

Barn Owl Survey Information

Legislation

Barn owls are protected by the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, including protection under Schedule 1 of this Act, and the Countryside Rights of Way (CROW) Act 2000. This legislation affords protection for barn owls against intentional or reckless killing and injury, the destruction of their nest or eggs, possession of any part of, and from disturbance at a nest site.

Habitat

Although barn owls require rough grassland in which to forage, the best barn owl habitat comprises a variety of components, including rough grassland, marshy areas, hedgerows, young plantations and unmanaged arable field margins. A barn owl's natural diet includes small mammals, mainly voles, mice and shrews, and a 'home range' would typically cover around 5000ha.

Barn owl roost and nest sites are typically located at least 3m high. They show a strong fidelity to their nest sites, which are usually within a cavity in a tree, or on sheltered ledges or floors in buildings. Barn owls may roost in the canopy of evergreen trees, or between straw bales.

Survey Methodology

Surveys are carried out following the 'bottom-up' intensive search survey method outlined by the Barn Owl Trust and a desk top study for records of barn owl in the area. This involves a surveyor holding a Schedule 1 license for barn owl conducting a search for barn owl evidence starting with the least suitable part of the site and finishing with the most suitable part, thereby minimizing potential disturbance to barn owl. Evidence includes pellets, feathers, splash marks (droppings), nest debris, actual sightings of live or dead owls and owlets, smell, and food begging calls. An assessment of the surrounding habitat for barn owl is also made.



Survey Timings

A 'bottom up' search for barn owl can be conducted at any time of year by a Natural England licensed surveyor.

J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
Intensive Search for Evidence											



Mitigation Strategy

Should a barn owl nest site be present and where disturbance cannot be avoided, a mitigation strategy will be required. Mitigation for barn owls is designed according to guidance from Natural England and The Barn Owl Trust, and incorporates the following components:

- Temporary alternative nest box nearby;
- Timing works to avoid the main breeding season of March to August inclusive;
- A survey immediately prior to works;
- A built-in permanent nesting place;
- Habitat management.

Permanent provisions for barn owls within buildings can be designed to be cost effective and inconspicuous. In summary, permanent provisions typically comprise a boarded off section of a loft void (ideally 1m³) with an appropriate entrance hole and a small corresponding exterior platform.

Further information is available on our website at www.emec-ecology.co.uk.



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