

## **Barn Owl and Kestrel Nest Box Scheme – Andy Jowett**

Barn Owls have long since been extinct as a regular breeding species in the local area but it is our ambition, through identifying suitable habitat, providing artificial nest sites and by liaising with local landowners to establish a sustainable Barn Owl population.

The majority of the scheme is in the BOG area but also spreads out of the recording areas boundaries. It is then hoped that coordination with other Barn Owl enthusiasts in neighbouring regions, for example, Harrogate, Leeds, Halifax and possibly Skipton will provide a large scale network of suitable Barn Owl habitat and nesting facilities allowing dispersing young birds to find their own territories without having to travel great distances and thus not crossing many busy roads.

At the current time (Autumn 2004), we have 3 pairs of pole boxes already erected as well as 12 tree mounted boxes. We have already arranged permission from various landowners for further nest boxes to be placed on their land and all being well we will have another 10 tree boxes built and erected by Christmas. We also have 11 kestrel boxes already in position with YWS kindly funding a further four from the Wildlife Conservation Partnership later this year.

The arrangement of the purchasing and erecting of two of the pairs of pole boxes was by Geoff Lomas of Yorkshire Water Services, who have also been very cooperative in allowing us to use their land for other boxes, particularly as some of these sites are secure from vandalism. Note we have already had one nest box stolen – luckily before any birds took up residence.

Another large chunk of the boxes were through a partnership with BOG, the Nidderdale AONB who supplied the funding and Colin and Val Shawyer of the Wildlife Conservation Partnership (WCP) who supplied the boxes and their vital expertise regarding such schemes. The AONB also funded a box scheme well to the North of the BOG area and this scheme is hopefully going to be vastly increased later this year in conjunction with the WCP.

This is then a convenient place to thank all the other people involved. Of course all the private landowners who have been a vital component to this scheme and without their help we would not be able to site and monitor any of the boxes.

Colin Slator has already provided additional boxes while Richard Scullion has already built five Kestrel boxes and will be making two Barn Owl tree boxes. Thanks also to Shaun Radcliffe, Peter Riley (the Baildon one!) and Pete Britton for their interest and promise of further box construction and to Pete Roe for invaluable help with erecting, maintaining and monitoring the boxes. A final thanks also goes out to all the other people who have advised or helped in anyway with this scheme – the list is too long to enumerate.

In 2004 we had two pairs of Kestrels in boxes yielding five and six young respectively and a pair of Barn Owls (outside the BOG area) reared three young in a nest box so the initial signs bode well for the future of these birds in and around the BOG area. We will constantly be evaluating local habitat and adding further boxes where appropriate.

If you would like to know more about the local nest box scheme or would like to report any sightings of Barn Owls please contact me at [andy.jowett@btopenworld.com](mailto:andy.jowett@btopenworld.com)