

CARMARTHENSHIRE LBAP BARN OWL ACTION PLAN

Introduction

Barn owls (*Tyto alba* – Tylluan Wen) are perhaps the one of the most cosmopolitan of all land birds and occur in suitable habitat over most of the world's land mass. In Britain they typically occur on farmland where they breed in quiet buildings or holes in hedgerow trees and hunt over open fields and around farmyards where they feed in areas of rough, often undergrazed grassland that hold good populations of small mammals. They are mainly found at altitudes of less than 200 m above sea level and tend not to be found in well-wooded areas. The UK population is believed to have dropped by up to 50% since the 1960s but since it is a very difficult species to census data are unreliable. It is listed as being of Amber conservation concern in the UK. Barn owl populations are known to fluctuate widely following the well-known cyclical population changes in small mammals. Preliminary data from the BTO Bird Atlas 2007–2011 suggest that the UK population has actually increased in size over the last decade. An increase in the provision of artificial nesting sites at a national scale, providing breeding birds with a greater number of alternative sites to move to between years may have helped. There are thought to be only about 400 breeding pairs in Wales.



Currently, the breeding population in Carmarthenshire is unknown but it is likely to have declined. Loss of nest sites through restoration of old farm buildings to dwellings and felling of old hedgerow trees are reasons for the barn owl's decline. However, one of the main causes is the loss of semi-improved species-rich grassland in the county. In addition, reduction of small mammal 'prey' populations and mortality from secondary poisoning by eating prey subjected to control by rodenticides are another cause of decline. In Wales, the barn owls' preferred prey is the field vole which lives in rough grassland habitats, including roadside verges. Consequently the owl spends a lot of time hunting in this hazardous environment. Road deaths, according to the Barn Owl Trust, are responsible for more than half of all barn owl deaths. No nest boxes should be erected within 1 km of major roads unless the road is screened by hedges or continuous tree lines immediately adjacent to the road surface.

Carmarthenshire is a priority conservation area for barn owls within Wales.

The local planning authority requires that surveys are undertaken to inform the planning/decision making of any plan/project that has the potential to affect barn owls as part of their statutory/policy responsibilities.

Vision statement and objectives

Within Carmarthenshire this plan aims to help the return of a viable barn owl population. Provision of nesting sites, adequate assessment of the potential impacts of development on barn owls and encouraging the retention/creation of suitable hunting habitat will all contribute towards this vision. Any action would seek to meet one or more of the following objectives:

- BO1** To maintain and increase the population of barn owls in Carmarthenshire
BO2 To gather data on the distribution and status of barn owls in Carmarthenshire
BO3 To provide guidance on habitat and nesting requirements of the barn owl

Summary of action achieved by LBAP Partners (for more information contact the biodiversity officer – Biodiversity@carmarthenshire.gov.uk) or visit the national Biodiversity Action Reporting System - <http://ukbars.defra.gov.uk>:

2010–12

- Erect barn owl boxes – 30 boxes made and erected in the county – CCC/TAYO BO1
- Barn owl postcards - promote submission of records – over 70 rec. – CCC BO2
- Surveys undertaken for all relevant planning applications – CCC BO4

2013

- Boxes erected as part of RDP funded Landscape & Heritage grant project – CCC BO1

Future proposed action

- Make available advice on barn owls and habitat management – CCC BO3
- Continue to promote recordings of barn owls sightings – CCC BO2

Legislation

Barn owls and their nest sites are protected by law. The barn owl is specially protected under Schedules 1 and 9 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. It is illegal to kill, injure or take a wild barn owl or to take or destroy its eggs. It is also illegal to check nest sites or even to disturb a barn owl while it is at or near a breeding site - unless you hold a special licence. (Usually March to October is considered the breeding season, but they might breed at almost any time of year!)

Useful links:

- [Barn Owl Trust](#)
- [Carmarthenshire Bird Club](#)
- [BTO Barn Owl Monitoring Programme: final report 2000-2009](#)
- [RSPB – the barn owl](#)

Among early English folk cures, alcoholism was treated with Owl egg. The imbibor was prescribed raw eggs and a child given this treatment was thought to gain lifetime protection against drunkenness.

Owls' eggs, cooked until they turned into ashes, were also used as a potion to improve eyesight.

Barn owl records 2005-2011

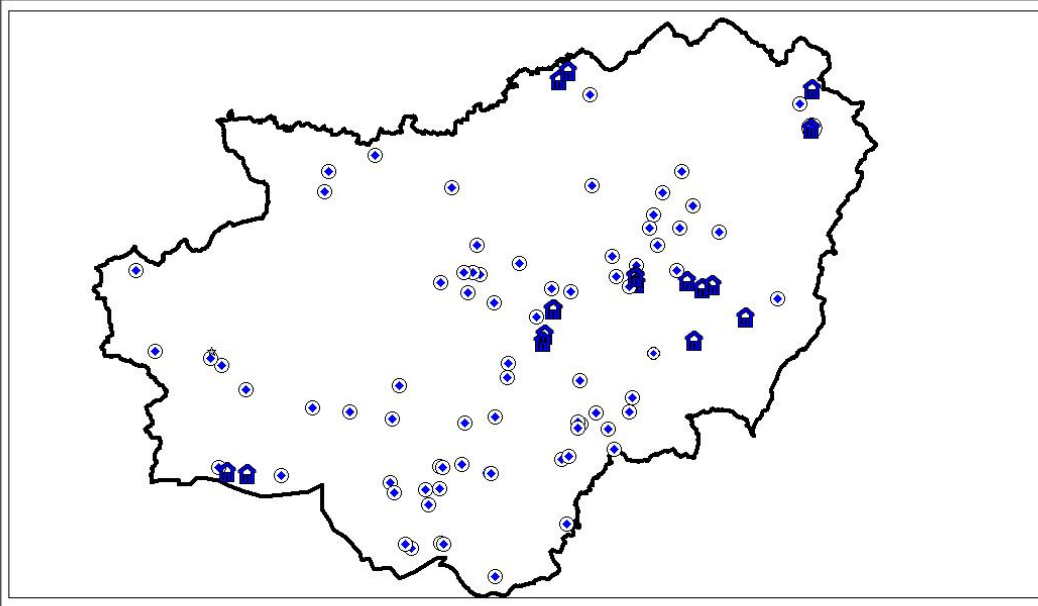
with barn owl box sites

Compiled by on 19 April 2011

Cyngor Sir Caerfyrddin, Adran Cyfarwyddiaeth
40 Heol Spilman, Caerfyrddin, SA31 1LQ
Carmarthenshire County Council
Regeneration Department
40 Spilman Street, Carmarthen, SA31 1LQ



Scale 1:36184



Agynhyrochwyd o'r Map Ordnans gyda chaniatâd Rheolwr Argraffdy ei Mawrhydi, Hamfrait y Goron-LA 100023377.
Reproduced from the Ordnance Survey Map with the permission of the Controller of HM Stationary Office, Crown Copyright Reserved-LA 100023377.

Additional information: % Carmarthenshire County Council
Template: F:\GAPP\SYSTEM\PLATE\ccc_34.wor



Partneriaeth **Bioamrywiaeth** Sir Gaerfyrddin
Carmarthenshire **Biodiversity** Partnership

www.carmarthenshirebiodiversity.co.uk

The [Carmarthenshire Biodiversity Partnership](#) (CBP) is made up of the following organisations: [Carmarthenshire County Council](#) (CCC), [Wildlife Trust of South and West Wales](#) (WTSWW), [Natural Resources Wales](#) (NRW), [RSPB](#), [Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust](#) (WWT), [Carmarthenshire Bird Club](#) (CBC), [National Botanic Gardens Wales](#) (NBGW), [Butterfly Conservation](#) (BC), [Carmarthenshire Rivers Trust](#) (CRT), [National Trust](#) (NT), [Botanical Society of the British Isles](#) (BSBI), [Llanelli Naturalists](#) (LN), [Bat Conservation Trust](#) (BCT), [West Wales Biodiversity Information Centre](#) (WWBIC), [Amphibian and Reptile Conservation](#) (ARC)