

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

Year	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Nesting attempts	30%	22%	28%	29%	20%	33%	20%	33%	22%	30%	64%	22%	36%
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)	32% (32)
Average eggs per clutch	5	4	5	4	4	3.5	3.3	4	3	3.5	3.7	4	3.9
% eggs hatched	59%	53%	69%	68%	96% (69)	73% (85)	83% (55)	93% (127)	92% (57)	69% (73)	69% (196)	36% (32)	69% (97)
Average hatched	3	2	3	3	4	2.5	2.8	4	3	2	3	1.5	2.7
Average fledged.	2	1	3	2	3	2	2	4	2	2	2.8	1.4	2.5
Percentage of eggs 'ringed'	42%	32% (24)	59% (74)	55% (59)	88% (63)	66% (73)	61% (40)	89% (121)	84% (52)	84% (61)	92% (181)	34% (30)	65% (92)
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 but some later.	March & April	April	May but many later.	March & April	May	April & May
Weather	Exceptional warm April temperature 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)	Exceptional warm. March & April; followed by above average rainfall; which continued.	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 summer weather only declining in August.	A benign winter was followed by a short period of dry sunny and warm weather in April. However, May onwards was cool and wet.	Winter was the second wettest since 1910. However, the spring was dryer. April was cool and the summer did not become settled until later.	Mild winter followed by a dry spring. Warmer than average from March to June. From mid July the weather was cooler and wetter.	Winter and spring had low average temperatures and late snow. May was warmer and the Summer very dry & hot.	Winter was milder & dryer than average. Temps fluctuated in April & May but the summer started warm; eventually becoming unsettled.

BARN OWL BREEDING SEASON 2019:

This study (of around 100 sites) indicates that this was a much better Barn Owl breeding season than in 2018. Although numbers were nothing like as high as in the exceptional year of 2017; numbers returned much nearer to the long-term average (*circa.* 30%) with 36 pairs trying to nest and 32 successfully raising young.

Following on from a mild winter and reasonably good spring weather birds started to nest in April and May. For the first time ever several of our late May visits coincided with the eggs starting to hatch. The summer started warmer and dryer than average which was good for returning to nests to ring young but as time progressed it became cooler and unsettled (including becoming wetter) which probably prevented the occurrence of many second broods (only one was recorded) although there was no shortage of food. This was evidenced by the discovery of several larders of food (dead small mammals) being placed in boxes by male birds in the summer, presumably wanting to nest again.

The average number of eggs laid was 3.9; although three '6's were recorded. The average number of owlets fledged was 2.5 although two pairs raised five. 92 owlets were ringed/fledged.

Twelve new adult Barn Owls were ringed and 19 were re-trapped; including an 8yr old female that nested again near Boulmer and raised 4 young. Others near Wooler were 6 and 7yrs old respectively. A female, originally ringed at Rochester in the Military Ranges that is 6yrs old, was found with two young near Fallodon having not been seen since 2015; and a 7yr old nested successfully again near Warkworth. Near Longhorsley a 2yr old bird seems to have inherited her nest site from her parents; and raised 3 young. Not far away a 5yr old, that was originally ringed near Fenton, north of Wooler raised 3 young.

Jackdaws were unfortunately back with a vengeance occupying many owl nest sites. Because of this troublesome corvid our resident 8yr old female, originally from Dumfries, nested later than usual in a different site (near Craster) but we were able to ring her two young in August. Close by a 2yr old had two young which we ringed in June; and then moved to a different box to have another two in August (this was our only known second brood). Unusually a 1yr old female nested (a little late) and raised two young in August near Alnmouth.

Generally, the most successful nests were towards the coast but some of the inland sites showed signs of a recovery in the owl population.

Kestrels were again not very evident and only one pair raised four young in an 'owl' box near Alnmouth.

Tawny Owls did not take over any 'Barn Owl boxes' this year but had a reasonably good year 'swopping' boxes with our rare breeding Goldeneye ducks.

Successful Barn Owl nests were near: Wooler, Doddington, south of Berwick-upon-Tweed, Bamburgh, Fallowdon, Newton by the Sea, Rock, Craster, Howick, Alnmouth, Warkworth, Boulmer, Whittingham, Longhorsley and Netherwitton

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Philip Hanmer 2019; Natural History Society of Northumbria (Hancock Museum) Ringing Group.