legacies from Peter Blood and others. Our new office has maximum insulation and is a very energy-efficient building, and will future proof the Trust for many years to come.



The New BOT Office

What will Barn Owl Trust do with your gift?

You don't need to leave a large legacy to the Barn Owl Trust to make a difference and every legacy no matter the size, will help us do the following:

Conservation – Site visits and practical conservation work including nestboxing and habitat advice. Our nature reserve is used for guided nature walks and conservation volunteering (great for mental health and wellbeing).

Education – Our visits to schools and youth groups bring a conservation message to the next generation. We give talks to adults groups and provide training courses for ecologists, planners and other specialist groups.

Information - Dealing with 4,000 enquiries a year is a major part of our work, by telephone and email and by keeping our vast website up to date, we provide information on all aspects of Barn Owl Conservation. Our website receives well over 1,000 visitors every day.

Care - Maintaining our owl sanctuary and rehabilitation centre - where we provide top-quality care for casualties and a genuine sanctuary for those that can't be released. We never turn away an owl.

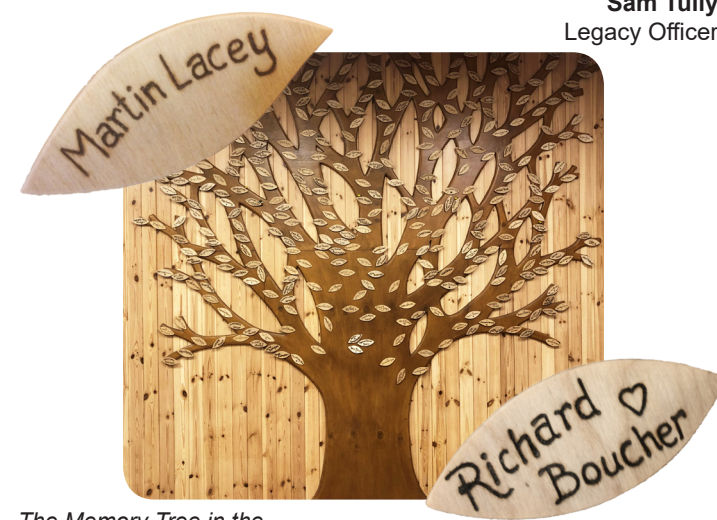
Research – One of the most important things we can do is to work out how to reduce the number of Barn Owls being evicted and killed. Legacies helped us research the effects of barn conversions and major roads, and share the results with those in a position to help. There is so much more to do!

Legacies and donations in memorium from supporters have made it possible for us to plan ahead. Many of them have been remembered with a leaf on our Memory Tree in our Meeting Room. Remembering the Barn Owl Trust in your will couldn't be easier, and you can find details on our website: www.barnowltrust.org.uk/support-us/leave-a-legacy.

Your legacy to the Barn Owl Trust means our vital conservation work will continue and you'll still have an impact on the world after you've moved on.

The Barn Owl Trust would not have achieved so much over the last 36 years if it was not for the generous legacies that have been left to us and we appreciate each and every one. If you would like to know more about leaving us a legacy in your will, please call Sam our Legacy Officer on 01364 255256 or email sam@barnowltrust.org.uk for an informal chat.

Sam Tully
Legacy Officer



The Memory Tree in the Norman Alderson Meeting Room



Charity Information

Barn Owl Trust

Waterleat Ashburton Devon TQ13 7HU
01364 653026 / 255256 info@barnowltrust.org.uk
www.barnowltrust.org.uk

Registered Charity number 299 835		Charitable Incorporated Organisation No: 1201419	
Trustees:	Keith Grant (1990)	Frances Ramsden (1988)	Simon Wilson (2000)
	Kevin Keatley (2010)	Ed McNeil (2020)	Hon Treasurer: Mark Pountney (2002)
	Secretary: Gill Gant	Minutes: Anne-Marie Glenn	
	Management Team:		
	David Ramsden - Head of Conservation	Gill Gant - Office Manager	
Independent Examiners:		Solicitors:	Bankers:
Francis Clark LLP		Wollen's	Triodos Bank UK
Chartered Accountants		Carlton House	Deanery Rd
Sigma House, Oak View Close		30 The Terrace	Bristol
Edginswell Park		Torquay, Devon TQ1 1BS	BS1 5AS
Torquay, Devon TQ2 7FF			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 via our website, email, phone or post. Our research work is relevant throughout the UK and beyond.

The Trust also leases 26 acres of land from the Barn Owl Legacy Trust (BOLT), which was purchased with a legacy in 2001. This is known as the Lennon Legacy Project and 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		TRUST VOLUNTEERS	
OFFICE MANAGER	: Gill Gant	HONORARY SOLICITORS	: Wollen's
HEAD OF CONSERVATION	: David Ramsden MBE	VETS	: Veterinary Hospital (Estover)
SENIOR CONSERVATION OFFICER	: Mateo Ruiz		: Seymour Vets Ltd
CONSERVATION OFFICER	: Pip Laker		: City Vets (Exeter)
ASSISTANT CONS OFFICER	: Tim Wilkins	BTO RINGING COORDINATOR	: Keith Grant
	: Josh Case		
	: Kate Jellyman	EDUCATION VOLUNTEER	: Baley the Barn Owl
DIGITAL MEDIA OFFICER	: Kaye Thomas		
RESERVE OFFICER	: Harry Hingston	LIVE OWL EMERGENCY HELP	: Fiona Anderson
& VOLUNTEER COORDINATOR		& OWL TRANSPORTATION	: Margaret Rhodes
ADMIN ASSISTANTS	: Marianne Bryan		: Esther Van Delft
	: Anne-Marie Glenn	PRACTICAL SUPPORT	: Tony Hulatt
	: Jessica Munday	FEEDBACK MAGAZINE	: Marianne Bryan
	: Vanessa Lewis		
	: Lucy Bruckner	GENERAL ASSISTANCE	
LEGACY PROJECT	: Sam Tully		
EDUCATION OFFICER	: Jessica Munday	Caroline Fawell	Fiona Hailstone
COMPUTER/IT SUPPORT	: Alan Lewis	Chris Marshall	Maeve Leith
PRACTICAL SUPPORT	: Jasmin Ramsden	Di Hawkings	Simon Petherick
	: Joel Turnbull	Diana Baker	Melanie Reeves
	: Chris Allen	Emily Peacock	Caroline & Daniel Snow
	: Emily Smith*	Hazel Gruber	Eleni Vreony
	: Aiden Lawley	Kim & Ed McNeil	Rick Barton
SCHOOL VISITS/TALKS	: David Ramsden	Margaret Rhodes	Paul & Jen Hankin
	: Mateo Ruiz	Michael Park	Judith Read
	: Jessica Munday	Plymouth Uni Students	Mark & Jodi
ACCOUNTS	: Frances Ramsden	Barn Owl Trust staff and volunteers often have several roles, only their main areas of work are listed here.	

* Indicates those leaving during the period of this report

BOT Environmental - NO: 203 173

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. At the end of March 2024, we applied for de-registration of BOT Environmental as we had made nil returns since 2011.

Annual Report 2023 - 2024



Welcome to the Annual Review of our last financial year 2023-2024. It has been a year of changes and began with our staff crammed into the Meeting Room and builders on site until January 2024 as our offices were demolished and rebuilt. Thanks to legacies from Peter Blood and others we have been able to create a light, airy, warm, dry building which has under floor heating and an air-source heat pump. The team are delighted with their new working environment, and we have been able to reclaim our Meeting Room and use it again for its original purpose. Although a significant outlay was needed for the rebuild, it will future-proof the Trust, and we expect to see savings in energy consumption and a return on the expenditure over time, rather like the solar panels which were installed in 2012 and made possible by a legacy from Peggy May Fullman. Thanks must go to Daren Thomas of A-Tec Design for designing the building and doing the drawings for the planning application and building control free of charge. We are really grateful for his support and to Futureproof Building for delivering such a fantastic space.

As reported last year, prior to the Covid Pandemic, the Trustees had proposed and agreed to convert the Trust from a Registered Charity to a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) thereby once again, future proofing the organisation and making it easier to recruit new Trustees by limiting personal liability. Following approval at the Trustee Meeting on 27/10/2022 of a draft CIO constitution, a new CIO was registered by the Charity Commission on 21/12/2022. During the year, we worked towards transferring the assets and facilitating a smooth and seamless transition of legal status from the Charitable Trust called The Barn Owl Trust (Charity Number 299835) to a CIO called Barn Owl Trust (1201419). All of the assets, including the staff who all had new contracts, were transferred on the 31st March 2024. From 1st April 2024, we are now operating as Barn Owl Trust. Our activities, staff, Trustees, our contact details and even our VAT number all remain the same.

The last Trustees' Report contained news of the largest legacy by far that the Barn Owl Trust has ever received. This £700,000 was included in the accounts for that year but received during the financial year covered by this report. As with all legacy income, the Trustees want to use the funds most effectively to 'conserve Barn Owls and the Environment'. Because this was such a large amount, an Extraordinary Trustees' Meeting was held in May 2023 where ideas generated by the staff, volunteers and Trustees were discussed and a plan was drawn up. We are delighted to announce that in November 2023 we recruited another member of conservation staff to expand the team and enable us to undertake more practical work and research. In February, another new post was created, a dedicated Education Officer, to update and expand our educational work. These posts were only possible because of Gillian Grimwood's wonderful legacy.

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.

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. ★

Again, thanks to increased staffing levels, we embarked upon four new research projects: one looking at the occupancy rates of different types of Barn Owl nestboxes in different positions, another looking at occupancy rates in relation to landscape variation and habitat, one is an investigation to better our understanding of Barn Owl road mortality in relation to nest site distribution, and finally, an investigation into the effects of climate change on nesting Barn Owls. There is more about this in the following Conservation Report.

Filming for the Advanced Barn Owl Surveying and Mitigation (ABOSM) course is now completed, and we hope to have it finished during the next financial year. We published our State of the UK Barn Owl Population Report 2023 in March 2024, using data collected from 43 groups across the UK. Nationally, 2023 seemed to be another good year for breeding Barn Owls across the UK. Nesting occupancy showed a fantastic 22% above average, although not quite as good as the 37% increase we saw in 2022.

Guided walks and volunteer events on our 26-acre nature reserve, the Lennon Legacy Project (LLP), brought new people to the site. The LLP has benefitted tremendously by the employment of Harry Hingston as our Reserve Officer and Volunteer Coordinator, when his Internship was completed in October. A huge amount of practical work and wildlife monitoring has been possible and during the year we recorded our first Red Deer, a Kingfisher diving in the Flo Pond and a visiting Otter. We continued to record and report on the monthly changes in our online Wildlife Diary.

Our project, in liaison with Devon Birds, to install cameras in 25 wild Barn Owl sites to minimise disturbance when monitoring was completed and proved very useful during the 2023 breeding season.

'Flying into the Future', our new presentation for schools and youth groups, was introduced during the year and through the medium of storytelling helps young people learn about Barn Owl habitat and conservation. It introduces the topic of extreme weather and climate change. This replaces the 'Wings of Change' talk which has been a staple part of the Trust's work since 1988 which can still be given in-person and online, and is available on DVD. With our new Education Officer post, we have been able to introduce Barn Owl pellet analysis workshops and going forward we plan to expand our educational work.

We continued working on the massive task of upgrading our website. This involved transferring the content of hundreds of pages into a new 'theme' in Wordpress then updating the text and page layouts, so they display well on mobiles and ipads (our previous website didn't). I am delighted to say that the new site went live in April 2024.

Despite our website having plans and videos on how to make nestboxes, we sold 723 (656 -2023) boxes during the year in addition to those erected by our staff and volunteers. Sale of boxes is an important source of income which helps support the cost of running our Conservation Team. However, for the Trust, selling nestboxes is not a commercial venture but a way of delivering evidence-based conservation objectives. Our nestboxes are a better design for Barn Owls than many of those we come across during fieldwork where nestling Barn Owls have fallen and died.

As climate change continues to increase rapidly and with nature declining globally at rates unprecedented in human history, the Climate and Ecological Emergency must be a strong focus in the coming years. It is essential that sustainability is the key to everything we do, not just at work, but in our whole lives. We will, as always, continue to give environmental and ethical consideration to all our activities here at the Trust and to the purchase of resources.

The Trust is now in its 36th year and we have a great team here. Together we've achieved a tremendous amount over the last three and a half decades. As we move forward into our first year as a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) on behalf of all of the Trustees, I would like to thank our staff, our volunteers and everyone that has supported us and who have made this possible. *Together we can make a world of difference* - Thank You All.

Keith Grant Chair of Trustees, June 2024 ★

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Conservation Report

State of the UK Barn Owl Population 2023

The most up-to-date figures on the UK Barn Owl population were published in our report: State of the UK Barn Owl Population 2023, which is based on results provided by 41 independent monitoring groups who between them checked 4,136 potential nest sites. On the whole, 2023 seemed to be another good year for breeding Barn Owls across the UK. Nesting occupancy was a fantastic 22% increase on average, although not quite as good as the 37% increase we saw in 2022. The West Midlands in particular had a great year with over 50% increases in occupancy reported by Cheshire (+82%), Shropshire (+129%) and Staffordshire (+56%). Ulster (+130%) also had a good year with a jump from 5 to 8 sites occupied - hopefully this is a trend we will see continuing in Northern Ireland. Although declines in occupancy were recorded in more regions compared to 2022, only Gloucestershire (-25%), Jersey (-36%), Oxfordshire (-56%) and Wiltshire (-11%) had declines of 10% or more.

Unfortunately, the increase in nesting occupancy was not supported by a significant increase in mean brood size, instead remaining very close to average with only a 2.7% positive change observed. Galloway (+21%) and Leicestershire (+31%) were the only regions to record more than a 20% increase in mean brood size with Derbyshire, Powys and Somerset (+19%) close behind. Unfortunately, noticeable decreases were observed in Warwickshire (-37%), Wiltshire (-24%) and Yorkshire (-34%). The higher number of birds nesting was likely because of the dry, non-harsh winter we had in 2022/2023. However, this was then followed by a year of very variable weather across the breeding period with a very wet March, heatwaves in June and September and numerous named storms. This weather variability has been highlighted by regional differences in Barn Owl breeding success and was a likely contributor to the cause of an unexceptional year for brood size.

With the recent report that global warming has exceeded 1.5 degrees across an entire year (compared with pre-industrial levels), these unpredictable weather events are undoubtedly set to continue, along with their detrimental effects on Barn Owls, Field Voles and other wildlife.

We checked 77 of our own annual monitoring sites in Devon and Cornwall of which 35 had nesting (compared to an average of 30) and an average of 3.4 young in the nest compared to 2.9 - a good year!

The Lennon Legacy Project – our nature reserve

As regular readers will know, we are extremely fortunate to have a 26-acre nature reserve thanks to the generosity of Ms Vivien Lennon, who remembered the Barn Owl Trust in her Will, and (by chance or good fortune) to the land becoming available shortly afterwards.

During the year, our intern Harry Hingston was promoted from his 'trainee' position to 'Reserve Officer and Volunteer Coordinator' and continued making fantastic progress with every aspect of his role and the Reserve he manages. Readers with a particular interest really should read the 'Wildlife Diary' which is updated every month (barnowltrust.org.uk/news-events/wildlife-diary).



Barn Owl in Wildlife Tower

Photo: David Ramsden

Highlights of the year included a Barn Owl roosting in our Wildlife Tower, seen regularly hunting in the reserve, and heard screeching most nights until it found a mate. The completion of our first Field Shelter – a dual purpose building for the goats to sleep and shelter in and for Barn Owls to hunt in, complete with a 'mouse feeding station'. And amongst all the usual sightings of flowers, grasses, insects, birds and mammals was a Stoat seen crossing the river, our orchid count reached 146, regular Kestrel hunting, Stock Doves nesting, a fantastic show of wild flowers on the previous bird-food-crop area, our first-ever Red Deer(!), a huge swarm of bees, Skylark singing its heart out, Kingfisher fishing, our first-ever Otter sighting(!), our first south-of-England-style hedge laying, the start of our second Field Shelter, and our first sighting of 'Hair Ice' (I'd not heard of it either).

Harry has been particularly good at attracting volunteers to tasks on the reserve and thanks must go to all of those that have turned out whatever the weather.

The only disappointment was our Wild Bird Food Crop. Avoiding Fodder Raddish and Forage Rape (because they're thugs) turned out to be a mistake. The crop had plenty of healthy-looking Millet (three varieties) but the seed produced was tiny and short-lived. The Sunflowers were great but their seed is also short lived. By December, pretty much all the seed had gone leaving nothing to bridge the late-winter 'hungry gap' except the sunflower seeds we scattered. We did have good autumn counts of Goldfinch, Chaffinch, and Greenfinch, plus a few Reed Bunting and others but very few Linnets compared to the 500+ we'd had in previous winters. Lesson learned. We'll include some Forage Rape next time. Another lesson learned was "don't mix Poppy seeds with other kinds". If you want your Poppies evenly distributed, you need to scatter them separately.

Gillian's Legacy – new projects funded!

Following the receipt of a substantial Legacy from the estate of Gillian Grimwood, in May 2023 the Trustees held a extraordinary meeting to consider 31 ideas for legacy expenditure put forward by our staff and volunteers.

Each idea was assigned to one of the following categories:

- ☐ Discard – the idea is not practical/it's not the right time for it.
- ☐ Just do it – good idea, let's do it using general funds.
- ☐ Let Senior Managers decide on how/when to take this idea forward.
- ☐ Let's get more information with a view to investing in it.

Amongst the 'interesting ideas' were research proposals, some of which the Trustees decided to support, not by allocating legacy income to research, but by allocating it to practical conservation work. The idea being that funding an additional conservation post allowed existing staff to have more research time. The research ideas were carefully considered to ensure that they had real conservation value.

During the year, we embarked upon four such projects;

- ☐ Looking at the occupancy rates of different types of Barn Owl nestboxes in different positions.
- ☐ Looking at occupancy rates in relation to landscape variation and habitat.
- ☐ An investigation to better our understanding of Barn Owl road mortality in relation to nest site distribution.
- ☐ Investigation into the effects of climate change on nesting Barn Owls.

During the year, 34 boxes were erected for the nestbox research projects - 24 indoor and 10 outdoor. This is 42% of the total required. Thirty-three habitat surveys were also completed during 27 field trips. For the third research project we accessed shape files for the UK road network and calculated road density within 1 km radius of known nest sites. For the fourth, we established methods of accessing temperature and precipitation data from the UK Met Office 1961 – 2100 climate projections for all 25 km-squares containing monitored nest sites in preparation for analysing Barn Owl nest occupancy and breeding success in relation to climate change.

Team changes

As already mentioned, Harry Hingston was promoted to Reserve Officer and Volunteer Co-ordinator. Our 'still-quite-new' part time ACO Tim Wilkins was joined by two new full time Assistant Conservation Officers (ACOs) Josh Case and Kate Jellyman, both excellent. Our existing ACO Dr Pip Laker was promoted to

Conservation Officer and our Conservation & Science Officer Dr Mateo Ruiz was promoted to 'Senior' Conservation & Science Officer.

As for me? Well, this is the last time I'll be contributing to an Annual Report as I'll be retiring as Head of Conservation at the end of March 2025. After a 43-year vocation in Barn Owl conservation, 37 years leading the Trust's conservation, education, and research work, and 26 years line managing our conservation staff, it's time for me to do something different and high time the Conservation Team had a new leader. So, part of my work during the year has been the creation of a 'Handover Plan' working closely with Mateo, who I'm very pleased to say, will be leading the team from 1st October 2024.

I'm extremely pleased with performance right across the Conservation Team, and delighted that in February 2024 we were joined by Jess Munday as our first Education Officer – an area in which she already has a wealth of experience – AND I am very happy to be leaving the team in such capable hands.



Mateo with road casualties

Photo: Matt Twiggs

Fieldwork trips

With more conservation staff time (thanks to Gillian's legacy), a staggering 204 trips were conducted during the year and this included 75 visits to Annual Monitoring Sites, the erection of 66 Barn Owl nestboxes, 3 Tawny Owl nestboxes and 1 Little Owl nestbox, repairs to 5 Barn Owl nestboxes and 12 Barn Owl nestbox clear outs. Special thanks must go to Jaz and the members of her Nestbox Production Team for building us all those wonderful boxes! We also conducted an additional 9 Habitat Advisory visits, 7 surveys, 2 filming trips, 17 camera installations/fixes and 5 rehab/release trips.

Incoming owls

Twenty-six casualty owls were received during the year, of which 13 were Barn Owls, 12 were Tawny Owls and 1 was a Little Owl. Of the 26, 4 died, 3 were euthanised and we are very pleased to report that 19 were released (8 cold releases, 11 supported releases). This is an extremely high proportion. In addition, we took in 8 Tawny Owls and 3 Barn Owls which were re-homed in our sanctuary.

Talks

Only one 'Wings of Change' school visit talk was given during the year, quite possibly our last, because we invested lots of time in creating a talk to replace it called 'Flying into the Future' three of which were given just before the year ended. Where the 'Wings of Change' was a story about things that have happened to Barn Owls since WW2, 'Flying into the future' starts in the present day and looks at things that will happen to Barn Owls in the next 20 or so years. As such, it is an excellent vehicle for teaching young people how Barn Owls live now and how they are likely to be affected by climate change impacts.

Eighteen 'Restoring the Balance' talks (about Barn Owls and the work of the Trust) were given to adult groups, 2 of which were online. With the Trust's support, our Head of Conservation presented his own 'Climate and Ecological Crisis? What's all the fuss about?' talk 23 times during the year. We also created and delivered several bespoke talks, including another 1 for the Conservation Chat UK 'Saving Species Conference' and several at our own Nestbox Workshop events.

Enquiries

During the year, a staggering 17,932 communications or transactions were recorded on our database of which there were 7,282 email enquiries and responses. Nestbox enquiries alone accounted for 1,192!

Other Information provision

Of course, our website deals with many more enquires than we ever could in person and received a staggering 919,210 page views in the year by 473,501 unique visitors. Our YouTube channel which hosts our short information/instructional films had 146,224 views in the year and reached 5,100 subscribers. Our most popular video 'An introduction to the Barn Owl' reached 557,875 views.



Kate erecting an outdoor nestbox

Photo: Cam Crook

During the year we continued working on the vast task of upgrading our website. This involved countless hours of staff time, but worthwhile as we have well over 1,000 visitors a day, 473,501 unique visitors in the last year. We had to transfer the content of hundreds of existing pages into the new site and updating the text and page layouts so they display well on mobiles and pads. At the year's end the new site was virtually ready to launch.

Events

Once again we attended the Devon County Show, the Royal Cornwall Show, Celebrate Start Bay, FarmWise, and Conservation Chat UK's Conference. Additionally, we ran two Nestbox Workshops and a Pellet Analysis Workshop for the National Trust.

Training Courses

Our online training course Barn Owl Ecology Survey & Signs continues to be the main source of Barn Owl training for Ecological Consultants and others. The creation of our Advanced Barn Owl Surveying and Mitigation (ABOSM) online training course is still ongoing due to the pressure of other work.

Raising awareness of our situation

Since the Barn Owl Trust started in 1988, we have taken every opportunity to raise awareness of the Ecological Crisis – the fact that, for example, 48% of the World's bird species are in decline and 13% face extinction – and the Climate Crisis – the fact that we are still "on a highway to climate hell with our foot on the accelerator" (UN Sec. General). The accelerating rise in atmospheric carbon shows absolutely no sign of reducing and the root of the problem, fossil fuel burning, is still increasing. The year Feb 23 to Feb 24 saw an average temperature of more than 1.5°C above pre-industrial (*Copernicus*). We are likely to pass 2°C in 2040-50 (*Hansen et al.*) beyond which we'll most likely see the collapse of civilisation. By 2100, we are like to enter the range of 3.2-5.4°C (*IPCC*) which is enough to wipe out most life on Earth. If we don't sort this out, nothing else is going to matter. There are no Barn Owls on a dead planet. The solutions are well known, and we all have a voice.

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

David Ramsden MBE
Head of Conservation



Financial Report

After last's year's amazing legacies and unusually high income we ended this year with a deficit of £62,035.

As at 31st March 2024, all assets were transferred from The Barn Owl Trust (Charity Number 299835) to the new CIO called Barn Owl Trust (1201419) as a Donation of £1,473,557. This was made up of unrestricted funds of £1,457,842 and restricted funds of £15,715.

The figures in this year's Annual Report are much smaller than usual as we have had to show the Statements of Financial Activities and Balance Sheets for both The Barn Owl Trust and the new Charitable Incorporated Organisation Barn Owl Trust. A full copy of both sets of accounts are available on the Charity Commission website by searching the charity numbers.

Prior to all assets being transferred to the new CIO, the total incoming resources for the year ending 31 March 2024 were £413,029 a decrease of £910,012 (69%) on the year ending March 2023 (£1,323,041). This significant change was almost entirely accounted for by the change in legacy income during the year. Combined income from grants, legacies and donations saw a decrease of 79% on the previous year at £241,501 (2023 - £1,140,914) accounting for 58% of total income (2023 - 86%).

We saw a 23% decrease in individual donations at £27,964 (2023 - £36,134). Our Friends Scheme income remained almost the same as last year, but we did see a 7% decrease in income from Adoptions. Volunteer fundraising increased by 122% to £2,898 (2023 - £1,304).

Legacy and Gifts In Memorium income were down by 91% at £86,432 (2023 - £962,055) accounting for 21% of total income for the year (2023 – 73%). 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 financial reserves to survive the years we are in deficit.

Legacies not only enable the Trust to continue to achieve so much general conservation work, but they also allow us to invest in special projects such as the Kingfisher wall, the building of our new website, the purchase of the Lennon Legacy Project land (LLP), the creation of the two ponds in the LLP, the Meeting Room and the Solar Project. This year they allowed us to allocate funds to build our new energy efficient and environmentally-friendly offices. The Trustees have developed a plan to effectively use the exceptional legacy received in the last financial year, which were shown as an accrual in the accounts, and two new posts were created during the year.

We have produced 10% more nestboxes in the year: 723 (2023 - 656), although income from nestbox sales has only increased by 5%, expenditure has gone up by 23%. Despite the rise in material and staff costs we have tried to hold the prices and absorb the VAT cost.

The Nestbox Team of five worked seven days a week between them during the year. Sale of nestboxes is a significant source of income which helps to support the cost of running the Trust and of course provides high-quality boxes which we use ourselves.

Income from our Barn Owl Ecology, Surveys and Signs (BOESS) online course was, as expected, significantly lower than the previous year which was unusually high as it was the first year since 2020 that the course had run and there was a huge waiting list. One hundred people registered for the course during the year.

Overall expenditure increased by 18% to £475,070 (2023- £404,246). Expenditure on Charitable Activities was £458,328; 19% higher than 2023 (£384,436). The Conservation Team was increased by two posts to enable us to undertake more work including new research projects and the cost of practical work increased by 19% to £235,649 (2023 - £197,586). The Information and Advice service costs increased by 21% to £120,277 (2023 - £99,636). All salaries were increased by 5% across the scale during the year. Total salaries increased by 18% to £296,636 (2023 - £252,433).

The cost of fundraising decreased by 10% to £11,079 this year from £12,332 in 2023. Fundraising still accounts for just 2% of our total expenditure, and includes time spent applying for grants. We spent 24% less on promotional goods £5,663 (2023 - £7,478); this generated £15,173 income (2023 - £14,939), 4% of total income.

Support costs include telephone, repairs, overheads such as insurance, water and electricity, stationary, management, cost of payroll, and office cleaning. These necessary costs have increased by 15% over the year to £36,893 (2023 - £32,121) and account for 8% of expenditure, of this our management costs are primarily due to our accountancy fees which have increased due to VAT registration; they are now 3.7% of total spend at £17,640 (2022 - £21,441). Despite this, because of our volunteers, we can keep management and other administration costs down. Volunteers continue to be an invaluable asset to the Trust, assisting in every aspect of the work including practical tasks, administration, clerical work, and fundraising, as well as the provision of professional services.

Of the unrestricted funds available to the CIO, the Trustees have allocated £484,249 as a reserve for the next financial year, and £685,733 for other projects including the funding of our new Education Officer role and Assistant Conservation Officer role going forward, as well as several research projects, leaving a general fund of £287,825 (2023 - £132,000).

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



THE BARN OWL TRUST		Unrestricted	Restricted	Total	Unrestricted	Restricted	Total
		2024		2024			2023
	Notes	£	£	£	£	£	£
Income from:							
Donations and legacies	2	239,501	2,000	241,501	1,115,994	24,920	1,140,914
Charitable activities	2	123,142	-	123,142	149,185	-	149,185
Other trading activities	2	16,866	-	16,866	16,990	-	16,990
Other Income	2	31,520	-	31,520	15,952	-	15,952
Total		411,029	2,000	413,029	1,298,121	24,920	1,323,041
Expenditure on:							
Raising funds	3	16,742	-	16,742	19,810	-	19,810
Charitable activities	3	448,882	9,440	458,322	369,853	14,583	384,436
Donation to new CIO	3	1,457,842	15,715	1,473,557	-	-	-
Total		1,923,466	25,155	1,948,621	389,663	14,583	404,246
Net (expenditure)/income		(1,512,437)	(23,155)	(1,535,592)	908,458	10,337	918,795
Transfers between funds		8,543	(8,543)	-	2,601	(2,601)	-
Net movement in funds		(1,503,894)	(31,698)	(1,535,592)	911,059	7,736	918,795
Reconciliation of funds:							
Total funds brought forward		1,503,894	31,698	1,535,592	592,835	23,962	616,797
Total funds carried forward		-	-	-	1,503,894	31,698	1,535,592



SOFA Note 2.	2024	2023
Income	£	£
(a) Donations and legacies:		
Grants and donations	155,069	178,859
Legacies	86,432	962,055
	241,501	1,140,914
(b) Charitable activities:		
Nestboxes	78,360	74,451
Training courses	26,600	57,743
Other	18,182	16,991
	123,142	149,185
(c) Other trading activities:		
Fundraising	1,693	2,051
Promotional goods	15,173	14,939
	16,866	16,990
(d) Other income:		
Solar generation	5,240	4,890
Bank interest	25,264	5,051
Other	1,016	611
Sale of fixed assets	-	5,400
	31,520	15,952
	413,029	1,323,041

SOFA Note 3	Activities	Governance	Total	Total
Expenditure	Undertaken	and Support	2024	2023
	Directly	Costs	2024	2023
	£	£	£	£
Raising funds:				
Fundraising	11,709	-	11,709	12,332
Promotional goods	5,663	-	5,663	7,478
	16,742	-	16,742	19,810
Charitable activities:				
Nestboxes	57,434	-	57,434	46,593
Training course	5,375	-	5,375	6,000
Practical work	235,643	-	235,643	197,586
Information and advice	120,277	-	120,277	99,636
Support costs	-	36,893	36,893	32,121
Independent examination	-	2,700	2,700	2,500
	418,729	39,593	458,322	384,436
Donation to New CIO				
	1,473,557	-	1,473,557	-
	1,909,028	39,593	1,948,621	404,246

BARN OWL TRUST	Unrestricted	Restricted	Total
Statement of financial activity	2024		
	Notes	£	£
Income from:			
Donations from old Charity	2	1,457,842	15,715
Total		1,457,842	15,715
Expenditure on:			
Raising funds	3	-	-
Charitable activities	3	-	-
Total		-	-
Net (expenditure)/income		1,457,842	15,715
Transfers between funds		-	-
Net movement in funds		1,457,842	15,715
Total funds brought forward		-	-
Total funds at 31st March 2024		1,457,842	15,715



is something we have heard from several charities we have applied to during the year. Combined with the cost of living increases which have affected everyone, including our donors, our staff and our own overheads, this has led to the deficit in the year.

Volunteer fundraising can make a significant difference so we would be delighted to hear from anyone that wants to hold a coffee morning, run a marathon, make jam or anything else to raise funds to support our work.

We are as always extremely grateful to our supporters, Friends, individuals, businesses and charitable trusts that continue to support our work. Thank you all so much from everyone here at the Trust. We couldn't do it without you.

Mark Pountney *MAAT - Honorary Treasurer*

Financial Report continued

However, our fixed assets and stock account for £288,432 (2023 - £132,000) of this and considering the regular shortfall in income vs. expenditure (excluding legacies) we have had to start drawing on these reserves. We are constantly looking for ways to increase our regular income.

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. This



Thank You

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

Alice Noakes Memorial Charitable Trust	The Cobalt Trust
Dumbreck Charity	The Diana Edgson Wright Charitable Trust
Edith Murphy Foundation	The Elmgrant Trust
Gerefa Charitable Trust	The Ian Askew Charitable Trust
Guernsey Animal Aid	The Jack Patston Charitable Trust
Harbinson Charitable Trust	The Keith Ewart Charitable Trust
Harry Walter Faulkner Charitable Trust	The Leslie Mary Carter Charitable Trust
Joan Cullen Charitable Trust	The Lord Faringdon Charitable Trust
John Swire 1989 Charitable Trust	The Panton Trust
Lowther Charitable Settlement	The Patricia Routledge Foundation
Mabel Cooper Charity	The Pennycress Trust
Martin Wills Wildlife Maintenance Trust	The Ratcliffe Foundation
P F Charitable Trust	The Robert Clutterbuck Charitable Trust
Sabina Sutherland Charitable Trust	The Valerie Ayton Charitable Trust
Scott (Eredine) Charitable Trust	The Walker 597 Animal Trust
Sir John and Lady Heathcoat Amory's Charitable Trust	Three Owls Bird Sanctuary and Reserve
The Audrey Emma Lamb Charitable Trust	Veterinary Hospital Group
The Blair Foundation	Wildlife Watching Supplies

During this period we received legacies from:

Gillian Grimwood, Pamela Fraser Bewley, Irene Mary Draycott, Sheila Lesley Howard,
Mr Les Withey, Mrs Enid Sage and Dallice Merrick.

and Gifts in Memory of:

Sue Bragg, Michael David Davis, Janet Crosby, Dorothy Mellersh, Irene Watson, Timothy Butler, Marlene Reeve, William Trevennen,
John Scott, Geoffrey Hugh Richardson, Rebecca Oldfield, Douglas Maclean, Dorothy Reed, Shirley Margaret Davies, Walter Gee,
Betty Patricia Waring, Jean Hoyland Green, David Parish, June Ann Boyce, Alma Mary Coates, Gillian Ann Hales
and Catherine Violet Shepherd née Fortin.

Rest In Peace

Donations from sponsored events and other fundraising were received from:

Josh McDowall for running the London Marathon, Stephen Powles for holding a raffle at his Tawny Owl talks,
Tracey Morris & Shelley Wright for sale of their Owl Mug Cosies, Women's Institute Exminster for holding a Tombola,
Angela Brown and Karen Chelsey for selling homemade Calendars and Tetra Tech for matching the funds they raised,
Tim and Jean Reavell for raising funds through the sale of aluminium cans,
Jennie Webber for donating her profits from her Wildlife Drawing classes, Kim Jones for the sale of Christmas cards,
Animal Care Students of Petroc College for raising funds,
and for Bird World for donating their profits from an ABWAK (Association for British and Irish Wild Animal Keepers) workshop.

Thank you all so much for your support



Restore Nature Now!



David and I attended the [Restore Nature Now](#) March on 22nd June representing the Barn Owl Trust, alongside a total of 350 environmental groups, as well as tens of thousands of members of the public.

I was blown away by the breadth of society captured by those attending, as well as the amazing effort put into costumes, clever banners and incredible props. The message was clear we - must act now for nature and climate. The Labour government has a big responsibility in ensuring nature and the environment is embedded within all policy decisions.

The Barn Owl Trust, as well as many other nature and climate groups, are united in providing five clear actions for the UK government to follow:

1. A pay rise for nature - Farmers manage 70% of UK land and have a huge role to play in supporting environmental recovery. But they need more support. We want to see the nature and climate-friendly farming budget doubled.

2. Make polluters pay - Big businesses; from water, to retail, to energy, all further environmental decline. We want new rules to make them contribute to nature and climate recovery, and an end to new fossil fuels.

3. More space for nature - Just 3% of English land and 8% of waters are properly protected for nature and wildlife. To meet UK nature and climate commitments we need to expand and improve protected areas, and ensure public land and National Parks contribute more to recovery.

4. A right to a healthy environment - Limited access to nature, and pollution in the air and water, affects everyone's health. We're calling for an Environmental Rights Bill which would drive better decisions for nature, improve public health and access to nature.

5. Fair and effective climate action - We cannot save nature without solving the climate crisis. We want investment in warm homes and lower bills by increasing home energy efficiency, supporting active travel and public transport, and replacing polluting fossil fuels with affordable renewables to ensure we at least halve UK emissions by 2030.

I have many anxieties surrounding the climate and nature crises we are observing, and it was inspiring to see so many different people and groups pulling in the same direction. It is more important than ever that we all keep pushing for change, and nature is relying on us all to start conversations with friends, families, and strangers.



Collectively, by making positive environmental lifestyle changes, getting involved in direct action, volunteering with local wildlife and climate groups, and staying informed on biodiversity conservation we will make a difference!

Josh Case
Assistant Conservation Officer

New Website Goes Live



Our team have been working diligently to get the new [website](#) up and running, and it went live on Thursday 25th April 2024.

We had to shut the old site down for 3 days before then to allow us to make all the changes needed and test everything was working, so we very much hope it didn't cause anyone any problems. We did have a link on the maintenance page to a previous version of the website which contained all the information, as well as our contact details.

We've re-designed over 100 pages, but we've still got hundreds more to go as our website is an encyclopaedia of Barn Owl information! We will be working away on this project for a few more months yet.

We very much hope that you like the final product!

Ulster Wildlife Visit



Mateo (left) with Katy and Ross from Ulster Wildlife
Photo: Katy Bell

In October 2022, I was lucky enough to be one of two members of our Conservation Team to visit Northern Ireland to exchange ideas and experiences with members of the Ulster Wildlife (UW). We were wonderfully guided by Katy Bell and Ross McIlwrath, who are Senior Conservation Officer and Priority Species Officer, respectively, and in July this year it was their turn to visit us. Barn Owls remain extremely rare in Northern Ireland, so an important objective of UW's visit was to see how conservation work is done where Barn Owls are relatively more abundant. We packed as much as possible into three busy days!

Fortunately, their arrival on Monday 22nd coincided with some fine weather, and during the morning they were treated to a tour of the LLP Nature Reserve by our Reserve Officer, Harry Hingston. Slow Worms and Common Toads are both absent from Ireland, so close encounters with both of these species were particularly interesting for our guests. The walk around the reserve gave a valuable opportunity to compare the results of different habitat management techniques that we employ to maintain rough grassland as Barn Owl foraging habitat. Surprisingly, Field Voles are virtually absent from Northern Ireland, so seeing evidence of these rodents in prime habitat was fairly novel for Katy and Ross.

In the afternoon, they accompanied me across Dartmoor to carry out nestbox checks and a habitat survey as part of our current nestbox research project. We accessed two new tree-mounted nestboxes and found that both had been occupied by Grey Squirrels. This species can carry squirrel pox without suffering symptoms, but when they transmit the disease to the UK's native Red Squirrels it has lethal consequences. As Katy and Ross work hard to conserve the Red Squirrel in Northern Ireland, they were understandably concerned at the abundance of the invasive Grey Squirrel in our landscapes. However, our outing took a turn for the better when, in the course of our habitat survey, we were invited to inspect some stables. Inside we found very fresh evidence of a Barn Owl roosting there, thus adding to our catalogue of known sites.

Further field work on Tuesday involved going to a barn that the Trust has visited yearly since 2003, as part of our ongoing

monitoring of the Devon Barn Owl population. This beautiful old barn lies nestled in rough grassland in the South Hams. An adult female was quietly hiding inside the nestbox when I peered in, and the UW team helped as I carefully fitted a BTO ring to the bird's leg. On Wednesday, we visited another traditional building in the South Hams, this time to erect an indoor nestbox. Katy and Ross quickly got the hang of our safety equipment, which includes rope and harness system to avert disaster in the unlikely event of someone falling from the ladder.

During their time with us, Katy and Ross observed our Assistant Conservation Officer, Kate Jellyman, handling a Barn Owl owlet. The youngster had been under close observation in our 'bird room', due to being very underweight on arrival. Having recovered well, 'Annie' was now being transferred to one of our hospital aviaries to further regain strength. They also watched Kate conduct a

thorough health check on a newly arriving Barn Owl. Saving the lives of individual Barn Owls anywhere is immensely rewarding, but the species is so rare in Northern Ireland that re-releasing rehabilitated owls can also improve population size there.



Young Tawny Owl
Photo: Mateo Ruiz

Tawny Owls are absent from Northern Ireland, so the Ulster Wildlife team were excited to see some in the Ashburn valley. The three youngsters were almost certainly the brood that was ringed in the LLP pole-box

In addition to habitat surveys, Barn Owl field work and rehabilitation, we tried to share how we record data, facilitate Barn Owl conservation action by others, and respond to situations where Barn Owls are at risk due to human activity. We also enjoyed a fabulous evening watching a brood of branching Tawny Owls and a fly-by Nightjar, both of which are absent from Northern Ireland. In return, it was enriching to hear from Katy and Ross about their experiences and methods where Barn Owls are so scarce and share their world with Pine Martens and Long-eared Owls. This has been a huge learning opportunity, and we are grateful that our collaboration with Ulster Wildlife continues to grow.

Dr Mateo Ruiz
Senior Conservation & Science Officer

In Memory of Bill

Bill Bishop 1931 - 2024



My Dad was a keen supporter of the Barn Owl Trust for 26 years. He helped the Trust with bird recovery, bird release, and surveying, as well as adopting an Owl and being a Friend of the Trust.

When I moved to Devon in 1996, I soon became aware of the vital work carried out by the Barn Owl Trust and both my parents took an interest in my volunteer work and also became supporters. We took part in the sponsored walks and other events.

My Dad's love of nature and the countryside started when he was evacuated to his auntie who lived in Tring, Hertfordshire during the Second World War. When he was older, and after working as a cartographer before and while serving in the army, he moved back to Tring to gain experience of life working on a farm before starting a job a few years later as a Health and Safety Inspector of agriculture working in Bedfordshire. He did this job for the rest of his working life before retiring and moving to Norfolk where he did voluntary work for Welney Wildlife Trust.

When my Mum died in 2007, Dad moved to Devon and lived in the same village as me and kept active walking and birdwatching into his nineties. He passed away in February 2024 after struggling with ill health and fragility. As a tribute for his funeral service, I wrote a short poem about a Barn Owl hunting over three of the landscapes he lived in - Hertfordshire, Kent and Devon. My Dad was a kind and gentle soul.

Simon Bishop
BOT Supporter



A heart shape ghostly face emerges from the hay barn.
Along Cow lane, hunting low over hedgerows verges and banks.
The late summer breeze dries freshly harvested sheaves.
Quartering the farmyard as the milk float departs before dawn.

Screeching across the valley as the Nailbourne rises.
Perched on the stile overlooking the church graveyard.
The recreation field, school and endless orchards in view.
Two horse chestnut trees cast shadows across the cricket ground at sunset.

Floating twisting and turning on silent wings.
Over rough grassland and disused railway lines.
The river flows and meanders through the landscape of this valley.
The place where my Dad settled in his twilight years.

In Memoriam

The Trust has received legacies from the estates of:

Barbara Pope

and donations in memory of:

Brenda Anderson, Susan Child, Rosemary Ann Elsworth, Catherine Violet Shepherd née Fortin, Lilian Yvonne Gaunt, Ann Green, Jean Harvey, Lyn Webster Wilde, David Young and Mick Manwaring.

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

Hollow Tree Haven



The beautiful cover photo for this issue of Feedback came from Tara Simms, who discovered a pair of Barn Owls using a spectacular tree cavity on her farm in Northamptonshire.

As natural cavity nesters, these types of nest spaces are exactly the sort of places Barn Owls have been using for hundreds of years. Unfortunately, there is a severe lack of natural nest spaces these days, so we tend to install nestboxes to help mitigate this.

Thank you Tara for sending us these amazing photos and we cannot wait to hear if there is successful breeding this year!

If you know of a Barn Owl nest site, please do record it on our national survey website: www.barnowlsurvey.org.uk.

Fundraising Fun

Annual Prize Draw

The Annual Barn Owl Trust Prize Draw has now been launched and, thanks to the generosity of many businesses, the prizes are already looking exciting! Last year was an incredible success, and this year we hope that many of you will support the Draw again as every penny goes towards our work here at the Trust.

One of our prizes last year was a beautiful Barn Owl sculpture by Scott of Scott's Chainsaw Carving. These carvings are becoming a staple of our Draw and prove to be a popular prize! The prizes so far this year include:

Scottish Seabird Centre - Family ticket
Bletchley Park - Family season ticket
Eat Weeds - Book bundle
Becky Falls - Entry ticket for 2
Naturetrek - £250 voucher
Piper's Farm - Voucher
Epona Art - Barn Owl Sculpture
Stratford Butterfly Farm - Entry ticket
Frobishers - Mixed box of 24 soft drinks
Stover Golf Club - 2 vouchers to use for indoor golf simulator
Beehive - DIY bee hotel kit & backpack
Scott's Chainsaw Carving - Owl carving
Anonymous Donation - £15 All4One Gift Card
Haynes Motor Museum - 2 Adult & 2 Children tickets
Farmer Palmers Farm Park - A Family ticket
Court Farm Country Park - A Family voucher
Luke Western Art - The Best Nest book and Barn Owl Print
Rex Latham Blacksmith - Hand-made owl letter opener
Dartmoor Lodge Hotel - Carvery for two
Totnes Rare Breeds Farm - Entry ticket
Lydford Gorge Alpacas - Alpaca trek for 2
Adam Henson's Cotswolds Farm Park - Family Ticket
Buckfast Butterfly & Otter Sanctuary - Ticket for 2
Cannon Hall Farm - 4 Admission passes
Babbacombe Model Village - Entry Ticket
Bocketts Farm Park - Entry ticket for 2
Anderson Press - 'The Secret Garden Rewilded' by Anthea Simmons



Tickets are on sale now - £1 per ticket, or £5 for a book of 5. The draw takes place on Wednesday 11th December so there is

still plenty of time to purchase your tickets. To buy online please make an online donation putting 'Draw Tickets' in the reason for donation box, alternatively you can send us a cheque made payable to Barn Owl Trust with your ticket stubs, or stating how many tickets you require.

The prize draw list is very varied for this year and we have prizes from businesses all over the country, giving all our supporters an opportunity to enjoy a prize. A full list of prizes can be found on our website (www.barnowltrust.org.uk/annual-prize-draw-2024) and keep an eye out on the page as more prizes get added throughout the coming months. Good Luck!

Sam Tully
Legacy Officer



Photo provided by Janet Rutter

Dear Team,
 Just wanted to let you know that I have finally taken up my 2022 raffle prize, which was 2 nights at Coppet Hill in Dorset. I have attached some photos. We had an amazing time, with Ellen, the perfect hostess. We stayed in Little Coppet, a land pod sited on a hill. So fab views and lots of wildlife (deer, buzzards, rabbits). We didn't observe any Barn Owls flying, but we saw the mother and owlets on the nestcam. We recommend Coppet Hill to anyone looking for the perfect off grid experience.

Thank you for my brilliant prize.
 Regards,
 Janet Rutter

Owly News

Inspired by owls!



Julia handling a Barn Owlet at one of BOT's monitoring sites in 2011
 Photo provided

My love of Barn Owls began when I was at primary school (1989 - 1996). I went to Doddyscombsleigh primary school in the Teign Valley. The Barn Owl Trust came to visit our school and gave a wonderful talk about Barn Owls. As with the modern day talks, the Trust brought an owl! The owl was released into our school hall which had very high ceilings. I have strong memories of the speaker struggling to get the owl down! At the end of the talk, each pupil was given a lovely story about Barn Owls - I still have mine!

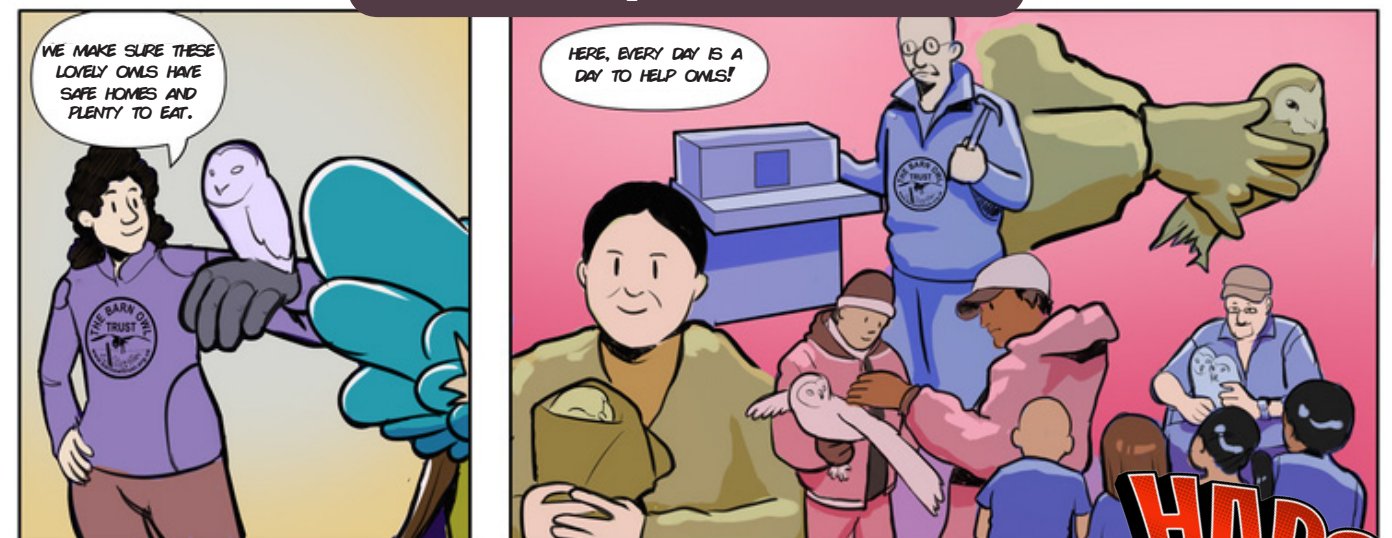
My passion for ecology grew in secondary school when I studied environmental studies at GCSE and Biology and Environmental Science at A Level. I then went on to study Countryside & Environmental Management at Harper Adams University in Shropshire and graduated with a First Class BSc Honours Degree. After graduating I started my career as an ecologist. I spent my spare time volunteering with the Devon Bat Group, the Vincent Wildlife Trust, the Barn Owl Trust and a number of other conservation organisations working with protected species in Devon.

Back in 2008, I undertook the Barn Owl Trust's Barn Owl Ecology, Surveys & Signs course. This course reignited my passion for Barn Owls, so in 2010-2011 I assisted Matthew Twigg, the former BOT Senior Conservation Officer, with his visits to the Trust's annual monitoring sites. We checked known breeding sites for nesting owls and were ringing any owlets that were present (photo attached). My experience with the Barn Owl Trust enabled me to apply for Natural England's Barn Owl survey licence. I have been an ecologist for 18 years now.

My children attend Dunsford Community Academy in the Teign Valley. We set up an Eco-committee last year and now have a school full of passionate pupils, keen to help the environment. As the volunteer Eco-coordinator, I made it a priority to invite the Barn Owl Trust to our school. Jess and her team brought Baley the Barn Owl to the school in March and gave a very impactful presentation about how climate change could impact Barn Owls. She also gave a very engaging workshop on pellet analysis - the children didn't want the workshop to end! Judging by the feedback from the children, the Barn Owl Trust have successfully sparked a passion for wildlife and may even have created the next generation of conservationists.

Julia Balfour

A Comic Strip with a Difference



In April 2021, Clean Planet Foundation launched a children's comic called HAPSIE (a play on the word happy) for ages 7-11. The comic is released monthly, alongside online content and a hardback annual. It's fun and silly but always has a positive message about the world – and fixing it. HAPSIE was part of Clean Planet Foundation's feature in the United Nations COP26 Climate Change Publication, while Clean Planet Foundation's Clean Planet Peninsula project was recently featured across BBC News.

Every character in the comic tackles an environmental issue. The Eyes of Hope feature shares the work of real organisations. In one issue the character Hope meets the Barn Owl Trust and learns about Barn Owls, the hazards they're facing and the people who are helping them! Alongside the illustrated comic, there is a Q&A piece on Barn Owl decline and how the Barn Owl Trust works to conserve them in the wild. You can see the full comic strip here: www.hapsie.com/post/eyes-of-hope-barn-owl-trust-eh47.

Poetry Competition 2024

Calling All Poets!

We are delighted to announce our eighth poetry competition and invite **YOU** to take part!

This Year's Theme: Empowering Earth.

Explore the beauty and inspiration found in nature through your poetry. Let your words paint vivid landscapes, capture serene moments, and echo the calls of our wonderful planet.

Supporting a Worthy Cause

All donations from the competition will support our vital conservation work and provide care for injured owls. Your participation will not only showcase your poetic talent but will also contribute to the preservation of wildlife.

Entries will be accepted from 1st October 2024, with the closing deadline of 31st January 2025. We will announce the winners in our Spring 2025 edition of Feedback. The winning poems, along with a selection of the best entries, will be published in Volume 8 of our 'Wildlife Words' Anthology which will be available to purchase via our webshop. The competition is open to all writers and there is no entry form required or limit to the number of entries you make. There is an entry donation of £5 per poem (send a cheque or make a donation via our [website](http://www.barnowltrust.org.uk)). This is a fantastic opportunity to have your work published and read by a wider audience.

****Join us in celebrating nature and making a difference. Submit your poem today!****

More Owly News!

Tawny Owlet in Trouble



Douglas used the information available on our website to assess and help this malnourished Tawny Owlet. Photo Provided.

Just a big thank you for giving me courage and info to help a starving Tawny Owlet now successfully back with its family in the garden. Great feeling and very privileged to see the owlets fluttering about at dusk. I wouldn't normally get involved but found one parent was dead on the lawn, probably killed fighting Jackdaws, hopefully me being able to feed this smaller one, that at first looked like it wouldn't make it, gave the remaining owl a chance to feed the other. Now, one week on, both owlets are fluttering around together at the bottom of garden. I guess you don't always succeed, but amazing when things go ok!

Douglas Francis

Getting Crafty!

We always love to hear from our supporters and earlier this year Ros Hay, a long-time supporter of the Trust, got in touch to let us know how much her grandchildren (9 and 13 years old) had enjoyed the owly activities we had sent them as part of their Adoption renewal packs. Thank you for the photos Ros and well done Niamh and Isla!



"Thank you for the wonderful things that you sent in Niamh's renewal pack. We had fun at the weekend and here is Niamh with her completed owl."

"Here is a painting done by Niamh and Isla (my granddaughters) using my water colour set. It was a lovely project for half-term. Thank you!!"



The Barn Owl Trust hopes to inspire more young people to learn about Barn Owls and take an active role in helping wildlife and protecting our planet for the future. If you are a young person and you would like to find out more about Barn Owls, check out the Kid's Stuff pages on our website at www.barnowltrust.org.uk/kids-stuff. Here you can find lots of amazing facts about Barn Owls and fun free activities to do. Keep your eye on our website for a 'new look' Owlet Kid's Club coming soon. We love to hear about the Owly things you have created. If you have a photo of your artwork that you would like to show off, email it to education@barnowltrust.org.uk. You may find yourself in the next edition of Feedback or The Flyer!

Amara the Barn Owl

The village of Newbridge, here on the Isle of Wight, has wonderful Barn Owl habitat. With its rough stream banks, wildflower meadows and long grassy field margins, Barn Owls want nothing more than to live here. So, it was with the help of some kind villagers that a Barn Owl nestbox, complete with a night vision trap camera outside, was erected in my garden in April 2023. Almost immediately Jackdaws (as fellow cavity nesters) moved in. Soon after though I was able to use my camera to watch as a female Barn Owl stormed the box and successfully evicted the Jackdaws. All the while, the male Barn Owl sat and observed from a branch nearby, confident his mate had everything under control. They moved in that night.

Between the first and second week of July, three owlets were born. At first, I only thought there were two until I noticed the eldest owlet passing food received from Dad into the box. Then, a week later, a much smaller owlet suddenly appeared on the tray with its older siblings to watch the world go by. I named them Amelia (named after pioneering Aviator Amelia Earhart), Atlas and youngest Amara (meaning eternally lovely/grace). All three owlets learned to fly within four days of each other and visits to the box from the eldest two became less frequent by late September. However, Amelia would often return just to sit with Amara who appeared reluctant to leave. I did notice from video footage he found putting any pressure on his right leg painful, was still smaller than his elder brother and his call remained a piercing 'baby' screech.



By the following February, Amara was fast approaching eight months old. His leg was still barely usable and so he had chosen to roost nearby to his parents, returning to them each night. Quite incredibly, Mum and Dad recognised he was unable to hunt for himself and through severe gales, torrential rain and less food availability continued to feed him. Mum even continued to show affection rather than pushing him away. That was until the parents

began their courtship and preparations for a new breeding period... Amara started trying to intercept food gifts from his Dad, obviously meant for Mum during the laying period.

Amara was still asking for food by 31st March 2024, and whilst Dad was happy to oblige, trail cam footage showed that Mum had had enough. One day, she suddenly physically pushed him off the roof of the nesting box. It was now time for her to focus on her new impending brood. That is the last time I saw Amara. Although I do not know what became of him, it was quite remarkable to observe a pair of Barn Owls willingly feeding and sustaining an injured owlet for such a long time beyond the typical period of dependency. For the trap camera videos documenting this tale, head to Joanna's Instagram page at [@island_garden_guru](https://www.instagram.com/island_garden_guru).

Photos Provided.

Joanna Cowan

Team Talk

Hello and Goodbyes

Since the last issue of Feedback we have said our farewells to Admin Assistant, Lucy Bruckner, and Assistant Conservation Officer, Tim Wilkins, who both left the Trust in the spring. We want to thank them for all they brought to the Trust and wish them all the best for the future.

We are delighted to introduce you to the newest members of the BOT Team, Rob Tilsley and Claire van Walsum. Rob has joined the Admin Team full time as an Administrator and IT Support Officer and Claire is working part time as a Barn Assistant.

Rob has lived in Devon for nearly 20 years and been amazed by the wildlife, having encountered, (among other things), a Basking Shark swimming very close to shore, Nightjars, and Bioluminescent Centipedes. These experiences added to a lifelong passion for wildlife and nature, and whilst Rob hasn't worked in conservation before, he is absolutely thrilled to get the chance to contribute to furthering the fantastic and important work of the Trust.

Claire feels fortunate to have spent her entire life in Devon, where she enjoys exploring the breathtaking countryside with her Sprocker Spaniel, Acorn (see photo below). Dartmoor is particularly special to her, and as she navigates the joys of motherhood with her energetic two-year-old, Mia, she delights in watching her discover the wonders of nature for the very first time.

Rob Tilsley
IT Support Officer/Administrator



Hello Everyone! I'm Rob, and I joined the Barn Owl Trust in April this year. As the IT Support Officer and Administrator, I've had the privilege of working alongside an incredible team. Their dedication, passion, and vast knowledge have left me in awe. Part of my role involves answering the phone, the sheer range and scope of the enquiries that come in has been mind boggling! People phone in from all over the country, sometimes

even from other countries, and the team here always know the answer to queries and give such brilliant practical help to a huge range of issues. It's truly an honour to be here.

Claire van Walsum
Barn Assistant

Hi, I'm Claire and I started working with Jaz and the rest of the Barn Team back in May. I was initially recruited to package up the range of nest boxes that the Trust builds, ready for sending out to our customers. I have recently started learning to felt the nestboxes and am really enjoying working with the Barn Team, learning new skills and knowing I am contributing to the important work the Trust does in conserving Barn Owls.



Dogs of the Barn Owl Trust

Recently we managed to get (almost) all of the current office dogs together for a photo, and all of them are facing towards the camera, which was quite an achievement!



Back row (L-R) Bentley, Pip and Ned
Front row (L-R) Chica, Mateo, Pancho, Biscuit, Jaz, Poppy, Frankie, David and Maizie

The Trust's offices have always been dog friendly (we love dogs!) and over the years many staff members have brought their four-legged friends to work. On some occasions we have found we've had more dogs in the office than staff! Many of you will remember our annual sponsored dog walks, of which many staff dogs participated in over the years. Thank you to all those wonderful fundraising hounds (and their humans!) for giving up their time to raise money for our conservation work, and thank you to all who sponsored them. We would love to hold another sponsored dog walk in the future...so watch this space!



We Need You!

Do you live near Ashburton and have some time you could spare to volunteer at the Barn Owl Trust? We are looking for regular help with a variety of tasks including:

- Aviary cleaning - to work alongside our experienced volunteer.
- Admin tasks supporting our Funding Officer.
- Office work assisting our Admin Team - making up Friends and Adoption packs, packaging sales goods and other administrative tasks.
- Helping out the nestbox building team with woodwork, general site maintenance and other practical tasks.

If you would like to help please do drop us a line on info@barnowltrust.org.uk

Thank You!



Thanks & Things

A big thank you to all our supporters who have sent in items from our Wants List or goods for recycling:

Catherine Abbott, Louise Anquetil, Heather Buswell, Andrew Elliot, Lucas Fischer, Adrian Frisby, Jackie Golding, J & J Gourd, Rachel Kirkley, Gwyneth Parish, Moura MacDonagh & Martin Plimsoll, Pam and David McIvor, Kim & Ed McNeil, Steve Martin, Pam Middleton, Jennifer Muir, Mr Pallant, John W Rae, Jane Rutter, J.Dilnot Smith & Son, T Stacey, Sandra Stockwell, Adriana Vázquez, Isabelle, Jean & Kate, Hi-Line Contractors SW Ltd, The Frazers Group and the lovely person who anonymously sent us the Stanley wire cutters!

Thank you to all our Prize Draw donors:

Adam Hensons's Anderson Press, Cotswold Farm Park, Babbacombe Model Village, Becky Falls, Beehive, Bocketts Farm Park, Bletchley Park, Buckfast Butterfly and Otter Sanctuary, Canon Hall Farm, Court Farm Country Park, Dartmoor Lodge Hotel, Eat Weeds, Epona Art, Farmer Palmers Farm Park, Haynes Motor Museum, Luke Western Art, Lydford Gorge Alpaca's, Naturetrek, Pipers Farm, Rex Latham Blacksmith, Scotts Chainsaw Carving, Scottish Seabird Centre, Stover Golf Club, Stratford Butterfly Farm and Totnes Rare Breeds farm.

Another huge thank you must go to our wonderful volunteers who give up their time to help the Trust:

Saleh Alfulaij, Ian Bailey, Diana Baker, Jan Blinco, Morwenna Cooper, Tim Dowling, Caroline Fawell, Charlie Fleming, Leah Fynn, Jane Goodall, Fiona Hailstone, Dianne Hawkings, Tony Hullat, Alan and Trisha Leaver, Maeve Leith, Graham and Julia Lovegrove, Kim McNeil, Pam and David McIvor, Chris Marshall, Steve Martin, Archie Poole-Simpson, Melanie Reeves, Sarah Remy-Mitchelson, Margaret Rhodes, Daniel Snow, Holly Stapley and Penny Woollams.

To all our fantastic fundraisers, thank you!

The Association for British and Irish Wild Animal Keepers donated profits from their workshop held at Bird World. The animal care students at Petroc College also raised much needed funds for us.

Can you help us with:

- [FEIN wet/dry dust extractor](#) for use with building nestboxes
- Wild bird food - sacks of black sunflower seeds & peanuts
- Felco model 2 secateurs
- Garden forks
- ['Farming and Birds'](#) by Ian Newton
- ['A Field Guide to Monitoring Nests - BTO'](#) by James Ferguson-Lees, Richard Castell and Dave Leech
- [Tomlov HDMI Microscope Model - DM401 Pro](#)
- PZ2 Impact Driver Bits
- Folding saw horses/trestles
- Binoculars - At least 7x magnification, lens diameter 7 x 40 or 8 x 40 or 7 x 42 mm
- Electric chain saw - Stihl (cordless)
- Electric Strimmer/Brushcutter - Stihl (cordless)
- Anabat Detector
- Metal Detector
- Old newspapers (for owl boxes in our Bird Room)
- Used stamps, including any foreign stamps & currency
- Postcards and pre-1970 envelopes with stamps on
- Wood for making outdoor nestboxes - sheets of 9 / 12mm tanalised ply and lengths of 25 x 50mm tanalised batten
- Brightly coloured ripstock material for banner printing
- Socket set (48 pc 1/2 inch drive)
- Extra long drill bits (3,4 & 5mm)
- Bahco foldable pruning saws
- Quick grip clamps
- Box Trailer (minimum 2.4m x 1.5m x 1.8m high)
- Small plate compactor
- Small bales of hay and straw (can collect from S.Devon)
- 2 covers for 50mm tow-balls
- Buckets - approx 14 Ltr
- Bungee Cords

Thank you for your help.



Tail Piece

Here at the Trust, with the exception of June, every month since July '23 has had significantly higher rainfall than average. So far this month, we've had almost 60% more rain, and the mean temperature is 1.45°C lower than our average July. A new report from the European Union's Copernicus Climate Change Service revealed that the global-average temperature for the past 12 months was more than 1.64°C above the 1850–1900 pre-industrial average. So given this, why have we had such a damp year? It all comes down to the jet stream, a fast-moving strand of air several miles above the Earth that blows west to east. The jet stream exists largely because of a difference in heat, which in the northern hemisphere means cold air on the northern side of the jet stream and warm air to the south. Recently the jet stream has flowed across the UK or further south, allowing areas of low pressure to move in, which brings wind, rain and cooler temperatures.

Today the Met Office have issued their State of the UK Climate report, an annual publication which provides an up-to-date assessment of the UK climate. It says amongst other things, "The UK's climate continues to change. Recent decades have been warmer, wetter and sunnier than the 20th Century. Observations show that extremes of temperature in the UK have been affected much more than average temperature and for the second successive year, 2023 was the warmest year for UK near-coast sea surface temperature". Climate change is here, and whilst we, at the moment, can adapt, our wildlife and ecosystems, which have developed over millennia may not be so lucky.

Whether it's the weather or ecological breakdown, we have really noticed the lack of bees and butterflies this year. The Buddleia outside the office would normally be covered in butterflies now and our annual Butterfly Walks in early July saw far fewer species and much lower numbers than usual. We did see Mining Bees on the edge of the winter bird food crop at the start of the month, they excavate nest tunnels in the soil, but after some heavy rain in the first half of the month they had disappeared. The pollinator strip on the edge of the crop which would normally be

humming, is strangely silent. Shifts in seasonal patterns and weather could be responsible for disrupting bumblebee behaviour, extreme weather events like floods, droughts and storms can have an immediate impact on them.

As Josh reports on page 17, in June, tens of thousands of concerned people made the journey to London to ask the UK government to 'Restore Nature Now'. It was extremely moving to see so many people there, but we now need our government to act before things get any worse. We need our media to inform and educate about the situation facing not just our wildlife, but human life as well. This month wildfires in the Canadian town of Jasper, near one of the country's largest national parks, have forced more than 25,000 people to flee. Heat related deaths and extreme weather events are increasing around the world, and a major storm hit Bavaria, with hail transforming roads into a winter wonderland in the middle of summer due to heavy hail. If reported at all, the news we hear is about the effect on humans, rarely on wildlife.

Things need to change, and fast. We need more people, all people, to understand what is happening and to demand our leaders take serious action to tackle both the Climate and Ecological Crises. We now have a new government. Pre-election media coverage suggested that the cost-of-living crisis, refugees and housing were the main concerns of the British public. Nobody seemed to mention that if we don't sort the Climate and Ecological Crises those things will get much worse. Crop failures will lead to food shortages and increased prices, desperate people fleeing their homeland where they can no longer survive will increase the number of refugees, and flooding and wildfires will destroy housing that already exists. Let's hope that our media will start to cover this, the general population starts to understand what we are facing, and our new government sees the scale of the crisis's and acts quickly.

WE can all play a part by making sure we stand up for our wildlife and the natural world and spread the message that things need to change.

Together we can make a world of difference.

Frances Ramsden