

Job Description – Assistant Conservation Officer (ACO)

**Post Title:**

Assistant Conservation Officer (ACO)

Line Manager:

Head of Conservation

Location:

The Barn Owl Trust, Waterleat,
Ashburton, TQ13 7HU

Salary:

£24,557.72

Duration of post:

12-month renewable contract

Hours of work:

37.5 hours per week

THE BARN OWL TRUST

The Barn Owl Trust is a small, registered charity based at Ashburton, Devon. Its core aim is focused on the conservation of the Barn Owl and its environment. The main areas of work are the provision of information, practical and advisory fieldwork, owl rehabilitation, education and research. In addition, we run a small sanctuary which is not open to the public.

More information is available on our website: www.barnowltrust.org.uk.

The Assistant Conservation Officer will carry out Barn Owl conservation work in close liaison with a small team of experienced Conservation Officers. This involves 60 to 90% office/screen time: responding to conservation enquiries and record keeping. And 10 to 40% fieldwork: erecting/monitoring nestboxes, habitat and other owl-related advisory work, plus a wide range of less frequent tasks. Work varies seasonally with an annual average of approx. 85% office work and 15% outdoors.

PRINCIPAL ACTIVITIES AND KEY RESPONSIBILITIES

Core work:

- Develop and maintain knowledge of Barn Owl ecology and conservation through reading and research
- Respond to email, phone and social media enquiries relating to Barn Owls, nestboxes, and habitat management
- Advise landowners and the general public on creating and maintaining rough grassland
- Erect and maintain nestboxes in indoor and outdoor locations, using basic woodworking skills
- Undertake nest inspections and site surveys in line with BOT working practices and licence conditions
- Carry out practical conservation activities such as maintaining nestboxes and creating access holes for owls entering buildings
- Record observations, site details, and communication on an Access database
- Help care for casualty owls, rehabilitation, and permanent sanctuary birds
- Follow and comply with health, safety, and welfare policies
- Use our Access database to retrieve and record data
- Assist with diverse projects, including data collection for scientific research
- Support and work together with other members of the Conservation Team

Additional activities:

- Represent the Trust at events and meetings (some evening/weekend work will be required) and on social media
- Organise and oversee volunteers
- Undertake occasional land management tasks and some general maintenance work
- Implement a personal work schedule (in liaison with Head of Conservation)
- Help maintain equipment and vehicles
- Carrying out other tasks/duties to help the Trust reach its goals/mission

Person Specification – Assistant Conservation Officer (ACO)

	Essential	Desirable
Skills and attributes	Keen interest in Barn Owls, ecology and conservation, and an eagerness to learn.	Practically minded, resourceful and flexible to create solutions to problems.
	Happy to work outdoors in all weathers and equally happy to do office (screen) work most of the time.	Able to identify and interpret signs of Barn Owl occupation.
	Excellent communication skills (both written and verbal) along with excellent inter-personal skills	The ability to prioritise work efficiently and see tasks through from conception to completion.
	Capable of lifting and erecting a 3-section 24 kg ladder and confident when working at height.	Good awareness of logistical constraints and practical timeframes.
	Capable of using hand tools and power tools to carry out DIY-type tasks in workshops, in the field, and at height.	Proficient in planning and executing work over multiple locations.
	IT literacy to facilitate data handling, meticulous record keeping, correspondence and web searching.	Ability to work independently and within a team, as well as engaging stakeholders.
Knowledge and qualifications	Well-developed knowledge of owls, British birds, and farmland wildlife.	Degree in conservation-related field (undergraduate/postgraduate), or extensive related experience.
	Broad awareness of wildlife conservation issues.	Knowledge of farming, UK farmland wildlife (especially birds) and wildlife-related legislation.
	Full UK driving license and happy to spend time driving.	Working at Height qualification, 4x4 off-road driving qualification, First Aid training.
	Knowledge of Health & Safety principals & practice.	An interest in climate change and the ecological crisis.
Experience	Practical aptitude - DIY skills.	Demonstrable commitment to wildlife and wider environmental conservation.
	Monitoring wildlife species while avoiding any negative impacts.	Handling spatial data in various formats (e.g., UK grid reference, decimal latitude/longitude, etc.).
	Using common work-place software.	Handling wild birds and providing rehab care.

General Terms and Conditions

Holidays:	24 days per annum plus Bank Holidays
Pension:	The Trust contributes to the NEST Pension Scheme. Full details will be provided.
Hours of work:	37.5 hours per week. Overtime is not paid but flexible time off in lieu (flexitime) may be taken where appropriate, as the post may involve some evening or weekend working.
Duration of post:	This post is offered for a period of 12 months, to include a 3-month probationary period, during which time post holders are expected to demonstrate their suitability for the role. At the end of the 12-month period, subject to performance, the post will become permanent, and the contract renewed annually.
Closing date for applications:	Midnight Sunday 7th September 2025
Interviews:	Thursday 2nd October 2025 Interviews will involve a 10-minute presentation on 'Your knowledge of Barn Owls and what you can bring to the role' - <u>without</u> the use of PowerPoint. There will be a woodwork activity and a short ladder handling task as part of the interview process – please dress appropriately – this is a manual handling task .
Start date:	Ideal start date is Monday 3rd November

Thank you for your interest in working for the Barn Owl Trust. We look forward to receiving your application. To apply for this position, you will need to complete an application form which can be downloaded from our website.

As an inclusive employer, the Barn Owl Trust values diversity and we are committed to creating an inclusive culture where everyone is able to be themselves and to reach their full potential. We encourage applications from people of all backgrounds and cultures.

PLEASE NOTE:

Lifting and erecting a 24 kg ladder safely is a requirement for this role. Please be mindful of the fact that we can only consider applicants who will be capable of this task after training.

See [How to erect a Barn Owl nestbox in a tree](#)

