2022

Shropshire
Barn Owl
Group

This report summarises the breeding results and activities of the Shropshire Barn Owl Group (SBOG) for 2022. SBOG is a voluntary group which has been working since 2002 to increase the breeding population of Barn Owls in Shropshire by providing nestboxes and working with farmers and other landowners to retain and improve their habitat. When we started out the Shropshire Barn Owl population had been in decline for over half a century, and we estimated it to be around 140 breeding pairs. Now, it is in the region of 220 pairs. Our aim is to ensure that the population remains stable and to continue to establish new breeding pairs each year.

The 2022 Breeding Season

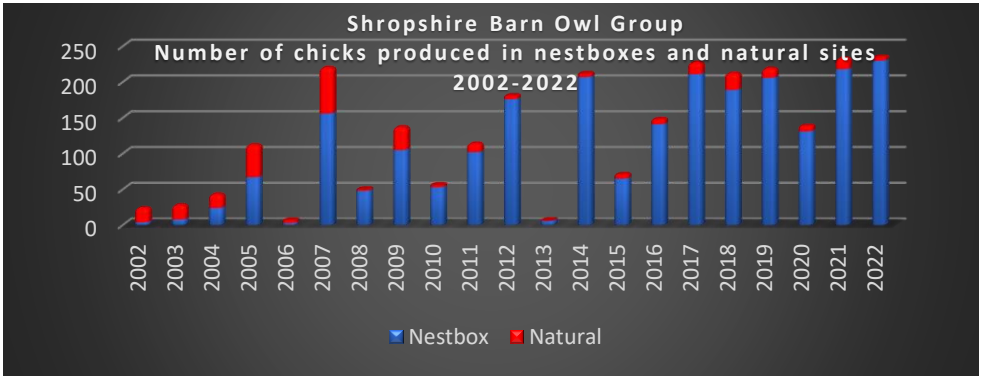
2022 proved to be the most productive breeding season since the group was established. The breeding data in Table 1 is confined to those pairs successfully producing chicks and includes data from two successful breeding sites monitored by the Upper Onny Community Wildlife Group (UOCWG). 189 sites were monitored. 235 chicks were produced in 81 of those sites successfully producing chicks, 230 in nestboxes and 5 in natural sites. Breeding (at least one egg laid) occurred in 83 (43.9%) of the sites, the first egg being noted on 29th March. Broods ranged from one to five chicks and averaged 2.9. No second broods were recorded. Fourteen new pairs were established, adding to the 32 produced in recent years. One nestbox was used for the first time since it was installed in 2003.

Table 1. Number of chicks produced according to type of nest site in 2022

Figures in brackets refer to number of broods

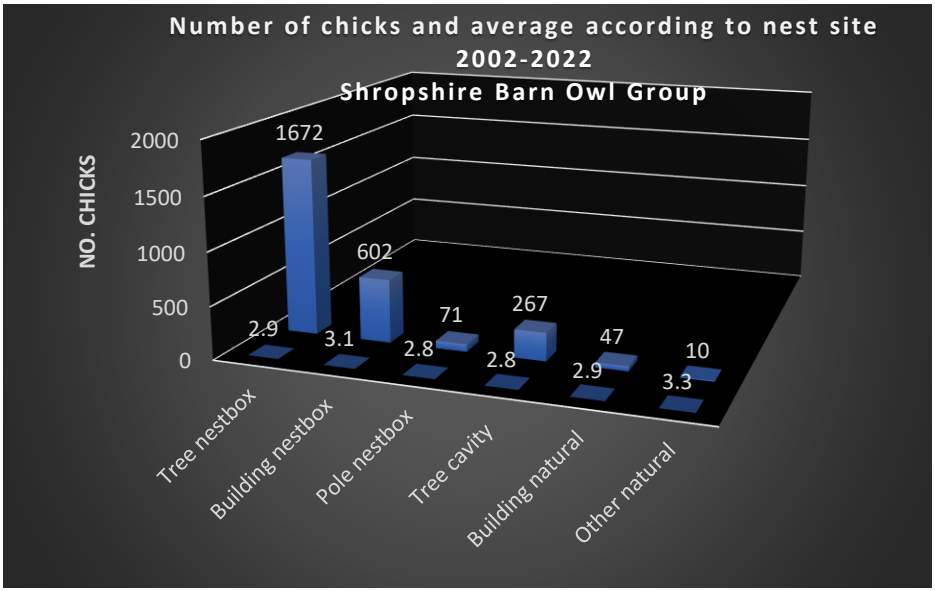
Tree nestbox		Building nestbox		Pole nestbox		Tree cavity natural		Building natural		Other natural		Total No. chicks	Mean No. chicks
No. chicks	Mean	No. chicks	Mean	No. chicks	Mean	No. chicks	Mean	No. chicks	Mean	No. chicks	Mean		
156 (57)	2.7	68 (21)	3.2	6 (2)	3.0	5 (1)	5.0	0	0	0	0	235 (81)	2.9

Breeding summary 2002-2022



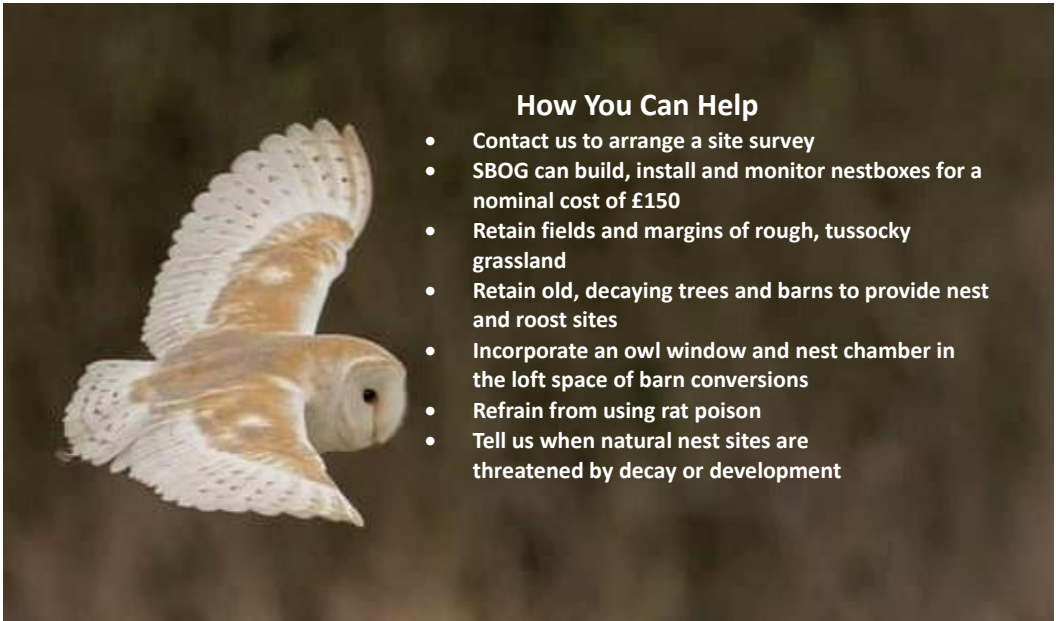
2669 Barn Owl chicks have been produced in nest sites monitored by SBOG since 2002, 2345 in nestboxes and 324 in natural sites. 87% of Barn Owls have been produced in nestboxes and, although data on the location and number of natural nest sites is limited, it is highly probable that nestboxes are now the predominant nest site for breeding Barn Owls in Shropshire.

Five of the last six years have consistently been peak years, with over 200 chicks produced in each year. Only 2020 dipped below 200, with 139 chicks. This trend is interesting because between 2002 and 2016 there was a cycle of peaks and troughs in breeding productivity. The levelling off may be attributable to climatic or environmental factors, and data from future breeding seasons might offer an insight. The mean number of chicks produced per successful brood in Shropshire 2.9. This is consistent with studies elsewhere which suggest that a long-term average productivity of about 3.2 young per pair is required to maintain viable populations.



Thank you

Thank you to the farmers and landowners across Shropshire who want to see Barn Owls on their land and who provide invaluable support in allowing SBOG to install nestboxes, to those who assist us in so many other ways with practical support and records, Dave Ware, Paul Shearer, Clenviro and Cooper & Williams, and to photographers Steve Dawes (cover and page 2) and Tim Preston (page 4). For financial support this year we are most grateful to the William Dean Countryside & Educational Trust and David Collin Greeting Cards and the many landowners who contribute to the nestbox costs. Without this financial support we could not do what we do for Barn Owls.



How You Can Help

- **Contact us to arrange a site survey**
- **SBOG can build, install and monitor nestboxes for a nominal cost of £150**
- **Retain fields and margins of rough, tussocky grassland**
- **Retain old, decaying trees and barns to provide nest and roost sites**
- **Incorporate an owl window and nest chamber in the loft space of barn conversions**
- **Refrain from using rat poison**
- **Tell us when natural nest sites are threatened by decay or development**