

Barn Owl



The Barn Owl is primarily a farmland bird, hunting for small mammals over rough grassland and along field margins.

A decline in Barn Owl numbers is largely a result of reduced food supply caused by changes in farming practices. The loss of old barns for nesting and roosting is also significant in many areas.

Barn Owls can be encouraged by providing more areas of rough grassland and artificial nest sites.

Foraging Habitat

- Barn Owls require rough grassland for foraging. This grassland can be provided in the form of blocks, and/or strips along field margins, woodland edges and watercourses
- Rough grass strips should be at least 2m wide but ideally 4m-6m. They should preferably be linked by hedges or other grass strips
- Rough grassland can be created by planting a grass-seed mix consisting of tall, tussock-forming species including Cock's-foot and Timothy, along with shorter, softer grasses such as Yorkshire Fog, bent and fescue species
- During the first year, new grass should be allowed to grow tall through the spring and left to collapse in the autumn. The collapsed grass will be shaded out by the following spring's growth thus creating a litter layer. This litter layer provides cover for small mammals and enables them to reach numbers high enough to support breeding Barn Owls
- Margins should be maintained by topping (in autumn at a height of 13cm) or light grazing every second or third year

Nest Sites

- Protect and maintain existing nest sites in buildings and tree holes
- Erect nest boxes, ideally in pairs, within 500m of each other, and at a density of about one pair per km² – NOTE – It is strongly advised not to mount a box within 1km of a major road
- Nest boxes can be mounted on trees, poles and inside rural buildings. They should be at least 3m above ground level with the entrance hole visible to passing Barn Owls
- More information on building and erecting Barn Owl nest boxes can be found at www.barnowltrust.org.uk and www.hawkandowl.org.uk



For further information please contact: