Appendix I. BAT INFORMATION.

Ecology

There are currently 18 species of bat residing in Britain, 17 of which of which are known to breed here. They are extremely difficult to identify in the hand and even more so in flight.

All appear to be diminishing in numbers, probably due to habitat change and shortage of food, caused by pesticides, as insects are their sole diet.

As their diet consists solely of insects, bats hibernate during the winter when their food source is at its most scarce. They will spend the winter in hollow trees, caves, mines and the roofs of buildings.

Certain species, particularly the pipistrelle (the commonest and most widespread British bat) can quickly adapt to man-made structures and will readily use these to roost and to rear their young.

Surveys

During walkover surveys, bat roosts can be identified by looking for:

- Suitable holes, cracks and crevices within any building, tree or other structure.
- Bat droppings along walls, window cills, or on the ground.
- Prey remains, such as insect wings.

Further investigations can be made using endoscopes, by carrying out aerial inspections of trees or by conducting bat activity surveys during dusk and dawn over summer months.

Legislation

Bats are protected under Appendix II and III of the Bern Convention (1982), Schedule 5 and 6 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981), Annex IV of the Habitats Directive (some species under Annex II), Annex II of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations (2010) and EUROBATS agreement. Numerous species are

also listed under section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act (2006) making them species of principal importance.

All bats and their roosts are therefore protected in the UK. This makes it an offence to kill, injure or take any bat, to interfere with any place used for shelter or protection, or to intentionally disturb any animal occupying such a place.

The UK has designated maternity and hibernacula areas as Special Areas of Conservation (SAC's) under the Habitats Directive. Implementation of the UK Biodiversity Action Plan also includes action for a number of bat species and the habitats which support them.

Where development proposals are likely to affect a bat roost site, a licence is required from Natural England.

Appendix II. BARN OWL INFORMATION.

Ecology

The diet of the Barn Owls consists almost entirely of small mammals such as mice, shrews and voles. Consequently, areas of moist, moderately long grassland are especially important for foraging with 90% of prey taken within a 1km radius of the nest site.

Their feathers are specially structured for silent flight and, by using their extremely sensitive hearing, Barn Owls can find and swoop noiselessly onto their prey. Although Barn Owls can see perfectly well in daylight, they tend to hunt mainly at night.

Suitable nest sites are predominantly in derelict buildings such as farm buildings, church towers and old chimneys. Nest sites must be dry and warm to prevent fatal chilling of the owlets in wet weather.

Barn Owls generally produce 4 – 7 eggs, laid at intervals of 2 – 3 days during the breeding season (March to August inclusive). This gives a staggered hatch, with the first hatchling being as much as a week older than the last. In poor prey years the youngest chicks are unlikely to fledge.

Habitat loss due to agricultural change and urbanisation has had the most significant impact on Barn Owl numbers. The drainage of grasslands increases in cereal crops, autumn sowing, the decline in haymaking, the loss of wild grassland, edge habitats and hedgerows, the vermin proofing of grain storage and the fragmentation of habitats as a result of land take for new roads, factories and housing schemes have all had an influence on the availability of suitable foraging habitat.

This has been compounded by the loss of traditional nest sites as a result of building improvements and conversions for other uses including residential.

As birds are pushed to exploit prey rich roadside verges and railway embankments, they increasingly become prone to deaths from collisions with trains and road vehicles. Death can also be caused by consuming prey items which contain residues of rat and mouse poison.

The effects of disturbance are more pronounced at different times of the year. The early stages of the breeding season are the most vulnerable and birds may abandon nest building or even eggs if disturbed. When the eggs have hatched, they tend to tolerate a higher level of disturbance before abandoning young birds in the nest. Generally, disturbance should be avoided between April and September.

Surveys

Walkover surveys will look identify areas of suitable foraging habitat for Barn Owls. They will also look for suitable nesting locations and any signs of pellets within these areas.

Legislation

Barn Owls are protected under Schedule 1 and Schedule 9 of The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981.

It is therefore an offence to intentionally kill, injure or take any wild bird, take damage or destroy the nest of any wild bird while that nest is in use or being built, or to take or destroy an egg of any wild bird. Special penalties are available for offences related to birds listed on Schedule 1 of The Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981), for which there are additional offences for disturbing these birds at their nests, or their dependent young.

Appendix III. NESTING BIRD INFORMATION.

Ecology

The nesting season will vary according to the weather each year but generally commences in March, peaks during May and June and continues until September. It is also worth remembering that some birds nest in trees and scrub but others are ground nesting or prefer man- made structures or buildings.

Surveys

Nesting bird surveys search for potential nest sites in vegetation, buildings etc. Potential nesting sites are observed over a suitable period of time for bird movements or calling male birds that would indicate the presence of a nest. The presence of a nest can be identified from the field signs without the necessity to see the nest itself, thereby avoiding any disturbance of the nests. The best way to avoid this issue is to plan for vegetation clearance to be carried out outside the bird-nesting season.

Legislation

Nesting birds are protected under The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981.

Part 1. -(1) Of the Act states that: - If any person intentionally: - kills, injures or takes any wild bird; takes, damages or destroys the nest of any wild bird while that nest is in use or being built; or takes or destroys an egg of any wild bird, he shall be guilty of an offence.

Part 1. -(5) of the Act states that: - If any person intentionally: - disturbs any wild bird included in Schedule 1 while it is building a nest or is in, on, or near a nest containing eggs or young; or disturbs young of such a bird, he shall be guilty of an offence and liable to a special penalty.

The Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 amends the above by inserting after "intentionally" the words "or recklessly".

Toolbox Talk: Barn Owls

Whitcher Wildlife Ltd

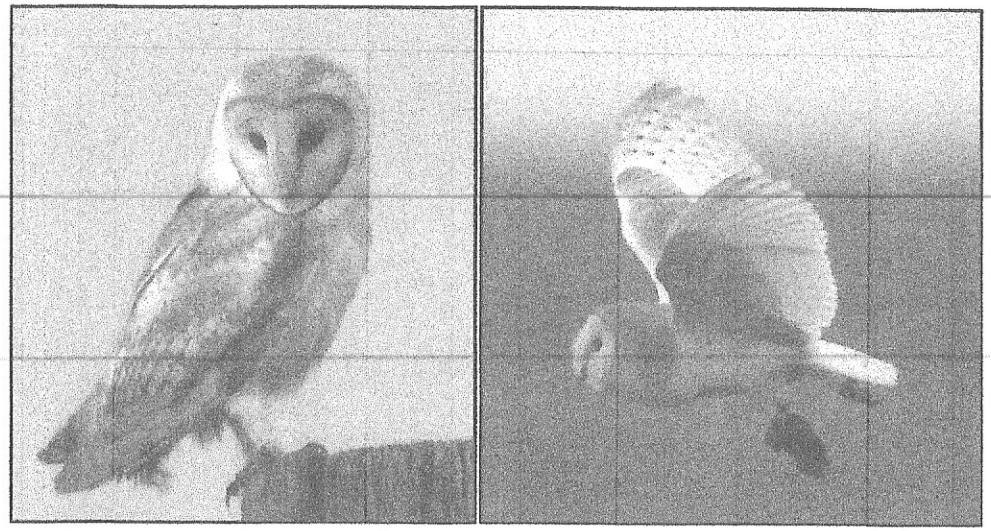
Ecological Consultants

The Barn Owl is the most widely distributed species of owl, and one of the most widespread of all birds. The species has been in decline and they are not as common in some areas as they used to be.

Identification

Barn Owls have buff-coloured upper feathers, white under-parts and a distinctive heart-shaped face. They have a wing span of 75-110cm. When seen in flight the overall impression is of a large white bird.

Barn Owls make a variety of shrieks, hisses and snoring sounds, but they don't hoot (that's the Tawny Owl).



The diet of the barn owls consists almost entirely of small mammals such as mice, shrews and voles. Consequently, areas of moist, moderately long grassland are especially important for foraging with 90% of prey taken within a 1km radius of the nest site.

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Habitat

Suitable nest sites are predominantly in derelict buildings such as farm buildings, church towers and old chimneys. Nest sites must be dry and warm to prevent fatal chilling of the owlets in wet weather.

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The photograph shows two barn owl chicks just before fledging, moulting out of their nesting down. This nest was located underneath a disused railway bridge on the top of the abutment walls.



Legislation

Barn owls are protected under Schedule 1 and Schedule 9 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. It is therefore an offence to injure, kill or capture a barn owl, to disturb nesting birds, to take eggs, and to release captive owls into the wild without a licence.

If barn owls or a barn owl nest is identified during works, stop all works and contact Whitcher Wildlife Ltd directly on 01226 753271 or at info@whitcher-wildlife.co.uk