

Nestboxes for use in barns & other buildings



LEAFLET No 3

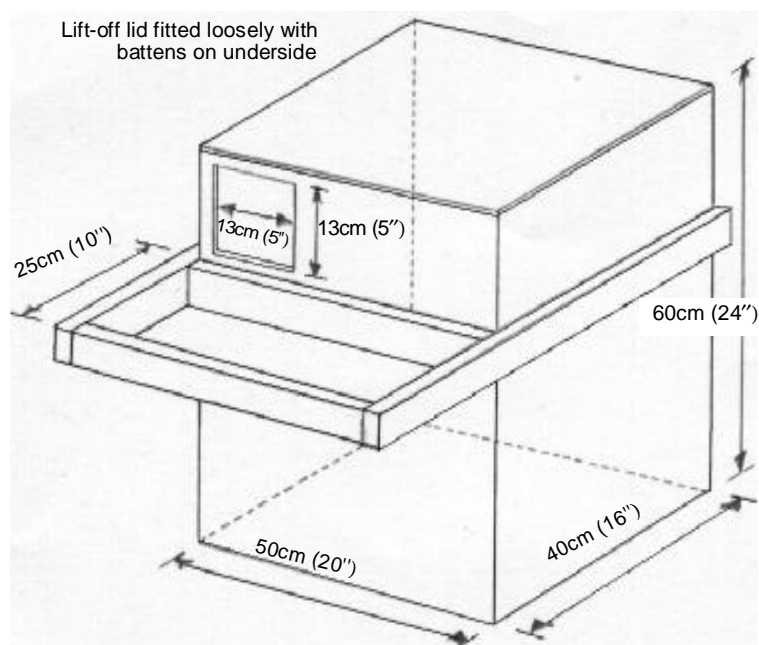
Reg. Charity No 299 835

This leaflet describes how to make and erect a Barn Owl nestbox suitable for a barn or other building. It includes plans, dimensions, materials and safety advice.

Background

Nestboxes can be of great benefit, especially in areas where there is plenty of food available but a shortage of suitable nesting or roosting sites. When you are considering an area for nestboxes remember that the Barn Owl is not a woodland species but a bird of open country, most of which is farmland. For further information see *Habitat Management* (leaflet no. 1).

Many old barns and almost all modern farm buildings are far from ideal for Barn Owls as they lack suitable cavities for the birds to nest in. Barn Owls like to roost out of sight of humans and are much less inclined to be flushed from a building if they have a box to hide in. In fact, it is amazing how much disturbance Barn Owls will tolerate at sites with a suitable nestbox. Almost any tall rural building can become an ideal roosting and nesting site when a nestbox is provided.



Indoor nestboxes can be constructed from 9mm ($\frac{3}{8}$ ") softwood shuttering ply with 50mm x 25mm (2" x 1") batten along all the edges on the inside. Please avoid using tropical hardwood products - select Scandinavian or Canadian softwood ply.

As a cheaper alternative, a tea-chest can be simply adapted by cutting an entrance hole, fixing on a tray

and adding a removable lid. In this case, do ensure the foil lining and any sharp nails or strips of metal which may injure the owls are removed.

The tray on the front gives more air space for the young owls to exercise their wings before their first flight. The removable lid is essential as the box may need to be cleared out occasionally.

NOTE that it is illegal to disturb wild Barn Owls whilst they are breeding. It is not even permitted for the provider of the nestbox or the site owner to inspect the nest unless they have a current licence to do so. Please see *Safeguarding Wild Sites* (leaflet no. 28).

When positioning your indoor nestbox, remember:

1. Fix it as high up as possible. However, remember that fully enclosed modern barns with little ventilation can become very hot in fine weather - in this type of building the box should be placed below the apex but at least 3 metres (10ft) above ground level. Bear in mind that you also need to place the box to allow removal of the lid.
2. Position the box so that an owl entering the building through the most likely opening will see the entrance hole and have an easy flight path to it.
3. If possible, position the box so that emerging nestlings will be able to walk onto beams or other flat surfaces.
4. Consider your own safety (for which you are responsible). Try to position the box where it can be easily and safely inspected at a later date.
5. The box must be in a completely dry position if it is to last many years.
6. Unless Barn Owls are already present, avoid placing boxes within 1 km (half a mile) of a motorway, dual-carriageway, or similar modern road.
7. Avoid buildings subject to irregular loud disturbance, for example sheds used for night-time lambing in January/February. Bale stores, covered yards and silage stores are normally okay.

There is no need to line the nestbox. The eggs are usually laid on top of the birds' own pellet debris which is a wonderfully absorbent material - much better than anything you might provide!

Permanent access into the building for the owls is obviously essential. If there is no existing access for owls you can create access using the following guidelines:

- 1 Make the entrance hole about 12cm (5") wide x 25cm (10") high (minimum 4" x 6").
- 2 Make the hole as high up the wall as possible. Avoid facing it into the prevailing wind.
- 3 Position the hole so that it is likely to be noticed by a passing bird. Don't face it towards a close tree or other tall building which will obscure it.
- 4 When making access into an attic of an occupied dwelling or barn undergoing conversion please refer to *Barn Conversions* (leaflet no. 22) or the Barn Owl Trust booklet *Barn Owls On Site - A Guide for Developers and Planners*.
- 5 In the case of an occupied house, converted barn or busy farmyard, the entrance hole into the building should, if possible, be situated on the side with the least disturbance, with direct access to an open area of good habitat.

Safety

Before you erect your nestbox take time to consider the hazards you might face and what steps you could take to minimise the risks. Hazards might include an injury at a remote location; falling from a ladder; masonry falling from unsound buildings; injury from heavy lifting; dropping a nestbox onto another person; and poor positioning of a box resulting in additional hazards for others using the building or monitoring the box at a later date. The following are examples of precautions you should take to reduce the risks.

- 1 Ideally take a companion. If erecting your nestbox at an isolated site on your own, let someone know where you are going and when you expect to be back before you set off. Carry a mobile phone if you have one.

- 2 Time spent in reconnaissance and preparation is seldom wasted. Never carry a box up into position until all preparatory work is complete. Double-check your measuring to confirm that the box will fit.
- 3 Ensure that your ladder is secure before climbing it. If possible tie it off at the top and bottom before climbing up with the nestbox.
- 4 Avoid over-reaching - never attempt to carry out any task up a ladder if you cannot reach comfortably.
- 5 When planning how to position, support and fix a nestbox, try to create a situation where the box can rest in position without being held. This will allow you to have both hands free to fix it safely.
- 6 When carrying a nestbox up a ladder, ensure that it is kept low relative to your body (ideally not above waist height). This will keep your centre of gravity down. Try to keep the box in front of both you and the ladder so that it pulls you towards the ladder - never hold a nestbox behind or above you.
- 7 You are responsible for your own safety - assess all the risks and be careful.

Good luck!

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The Barn Owl Trust is a registered charity dedicated to the conservation of the Barn Owl and its environment. You can become a **Friend of the Barn Owl Trust** and support our work by making a regular donation. **Friends** receive our biannual magazine *Feedback*, our Annual Report, a car sticker and a badge.

The Trust provides a wide range of free leaflets on Barn Owl related matters. For details of these and further information about the Trust and its work, please write including a large SAE to the Barn Owl Trust, Waterleat, Ashburton, Devon TQ13 7HU. tel 01364 653026 email info@barnowltrust.org.uk website www.barnowltrust.org.uk



Restoring the Balance

We've lived side-by-side with Barn Owls for centuries. But in modern times wild Barn Owls have become increasingly rare - and the reasons are all man-made. The Barn Owl is a symbol of our relationship with the countryside: the decline of this beautiful bird reflects our attitude towards the environment. No species can prosper in isolation - not even human beings. All things are connected and if we lived in balance with nature then Barn Owls, and so much other wildlife, could thrive.

How you can help

You can help to conserve the Barn Owl by **Becoming a Friend** of the Trust and making an annual or monthly donation to support our work. If you are a UK tax payer and complete a simple **Gift Aid** declaration the Trust can reclaim the tax paid on your donation and significantly increase the value of your gift at no extra cost to you. Standing order and Gift Aid forms are provided below. Please consider paying by **Standing Order** as this greatly reduces our administration time and costs.

BECOMING A FRIEND

UK Friends: Individual £20; Family (same address) £25

Overseas Friends: Individual £25 (sterling); Family (same address) £30 (sterling)

Owlets: UK £20; Overseas £25. Owlets are Junior Friends. They receive a personal ID card, Feedback and goody bag. (If children are under 16, please state ages. One or more children from the same family at one address can be Owlets.)

Name(s) _____

Address _____ Postcode _____

Daytime telephone no _____ email address _____

I would like to become a Friend of the Trust and receive my Friend's pack - I enclose £ _____ * (see above)

I am pleased to enclose a donation of £ _____ *

*UK taxpayers please complete Gift Aid declaration below.

Sorry, donations of under £5 are not acknowledged without an SAE.

The contact details you submit on this form will be held by the Barn Owl Trust on a secure computer system and may be used by the Trust in pursuit of its aims. Please let us know if you object to this.

GIFT AID DECLARATION

If you are a UK tax payer completing this Gift Aid form will enable the Trust to reclaim the tax paid on your donation, thereby increasing the value of your gift at no extra cost to yourself.

Full name _____

Address _____ Postcode _____

I want the Barn Owl Trust to treat all donations I make on or after the date of this declaration as Gift Aid donations until I notify you otherwise

My signature _____ Date _____

Note: Please remember to tell us if you no longer pay an amount of income or capital gains tax equal to the tax we reclaim on your donations.

Please contact our office if you have any queries.

STANDING ORDER FORM

Name _____ Date _____

Address _____ Postcode _____

Please pay £ _____ on the first day of each **month*/year*** (* delete one) starting in the month of _____

and a like sum on the same date each **month*/year*** until further notice to the account of

the Barn Owl Trust (a/c no. 1027812) at Lloyds Bank (sort code 30-98-69) 31 Fore Street, Totnes, Devon TQ9 5HH

My signature _____ Account Number _____

To the manager _____ Bank _____

Bank Address _____ Postcode _____

THIS STANDING ORDER REPLACES ANY EXISTING STANDING ORDERS FROM THIS ACCOUNT TO THE BARN OWL TRUST

Please fill in and sign the appropriate parts of this form and post it to:

The Barn Owl Trust, Waterleat, Ashburton, Devon TQ13 7HU

If you'd like to receive information by post, please tick the boxes below and enclose a large stamped addressed envelope:

- | | |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sample of <i>Feedback</i> (our bi-annual newsletter) | <input type="checkbox"/> Fund-raising for the Barn Owl Trust |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Leaving a legacy to the Barn Owl Trust | <input type="checkbox"/> Barn Owl Trust publications (full details also on our website) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Corporate sponsorship | <input type="checkbox"/> Barn Owl Trust sales goods (full details also on our website) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Barn Owl adoption | <input type="checkbox"/> Consultancy/Site Assessment Service (full details also on our website) |
| (full details also on our website) | <input type="checkbox"/> Give As You Earn |

The Barn Owl Trust - Conserving the Barn Owl and its Environment