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General Manager Andy Hulme says *WELCOME* to the Suffolk Owl Sanctuary Newsletter.

Welcome to our latest newsletter, in which we take pleasure in bringing you up to date with some of the many owl rescue and rehabilitation cases we've been involved with during the past few months, as well as other projects that have been going on at the centre.

First, however, on behalf of us all - and that of course involves the owls and other birds of prey for which we are responsible - I would like to express how very grateful we are to all our volunteers, supporters, donors and owl adopters - without whom none of this would have been possible. Thank you - and come and see us again soon!

Andy Hulme

General Manager, The Suffolk Owl Sanctuary

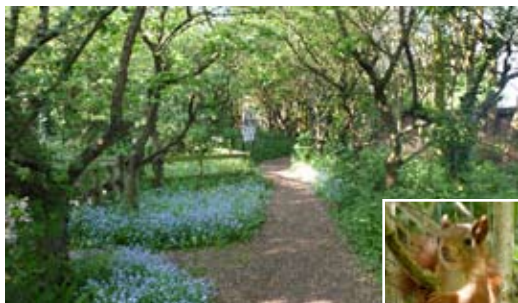
Up, Up & Away

Spring always sees a higher proportion of Tawny Owls brought into the Sanctuary. Very often these are fledglings who have strayed too far from their nests, who usually we can return safely home to be reunited with their parents.

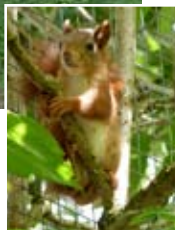
This young chap was less fortunate - he was hit by a car and found dazed & confused in the road with a badly bruised eye.

However, after some specialist treatment and a few weeks of TLC he had fully recuperated and was ready to return to the wild with sight fully restored. Then his 'finder', Julia Wilson, came & collected him and had the privilege of releasing him close by to where he was originally found.

Of the event, Julia commented rather ruefully: "He flew off very close to the ground into a wooded area and we didn't see him again. I was hoping he'd fly up into a tree and call to all his friends but no such luck!"



The woodland walk at S.O.S. may be small but it's teeming with activity including our red squirrel colony, hedgerow bird hide and various bug hotels & bird boxes.



Bloomin' Marvellous

As Spring 'sprung', so did our woodland walk, a section of the Sanctuary we have given over to promoting other forms of British nature conservation. Over the years this has been assiduously cultivated and developed by Andy, Matt, Liz & the volunteers and it's a joy to behold now that the wild flowers have burst into bloom.

What a difference a (few days) make!

Regular followers and lovers of all things raptor will know that it's not long before the young birds which hatch as 'ugly ducklings' with us every year turn into extraordinarily beautiful creatures. As an example, pictured right is one of our two Great Horned Owl youngsters. In the space of just a four weeks of hatching as a tiny mite he was almost unrecognisable as he sported his copious downy plumage and stood nearly 18" tall.



Above: "From little acorns..." Birkett, a Great Horned Owl in the making, just 4 weeks after being hatched at the Sanctuary (left). He has been sponsored by a local firm of solicitors, Birketts, who are contributing to his upkeep this year as part of their celebrations marking 150 years in business..

PLEASE RENEW YOUR OWL ADOPTION

As we hope you can see from this newsletter, the work of S.O.S. continues with dedication & enthusiasm. But - if you can - PLEASE renew your owl adoption as your donation is vital to our future and the well-being and care of our avian friends.

Please call **08456 807 897** or visit **www.owl-help.org.uk** to renew or adopt-an-owl for family or friends



All re-adopters receive this special lapel pin with our compliments as a "Thank You!"

SAFEGUARDING THE FUTURE - boxing clever for wild owls



Our wild owl nest boxes are located in a variety of suitable locations both indoors & out



As part of the survey process and safely secured in a soft muslin bag, each youngster is weighed...



... measured to help determine its age...



... and carefully ringed for future tracking purposes.

The Suffolk Owl Sanctuary established the East Anglian Nest Box Scheme for wild owls and other birds of prey in 2000. Since then it has progressively surveyed and then built, sited, erected and monitored a network of wild owl nesting boxes to replace the diminishing number of derelict barns, outbuildings and natural nesting cavities favoured by raptors in our vicinity.

Last year we were pleased to announce the amalgamation of our efforts with another long-standing regional conservation group - The Thornham Owl Project. This was in order to strengthen, consolidate & extend the important work of providing safe & secure lodgings for wild birds of prey, especially those species which are under threat.

Thanks to **your** financial help & support, S.O.S. now provides transport, tools, workshops, storage, manpower and other facilities to the extended nest box scheme which currently maintains over 280 boxes throughout the region.

The boxes themselves are one thing, but the careful monitoring of how and by whom they are used is also fundamental to the project. As volunteers, our colleagues Roger Buxton and Kevin Boyce, often helped by our Conservation Officer Dean Winham, spend much of the Spring & Summer months visiting each box, carefully recording all signs of activity. This is done under the auspices of a mandatory Disturbance License issued by the Government in accordance with the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. At the same

time they repair or replace dilapidated boxes.

The findings of the 2012 survey made interesting reading. Whilst nationally Barn Owl breeding activity was considered very poor, in the Eastern region this trend was not duplicated, with 97 young barn owls being ringed or banded as part of the ongoing process to monitor weight, health and ageing of the local population.

The results for Tawny Owls and Little Owls were not as encouraging. The declining use of the funnel nest boxes designed for Tawny Owls was one possible reason. At the same time the reluctance of Little Owls to use artificial sites while, smaller natural sites pertain is another. More success was enjoyed by the initiative to provide more boxes for Kestrels, 11 of them producing an average brood of 4 chicks each.

However, on the basis of an initial survey of 2013 clutches, Roger reckons breeding results for all wild owl species may have been severely affected by the prolonged cold spells last winter. It's too early to tell yet whether things may improve as a result of possible second clutches being more successful. We'll keep you posted on the outcome.



It's thanks to the donations raised by the Adopt-an-Owl Scheme that enables us to continue this valuable work - thank you!

HOSPITAL TALES

Experience has taught us that birds of prey get into all sorts of scrapes. Thanks to your continued support we are able to maintain our special Raptor Hospital to service the many demands on it's time and rehabilitate as many birds as we can back to the wild.

Hammy Encounter



We don't often give names the injured birds that come into our care for treatment but just recently a rather perplexed Tawny Owl arrived with quite a story to tell.

The young chap was found caught up on - would you believe? - a ham radio aerial, so it wasn't long before we broke with tradition and "Hammy" became his adopted name as we started to look after him.

The aerial was the type used by CB radio enthusiasts and stands about 15 feet in height. We don't know how the tawny managed to, but he impaled himself on it, the shaft of the mast going straight through his left wing.

The husband & wife team that found him set about a rescue mission by dismantling the framework which held the aerial in place; then slowly lowered it to the ground and finally slid poor Hammy off onto the grass. Then they covered him with a towel to enable them to safely pick him up, popped him in a box and took him straight to the local vet, who was kind enough to operate on him straight away and stitch him back together.



*Regular readers may know that courtesy of "Pets At Home" our raptor hospital was re-built last year and that thanks to your continued support of our **Adopt-an-Owl Scheme**, we were able to refurbish it with brand new equipment.*

*Since then it has been in constant use and together with the suite of secluded rest aviaries means that we are able to rehabilitate over 50% of the injured wild birds we receive into our care back to the wild. **THANK YOU!***

Hammy was then brought in to the Sanctuary where we kept him under observation and applied liberal helpings of TLC until he was ready to be placed in one of our rehabilitation aviaries. Here he was able to fly around, so starting to rebuild the damaged muscles in his wing and - as you will see from the pictures - is now well on the road to recovery. Hopefully it won't be long before we can release him back to the wild in a fit and proper state to fend for himself again.

Caught Out by the Cold



It's rare that we see (and certainly receive into our care) a wild Long Eared Owl but such was the case when just recently, one was brought into us from over on the east coast at Sizewell, home of the infamous power station. We suspect caught out by the late covering of snow at the end of March, it arrived in a very weakened, extremely hungry and obviously exhausted state. But after a spell in our warm treatment room followed by a few days of regular food, the little chap was as good as new and we were able to take him back to home ground for release very shortly afterwards.

Call of Duty



Not all of our rescue & re-habilitation work for injured wild birds takes place within the walls of the Suffolk Owl Sanctuary, as sometimes our patients require overnight attention to give them the best chance of survival. This often results in some sleepless nights for our caring staff - and their better halves!

Earlier this year the Barn Owl above was brought in by a member of the public in a very withered state. He was pretty obviously suffering from a lack of food - not unsurprising as the area had been covered in snow turning to ice over during the enduring bitterly cold weather in March, and this no doubt restricted its hunting activities.

Our trusty falconer & fund-raiser Maz undertook to nurse the young thing back to health and afterwards reflected that even four days at home and keeping a grumbling hubby awake at night was a price worth paying to get this emaciated Barn Owl on the right road to recovery

"To be honest, when he first came in we didn't think he would make it through the night - he really looked in need of some round-the-clock care to keep him topped up with small amounts of fluid and food."

Thanks to her attentions the little beauty was later re-located back to our hospital to enjoy the warmth and food that brought him back to robust good health, later to be released on home territory.



Birds of a Feather

This rather unusual picture shows two recent inmates of the Raptor Hospital at the Suffolk Owl Sanctuary, each having recovered from separate injuries but temporarily housed in the same aviary just prior to being released. Both sporting their distinctive red-rust plumage, it's hard to believe that the bird on the left arrived with us unrecognisable pretty much as a bird, let alone a Kestrel, it being both injured and covered in oil & muck. However, although one of our longest-term visitors, like his companion he soon took to the skies in search of a new home once he was released.

Latest Schools Newsletter out now



As part of our comprehensive programme of free teaching & learning aids for schools nationwide, we have just produced the latest edition of our 'owlish' schools newsletter - "The Stonham Screecher" - designed for Foundation and Key Stage 1 & 2 pupils. If you'd like some copies, please contact us at the address below or you can download this and a host of other learning projects and activities **FREE** from our website at www.owl-help.org



Many kind folk bestow on us the kindest thought by considering the long-term future of the Sanctuary when making their wills.

We can only say that such contributions towards the costs of running the Suffolk Owl Sanctuary in these still-austere times play a substantial and invaluable part in ensuring its survival. Bequests empower us to do all we can to publicise the need for the care and conservation of wild birds of prey in the UK, especially those under threat from malicious or inadvertent harm or the relentless encroachment of man on the countryside.

If you would like more information about considering the Suffolk Owl Sanctuary for a bequest or legacy, please ask for a copy of the special leaflet we have prepared covering all points on the subject by telephoning 0845 807 897. Thank you.

Now You See Him...



... now you don't! The remarkable camouflage of this Eagle Owl illustrates how difficult they can be to spot in the wild.

Just Plastered!



No - this unfortunate Tawny Owl hadn't been at the booze, though he came into us late last year sodden, and with a broken leg to boot. Things looked bleak but after a trip to our local vet Paul Canham, he soon revealed that the break was in a very good place and offered the bird a full chance of recovery, so the owl's leg was set in a little cast and after a few weeks in our hospital recovery room he was back on his feet and soon flying free - just how it should be!

All Tooled Up!



Building and locating wild owl nesting boxes is a fundamental part of our East Anglian Nest Box Scheme, which we run in association with the Thornham Owl Project and is funded by proceeds from the S.O.S. **Adopt-an-Owl Scheme.**

We're further grateful to The Leslie Mary Carter Trust, The Jean Sainsbury Trust, Yorkshire Building Society and the Alfred Williams Charitable Trust who have all made valuable contributions towards the nest box scheme and most recently the tools needed to keep the boxes to be constructed & repaired. Roger and Maz say **"Thank You"!!**