

Bucks Owl and Raptor Group

*Promoting owl and raptor conservation
throughout Buckinghamshire*



www.giveahoot.org.uk

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CHRISTMAS GREETINGS TO ALL OUR FRIENDS AND SUPPORTERS

BORG volunteers have been very busy this year, checking boxes for nesting birds, ringing and recording chicks breed in our boxes.

2018 has been an extremely difficult year for all of our Owls. We have included later in this newsletter some brief statistics to demonstrate how 2018 birds compared with 2017.

We have 3 new young volunteers join our group this year, their youth has reduced the average age of the group, their energy and desire to learn will hopefully inspire us oldies.

As you may be aware, BORG is a **"self-funding, not for profit voluntary group"** and at the moment we cannot be sure of our long term financial security. Currently our revenue comes from making and selling owl boxes along with an occasional donation. To secure the future of BORG we acknowledge the need to request your help by becoming a **"FRIEND OF BORG"**. Becoming a "Friend of BORG" is easy and at just £2.50 per month, or £30 a year, your donation will ensure our work can continue well into the future (more details below).

I would like to take this opportunity to say a big **THANK YOU** to our landowners, farmers and supporters who have already made the decision to become "Friends of BORG" Without your support our work would not be possible and for that we and I'm sure the birds are very grateful.

Please take a few minutes to read on, it means so much to know we have your support.

Friends of BORG



In spring 2017 we launched our new supporters' initiative "Friends of BORG". By becoming a Friend of BORG you are helping us to continue providing the practical conservation measures, education and research required to ensure these charismatic birds thrive in the wild. The money generated by this scheme continues to help cover the many costs involved in running our organisation. We would like to say a huge "THANK YOU" to all our current "Friends" – without you we would not be able to continue this vital work.

To continue our work we need more FRIENDS for information on how to become a friend of BORG please [CLICK HERE](#)

We Have A Winner

In our last newsletter, we mentioned that one of the perks of signing up was all "Friends" were to be entered into a draw to determine who had the opportunity to have our volunteers give a talk at a venue of the winners choice. Well, the draw finally took place at our recent Christmas gathering and the lucky winner was Mr Greg Taylor of Cublington, near Wing. Mr Taylor has been contacted by our "Friends" coordinator, who will liaise with him to arrange a suitable date and time to fulfil the prize.

We will let you know what happens in our next issue.....

A Tough Year For Owls

2018 has turned out to be a poor breeding year for the owls of Buckinghamshire.

There are several reasons for this. Firstly, we had a very late, cold, wet spell of weather which made it very difficult for owls to find enough food and as a consequence many did not attain a sustainable breeding weight...



Although the birds still attempted to breed this meant that subsequently many eggs were abandoned and many chicks died in the nests. This was followed by an exceptionally long hot summer, the grass stopped growing and small mammals (the main food source of our owls and raptors) became more difficult for them to find. As a result of these unusual conditions many eggs were abandoned and many chicks died in the nests. It became apparent as the season progressed that only birds nesting in the most pristine conditions produced young which successfully fledged. In fact many Barn Owls did not attempt to breed at all.

By comparing our monitoring results for 2018 against those for 2017 we can see more clearly how these poor weather conditions have affected the owl and raptor populations with the county. In 2017 we had 89 occupied Barn Owl boxes from which we rang 113 chicks, while in 2018 we had 25 occupied boxes and rang 55.

	Occupied Nests		Chicks Ringed	
	2017	2018	2017	2018
Barn Owl	89	25	114	55
Tawny Owl	7	4	22	4
Little Owl	1	4	2	8
Kestrel	23	14	44	36

FYI. APPROXIMATELY 80% OF BARN OWLS WERE BRED IN MAN MADE NEST BOXES!

HAVE YOU GOT LITTLE OWLS ON YOUR LAND?

Little owls are having a dreadful time across the country with the population halving in the last 10 years. Throughout the county we had only two active little owl nests this year.

As a group we at BORG intend to focus on ways to improve this situation in 2019. One of the first stages of this initiative is to ask for your help, in determining where we should concentrate our efforts. Please help us by answering the following...

Do you think or know you have Little Owls on your land or in the past had Little Owls on your land? If you can answer yes to this question please contact us via email or inform your local volunteer.

With the assistance of Dr Emily Joachim, the foremost authority on Little Owls in the England, our plan over the coming months is to attain knowledge relating to Little Owls and with her advice on boxes and surveying techniques we intend to do all we can to encourage these charming little birds to return to the Buckinghamshire countryside.



Volunteering - A Younger perspective!



Hello, my name is Luke and I am 14 years old. I am a keen bird watcher in my free time and owls are one of my favourite birds, although probably one of my most under recorded birds. I became aware of BORG as a result of my dad's work with them earlier this year and thought that joining the group would help increase my knowledge and understanding of these fantastic birds.

In August 2018 I signed up as a Friend of BORG and young volunteer. I started going out with BORG volunteer, Norman, earlier this summer to help with the monitoring of the nest boxes. We concentrated mainly on Barn Owls but looked at a few Kestrel boxes too.

I also got the opportunity to watch BORG volunteers ring the young owls and this has got me really inspired to try and get my ringing licence. I have also been helping to make and put up new boxes this autumn ready for use next spring.

It has been really fun to see a little bit into the lives of our owls and raptors. It is especially great to see when the boxes work; one of the boxes we put up about a month ago already has a barn owl roosting in it, so hopefully another new, active, nest next year!

WISHING ALL OUR SUPPORTERS A HAPPY AND PROSPEROUS NEW YEAR



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