

Cheshire Barn Owl

Report 2011



Introduction

This report collates data from the Wirral and the Mid, South, West, North, East and North East Cheshire Barn Owl groups.

Summary

144 Barn owl nest sites were found in Cheshire in 2011 which resulted in 395 chicks being reared. The number of breeding pairs was 10% higher than last year and the young per pair also increased significantly to 2.7 from last year's 2.0.

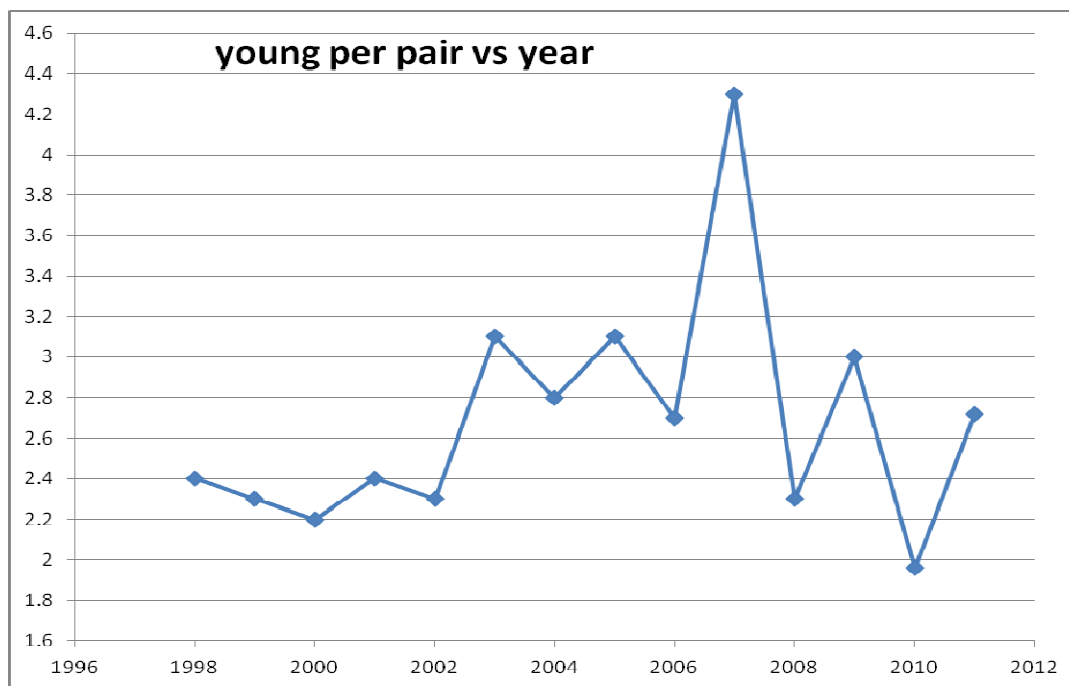
Total breeding pairs	144
Total successful pairs	139
Failed broods	3
Sites where young stolen	1
Breeding recorded –no eggs	1
Sites where young not counted	2
Total counted young	395
Young per breeding pair	2.72
Boxes installed	1388

Group	Breeding sites	Successful Sites	Counted sites++	Counted Young +	Ringed young	Second broods	Young per pair
Mid	44	41	44	116	108	0	2.63
North	2	2	2	6	6	0	3.0
N/E	13	12	12	33	33	0	2.53
South	16	16	14	39	37	0	2.43
Wirral	29	28	27	83	83	0	2.85
West	40	40	40	118	118	0	2.95
East	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Total	144	139	141	395	385	0	2.72

+ =live young

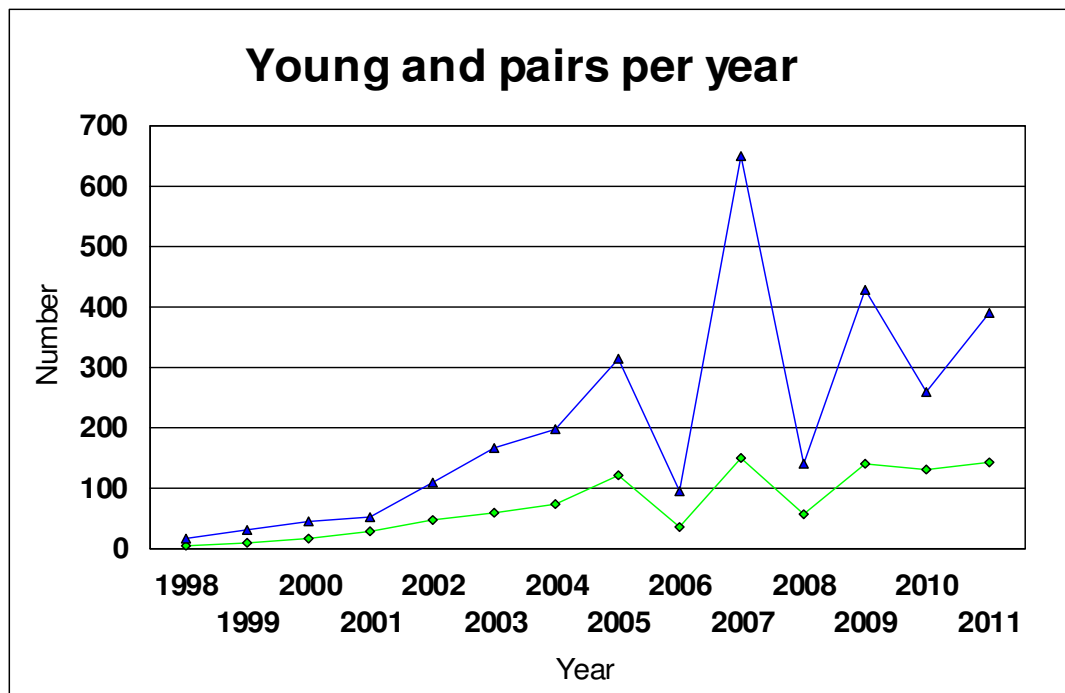
Note : Wirral reported 74 young fledged from 83 counted young and 95 eggs.

Year	Breeding Pairs	Young	Young per pair
1998	7	17	2.4
1999	10	32	2.3
2000	19	46	2.2
2001	29	53	2.4
2002	48	110	2.3
2003	61	167	3.1
2004	76	199	2.8
2005	123	316	3.1
2006	36	96	2.7
2007	151	651	4.3
2008	59	141	2.3
2009	141	430	3.0
2010	132	260	1.96
2011	144	395	2.72



Location of nest sites

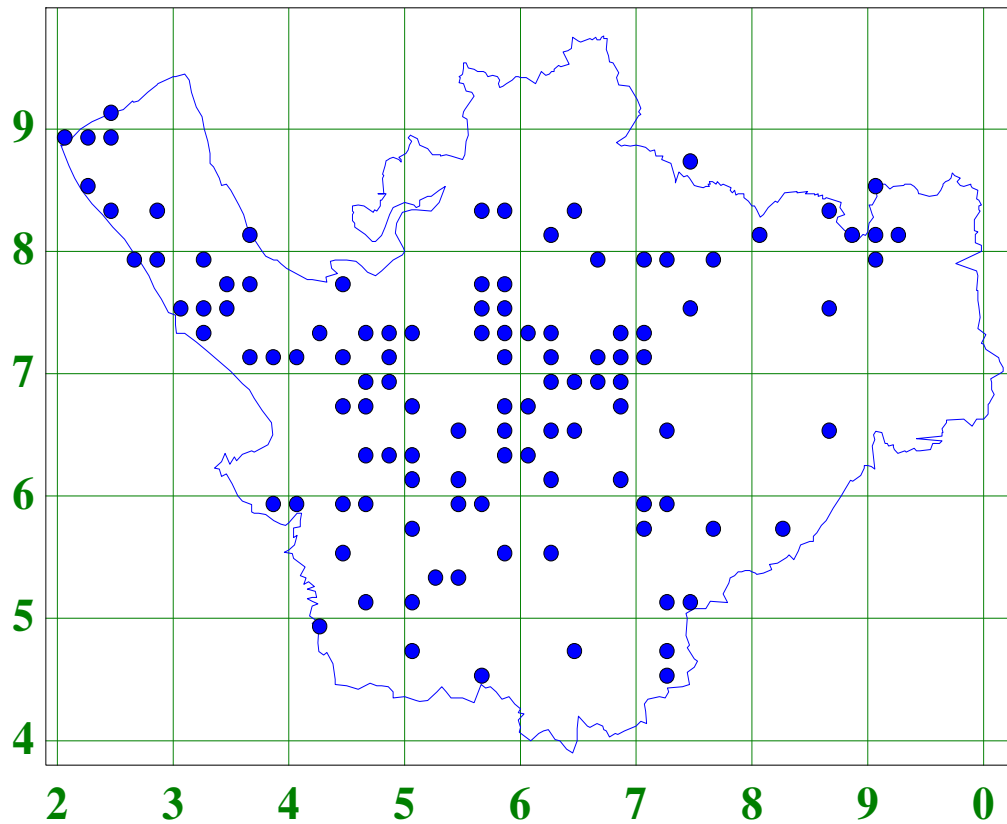
Group	Tree box	Barn box	Pole box	Building	Natural Tree site	Total
Mid	38	0	4	0	2	44
North	1		0	1		2
East	0			0		0
N/E	11			1	1	13
South	10		3		3	16
Wirral	17		8	3		28
West	5	1	32		2	40
Total	81	1	47	5	8	144



Box Utilisation

	Total boxes	Boxes used	% Utilisation
Mid	466	44	9
East	48	0	0
North	64	2	3
North East	117	13	11
South	122	16	13
West	399	40	10
Wirral	171	27	16
Totals	1388	144	10

Barn owl distribution 2011



Discussion

2011 was a much better year for breeding Barn owls in Cheshire .The number of pairs breeding was 144 which is about 10% up on the previous year. The young per pair is also well up on the previous year which must reflect a higher vole population. The very severe cold weather in December 2010 appears to have had little or no effect on the number of breeding pairs in the county which appears to be settling down to around 140-150 pairs.

There are no indications that Barn owls prefer tree boxes to pole boxes or vice versa as the box utilisation in mid Cheshire which uses mainly tree boxes is very similar to that of the West group which uses mainly pole boxes.

The distribution map is essentially what one would expect with most of the big gaps in distribution being in urban areas. The poor breeding success in the east of the county is somewhat surprising .This may be due to urbanisation , but this is greater in the north east where the breeding success is quite good. There is some high ground to the east but superficially there appear to be some river valleys with good habitat available.If anyone has an explanation please contact the author.

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