

## Guernsey Barn Owl Survey 2020

### Newsletter No 1 January 2020



*Photo courtesy of Dave Carre*

We would like to wish you all a very happy New Year and let's hope that 2020 is a good year for Guernsey's Barn Owls. 2019 ended with a few sightings from around the island, including one Barn Owl looking very much at home in its box. Fingers crossed that it will become a breeding site in a few weeks. Dave's photo shows what this is all about - the joy of seeing a Barn Owl in the dusk. Breathtaking.

The Survey got off to a good start last month with over twenty people contacting us - thanks to the Guernsey Press, local radio and other media for bringing the survey to people's attention. We now have new breeding sites on record which is excellent news. We have also had quite a few sightings which will be put on the database at the Guernsey Biological Records Centre over the next week or so.

Incidentally, we're also receiving valuable Kestrel breeding information which is being passed on to Mark Lawlor for the Bird Section's Kestrel Survey.

This month we will be contacting people who have had boxes from Vic Froome over the years to catch up with all their Barn Owl activity.



*Photo courtesy of Vic Froome*

Barn Owls are very faithful to their breeding sites and use them year on year and from generation to generation as is shown in Vic's photo. They do not make a nest. If you have twigs etc in your box it has been used by Stock Doves or similar. Barn Owls lay their eggs and raise their chicks on a layer of pellets which is continually added to. The nest hole is higher than the floor of the box to stop young chicks from falling out by accident. The pellets in the photo have built up over several years and this box, for the safety of young chicks, needs to be cleared out so they can't reach the hole and fall out.

Late winter is the ideal time to check empty boxes and clear them out if needed. **Safety** is the key word with a few simple precautions:

- only do it if you are able to and feel confident
- **always** have someone else with you - and a mobile phone
- wear a hard hat
- use a sturdy ladder
- secure the top of the ladder with rope
- never climb right to the top
- even if you think the box is empty, there could be an owl present so be prepared. If there is an owl present, leave quietly straight away



We are planning to gather some volunteers who would be willing and able to check boxes, we can't promise anything yet but let us know if

- your box has been used by Barn Owls
- it could do with a check and a clear-out
- you are unable to do it yourself

Thank you all for contributing to the Barn Owl Survey - the more information we have the better. We hope by the end of 2020 we will have a much clearer idea about how many breeding Barn Owls there are in the island. It's a big undertaking and will probably run into 2021. At the very least there will be an interim report by the end of 2020.

Julie Davis and the Barn Owl Survey Team