

S.O.S.

SPECIAL RESCUE REPORT

NEWS

Suffolk Owl Sanctuary, Stonham Barns, Stonham Aspal, Suffolk IP14 6AT
Tel: 01449 711425 www.owl-help.org.uk

The Newsletter for SOS Supporters

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This young Tawny was brought into us having been clipped by a car... on arrival he was concussed and one eye was severely bruised but after a few days in our Raptor Hospital and some time to recuperate, he was released back to the wild.



This Barn Owlet was found abandoned (if their chicks fall from their nest, adult Barn Owls will pay no further heed to their offspring and so they remain unfed) but we were able to resuscitate him - he is now fledging nicely and will soon be flying free.



An odd case of "Barn Owl Meets Fly Papers" - this mature bird fell down a chimney but in trying to find an exit, he encountered fly-papers - mayhem ensued! It took hours of skill & patience to disentangle his feathers without damage and he was released fit & well!



This pair of unrelated Little Owls were brought into S.O.S. separately - one with a leg so severely entangled in twine we thought at first amputation might be the only course of action. But it recovered in time and with the other - a foundling - both were 'hacked back' to their natural surroundings soon after.



Not so lucky - this handsome buzzard was found with a wing so badly broken that our vet deemed its life expectancy to be negligible - in this case, peaceful euthanasia was the most humane option.

All in a week's work...

Much of the money raised through the generosity of your kind donations pays for the nursing of injured owls & foundlings, and then getting them back safely to the wild. During a typical week this Summer, no fewer than seven injured owls and other birds of prey were brought into the Suffolk Owl Sanctuary for treatment. Here are some of their stories, many of which had a happy ending thanks to YOUR support!



MAKING IT ALL WORTHWHILE Conservation Officer Dean, who looks after our hospital at S.O.S., experiences the ultimate in job satisfaction as he releases a foundling Tawny Owl back to the wild after it had spent a few weeks with us getting fully fledged & ready for flight.

BOXING CLEVER

Some years ago we launched our Nest Box Scheme, the purpose of which is to replace the diminishing natural habitats of Britain's threatened Owl species with new safe and secure roosts.

Thanks to your continued support through owl adoptions and general donations, this work continues and thrives.

But it's never a case of just sticking a box up a tree, as many suppose! Here we follow our General Manager Andy Hulme and Conservation Officer Dean Winham as they set off on a cold winter's morn earlier this year to erect some new Barn Owl nest boxes - on the way you can pick up some useful tips if you're thinking about doing the same.



Normally the natural habitat of Barn Owls, old trees like these are now often felled

Easter traditionally heralds the arrival of spring and although a little early this year, we were out and about completing the preparations we began last Autumn to provide new nestboxes for our feathered friends in the wild in time for their breeding season, which usually begins in May.

As you may know, a proportion of the donations we receive through adoptions & donations goes towards funding the scheme - not only paying for the nest-boxes but also the manpower to survey sites and install the boxes, but afterwards clean and monitor their success.

However, there are many considerations which need to be taken into account before erecting nest boxes for wild owls and if this is of interest to you, the following guidelines set out the steps you need to take.

In simple terms, firstly you need to establish what sort of owls you have in your area, or at least



Hi Ho! Hi Ho! Andy & Dean set off to erect a box suitable for the Barn Owl



which species you intend to attract. Observation is the key here: have you seen or heard owls in vicinity, or perhaps come across owl pellets?

These will be your indicators that the environment holds promise. Once you're reasonably sure that owls are already in the area, or that the habitat may well attract them, you then need to establish whether there will be a sufficient supply of wild food - usually small rodents - in the area to sustain the owls and keep their interest! This particular process may take some patient research, as if there is no localised food source, then your mission will be a fruitless one.

The next thing to do is to build or buy a suitable nestbox for the intended species. You will find more information about Owl Nestboxes on our website at www.owl-help.org.uk, and later this year we are publishing a free booklet on the subject.

Then, when you have the right box, it's time to site it: in our case, this is always on someone else's land, so we need to get permission to do so before we start erecting boxes.

Now, be warned: there is usually quite a bit more to putting up an owl box than simply nailing it to a tree. As you will understand, the locations for siting the box may be remote, the footings soft and/or irregular, the size, shape and weight of the box more than a mere handful and the position well off the ground - so putting up a box may be at least a two-person job. Remember to equip yourself with suitable safety equipment and a good selection of

tools before you set out.

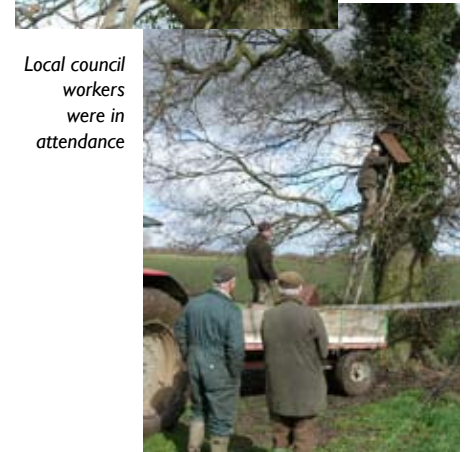
To illustrate the point, we took some photos of our most recent jaunt to sites that had been fully researched as known or potentially suitable Barn Owl habitats, headed by our Conservation Officer Dean Winham. One box was to be located on the gable end of a barn, and two others in well-weathered oak trees - and as you can see from the photos we had a very interesting day putting them up.



Andy and Dean complete the final assembly of the box on site



'Hard Hat Dean' manfully secures a gable box in a mature tree in a secluded location



Local council workers were in attendance



This barn presented the ideal location point for a new box, enabling us to locate it high enough to be out of harms way

Now, having successfully erected the boxes, it's worthwhile remembering that this is not, of course, the end of the story - only the beginning. It can take as much as three or more years before the owls decide to use a box - so those of you who undertake the task may have a long wait before seeing any results for their actions. Also, be certain you are aware that it is ILLEGAL to go near an owl nestbox without a "Disturbance License," which can only be obtained through the government agency DEFRA.

If you would like a free copy of our booklet "Saving Britain's Owls" please call 01449 711425 or write to us at Suffolk Owl Sanctuary, Stonham Barns, Pettaugh Road, Stonham Aspal IP14 6AT

SCHOOLS FARM FAIR



It was a busy day for Andy Hulme when he attended the recent "Schools Farm Fair 2008".

Now in its seventh year, this worthwhile annual event is attended by over 3,500 primary school children and teachers. The one-day educational show enables them to connect with how their food is produced and to give them an understanding of farming and its relationship with the management of the countryside.

As S.O.S. is a centre dedicated to the rehabilitation of the wild raptors - which is a form of countryside management - the event gave local school children the opportunity to meet some of our residents and being the breeding time of year, we were able to take several baby owls to the event. As you can see, feeding time proved to be a big hit!

JOINT EFFORT

As a Charity of whose charter the creation of new, permanent habitat of wild owls and other birds of prey forms an important part, Suffolk Owl Sanctuary is always interested to learn about the activities of others who have similar goals. So we're pleased to draw to your attention the work of a neighbouring group - The Thornham Owl Project - who are celebrating an important milestone in the quest to ensure that Barn Owls in particular are given every opportunity to survive & prosper in the face of man's encroachment on the landscape.



The Thornham Owl Project recently erected its 150th Bird of Prey nest box - no mean achievement for a group of experienced volunteers who have given of their time (and money) over the last 10 years to provide safe harbour for raptors! So as a gesture of goodwill, S.O.S. have used some of your donations for the purchase of materials needed for the building of new nest boxes as the Thornham Owl Project extend their programme. We hope you approve, and will keep you posted as to future developments.

BARCLAYS LEND A HAND



This summer saw great excitement at S.O.S. when a team of Barclays Bank volunteer management & staff arrived at the Sanctuary to install a special Sensory Garden, which they had kindly agreed to sponsor.

Among the many visitors we welcome to the Centre throughout the year are many disadvantaged children & young adults who are brought along by their carers to see the beautiful owls and other birds of prey in their aviaries and in flight during the demonstrations that we give during the summer months.

However, in order to enhance the visits of these youngsters we thought it would be a good idea to develop part of the centre as an additional experience to widen the scope & enjoyment of their visit. Transforming the centre forecourt of the Centre as a Sensory Garden seemed to be an idea with prospects and with this in mind, our fundraiser-in-chief, the redoubtable Maz, approached a number of corporations to see if they would be interested in funding the project.

To their great credit, Barclays Bank gave us an almost immediate 'thumbs up' and after an exploratory visit, returned on the big day with all the equipment necessary to install the garden, ably aided and abetted by a group of about 20 of their staff who had volunteered to graft on our behalf.

The transformation was remarkable, not least because the Barclays crew were able to declare

'mission accomplished' within the space of a day.

The Sensory Garden was designed by Barclays to stimulate the 5 body senses - touch, smell, sight, taste and hearing. To do this they incorporated as many colours, sounds and textures into the fabric of the garden as possible. Adding colour was the easy bit, as they used a great variety of plants to a vibrant, multi-hued effect. To stimulate hearing, the garden benefits from having an array of windchimes within the trees and the sound of the water feature which was installed, bringing the trickling sound of a stream to the area. To stimulate taste and smell, a mixture of herbs and plants like lemongrass, mint and a curry plant (which leaves a distinctive smell of curry when touched) were added to the blooms. To satisfy the tactile senses, our young visitors are guided towards the bark of the trees, rippling water and some of the sturdier plants & leaves with rough surfaces.

The end result is a beautiful garden which has added an extra dimension to the Suffolk Owl Sanctuary and one that invites young and old alike to wander through it and admire the tranquility and beauty it provides. We are sure it will provide a rewarding experience for all visitors, especially those who are disadvantaged by lack of sight, hearing and other faculties, and we'd like to say a very big THANK YOU to Barclays Bank and their team of volunteers for their generosity and hard work in providing and building the garden.

MOMENT OF RELEASE

As you can imagine, Barn Owls are 'flighty' things and so we had to be quick off the mark when we released one of these beautiful birds back to the wild just recently.

Conservation Office Dean and Head Falconer Matt took the bird - who had been brought into us having been found trapped in barbed wire - out to a remote location, hoping to catch the whole operation on video. But before they knew it, young matey was off across the fields - luckily we did manage one photo as the juvenile owl set off for a new life of freedom.



B&Q COME UP TRUMPS



We were very pleased to be the recipients of a special honour earlier this year when we received a grant under the B&Q One Planet Living Award Scheme. The scheme aims to help organisations across the UK which are working on projects that aim to enhance the local community and will help us build a sheltered observation station for visitors to the Sanctuary and gain some respite from the Suffolk Downpours! Seen here at the presentation centre are (right) Sir Michael Lord, M.P. for Central Suffolk together with (from left) Andy & Pungu our Bateleur Eagle; our good friends Dean & Denise from B&Q Ipswich and S.O.S. stalwart Marie Robinson who puts such a lot of effort into our fundraising activities. Well done all!

NEW KIDS ON THE BLOCK

The last few months have seen a number of new arrivals at the Suffolk Owl Sanctuary - all except Tiny born at our Suffolk headquarters. Most will play an important role as we inform, educate & entertain visitors and others who benefit from the demonstrations & talks we give on owl care & conservation.



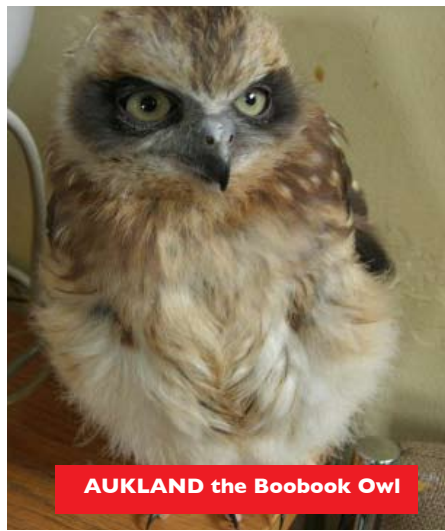
HADES the European Eagle Owl



ORKNEY the Snowy Owl



TINY the Burrowing Owl



AUKLAND the Boobook Owl

STORMY WEATHER REPAIRS



As last reported, January saw some heavy storms in our area, which more-or-less demolished some of our aviaries. Thanks to your support, we have been able to completely re-build our Hawk Block with a suite of four large aviaries, which we built around the trees and foliage that were there before.



CALL OF DUTY

A man's gotta do what a man's gotta do - even if it means dressing up in a VERY hot woolly owl uniform in order to do a bit of fundraising. But our man Dean is always game for a laff - and not only do his owlish antics keep the kids amused, it raises a few bob too!

PLEASE RENEW YOUR OWL ADOPTION

As we hope you can see from this newsletter, the work of S.O.S. continues with dedication & enthusiasm. But - if you can - PLEASE renew your owl adoption as your donation is vital to our future and the well being and care of our avian friends. Please call **01449 711425** to renew over the 'phone or adopt-an-owl for a friend or you can do it online at

Thank You!