

# BARNOWL

tytoalba

The Barn Owl was once a familiar sight in the British countryside. As its name suggests, it was frequently found in and near farm buildings where it was welcomed by farmers because of its usefulness in pest control.

Unfortunately, as 20<sup>th</sup> Century farming methods led to the destruction of hedgerows, meadowland and field headlands - with the consequential loss of habitat for prey species - and as old farm buildings were either demolished or converted to other uses, the Barn Owl population crashed to a dangerously low level. At the turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century it was estimated that there were less than 4,000 breeding pairs left in Britain.

Prey consists mainly of small mammals and, in particular, short-tailed and field voles, mice and common shrews which it either still hunts from a perch or by quartering over meadowland, often hovering, with a moth-like, silent, fluttering flight, relying on its superb hearing to locate prey.

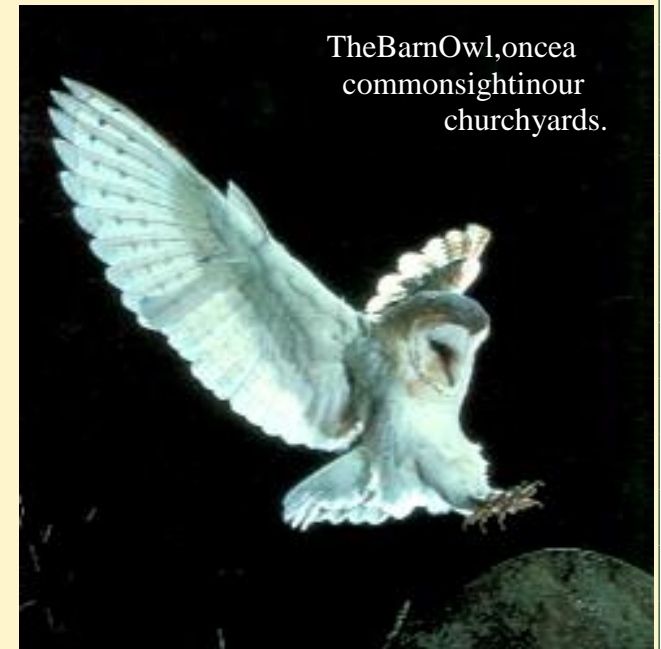
## FactFile

Length: 33cm - 35cm

Wingspan: 85cm - 93cm

Weight: 0.24kg - 0.36kg

Habitat: The greatest concentrations are found in low-lying arable areas near coasts where prey is abundant. The Norfolk coastal areas are ideal. The Barn Owl nests in hollow trees, buildings and crevices in rocks, laying a clutch of between 2 and 8 eggs. Incubation takes 1 month but for their size, Barn Owls have an unusually long period of 56 days before fledging.



The Barn Owl, once a common sight in our churchyards.