

Feedback



Issue 71 / Spring 2024



Reg Charity No: 299835 / 1201419
www.barnowltrust.org.uk

Waterleat, Ashburton
Devon TQ13 7HU

In this issue....

Welcome to Feedback	2
Diary Dates	2
BOT News	3
Bird News	4-5
Thermal Imager	6
LLP Update	7
Office Rebuild Complete	8-9
Gillian's Legacy Update	10
In Memoriam	10
New School Talk	11
Even More BOT News!	12-13
Owly Inbox	14
Team Talk	15
Thanks & Things	16
Tail Piece	16

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Chris Gee - [Instagram @chris_gee_wildlife_phot22](#)

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

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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 2024

Guided Walks

April

Weds 17th 2.30pm - Spring Walk
Thurs 25th 5.30am - Dawn Chorus
Bird Walk

May

Weds 8th 2.30pm - Wild Flower Walk

June

Thurs 20th 7.30pm - Mid Summer Walk

July

Tues 2nd 2.30pm - Butterfly Walk
Weds 10th 2pm - Butterfly Walk

August

Weds 14th 2.30pm - Summer Walk

September

Weds 4th 11am - Dragonflies, Grasshoppers & Crickets Walk

Join us for practical work in the LLP

All events 10am - 4pm:

May

Thistle Pulling
Mon 13th & Weds 15th

June

Thistle Pulling
Tues 11th & Thurs 13th

July

Bracken Bashing & Thistle Pulling
Weds 3rd & Fri 5th
Tues 9th & Thurs 11th

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.

A very warm welcome to Feedback 71. Spring is here and so many things are indicating new beginnings, not least our fantastic new office here at the Barn Owl Trust (BOT).

We are truly delighted to be working from this new building after a very long stint in temporary accommodation. We've watched with great interest the demolition and the rising of our new office and dreamed the dream of heated rooms, bright spaces and new, shiny, toilet facilities. There are still minor things to finish off, such as some external landscaping, but at last we are in, and oh, so happy! The new building was made possible thanks to generous legacies that were gifted to us, which enabled this significant investment in our future. Read more about it on [page 8 & 9](#).

There are some new and exciting projects happening at the Trust, like our Nest Camera Monitoring Programme. This will allow us to know more about the UK Barn Owl population and inform future work. See [page 3](#) for more information. We also launched a Nestbox Research Project in December and you can read about that on [page 12](#). On [page 6](#), Dr Mateo Ruiz (Senior Conservation and Science Officer) shares more about the use of Thermal Imaging technology. Our camera is proving really useful for monitoring nocturnal wildlife and allowing observation without disturbance - a very useful addition to our collection of 'tools'.

You'll find the LLP Update on [page 7](#), where we give you a brief, but exciting, summary of life on our nature reserve. We are thrilled to witness and record the biodiversity on our 26 acres and we hope you'll enjoy reading about the activity over the past 6 months or so.

I'm sure you'll recall that last year we received a substantial legacy from Mrs Gillian Grimwood. We promised to keep you up to date with all the news about how we are spending her wonderful gift and if you turn to [page 10](#), you'll find more information about our research plans and other intentions. One of the wonderful things we've been able to do is recruit a dedicated part-time Education Officer, Jess. You can read about the new talk 'Flying into the Future', that Jess will be presenting to schools and other educational groups on [page 11](#). She's very excited about the new talk, and indeed, about her important new role.

The Owly Inbox on [page 14](#) has some very interesting Owl news from around the world and on [page 15](#), you'll find introductions to new members of staff, Josh and Kate, who've joined the Conservation Team - Welcome to both of them!

We held our annual prize draw in December 2023. This is part of our suite of fundraising events, to help us with the general running costs of the Trust. Thank you to our lovely Sam (Legacy Officer and Fundraiser) who helped to collect a truly marvellous list of prizes, and to everyone who so generously donated. Not forgetting everyone who bought a ticket (or 5!); we hope you were one of the lucky winners! Joining in the fun really helps us and tickets for this year's draw are on sale now. You can see a picture of one of the fantastic prizes (and their winner!) on [page 13](#).

Talking of fundraising, I'm sure you will see a theme running through this copy of Feedback, as in previous editions. Your donations, and the kindness of people like you who care about Barn Owls, allow us to do so much work to protect this iconic species. The conservation research we are planning, and the very offices we are working in, is all made possible thanks to the generosity of people who were thoughtful enough to leave a legacy in their Will. If you are considering leaving us a gift in your Will, do have a chat with your solicitor or Will writer, we are so grateful for every single donation we receive.

Happy Spring Days to you all! I hope you get the opportunity to get out into nature and enjoy the wildlife.

Gill Gant
Office Manager

BOT News

Barn Owl Trust Transformation

Those of you that are regular Feedback readers may remember that in 2018-19 (Feedback 62), our Chairman Keith Grant mentioned that we were planning to convert the Trust to a CIO (Charitable Incorporated Organisation) in order to limit the liability of future Trustees and hopefully make it easier to find new ones going forward. This was put on hold due to the Covid-19 pandemic, but in 2022, we made a successful application to the Charity Commission (CC) to register 'Barn Owl Trust' a CIO and on 21st December we were notified of our new charity no. 1201419; we now also have a Companies House no. CE031023. We reported this in Feedback 69.

Since then, on 25th July 2023 we received an Order from the Charity Commission allowing us to transfer the assets from the Registered Charity The Barn Owl Trust 299835 to the new registered CIO Barn Owl Trust 1201419. This will be completed on 31st March 2024 at the end of our current financial year and from 1st April 2024 we will operate as the new charity, the CIO.

For our supporters there will be little outward change; our aims and objectives are identical, our staff, volunteers and our work will continue as always. None of our contact details will change and our websites www.barnowltrust.org.uk and www.barnowlsurvey.org.uk will remain the same. We have opened a new Co-op bank account (as the Co-op is one of the most ethical UK banks) and new standing orders will go into this after 1st April. Over the coming months we will be suggesting that regular supporters might like to switch their standing orders wherever possible.

Nest Camera Monitoring Program

We've recently finished the last installations of nestbox cameras that were partially funded by Devon Birds. We have approximately eighty annual monitoring sites, mostly across Devon.

Twenty five of these sites now have nestbox cameras fitted, which should help to improve the range and accuracy of our data collection and allow us to minimise nestbox disturbance by cutting out unnecessary physical inspections of nestboxes.

The installed cameras are small, silent and utilise black LEDs, which are invisible to humans and animals, so the owls are completely undisturbed by their presence. Having the ability to monitor nestboxes, when required, will allow us to gather greater and more accurate levels of data such as:

- Date of the first egg laid.
- How many eggs in the clutch.
- How many owlets hatch and how many eventually fledge.

Information like this helps us to build up a clearer picture of the current Barn Owl population and how well they are doing. We will also be able to more accurately assess the perfect time to visit and ring young birds and give better advice by monitoring during potential periods of welfare concern.

By cutting down on unnecessary journeys we will be able to reduce our carbon footprint, and as these systems need someone on site to access them, the landowners are able to get a view of life inside the nestboxes they wouldn't normally get to see!

The first few pictures have started to come in already and we are hoping for great things from the upcoming nesting season. We'll keep you posted!

Tim Wilkins
Assistant Conservation Officer



Camera installed in an indoor nestbox

News Bites

Education Officer Hired

As a result of the generous legacy left by the late Gillian Grimwood we have been able to fund a new part time education post. We are delighted to tell you that current admin assistant, Jessica Munday, was the successful candidate and you can read more about what this new role will entail in 'Gillian's Legacy Update' on [page 10](#) and also in 'Team Talk' on [page 15](#).

Training Course Update

Our Barn Owl Ecology, Surveys and Signs (BOESS) course is proving to be very successful and we are receiving wonderful feedback. We have recently completed all of the filming for the Advanced Barn Owl Surveying and Mitigation (ABOSM) course, but we still have a huge amount to accomplish before the course is ready to go live. We are planning to release the course later this year.

Ending Use of Rodenticides Away From Buildings

On 4th July 2024, the sale of products containing bromadiolone and difenacoum for use in open areas and at waste dumps will cease. Products purchased on or before this date will then only be authorised for use up until 31st December 2024. This change has been set in motion by the Campaign for Responsible Rodenticide Use, with 80% of Barn Owls containing rodenticide residues being a leading factor for instigating change. This law change will send a simple and clear message regarding the use of second generation anticoagulant rodenticides (SGARs) - they cannot be applied away from buildings.

New Website Update

Work on the new Barn Owl Trust website is ongoing. We've had a few setbacks, but we expect to launch this Spring! The site will retain all the current information, but it will have a much more modern look, be more user-friendly, and work on all devices. Our website is a huge source of information for Barn Owl lovers and professionals, and it's really important to us to make that information as accessible as possible.

Feedback in Colour

If you're currently receiving Feedback in the post, please note if you sign up to receive it as a PDF by email you will see all the lovely photos in full colour! If you would like to switch to an emailed copy, please send us a message info@barnowltrust.org.uk. Not only do you get the bonus of seeing our publication in colour, you are also helping the Trust to save funds on printing and postage, and helping the environment too! Thank you!

Bird News

The last 6 months has been a busy time for owl rehabilitation at the Trust, with many incoming casualties and then successful releases of birds returned to the wild. The summer months saw mostly young Barn Owl casualties, while the autumn months were mainly Tawny Owl road-traffic collisions.

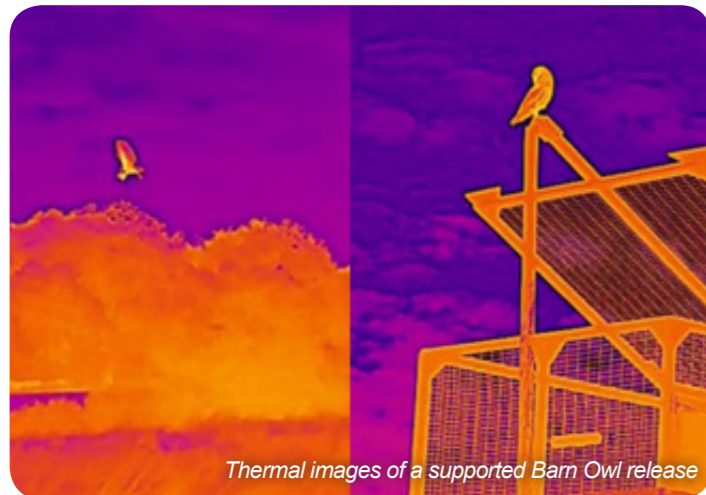
Since the last edition of Feedback, we are pleased to report that the young Barn Owls in our barn (Holly, Rowan and Moon) all fledged successfully. We set up a trail camera outside the barn and captured their very first flights in July and then continued to watch them coming and going throughout the month of August as they explored their immediate surroundings.



Holly, Rowan & Moon caught exploring on the trail camera

Very sadly, after only a month of independence, Holly was brought back to us badly injured and did not survive. She was found close to a road and so was likely hit by a vehicle. In happier news, after reports of a roosting Barn Owl from a local farmer 2km away from us, we installed a nestbox in their barn and were delighted to return and find the owl now roosting in the new box was in fact Moon. We are very hopeful she might nest in the box this season and we can continue to follow her progress!

In addition to the 3 in the barn, we also received another 3 Barn Owls from RSPCA at West Hatch and released them from our mobile aviaries on our rough grassland reserve. After opening the lid of the aviaries, the owls continued to return every night to collect food and then, after a month, they gradually reduced these return trips as they began hunting successfully for themselves. For one of the releases, we used the opportunity to quietly film the owl using our thermal camera and captured its very first freedom flight. We were amazed at how the owl instantly went into hunting mode and watched it quartering over the rough grassland,



Thermal images of a supported Barn Owl release

hovering over certain patches to listen for prey. Reassuringly we also saw it returning back to perch on the aviary in between hunting bouts.

While this activity was going on at our reserve, we received a call from a landowner in North Devon who we visit every year as part of our nest site monitoring scheme. The landowner reported that she had found a ringed Barn Owl badly injured in her barn and the owl was then euthanised at the vets. Having only visited the site days prior and knowing the ring number, we knew this bird was the mother of a brood of very young Barn Owl chicks. Therefore, we immediately called on RSPCA West Hatch to recover the orphaned chicks as they were still at an age where they required warmth from a brooding mother. West Hatch dutifully reared the owlets for the following months before contacting us when they were ready for release. The landowner was so keen to have the owlets released from their natal site that we took one of our mobile release aviaries up to her site, collecting the now fully-grown owlets on route. The owlets stayed within the release aviary for several weeks before the lid was opened at dusk. We were very pleased to hear the owls continued to collect food for over a month before they then started dropping back their collection rates.



Supported release of the 2 orphaned owlets from North Devon
Photo: Emma Hydleman

As summer drew to a close, a rather late Tawny Owl chick was brought into us by two members of the public (Pam and David) who had found the owl bedraggled, wet and emaciated in their garden. The owlet (named Bish) was immediately fed and put under a heat lamp, allowing him to dry out and warm up. Over the following weeks we housed Bish in our hospital aviary and were pleased to see him steadily gain weight and develop his flight muscles. Pam and David were really keen for Bish to be released back from the site where he was found and impressively built a release aviary with an openable lid for him in their garden. Bish then stayed in his new aviary for a few weeks before they lifted the lid at dusk on 15th September. However, as with some of the best laid plans... upon flying out the aviary, Bish was met by an adult Tawny Owl (quite possibly one of his parents) and they had a small tussle in the trees. Thankfully the other owl flew off and Bish flew around the trees and Pam could hear him hooting that evening. Pam and David enjoyed this process so much that they asked whether there was anything else they could do to help with housing owls – see Silver's Foster Story! (page 13)

As autumn rolled around, we then had a flurry of adult Tawny Owls brought into us for rehabilitation. These cases included Francis the Tawny Owl who strangely enough was found after flying into the office window of the accounting firm we use.



Bish in his purpose built release aviary
Photo: Pam McIvor

Francis was badly concussed and stayed with us for nearly 3 weeks before he was fully recovered and released back into his own territory. We then had 3 more adult Tawny Owls (Buddy, Rew and Jen), who were all hit by vehicles and stayed in our hospital aviaries for a couple of weeks each to recover from their injuries. Thankfully the injuries weren't too bad and these 3 were also all taken back to their territories and released. Sadly, in amongst the success stories, we had 3 cases where owls had extensive injuries and had to be euthanised.

Finally, Ken the Tawny Owl, came to us in mid-November after being found tangled in a barbed wire fence with injuries to his right wing. Ken was given pain killers, antibiotics and anti-inflammatories for a week along with regular cleaning of the wound site. Amazingly, Ken's injuries started to heal and he progressed from his box to our small hospital aviary, to then our large hospital aviary over the course of 6 weeks. As Ken had been with us for so long, we decided the best option was to conduct a supported release from our aviary here to give him a gradual reintroduction back into the wild.



Tawny Owl, Jen, just before her release

We are now approaching the time of year where Tawny Owls are starting to think about laying and Barn Owls are beginning to arrive at their nest sites. It is also the time where small mammal numbers are at their lowest and so we are hoping for consistent 'normal' weather without too many extreme weather events which reduce hunting opportunities. One of the major impacts of climate change is the increased frequency of storms and extreme weather events and so we will be prepared for the inevitable owl casualties that arise as a result of these.

Pip Laker
Conservation Officer

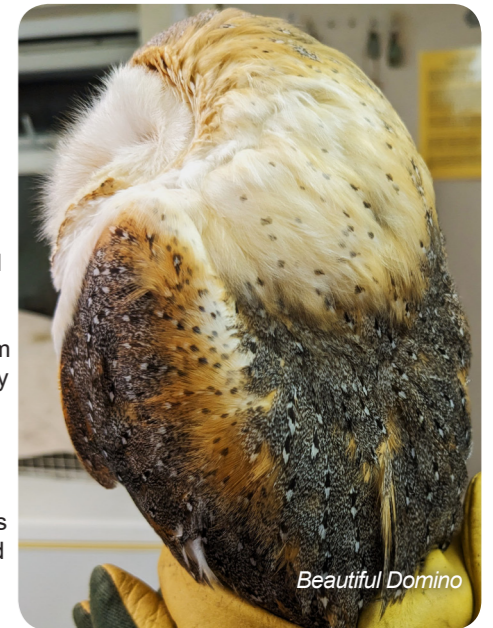
Spectacular Spots!



Amazing spots on Domino the Barn Owl

On 7th February, Conservation Officer, Pip, journeyed out to meet long-time owl rehabilitator and friend of the Trust, Celia, at her land in Mid Devon, where she has created an array of wildlife habitats over her 20+ acres. After 20 years caring for owls, both in her own sanctuary and injured live birds in her area (along with the help of Nigel), Celia has recently taken the decision to wind up her operation and gift us her remaining captive birds. Consequently, Pip brought back a car full of owls. We had 8 Tawny Owls and 2 Barn Owls of varying shapes, colours and sizes - from the giant "Louise" (who was off the scale at 500+ grams... perhaps more "Jeez Louise!"), to the stunning Barn Owl "Domino", with her very dark spots and silvery back. One owl was even noted as being over the age of 21!

The Conservation Team spent the afternoon methodically worming, clipping talons and weighing each owl in turn (and naming them where necessary too!) before releasing them into our largest aviary to meet their new friends. Most have various disabilities which means they aren't proficient flyers or they have reduced eyesight and hence couldn't be released back into the wild, but this didn't stop them from confidently exploring their new aviary.



Beautiful Domino

Celia first rehabbed a young Little Owl over 40 years ago and has been running her current setup since 2003 after finding an injured owl on the side of a lane. She has always been at hand to assist us with live bird rehabilitation and transportation in the past and we would like to say a big thank you to her for all the years of support!

Kate Jellyman
Assistant Conservation Officer

Thermal imager

Thermal imager reveals the inhabitants of the heatscape

The cover of darkness seems to bring a tangible confidence to wildlife. This isn't just true for species that are more strictly nocturnal, but it also applies to those that are also commonly active during the day. I have recently watched Roe Deer saunter casually around in the open at night, and Woodmice boldly clamber through hazel bushes. These exciting encounters have only been possible with the aid of our HikMicro Falcon FQ35 thermal imager (pictured right), with which I've watched Badgers, Rabbits, Brown Rats and even an American Mink.



I've also spent several enjoyable evenings observing Tawny Owls around the Trust offices and nature reserve, near Ashburton. Tawny Owl courtship takes place from December to early April, and peaks in March, so there is plenty of scope for further outings over the coming months. My attempts to find the Tawny Owls were unsuccessful on 17th December, but on 12th January I watched a pair approaching the aviaries where the resident Tawny Owls live in our sanctuary. A couple of days later I managed to observe the pair together in trees in Corner Wood, not far from a nestbox that was installed in September 2019. This species is versatile in its use of nest sites and might not use the nestbox at all. However, with the help of the thermal imager I may just be able to locate their nest site anyway.

Thermal imaging technology uses thermograms to visually represent infrared radiation as it is emitted from objects and beings. Infrared wavelengths are longer than the visible span of the electromagnetic spectrum, and they radiate from more or less everything. This means that thermograms don't just pick up on relatively warm things, instead they place them in a visual representation of everything, which I like to call a heatscape. Thermal imagers are really useful for monitoring nocturnal creatures, such as owl species, Eurasian Woodcock, or European Nightjar, but they are also useful for detecting ground-nesting or cavity-nesting birds, or birds in very dense vegetation. Using the equipment to monitor nestboxes can help discern if there is an occupant or not, without actively searching inside. This can help minimise the disturbance that breeding birds are exposed to.

Barn Owls featured in some of the pioneering research resulting from thermal imagers when, in 1998, findings were published



The young Barn Owl, Summer, caught by the thermal imager in flight

on where heat is lost by the owls as they rest and fly. These researchers discovered that Barn Owls lose significantly more heat while flying, as opposed to perching, which has since led to the recommendation to include 2 – 3 m high posts in patches of rough grassland. These will provide the owls with opportunities for perch-hunting, as a more energy efficient tactic when hunting in very cold weather.

Here at the Trust, the thermal imager has proved useful for following the movements of released rehab owls. A male Tawny Owl was brought to us on 16th November, after sustaining tendon damage and an open wound when he became entangled in barbed wire near Dawlish. We were concerned that 'Ken' would never be well enough to release, but after treatment from a veterinary nurse and over two months of rehabilitation with us, he was ready to go free! On 20th January it was a beautiful cold, clear night, and Ken's mobile release aviary roof was lifted at 5.10pm on the LLP nature reserve. By watching with the thermal imager, I could see how he cautiously emerged from the aviary roost box after 20 minutes. He then spent some time moving back and forth between perches inside the aviary. A full 40 minutes after he's first emerged, Ken finally flew directly to a branch right above the aviary, where he moved out of sight amongst ivy after 10 minutes, and I decided to leave.



Thermal Image of Ken, the Tawny Owl, perching at the brink of freedom

We released a male Barn Owl from another mobile release aviary, also on the LLP. 'Summer' had been picked up in early July as a nestling near Henley in Somerset and taken to West Hatch Wildlife Centre. Summer was in good condition when he arrived at the Trust in mid-August and was placed in the release aviary on 30th August. Considering he had only been in the wild as a young owlet, and had been in captivity for the last two months, this Barn Owl's behaviour was extraordinary. After perching on the roof of the aviary, he flew across the rough grassland with his head craned downwards listening intently. He lost height purposefully and began to hover. He dropped closer to the ground, focusing on a specific spot, and hovered again. Finally, he dropped into the long grass. The final plunge had not been very fast, and I wasn't surprised when he came up with empty talons. What I was surprised at was the way he had switched into hunting mode so quickly, on his first ever free-flying experience.

The proven survival of young birds released from captivity has established that instinct is sufficient for survival, and it may be that young Barn Owls receive no training at all by their parents. Nonetheless, just how easily Summer began his search for wild prey left me truly astounded.

Dr Mateo Ruiz
Senior Conservation & Science Officer

LLP Update

In the fleeting August sunshine, Golden Ringed and Emperor Dragonflies were patrolling the ponds. Lots of Holly Blue, Green-veined and Gatekeeper Butterflies were seen around the pond margins and a Wall Butterfly at the entrance to Kiln Close on the 2nd. On the 8th, the annual cut took place in Forde Orchard. Groundworks for the second Field Shelter, which will be in Kiln Close, began on the 11th. We were treated to frequent sightings of Jersey Tiger Moths and Hummingbird Hawk Moths on the Buddleia outside the Meeting Room. Great views of a Sparrowhawk over the reserve on the 20th interacting with a couple of Crows. A Sparrowhawk was seen again on the 21st and a Kestrel was recorded hunting over the old bird crop on the 22nd. We were still seeing some Birds Foot Trefoil and Lesser Stitchwort in the rough grass. For the first month of 2023 we didn't break any weather records during August.



Kingfisher perching on the plank across to the island in the Flo Pond

September started dry and unusually warm. On the 1st, a Kingfisher was seen perched on the plank across to the island in the Flo Pond. On the 7th, a female Whinchat was spotted on the Bird Crop and a Siskin could be seen drinking in the river. For some time now we have thought that an Otter has occasionally visited our ponds and on the 9th we were lucky enough to catch a glimpse of its back end on the trail camera, swimming in the Flo Pond! The overgrowth on the stone walls in Forde Orchard was cleared on the 13th by volunteers. A Heron was perched in the dead Ash Tree above the Abstraction Pool on the 14th, the first sighting for a while. A Kingfisher was back again on the 16th and spotted fishing on the Flo Pond. A Barn Owl was using the Kestrel provision of the Wildlife Tower on the 28th. Our weather broke records again in September with a temperature of 27.3°C, the highest we've ever recorded for the month.

October brought views of a Kestrel hunting over the field on the 4th. A Tawny Owl was bathing in the river on the 6th and on the 8th a trail camera picked up a Fox crossing over the cattle drink, startling a Grey Heron. A Kestrel was perched on one of the Thistle quadrat posts, before flying to an Ash tree on the roadside edge. 'Moby Dick', the large Trout in the Flo Pond, seems to have escaped the Otter's visit, and was seen in torch light on the 10th along with a smaller fish. On the 13th, volunteers spent the day beginning the process of laying the hedge on the Orchard stone bank. On the 17th, the biggest flock (60+) of small birds so far this autumn, flew off the crop, circling around before dropping back into the crop. The Orchid patch in Kiln Close got its annual strim on the 24th.

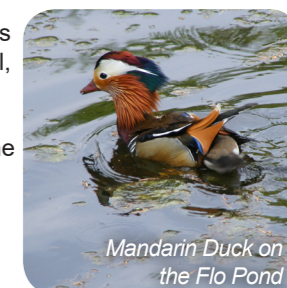
On 1st November, flowering plants in the wild bird food crop included Chicory, Corn Marigold, Cornflower and Poppy, with lots of Yarrow and even some Germander Speedwell in the rough grassland, so plenty of flowers for the remaining pollinators.

Sloes, Hawthorn berries, Holly and Rosehips were still abundant in the hedgerows. The Flo Pond was cleared, removing the grass, Rush and Reed Mace that were invading the pond. A Kestrel was seen again on the 3rd hovering over the new crop. A flock of 50 or so Goldfinches were in the Blackthorn along from the Field Shelter. Volunteers hand pulled all the brambles in the Corner Wood Bluebell patch on the morning of the 16th. On the 17th, the Orchard hedge laying continued.

December came around with spectacular views of a Sparrowhawk passing over the crop whilst a young fox emerged. During a lunchtime walk on the 6th, 2 Stonechats, 1 Jay, 30 Goldfinches, 6 Reed Buntings, 20 Chaffinches, 1 Song Thrush, a corvid flock (around 70 Jackdaws and 40 Carrion Crows) and 1 Great-spotted Woodpecker were seen. A Barn Owl was seen flying over the solar panels on the 7th. Our first Winter Bird Walk of the season was held on the 12th, with wet and rainy conditions to start. Species seen included Blue Tit, Great Tit, Robin, Blackbird, Wood Pigeon, Chaffinch, Goldfinch, Redwing, Carrion Crow and Common Buzzard. Volunteers began clearing one of the older patches of Blackthorn on the roadside hedge on the 14th. Hedge laying continued in Forde Orchard on the 15th, joining up the Devon style to the South of England style.

We began January as we ended December – unusually mild, wet and windy. A beautiful Fox was seen foraging in the Main Field, before disappearing into the crop. On the 5th, a cluster of 4 small Ash Trees with Ash dieback on the roadside edge were felled. On the 8th, Hair ice was found in the woods, Hair ice is a rare type of ice formation where the presence of a particular fungus in rotting wood produces thin strands of ice which resemble hair or candy floss. The conditions required for the formation of hair ice are extremely specific, hence the relative scarcity of sightings. By the 9th, the cold weather had arrived and the cattle troughs were frozen over, with ice around 10-15mm thick that all had to be broken. More hedge laying took place in the Orchard on the 12th. The thermal scope was used to observe a pair of Tawny Owls active near the Tawny Owl box in Corner Wood on the 14th. The first Frogspawn of the year was found in the Oakley Pond on the 20th, and on the 21st, there was spawn in the Flo Pond too. The water in the Oakley Pond was bubbling with Frog activity.

We very rarely see Rabbits on the LLP despite them often being seen on neighbouring land in the valley. However, Mateo spotted quite a few at night with the thermal imager in September and in February, with the winter dieback of vegetation, several Rabbit size holes were spotted in the hedge near the Field Shelter. On 2nd February, there was evidence of digging outside one of the lower holes and what is probably nesting material, a mixture of fur and dried grass.



Mandarin Duck on the Flo Pond

Four Mandarin Ducks flew up from the Frogspawn in the Watercress patch in the Flo Pond late morning on the 4th and the Early Purple Orchids were emerging in the mown patch in Kiln Close. On the 7th, Harry and Tim started putting in the corner posts for the 2nd Field Shelter in Kiln Close and Josh helped Harry begin the winter pruning of the Apple trees in Forde Orchard on the 14th. The 2 young Almond trees in the Orchard were starting to produce their delicate pink blossom by the 12th, and on the 15th, the first of the Tadpoles in the ponds had hatched. Bluebell leaves were emerging in Corner Wood and along the Apprentice Path, and there also were lots of Primrose leaves appearing in Corner Wood - Spring is just around the corner.

Office Rebuild Complete!



Our new office on the morning of the opening ceremony

Those of you that read Feedback 70 will be aware that last year, on the 15th May, the demolition of our old office began and a week later the preparation for rebuilding was underway. By early June, we had the block work in position to support the new building and, at the end of July, the framework was complete. In August, we saw insulation and windows fitted, the plumbing and wiring was beginning, and the roof was felted. During September, the external larch cladding arrived and the work to cover the building began. The floor was insulated before the underfloor heating pipes were fitted and, on the 28th, concrete was laid inside over the pipes.

network sockets were fitted throughout. All the pine walls needed 3 coats of intumescent (fire retardant) varnish, and the kitchen arrived and was fitted, thank you Howdens for a significant discount.



Pine panelling now complete and lino fitted

Volunteer Nick came in to begin painting the bathroom doors, red, blue, green and yellow for the shower room, and the door to the heat pump cupboard (green). Work began on the outside steps by the main entrance and, inside the office, the thermostats to control the under-floor heating temperature were fitted in each room. Outside lights were fitted, our outbuildings had the power reconnected and our aviary lights were working again (they had all been disconnected in April). The steps to the balcony between the conservation and admin rooms were started, the electrical distribution board was completed, and work had started on the cupboard to house the board and the server. The underfloor heating was commissioned and switched on.

In December, the office was warm - the underfloor heating kept the rooms at 20°C. Outside work on the access ramp to the front



Underfloor heating pipes fitted in the conservation office

October saw plasterboard being fitted inside to the outside walls for fire regulation purposes and the ceilings were plastered. Windowsills were fitted and the doorway and stairs to the Meeting Room were created. Ceilings were painted, the internal walls were insulated (using recycled insulation) and the internal pine panelling was done. In early November, the Air Source Heat Pump arrived along with the water cylinder, and the electrical and



The new kitchen

door had started and inside, on the 11th, the flooring company arrived to prepare the floor for its 'smoothing and levelling compound'. This is where everything ground to a halt...The concrete hadn't dried out enough, despite the underfloor heating being on since the 1st and the humidity was too high to start the work. We had hoped to move in over the Christmas break, but the delay meant that the flooring had to be rescheduled for the new year.



The new admin office

On 2nd January, the flooring company were back and able to make a start. The fire alarm installers also came back in then as we had had some issues with the system going off over the Christmas break. The posts and rails were fitted around the access ramp and the flooring was finished during the second week of the month, which meant the toilets could be fitted. No more going out in the cold and rain to use the compost loos.



The Conservation Team - happy to finally be in their new office!



Daren Thomas cutting the ribbon at the opening ceremony

During the third week of January, we moved in! There are some final things to be sorted out, but our team now has a purpose built, energy efficient, warm workspace - no more cold feet! We also have our Meeting Room back, so we have somewhere to welcome visitors, run workshops, have meetings, and offer refreshments to the folk that attend our LLP and other events.

We were delighted to hold an official opening ceremony for our new offices on Monday 26th February. Daren from A-Tec Design was invited to cut the ribbon and a cream tea was provided in the Norman Alderson Meeting Room for staff, volunteers, Trustees and all those involved in this project. David Ramsden, Head of Conservation, said a few words and leaves bearing the names of the three kind supporters who left us legacies and enabled this project to happen were placed upon our Memory Tree.



The meeting room and new office seen from above the solar panels in the LLP

Congratulations to all our team who worked and coped extremely well under adverse circumstances for 10 months. Our grateful thanks go to Jo, Joe and James from Futureproof Building, who built such a beautiful space, Daren Thomas of A-Tec Design, for designing the building and doing the drawings for the planning application and building control, Simon, the electrician who spent a lot of time here, and all the other tradespeople involved in the project.

Special thanks must also go to Peter Blood, Arthur Cooper Stafford and Maureen Theresa Bird, who were thoughtful enough to leave generous legacies to the Trust and make the whole project possible. The new office has provided the Trust with a secure and comfortable working environment for staff and volunteers for years to come.

Frances Ramsden
BOT Trustee

Gillian's Legacy Update

Every legacy is special no matter how big or how small.
Every legacy is remembered, and every wish honoured.

Having said that, not all legacies are the same and an extraordinary legacy deserves an extraordinary outcome. That's how we felt when Gillian's legacy arrived. Once we'd got over the shock, and the dust had settled, we knew we had to do something really special in her memory. Our Trustees held an extraordinary meeting to consider a wide range of ideas from "we could get some new display boards", to "let's buy land and create another nature reserve, another 'Barn Owl Heaven', like we did with the Lennon legacy".

Seventeen ideas were considered. Some were so good and so affordable that the response was "let's just do it!" – they went on the 'just do' list. Some were medium-sized and so agreeable they went straight onto a 'let the Managers decide' list. And then there were THE BIG ONES... Big ones like "let's increase our staff so we can do more Barn Owl conservation", "let's invest money ethically and spend the interest on Barn Owl conservation" and "let's do research so we make Barn Owl conservation more effective". Just when it seemed a theme might be emerging, the idea came up "let's create a new post and have a full time Education Officer!". Why? "So we can teach more people about Barn Owls". Yes, a theme definitely had emerged.

In the end, our Trustees settled on three BIG IDEAS with five big outputs.

1) Fund a full time Assistant Conservation Officer post for three years to do more Barn Owl conservation work (that's output one) and to free up existing staff to do two big 'conservation research' projects, one comparing the occupancy rates of different types of nestboxes (output two) and another looking at the occupancy

of nestboxes in different landscape types with different amounts of foraging habitat (output three), comparing new data to existing data. And, if time allows, another research project using data collected for our annual 'State of the UK Barn Owl Population' reports to investigate the effect of climate change on Barn Owls.



2) Fund a part time Education Post to do more school visits, telling our new story 'Flying into the Future' (see page 11), run education events and a regular 'watch group' in our 'Lennon Legacy Project' nature reserve, create new talks and school visits based around owl pellet dissection, revamp our junior supporters scheme, update our webpages for kids and all our educational resources, and a whole host of other things... (output four).

3) And, as a permanent memorial to Gillian, buy land and create our 2nd nature reserve! Assuming we can find the right land at the right price, this will be another haven for Barn Owls and as many other birds, mammals, grasses, flowers, butterflies, and other invertebrates, as the site can accommodate. And another site to showcase the tremendous biodiversity gains in Barn Owl habitat creation. (Output five).

In memory of Gillian Grimwood. Thank you Gillian.

David Ramsden
Head of Conservation

Walter Gee

Walter (known as "Wally" or "Wal" to family and friends) had a lifelong love and interest in nature and wildlife. In the early 1990s, he became especially fascinated with owls, and with Barn Owls in particular. This fascination was intensified after a Christmas gift from his family in 2003 consisting of a 'Birds of Prey' day experience where he was able to get up close and personal with many hawks, falcons and, most importantly, owls.

His home was filled with pictures and figurines of owls, and the end wall of his bungalow displays two large owl images which he had included in the rendering when it was renewed.

Whilst he never knew of the Barn Owl Trust, and his mobility was severely

impaired in his later years, his family felt that he would have loved the idea of money collected in lieu of flowers at his funeral, being donated to this organisation dedicated to the education, preservation, protection and conservation of his favourite owl.

Thanks to Walter's son Steve for words & photo.

In Memoriam

The Trust has received legacies from the estates of:

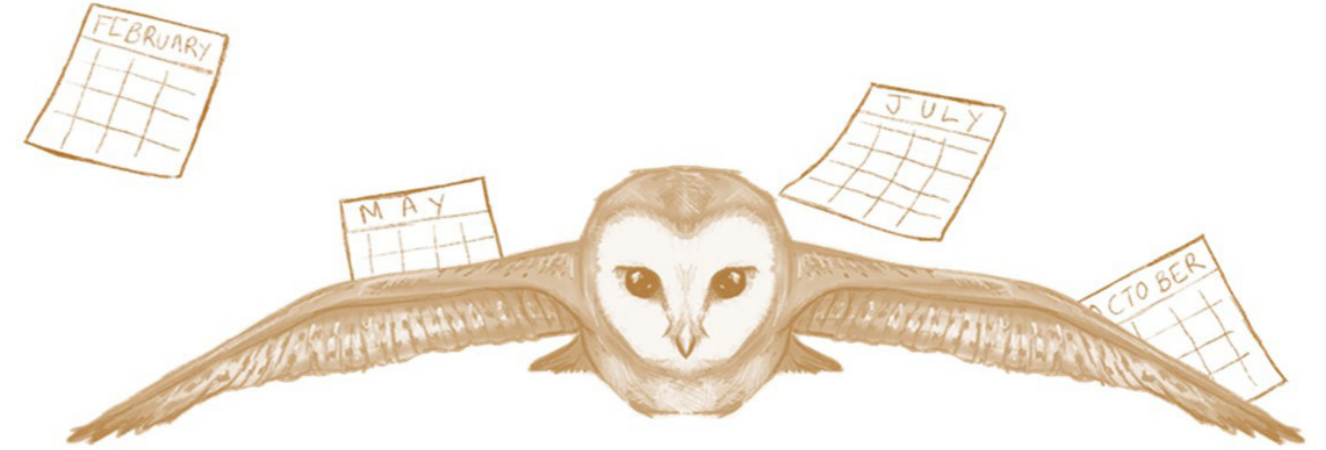
Dalice Merrick & Enid Sage

and donations in memory of:

Alma Mary Coates, Shirley Margaret Davies,
Walter Gee, Jean Hoyland Green, Gillian Ann Hales,
Douglas Maclean, Rebecca Oldfield, David Parish,
Geoffrey Hugh Richardson, John Scott
and Betty Patricia Waring

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

New School Talk



Flying into the Future

The Barn Owl Trust has been delivering the 'Wings of Change' talk to schools and youth groups for the past 35 years, visiting its first school way back in 1988 with beautiful Barn Owl 'Moon'. The Wings of Change story looks back in time, beginning in the 1940s and continuing to present day. It looks at how the intensification of agriculture, development of traditional buildings and modern road building over this period influenced the decline of Barn Owls. The talk has enabled the Trust to spread the message of Barn Owl conservation to young people across Devon and adjacent counties. In lockdown, talks moved to Zoom, allowing the message to be spread even further afield. The furthest being delivered to a school in West Yorkshire.

The talk's first outing took place at Braunton Countryside Centre in November 2023. This fantastic resource aims to increase the understanding, awareness and enjoyment of Braunton's surrounding landscapes for visitors and the local community. The Trust were invited by the centre to deliver the talk to a very attentive audience of children, parents and guardians. This was a great location in which to deliver the talk for the first time and it was well received, with the audience providing both positive and constructive feedback.

The talk will be offered to schools and other educational groups throughout 2024. If your school or youth group are interested in receiving a 'Flying into the Future' talk, please contact Jess at education@barnowltrust.org.uk for further information.

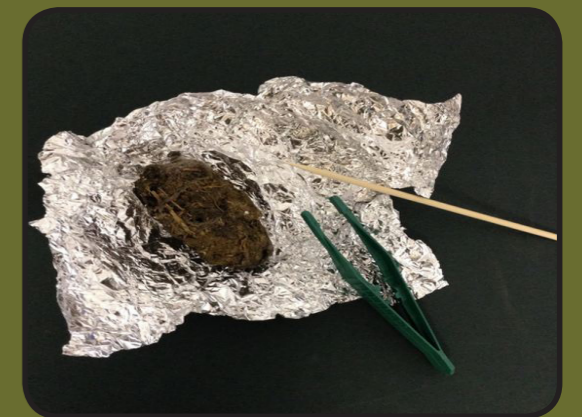
Jessica Munday
Education Officer



Jess giving the first Flying into the Future talk
Photo provided by Braunton Countryside Centre

Last Autumn, the Trust launched its new talk, 'Flying into the Future'. Although many of the original threats to Barn Owls still remain, this talk has been written in response to new threats Barn Owls will face in the future, particularly that of our changing climate. It begins in the present and continues forward 25 years in time, following the story of the Barn Owls living on two different farms near the Exe Estuary in Devon. Aimed at upper primary school aged children, it considers how the impact of extreme weather events might affect Barn Owls and how the families living on the farms try and help them, and how they respond to the challenges of extreme weather events. It is hoped that the talk will inspire young people to protect our planet for the future. Where possible, talks will be accompanied by an appearance by Baley the Barn Owl.

Pellet Dissection



Dissecting pellets and identifying small mammal remains provides young people (and adults!) with an amazing opportunity to learn more about the diet of Barn Owls, small mammal anatomy and skeletons. If you are interested in analysing pellets, we sell Pellet Packs via our website at

www.barnowltrust.org.uk/product/pellet-dissection-pack

Each pack contains at least 2 pellets, everything you require to dissect your pellets and an identification guide. Look out for more educational resources on our website in the coming year.

Even More BOT News!

Guernsey Animal Aid



Miracle - the Barn Owl from Guernsey

On 7th of November, we had surprise visit from Sue and Marianne (of Guernsey Animal Aid) who came to donate an incredible £15,000 to the Barn Owl Trust!

Guernsey Animal Aid was founded by Sue Vidamour in 1998 as an answer to the feral cat problem on the island. As a result of their amazing efforts, the feral cat problem has massively reduced and over the years the charity expanded to take in all animal casualties (large and small) as they developed a substantial rescue centre and sanctuary. However, the centre is now closing down and they kindly decided to allocate some of their left-over funds to us.

Sue first got in touch with us back in 2005 when she was seeking advice over an injured Barn Owl who couldn't be released back into the wild. The owl had been found by a man walking his dog along the cliffs in Guernsey and was very thin and covered in ticks. Animal Aid took her in and did an amazing job at getting her strong and fit again. Unfortunately, the owl wasn't flying well enough to be released back into the wild and so came to live at our sanctuary here. She was named Miracle and was adopted by many of our supporters who followed her progress for the following 7 years before she passed away in 2012.

Recently, Sue has been back in touch with us for advice over an emaciated young Barn Owl who had blown out of a tree in gale force winds and rain. Again, Sue did a brilliant job of bringing the owl up to a good weight and then built a release aviary where the owl spent a few weeks before the lid was opened at dusk. The release went perfectly and the owl continued to return to the aviary for 6 weeks to collect food as it gained independence. While the rescue centre is closing down, we are reassured to know that Sue is still going to rehabilitate injured birds and so we know the Barn Owls of Guernsey are in good hands!

Many thanks Guernsey Animal Aid and huge respect for all the work you have done over the years.

Pip Laker
Conservation Officer

Nestbox Research Project Takes off

"How long will it take for my new nestbox to become occupied?"

We aim to answer this common question as part of our commitment to helping people to help Barn Owls. We need some new information first, which we aim to acquire with 3 years of monitoring at 80 new nestboxes, at previously unoccupied sites. We will also compare Barn Owl activity at these new sites with activity at established sites. This will enable us to evaluate the relative contributions that 'traditional' sites and new sites make in terms of young owls that join the population.



Brood of 3 Barn Owlets
Photo: Kevin Keatley

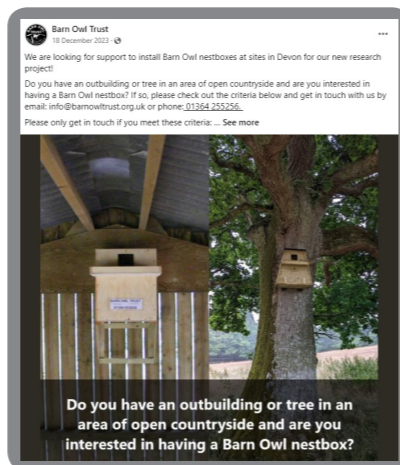
We know that Barn Owls are inquisitive about small, dark entrance holes, and that a lofty position can encourage them to select a nestbox for breeding in. However, identifying other nest site characteristics that increase breeding success could improve our methods of positioning new nestboxes in the future. For this reason, we are also aiming to conduct a survey of the nest site and surrounding foraging habitat at each site where a new nestbox goes up.

This research is possible due to the amazing and generous legacy left to the Trust by the late Gillian Grimwood. The project also hinges on having permission to work at 80 new sites, so we used Facebook to engage with potential site owners.

At the time of writing, our December 18th Facebook post has been shared 381 times and we've been busy responding to 162 emails and many telephone calls! Not only has this identified sites for our research, it has also opened up lots of incredibly constructive conversations on how to encourage and protect Barn Owls.

We'd like to send a massive thank you to everyone who got in touch!

Dr Mateo Ruiz
Senior Conservation and Science Officer



Silver's New Home



Silver's fantastic new aviary

We met Pam and David in July when they brought us a young Tawny Owl who they'd found in a very sorry state in their garden. Once the owl (Bish) had recovered and reached dispersal age, Pam and David were keen to release him back in their garden and so constructed an amazing 3D pentagon-style aviary with an openable roof. Pam and David enjoyed this process so much they asked us if there was anything else they could do to help. At around the same time, one of our fostered Barn Owls (Silver) was in need of a new home as her foster carer had sadly passed away. Pam and David immediately signed up to become her new carers and, once again, blew us away with their dedication as they decided to build an even bigger aviary for Silver, while keeping the pentagon-style aviary as a potential release site for any rehab cases we have. As Silver only has one eye, they provided several boxes for her on the floor of the aviary in addition to a high roost box and hanging perches for her to use. Pam has reported that Silver has settled into her new aviary very happily, with her favourite spot actually being her high roost box, and will fly out to greet David when he drops off her food in the evening.

Pip Laker
Conservation Officer



The release aviary purpose built by David for Tawny Owl - Bish

Annual Prize Draw

Our Christmas Annual Prize Draw took place on 6th December 2023. The prizes donated were incredibly generous and ranged from tickets to the Royal Yacht Britannia, the Eden Project, Adam Henson's Farm and the National Space Centre. We had a huge amount of entries and, with over 40 prizes, were able to have an amazing Draw. We are so grateful to all the companies that donated prizes for us and also to all those people who supported us in buying tickets. All the prize winners have been contacted and we would love to see pictures or hear of your experiences when you get to enjoy your prize.



Lucky winner, Shona, with her Barn Owl carving

You will find a book of tickets for this year's Prize Draw enclosed, £1 a ticket or £5 for the book. You can return your draw stubs with a cheque or you can make a donation via our [website](https://www.barnowltrust.org.uk) putting 'Draw Tickets' as the reason for donation. Prizes to be announced, so please keep an eye out on the [website](https://www.barnowltrust.org.uk) for details. Again, many thanks to all those who supported the Draw last year, every penny will go towards our goal of conserving the Barn Owl and its environment.

Sam Tully
Legacy Project and Fundraising Officer

Caught On Camera



In December, a trail camera was set up in the wild bird food crop area of the LLP. It's always exciting when the camera captures some of the reserves more nocturnal animals and we were thrilled to get some fantastic footage of a Badger and a Fox weaving around each other, eating the scattered sunflower seeds. The Badger was very interested in the trail camera and not at all wary of it, as you can see in the photo above. The Fox, however, kept his distance and can just be spotted by his glowing eyes in the background. The full video can be watched online in our Wildlife Diary:

www.barnowltrust.org.uk/wildlife-diary-2023

Owly Inbox

Tiggins Barn



Tiggins Barn completed

Tiggins Meadow is a private rewilding project in East Suffolk. The land was previously used for agriculture but was intensively over-farmed and became infertile. Since 2008, it has been transformed into a private nature reserve; with areas of wildflower meadow, dense hedgerows, seasonal ponds, and thickets of coppiced willow. Over the years, Barn Owls have visited the site, and have been encouraged to settle by installing barn owl boxes in the trees.

In 2020, a local architecture practice - Natural Building Studio, helped to design and build Tiggins Barn; a tool store, shelter, and workshop space. The questions before we set out were: How do we build to net-zero carbon? How do we touch lightly on the landscape? How do we make a building that creates additional habitat for wildlife?

We built a simple timber framed structure with a ridge line 4.5m above the ground. Owls enjoy a nestbox that is at least 3m above ground level. At one gable end, we left a small part of the loft as an uninsulated space. We created a small access hole through the wood facade and built a ledge outside so that owls could easily navigate the entrance.

Within a month of finishing the cladding (before construction has even finished) a barn owl started roosting. We were surprised at how quickly they took to the space, but they must be called Barn Owls for a good reason.

Earlier this spring we found a pair visiting - hopefully they are getting ready to mate and nest.

We used other simple and low-cost techniques to integrate wildlife habitat into the design. The eaves overhang the facade and create ledges suitable for smaller birds to nest. The building is raised off the ground on micro-screw foundations, which are removable, recyclable, negate the need for carbon intensive concrete, and provide a dry and sheltered habitat. The facade has a void behind it which can be inhabited by insects and spiders but can be removed for maintenance or if bees and wasps take over.



The timber frame is up

It's easy to make space in buildings for wildlife. It doesn't cost more. It doesn't have to be 'bolted on'. It can be integrated into a holistic design. If you would like to learn more, visit:

www.naturalbuildingstudio.com or contact Kit at naturalbuildingstudio@gmail.com

Kit Smithson
Photos Provided

Nine Owlets!



Rebecca Dmytryk from Humane Wildlife Control Inc, based on the central coast of California, USA was in touch in October, we discussed nestbox design features, the excellent work Humane Wildlife Control Inc are carrying out and they sent this amazing picture of 9 owlets!

Humane Wildlife Control Inc, is based on the central coast of California, USA. We believe humans are a part of nature, not separate from it. And that no one truly owns land - we are occupants. Tenants. As good tenants, then, we must strive for harmonious existence with other inhabitants which share the land, the Earth. When resolving wildlife conflicts, we take an ecology-based, holistic approach, with compassion, humanity and a deep respect for animals and the environment.

Part of this work has involved installing Barn Owl nestboxes for over a decade as natural rodent control replacing the need for poison! Our box design is heavily based on recommendations made by the Barn Owl Trust, to whom we are grateful to for their willingness to share their expertise. Our design continues to evolve, mostly based on what we observe through surveillance cameras. We believe the size of the box and placement of the entry hole are the two most critical components that influence the health and survival of the owlets.

Our boxes often produce 6 healthy fledglings. At one site, located on a golf course, we found 9 healthy owlets during a ringing operation!

Rebecca Dmytryk
Humane Wildlife Control Inc
Photo Provided

Team Talk

New Team Additions

Josh Case
Assistant Conservation Officer

Josh started working for the Barn Owl Trust in September 2023. He carries out a number of tasks including handling email and telephone enquiries, helping with fieldwork, and engagement with members of the public and landowners.

After gaining a degree in Zoology at the University of Sheffield, Josh has pursued a career in conservation, working with the RSPB in the New Forest, assisting with a Little Tern colony in North Wales before spending time working on the Dorset heaths with the Amphibian and Reptile Conservation Trust.

Josh is very concerned about the state of nature decline we are observing in the UK and wants to use his passion to promote conservation, particularly across our farmed environments. Being able to protect the Barn Owl, its environment and supporting the multitude of other species and ecosystem services this brings is a very exciting prospect.

In his spare time, Josh is excited to walk the heights of Dartmoor (after growing up in very flat Norfolk), wild swim in the beautiful rivers and get lost exploring the temperate rainforests.

Kate Jellyman
Assistant Conservation Officer



Kate started working for the Barn Owl Trust at the beginning of November 2023 and is part of the Conservation Team, carrying out a wide variety of tasks including enquiries and helping with fieldwork.

Kate lives in a 'tiny home' on an organic farm that produces vegetables for Riverford. She spent the years before the Barn Owl Trust working on the farm - planting, hand weeding and harvesting the veggies and continues to help out in her spare time. She has had a varied career so far and tried out lots of industries, from radio production to cafe management, before landing a job guiding on glaciers in rural Iceland. It was an amazing experience, but seeing the obvious effects of climate change first hand made it clear that she wanted to direct her life towards making more of a difference.

Since Iceland, Kate has spent time volunteering for local conservation projects, such as at the Devon Wildlife Trust and Wild Devon, before finding her dream conservation job at the Barn Owl Trust. Kate believes in the importance of conservation work,



especially protecting habitats and species in decline as a result of human activity. She hadn't actually seen a Barn Owl properly before moving onto the farm where she is now lucky enough to be able to watch one forage regularly from her kitchen window!

Since joining the Trust, Kate has learnt lots about Barn Owls and has been testing her knowledge through answering some of the many conservation enquiries we receive daily by email and over the phone. She loves that she gets to see and hold Barn Owls regularly and has helped with a few live birds when they've come into our Bird Hospital. She sometimes gets to feed the sanctuary birds and particularly likes 'Tyron', who is always keen for his dinner! She has also been out doing lots of fieldwork, putting up nestboxes and carrying out surveys, all over Devon and is excited to be part of the new nestbox research project (see [page 12](#)), along with the rest of the Conservation Team.

Kate thinks Devon is the best county and loves being out on Dartmoor or the coast path, walking and swimming, or staying in the van outside a cosy pub. She is thrilled to be in a job that means she gets to explore this beautiful county further and give back to nature at the same time. It has also been fantastic for her to speak to so many people keen to help the species thrive.

Jessica Munday
Education Officer

Jess joined the Admin Team part time in 2021 and became full time in 2022, spending one day a week developing educational resources. Thanks to Gillian's Legacy, we are now able to extend our educational activities by creating a new part time educational role (3 days a week). Jess was the successful candidate and we are excited for what she will bring to the table. She has a background in environmental education and is keen to get stuck in! She has already been working on the new school talk 'Flying into the Future' (see [page 11](#)) and will be updating and developing educational resources and activities as part of the new role.



Staff Celebration

The staff had been working in very close proximity for 9 long months and so welcomed a little light relief at Christmas. We decided to go to a local pub for a meal two weeks before Christmas. We had a great evening, and everyone seemed to enjoy themselves. We did our mad Secret Santa present giving at the meal, which provided us with a very entertaining half hour, as the staff had (as usual) excelled themselves finding weird and wonderful gifts for each other.

Barn Manager, Jaz, definitely won the prize for being the most festive! - see photo above!

Thanks to the Rising Sun in Woodland for hosting us, and providing crackers, table decorations and some wonderful food. We rather expect to be returning next Christmas!



Thanks & Things

We would like to say a big thank you to all our supporters who have sent in items for recycling, donated goods for our prize draw or gifted us items from our Wants List. Thank you:

Louise Anquetil, Jeanette Connabeer, H. Copland, Carl and Julie Earrye, Helen & Sean Farrow, Myfanwy Ford, Andrew Gillett & Joy Ward, Rosemary Godwin, Kim & Ed McNeil, Jayne Manning, Carole Lewis, Clare Lovatt, Gwyneth Parish, Beatrice Potter, Sylvia Precious, Janet Rutter, Elaine Underhill. Willmott Dixon Holdings Ltd and anyone we may have missed!

Thank you to our wonderful volunteers who give up their time to help the Trust:

Saleh Alfulaj, Ian Bailey, Diana Baker, Judy Bryan, Tim Dowling, Steve Dyer, Caroline Fawell, Leah Fynn, Nick Gant, Jane Goodall, Fiona Hailstone, Tony Hullat, Maeve Leith, Kim McNeil, Chris Marshall, Steve Martin, Simon Petherick, Melanie Reeves, Margaret Rhodes, Daniel Snow & Eleni Vreony.

A huge thank you to our Fantastic Fundraisers:

Tim & Jean Reavell for the sale of aluminium drinks cans collected from their dog walks, Jessica Ryan for giving a donation from the sale of her Barn Owl prints, Angela Brown & Karen Chelsey for selling Barn Owl calendars to raise funds for us, Sophie Nash for giving 10% from the sales of her Barn Owl prints and Lowe Aston Partnership for giving 10p from the sale of each card to the Trust.

We would also like to say a special thank you to Estover Veterinary Hospital, Seymour Vets and City Vets for all their help with treating injured owls.

Can you help us with:

- Books: 'Invertebrate Conservation and Agricultural Ecosystems' by Tim R New 'The Little Owl' by Dries van Nieuwenhuysen Et Al.- hardback of edition 2 and BTO 'A field guide to monitoring nests' by James Ferguson-Lees, Richard Castell and Dave Leech
- Folding saw horses/trestles
- Binoculars - At least 7x magnification, lens diameter 7 x 40 or 8 x 40 or 7 x 42 mm
- Hessian Sacks
- Electric chain saw - Stihl (cordless)
- Electric Strimmer/Brushcutter - Stihl (cordless)
- Metal Detector
- Old newspapers (for owl boxes in our Bird Room)
- Woodchip (for use in the aviaries)
- Used stamps, including any foreign stamps & currency
- Postcards and pre-1970 envelopes with stamps on
- Wild bird food - sacks of black sunflower seeds & peanuts
- 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)
- Wire cutters
- 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)

Thank you for your help.

Tail Piece



Those of you familiar with the Tailpiece are probably expecting it to be crammed with quotes and facts about climate change and all the other horrendous things that threaten life on Earth. But this issue, I thought I'd take you with me on my daily walk around the Trust's nature reserve (the LLP). It's the 4th of March as I write this and February here was extremely wet. March has started in the same vein, with over an inch and a half of rain so far and more than half an inch of that today. Fortunately, by the time the office closed the rain had stopped.

Our walk starts up hill and the ground, even on the slopes, is sodden. Celandines shine out amongst the rough grass, and we follow the mown path to the orchard where the hedge on top of the stone bank has been laid this winter. The Snowdrops we planted under the fruit trees have finished now but the Daffodils are standing proudly despite the weather. As we drop down through the orchard towards the ponds, we pass the Almond trees which have been flowering bravely since mid-February. The Oakley Pond on our left unusually has had more Frogspawn this year than the Flo Pond, and the Tadpoles in both ponds, that have survived the frosts, have hatched now. At the top of the Flo Pond there are 3 Mandarin ducks on the water, so we change direction and walk back up hill, past the Bee hives and around the back of the tractor shed to reach the gateway to the Apprentice Path.

The noise of the river is extreme as it races down the valley from the moors to the sea. It is overflowing the path where the abstraction pipes that feed the ponds are. The pipes are blocked yet again by the debris that washes down, so we take the broom that lives nearby and give them a brush as we pass. Because we are so close to the source of the river here, the water level rises and falls rapidly in response to rainfall, and today, as we cross the 1st bridge, the water is thundering below us. As we walk up the path, under the dripping trees we can hear a strident Song Thrush singing its heart out in the woodland. Blue Tits and Great Tits provide a chorus which is almost drowned out by the sound of the river. Bluebell leaves are appearing on the woodland floor and, as we cross the top bridge into Corner Wood, the Bluebell patch ahead of us is covered in shoots. In the middle of them, Primroses are flowering

and the leaves of our only Wild Garlic plant, in the middle of the path, have started to appear.

As we climb up through Corner Wood, the noise of the river recedes a little but never entirely disappears. On our left is Pennsland Land Lane and beyond it is the devastation where the Pine plantation was until last month when it was clear felled. We walk out of the woodland into North Park and can see the Wildlife Tower on the far side of the field. From here, we have to navigate an extremely muddy gateway, where the cattle that came in over the winter have churned up the ground, and on our right is the old winter bird food crop area. Its hard to believe that this time last year the ground had a crop on it - it has returned to grassland, with no reseeding, amazingly quickly.

We follow the path up hill and reach the highest point of the reserve. On a clear day we can see for miles from here, but today the view is shrouded by murk, nevertheless a Robin is singing in the hedgerow and the Blackthorn is flowering. We can choose here whether to walk back down the Wibbly Wobbly Path, or take the slightly longer route along the northern boundary of the reserve toward the First Field Shelter, past this year's winter wild bird food crop. Most of the seed had been eaten by the end of January, so mowing of the area for ploughing and reseeding has already started. A very pale Buzzard swoops down to catch an unsuspecting Field Vole from amongst the cut stalks.

We pass the recently revealed Rabbit holes in the hedge bank, and as we pass the field shelter and reach the Long Path, we spot a small group of Meadow Pipits flying up from the grassland. We follow the path to the top of Kiln Close passing the mobile aviary, where food is still being put out for a returning Barn Owl. A Carrion Crow is perched on one of the camera posts scattered around the reserve as we head back down the steep slope, past the solar panels, towards the office. Every walk here is different, because of the weather or the wildlife or flora we see. I hope you have enjoyed this one and will join us in person for one on another day. *Together we can make a world of difference.*

Frances Ramsden