Barn Owls



in north east Wales

Partners in this project are:

Conwy County Borough Council

Grŵp Astudio Adar Ysglyfaethus Cymru - Gogledd Cymru

Wales Raptor Study Group - North Wales

Wrexham County Borough Council / Wrecsam

Sir y Fflint Flintshire County Council

Sir Ddinbych Denbighshire County Council

The status and distribution of Barn Owls in north east Wales

We gratefully acknowledge the assistance of Chester Zoo in funding this leaflet.

In the past the Barn Owl was a common sight on farmland in north east Wales, and a loyal occupant of many farm buildings. You may have seen this magnificent bird just after dusk, or just before dawn.

Barn Owls have become more scarce. We want to know how many Barn Owls we now have in our area. This is where you may be able to help, by letting us know if you have Barn Owls nesting on your land.

This leaflet provides you with some simple steps you can take to find out if you have a resident Barn Owl.

On the back of the leaflet is a short Freepost questionnaire you can complete in 5 minutes. This will give us an idea of the Barn Owl population in north east Wales. Please help us to monitor our population of Barn Owls.



Habitat

Rough grassland – good feeding habitat for Barn Owls



Barn Owls will live comfortably alongside people, using man made structures such as farm buildings as daytime roosts and breeding sites. They prefer traditional farm buildings. However, they will use a new development or barn conversion if adequate provisions are made. They need a safe dark space to nest up off the ground in buildings. They may also nest in large cavities in old trees. They will use these sites as a base for hunting in the nearby area if this has suitable habitat for their prey, small mammals.

Barn Owl hunting ground includes a mixture of the following habitats:

- rough grassland, supporting a high field vole population
- damp, tussocky grassland in fallow or lightly grazed pasture
- weedy field margins
- hedgerows with rough margins
- woodland edge
- stubble fields
- drainage ditches
- farm grounds

How do you know you have a nesting Barn Owl?

This is a list of simple indicators you can use to identify your resident Barn Owl:

- Droppings – large white splashes - commonly known as whitewash - on a hard surface or smaller white patches on hay or straw. Droppings may run down roof timbers below the Barn Owls' perch, appearing as white vertical lines.



- Pellets – regurgitated remains of Barn Owl prey, composed of hair and bone, found in roosting areas. The size of a barn owl pellet varies from thumb nail size to whole thumb size, and is a glossy black colour when fresh.
- Feathers – Barn Owl wing feathers are very distinctive.



From March through to August take extra care not to disturb nesting birds. This is their main breeding season. Barn Owls are protected by law under Schedule 1, Part 1 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. Only people with the appropriate Schedule 1 licence may investigate the nest sites. Our project fieldworkers have such licences.

5 steps to encourage Barn Owls

- Provide suitable feeding habitat.
- Leave field margins unsprayed and uncut, thereby increasing the population of small mammals; the Barn Owls' prey.
- Barn Owls need a level area on which to lay their eggs, normally over 3 metres above ground. Such places may be in a wall cavity or within straw bales stored in a barn, but a better, safer place would be in a special nest box made for them, either in a building or on a tree. We can supply and erect a nest box for you.
- Owls are vulnerable to drowning in water troughs. This can be prevented by floating a piece of timber or upturned, plastic milk crate in the trough.
- Avoid using rodenticides as poisoned rodents can kill Barn Owls if eaten. Please consider: using traps, cats or terriers and disposing of dead rodents by burning.



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Questionnaire

How Many Barn Owls are nesting in north east Wales?

We don't know. Please help us find out by answering these simple questions:

1. Do you have suitable feeding habitat nearby?
   Yes No
2. Do you have Barn Owls nesting on your land?
   Yes No
3. Would you like advice on suitable habitat and nest sites for Barn Owls?
   Yes No
4. Would you like a nest box erected on your property?
   Yes No
5. Would you be willing to have your nest site monitored by one of our licensed field workers?
   Yes No

Your Details

Name: .....

Address: .....

.....

.....

..... Postcode: .....

Telephone number: .....

e-mail address: .....

NB: Your details will be held on our database and only made available to project partners. Please return this slip to: