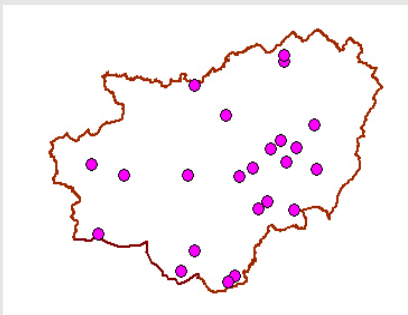
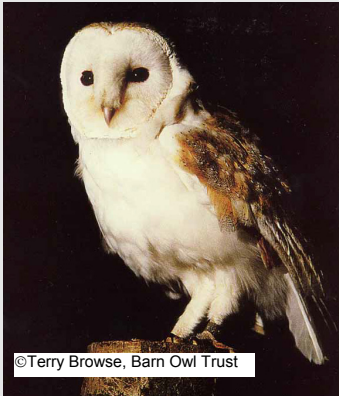


CARMARTHENSIRE LOCAL BIODIVERSITY ACTION PLAN

BARN OWL/ TYTO ALBA



Conservation objectives:

- Confirm the current population status and distribution in Carmarthenshire.
- Maintain, or preferably increase, the present population.

What you can do to help:

- Report all sightings of barn owls to the county bird recorder
- Provide artificial nest sites on or near barns and outbuildings.
- Leave/create areas of rough grassland to provide hunting grounds for the owls.

Further information:

www.barnowltrust.org.uk
www.carmarthenshire.gov.uk

Fossil records indicate that the Barn Owl appeared on Earth approximately two million years ago - as a species it is about 40 times as old as modern man!



Ecology

Barn owls typically occur on farmland where they breed in quiet buildings or holes in trees. They live alone or in pairs, and tend to mate for life. Generally nocturnal, barn owls sometimes hunt during the day, especially when feeding young. They hunt in areas of rough grassland (including roadside verges) feeding on small mammals (e.g. voles and shrews), using sound to detect their prey. They tend not to be found in well-wooded areas, preferring open country, and do not hoot but have a distinctive screech. The UK population is believed to have dropped by up to 50% since the 1960s but barn owl populations are known to fluctuate widely following the natural cyclical changes in numbers of small mammals. This decline, fortunately, has halted in many areas and the population may now be increasing.

Distribution in Carmarthenshire

The Carmarthenshire population is estimated to be less than 50 pairs.

Legal status

The barn owl is protected under Schedule 1 and Schedule 9 of the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981. It is an offence intentionally or recklessly to disturb them while they are in, on, or near a nest containing eggs or young, or to disturb their dependent young.

What are the threats?

- * Loss of nest sites through conversion of old farm buildings to dwellings and felling of old hedgerow trees.
- * Reduction of small mammal 'prey' populations
- * Mortality from secondary poisoning as a result of preying on small mammals being subjected to control by rodenticides.
- * Hard winters have led to many owls dying through starvation due to the reduction of food supply.
- * Mortality as road casualties from hunting along grassy road verges.

What is being done locally

- * Postcard survey being carried out by Carmarthenshire Biodiversity Partnership.
- * Barn owl boxes have been erected at WWT, Penclacwydd and on farms under the Tir Gofal agri-environment scheme.
- * Records for barn owls are published in *Carmarthenshire Birds* published by the Carmarthenshire Bird Club.
- * For barn conversions planning applications information is supplied on the incorporation of nesting features into the new design.

Where you can look for barn owls

Open country, along field edges, riverbanks and road verges.