

# Barn Owl Movements in Cheshire and Wirral

## Introduction

This paper looks at the movements of ringed barn owls *Tyto alba* retrap or recovery records since 2003.

MRG has a number of specialist members who concentrate on ringing owls and other farmland raptors, this has led to a significant increase in the coverage of these species in particular barn owls over the past 20 years.

The efforts are principally targeted at recording breeding efforts and ringing the owlets, however recently more effort has been made to catch and ring adults at the nest site and during the winter months.

Given that the majority of barn owls ringed in Cheshire and the Wirral are ringed by MRG ringers, the analysis concentrated on the records published by MRG on their recovery sheets, therefore it should be noted that the data does not cover the east of the county covered by South Manchester Ringing Group.

## Distance of Movements

The following table provides the number of barn owls and distances travelled

Distance	Number of Owls
0km	28*
0km - 1	32
1km-4km	73
5km-9km	138
10km-19km	80
20km-49km	34
50km- +	20

Table 1 The Distance of MRG Ringed Barn Owl Movements

\*This total includes young barn owls' dead in the nest site and adult owls retrapped.

The figures show an interesting spread, with the 5km-9km movement being the most prevalent figure, given that the vast majority of the owl ringed will be ringed as pullus, therefore it can be assumed that the distances can be deemed as dispersal from the natal site. In his book *The Barn Owl* Colin Shawyer 1998 states the average dispersal is 9km.

So, given this one would assume that our owls are following a similar pattern, however it is worth noting that most owls movements are within the range 1km-19km, this may be linked with the high population density, in areas with lower population density the owls tend to move greater distances.

Some interesting long distance movements have been recorded for example :

**GC51884** 1m ringed on 08/07/2009 at Hockenhull Hall, recovered dead in Mochdre, Colwyn Bay, Clwyd 06/04/2010– 66km W - this is an interesting movement, given the high ground between the two record points.

**GC51861** 1F ringed on 29/06/2009 at Crewe Engines, Coppenhall, ring recovered in a fox scat in 23/02/2010 Sedsall, Rocester, Derbyshire 47km SW.

And its sibling:

**GC51863** 1M ringed on 29/06/2009 at Crewe Engines, Coppenhall, recovered dead in Crewe 05/03/2010 5km SW.

Both birds successfully fledged and although they both moved in similar directions, the distance was significantly different, notably the female dispersing over 40km further than her male sibling.

### **Direction of Movements**

The movement of owls is dictated by an number of factors, for example the local owl population density

<b>Direction of Movement</b>	<b>Number of Owls</b>
N	21
NE	67
E	19
SE	87
S	20
SW	52
W	11
NW	40