

HELP WANTED
MONITORING BARN OWLS AND DIPPERS
IN THE SOUTH WEST SHROPSHIRE HILLS

The Upper Onny Wildlife Group, and the Upper Clun Community Wildlife Group, have both been installing Barn Owl nest boxes, and Dipper nest boxes, in their respective areas. Additional boxes for both species also have been placed in other parts of the Shropshire Hills AONB.

We are now looking for people to help with this work.

Firstly, the person who monitored the Barn Owl nest boxes in the Upper Onny area (Allison Littlehales) is no longer able to carry on with this work, and we are looking for somebody to take responsibility for visiting around 20 nest boxes, and monitoring their use, and liaising with a bird ringer to ensure that any chicks are ringed.

Secondly, Sally Pittam, who has monitored Barn Owl boxes in the Upper Clun and the Kemp Valley, is no longer able to carry on with this work either. Some of the boxes will be monitored by Duncan Yapp, but he is unlikely to be able to do them all every year, so another helper is needed. Again, this will involve visiting up to 30 boxes, monitoring their use, and arranging for ringing of nestlings if appropriate. Tony Cross is given first option for ringing any broods, if landowners consent has been given.

For both the Barn Owl projects, training will be given in 2010, and then a licence will need to be obtained for disturbing a Schedule 1 species at the nest. In view of the need for training, and obtaining a licence, people who want to take on one or both of these Barn Owl projects should be willing to make a commitment lasting over several years.

Thirdly, well over a hundred nest boxes for Dippers have been placed under bridges, mainly in the Upper Onny and Upper Clun, but also in the lower reaches of these rivers, and on the Redlake. John Swift, who installed the nest boxes and has monitored them up until now, is recovering from an operation. Help is definitely needed in 2010, and probably in subsequent years as well – John is looking for an apprentice!

First broods of Dippers in the boxes are ringed by Tony Cross, and anyone helping with the Dipper project will need to liaise with him. However, pressure of other ringing work later in the breeding season means that many second broods are not ringed, and there may be a possibility to involve a second ringer to ring second broods (only in cases where Tony is unavailable).

If anyone is interested in helping with any of these three projects, please ring or email Leo Smith 01588 638577, email leo.smith@dsl.pipex.com.