

Cheshire Barn Owl Report 2006

1 Introduction

This report collates data from the Wirral , North , West ,Mid, North East ,East and South Cheshire Barn owl groups. The data for North, North East, East and South Cheshire Groups is included within the Mid Cheshire data and is referred to as Mid+ in this report.

2 Summary

There were 36 confirmed breeding pairs in Cheshire in 2006 with a total of 75 confirmed young. At 8 of the breeding sites the young were not counted. Using the average number of chicks per pair at the counted sites of 2.7 would give an estimated total of 96 young in 2006.

3 Data

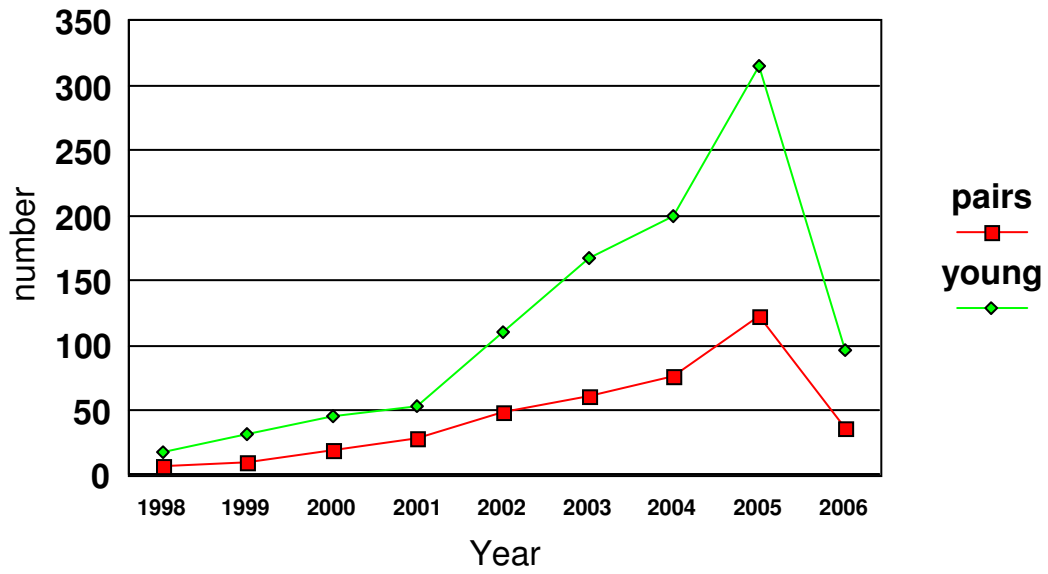
Breeding data for 2006

No. of confirmed breeding pairs	36
No of pairs with counted young	28
Average young per pair of the 28	2.7
Confirmed young owls	75
Estimated total young	96
Boxes installed	736

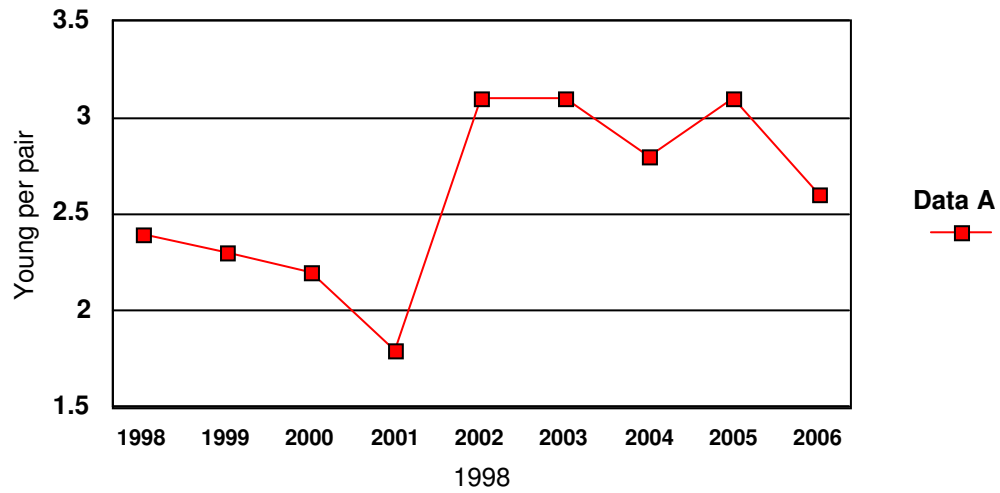
Comparison with previous years

<i>Year</i>	<i>Breeding Pairs</i>	<i>Young</i>	<i>Young per pair</i>
1998	7	17	2.4
1999	10	32	2.3
2000	19	46	2.2
2001	29	53	1.8
2002	48	110	3.1
2003	61	167	3.1
2004	76	199	2.8
2005	123	316	3.1
2006	36	96	2.7

Barn Owl breeding data 2006



Young per pair vs year



Box utilisation

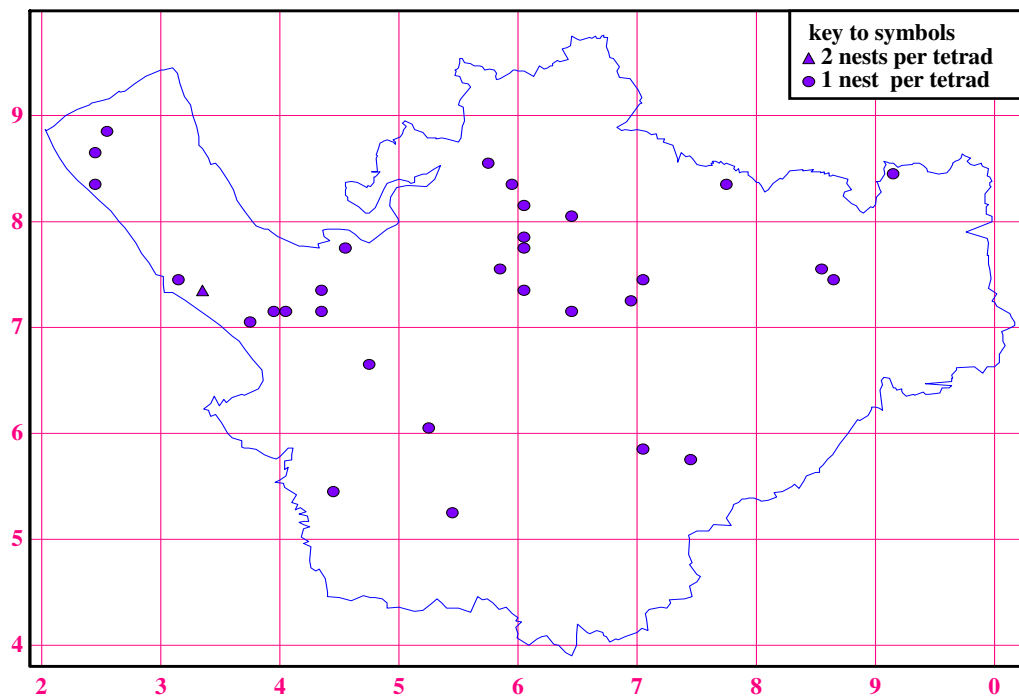
	<i>Total Boxes</i>	<i>Boxes used</i>	<i>% utilisation</i>
West	260	5	3.5
Mid+	333	16	4.8
Wirral	143	9	6.3
Total	736	30	4.1

Breeding success in each area

<i>G</i>	<i>Pairs</i>	<i>Young</i>	<i>Young/pair</i>
West	9	25	2.8
Mid+	18(10)	30	3.0
Wirral	9	22*	2.4
Total	28	76	2.7

Note :The 10 pairs in Mid Cheshire refers to those pairs where young were counted
 Wirral had 22 young hatched and 21 ringed.

barn owl distribution 2006



Discussion

This was a very poor year for barn owl breeding, with only 25% of the numbers that were breeding in 2005. This can be almost certainly ascribed to a very poor vole year, which was experienced throughout the whole country despite the generally good summer. Prey items found in boxes and pellets indicated that the owls were subsisting on a diet of mammals much smaller than the short tailed field vole. This year probably represents the well-established trough in the vole population, which appears every 3-4 years and should not represent a major decline in longer-term total Barn Owl numbers. The decline in breeding was not evenly distributed across the county and was most marked in the West Cheshire area. Even here, where there were large areas of good habitat the owls bred successfully. Hence there was not a large reduction in young per pair.

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