

# Windows on Wildlife

## Barn Owls



### Phantom of the Countryside

Barn owls are often seen floating about the countryside at dusk and dawn. They are our only 'white' owls and were often mistaken for ghosts. The fields around Johnshill and the cycle track are good places to look for them.

### Did you Know?

The left ear of the barn owl is higher than the right. This, along with the stiff feathers which form the facial disc, helps the owls to accurately judge the position of their main prey (field voles) when hunting.



### Ugly Owlets

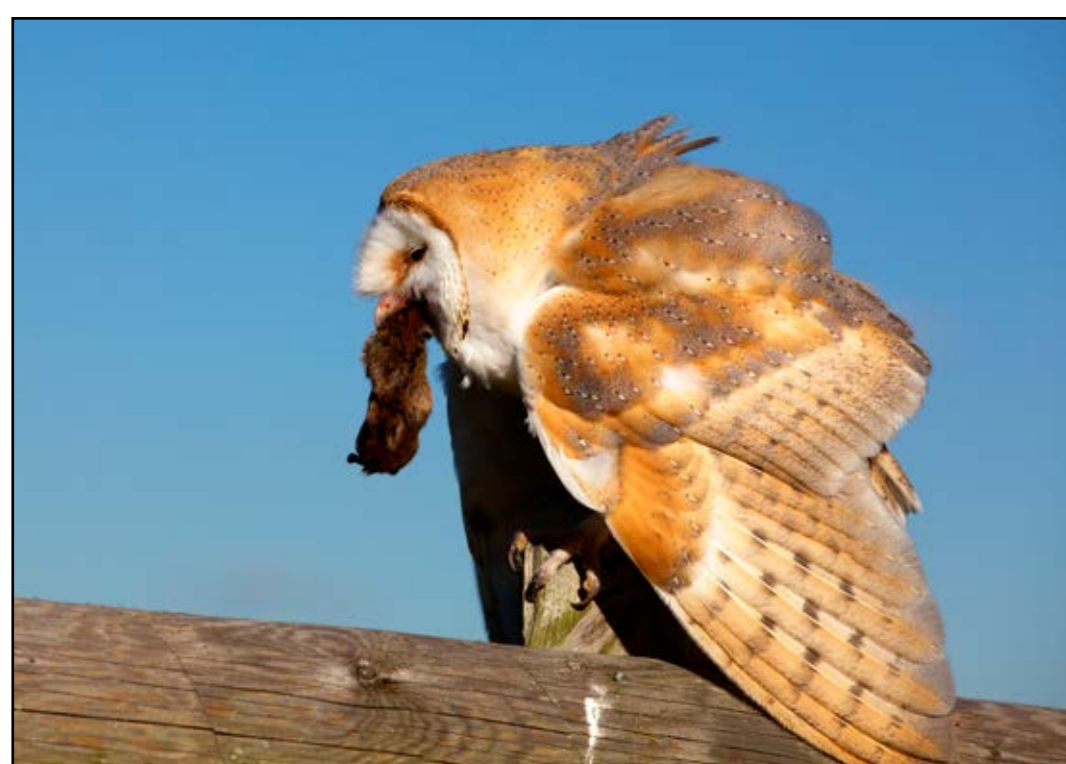
Young barn owls are not the bonniest of birds. They are often described as ugly and pot-bellied until they are 5 weeks old. By then, they have developed the heart shaped face and are covered in white down.

### Nesting Sites

Often associated with farm buildings barn owls will also nest in trees and caves. Nestboxes are becoming more and more important particularly in areas where nesting sites have been lost due to development.



## Owly Signs



### Pellets

Barn owls swallow their prey whole and then regurgitate the undigested remains such as bones and fur later. As barn owls often use the same roosting sites, you can collect these to find out what they have been eating.



### Silent Hunter

Specially adapted feathers allow the barn owl to fly silently. When the barn owl has found its prey it swoops down feet first for the fatal strike.

### Ringling for Research

Barn owls are rung in the Regional Park to help us understand the owl's biology and what threats it is facing. Barn owls are protected and a special licence is needed to ring them.

