

Hammer & Wood Owl Boxes RESULTS (2006 data suppressed for clarity)

Year	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Nesting attempts	30%	22%	28%	29%	20%	33%	20%	33%	22%	30%	64%	22%
Successful nesting	24%	14% (14)	26% (26)	22% (22)	18% (18)	26% (26)	16% (16)	33% (33)	21% (21)	23% (23)	58% (58)	13% (13)
Ave. eggs	5	4	5	4	4	3.5	3.3	4	3	3.5	3.7	4
% eggs hatched	59%	53%	69%	68%	96% (69)	73% (85)	83% (55)	93% (127)	92% (57)	69% (73)	69% (196)	36% (32)
Av. hatched	3	2	3	3	4	2.5	2.8	4	3	2	3	1.5
Av. fledged.	2	1	3	2	3	2	2	4	2	2	2.8	1.4
Percentage ringed	42%	32% (24)	59% (74)	55% (59)	88% (63)	66% (73)	61% (40)	89% (121)	84% (52)	84% (61)	92% (181)	34% (30)
Eggs were mostly laid	First half of April	Second half of May	Second half of May	April, May & June	April to May	April and later.	May; some later.	March & April	April	May but many later.	March & April	May
Weather	Exceptionally warm April temperatures but followed by above average rainfall.	Coldest April since 2001 and above average rainfall; weather deteriorated further in June.	Warmer, dryer and sunnier than average in April & May. June was warmer and dryer than average.	Heavy snow in late winter & early spring.	Heavy snow in early Winter (Nov & Dec 2010)	Exceptionally warm. May & April; followed by above average rainfall.	Very cold spring. Below average temp. in June. Fine weather from July.	A mild winter followed by early warm spring; with hardly any frosts. Fine weather only declining in August.	A benign winter was followed by a short period of dry sunny and warm weather in April. However, May was cool with above average rain. Summer was cool and wet.	Winter was the second wettest since 1910; Jan was exceptionally wet. April was cool and wet and summer did not become settled until April.	Mild winter followed by a dry spring. Warmer than average from March to June. From mid July the weather was cooler and wetter.	Unsettled winter. Feb, March & April had below average temperatures & widespread snow. The end of May was warmer and the Summer very dry & hot.

Ringers Year October; **BARN OWL BREEDING SEASON 2018:**

I take the opportunity this month to give my annual report on our Barn Owl studies in North Northumberland. This study (of around 100 sites) indicates that this was the poorest breeding year since at least 2006 for Barn Owls and that the climate (or in simple terms the weather) was the predominate determining factor in this outcome. Only 22 pairs tried to nest; and only 13 succeeded in raising young.

Consequent on the poor winter and appalling spring weather many birds did not even try to nest; others laid eggs as the weather improved towards the end of May but then lacking the body reserves to incubate them successfully gave up (there were 9 failed broods). Many adult birds seemed to be under weight.

While the weather improved in the summer, becoming remarkably warm (not to say hot) no late or second broods were located. This was probably because it also became very dry which suppressed the small mammal population; essential as the owls food supply.

The average number of eggs laid was 4 (little different than usual) ; although one pair laid '8' and then abandoned them. The average number of owlets fledged was only 1.4 but one pair raised 4 and four raised 3. Only 30 owlets were ringed and fledged.

Ten new adult Barn Owls were ringed and 23 were re-trapped; including one female which is 9yrs and another 7yrs old. The 9 year bird was ringed as an owlet in 2009 and has bred itself successfully (always early) every year since 2012 in a box close to the sea; only a few miles from its natal site. The 7yr old bird is our now resident female owl from Dumfries (ringed in 2011) bred again successfully, as she has done every year since 2012, raising 3 young. A female that failed to breed last year (when she was only a year old) did breed successfully north of Wooler (raising one young); while another that was hatched on the coast in 2014 and had moved inland to Whittingham to breed successfully in 2017 failed to hatch her eggs this year. Similarly a female with '*Guttata*' characteristics (of North Eastern Europe) which had bred successfully near Craster in both 2016 & 17 also failed. However, another *Guttata* type owl raised young (for probably the second time) near Crookham. Two of the pairs of owls that failed were only one year old; as were another two that occupied boxes but did not breed; and another pair found in a *Goldeneye Duck* box at the end of August, just roosting. It's to be hoped these birds will all survive the winter to breed successfully in 2019.

Generally the successful nests were in the north and towards the coast; while inland towards the south and west very few owls bred successfully. A well grown female owl hatched this year is shown in the attached photograph. Jackdaws again occupied a number of nest sites but were less of a problem than normal.

Kestrels did not seem to be able to take advantage of the owls failure and only two pairs used nest boxes.

A pair of Tawny Owls took over one Barn Owl box and raised 2 young; although this box is near a conifer plantation so perhaps this is not surprising.

Successful Barn Owl nests were near: Longhorsley, Netherwitton, Warkworth, Howick, Craster, Wooler, Berwick upon Tweed and Lindisfarne.

Thanks are due to all those who have helped with this project; in what has been a frustrating year. Philip Hanmer 2018.

Anyone interested in ringing is invited to get in touch. E-mail: tytoalbas@btinternet.com

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