

Piedmont Barn Owl Initiative

Promotes Benefits of Boxes

New Hope Audubon Society

The Barn Owl (*Tyto alba*) was once a common resident of central North Carolina farmlands, where sheltered wooden structures and large fields were present. Since the 1950s, however, Barn Owls have experienced a precipitous decline. Changes in land use practices, encroaching development, overuse of pesticides, predation, and the removal of old barns have made the Barn Owl increasingly rare in the Piedmont.

Recent research has shown that placement of properly designed nest boxes, in appropriate habitat, can dramatically improve population densities of these amazing birds of prey. Restoration programs in California, Pennsylvania, Florida and other states have been successful at restoring Barn Owl numbers to more sustainable levels. Most of these programs have taken place in agricultural areas similar to those in central North Carolina.



Adult Barn Owl
(Peter Trimming, Wikipedia)



Barn Owl nestlings, almost ready to fledge
(Chad King, Wikipedia)

The Barn Owl is more than just a beautiful bird of prey. A single Barn Owl family can consume up to 3,000 mice, voles, and rats per year, improving crop yields, decreasing pest control costs, and possibly limiting the spread of tick-borne illness. As North Carolinians seek more sustainable ways to maintain their rural buffers, the Barn Owl offers impressive economic and environmental benefit.

Beginning in late 2012, the New Hope Audubon Society began erecting nest boxes in an attempt to restore Barn Owl populations in the Triangle area of North Carolina. The goal is to place at least 25 boxes in north central Chatham County, southwestern Orange County and northern

Durham County. In time, New Hope Audubon hopes to educate landowners about the benefits of Barn Owls, and to work with other organizations to begin a regional movement.

- Barn Owls need about 50 acres of open grassland/agricultural land.
- Each installation costs approximately \$250 (nest box, pole, hardware, and concrete).

If you would like to read about the details of this project, visit <http://piedmontbarnowls.blogspot.com/> to follow installation events as they unfold.