



Barn Owl Recovery Project – November 2018 Update

Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust installed 45 barn owl boxes in 2017. These have been supplemented by a further 18 internal and 6 external barn owl boxes put up during the 2018 season.



Photo 1: Milestone – GWT staff erecting barn owl box number 60, spring 2018.

Photo 2: Donated external barn owl box installed by GWT volunteers, spring 2018.



Barn Owl Box Monitoring Programme

In 2017 Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust recruited and trained a team of 20 volunteers to monitor barn owl activity in existing barn owl boxes in the project area and at the suite of new boxes erected by the project in 2017.

With a further 24 boxes installed by the project in 2018, the total number of known barn owl boxes being monitored by Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust volunteers in the priority Windrush Valley area of the Cotswold District is now up to 92.

2017 was a very successful year for barn owls in the Windrush Valley system of Gloucestershire. 65% of the barn owl boxes were being used by barn owls during the year. At least 11 breeding pairs of barn owls successfully reared broods in the project area, with 23 owlets from 8 of the 11 boxes being ringed by our local ringer.

Unfortunately, the perfect storm of the mild wet winter of 2017/18, the “Beast from the East” and the prolonged drought-like conditions of this summer conspired against the poor barn owl. Whilst occupancy of boxes remained thankfully fairly high at 60%, only 5 pairs were successful in rearing owlets to fledging in the Windrush Valley system of Gloucestershire in 2018.

Although 2018 has been a disappointing year for barn owls, a wash-out breeding season is not the end of the world. The lifespan of a typical barn owl is 4 years, meaning that our adult birds will get another chance next year. Furthermore, the large number of boxes already erected will afford this year’s small number of fledged youngsters multiple sheltering opportunities to survive over the 2018/19 winter.

Photo 3: Some good news – 3 fledged owlets in an internal barn owl box near Bourton-on-the-Water, August 2018.



Next Steps

We will endeavour to build and put up further barn owl boxes in priority areas of Gloucestershire whenever opportunity, and necessary funding, arises. We will continue to work closely with landowners, including the National Trust, and with our partners at Gloucestershire Barn Owl Monitoring Programme (GBOMP) and neighbouring projects such as the Southam and District Owl Society.

Furthermore, we are committed to continuing to co-ordinate the volunteer monitoring programme. The results of this on-going monitoring programme will enable all interested parties to get a better picture of the conservation status of the barn owl population in the area, maximise the opportunities for the ringing of owlets by GBOMP ringers and ensure repairs are carried out on the existing stock of boxes promptly.

Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust is extremely grateful for the support from Grundon Waste Management, Montague Panton Animal Welfare Trust, Hamamelis Trust, Carter Conservation Trust, Cotswold Visitor Giving Scheme, Robert Clutterbuck Charitable Trust, Dent-Brocklehurst Family Charitable Trust and the many kind donations we received from members of the public towards our Barn Owl appeal.

Thank you very much for your support.

John Field
Living Landscape Adviser

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