

## New life in abundance

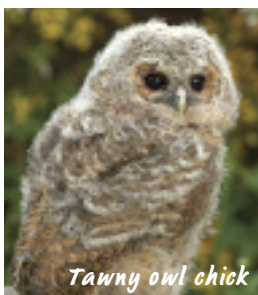
For wildlife newborns, this year has proved to be another successful one for the British Wildlife Centre. New life abounds with many young ones starting to emerge. Look out for them now!

**Badgers** After last year's litter of two, Humbug produced three cubs in March of this year. When mature they will reside with our two rescued female cubs. Next spring all five will be released onto the wild sett on our nature reserve, as a family group. We hope these semi-tame youngsters will prove suitable for badger watching evenings.



*Two week old badger cubs*

**Owls** In May we welcomed two barn owl and three tawny owl chicks from other wildlife organisations. They were just days old when they arrived and are being hand reared by our keeper, Katie. Owl chicks would never win any beauty contests, but when mature they are very appealing. Head Keeper Matt is planning to add more owls to his flying team (see page 3), and being hand-reared from such a young age means these birds will be happier around people and on the glove.



*Tawny owl chick*



*Roe deer fawn*



*Penny and her calf*



*Two of Flo's cubs*

**Foxes** In April Flo gave birth to five cubs. Now Flo's a mum with big responsibilities, we thought she may revert to more fox-like behaviour, but she's as friendly with people as she ever was. Flo and Frodo are attentive parents and the cubs are thriving. They are just starting to venture out along with mum during the fox talks.



**Deer** The month of May saw our first baby deer of the season, when red deer Penny gave birth to a beautiful calf. We're expecting more calves by the end of the summer, all fathered by dominant male Eric of course. A very pretty fawn was born to roe deer Willow. Photographers were thrilled to get shots of this fawn feeding.



*Wildcat kitten*

**Wildcats** After a gap of five years we're pleased to report the birth of wildcat kittens this May. Kendra had a litter of three sired by Lex. Soon after, Kendra's sister, Iona, gave birth to one kitten fathered by Angus, Lex's brother. Wildcats are a species under threat. Confined to the remotest parts of Scotland, the wildcat is our last remaining native cat species with an estimated 400 pure individuals left in the UK. At the end of summer the kittens will go to Scotland to be entered into an organised release programme.

**Red Squirrels** It has been another good year for red squirrel litters so far, and more are on the way. When a little older the kits will boost numbers in our walk-through red squirrel enclosure in the Cope. The new additions will include females for the first time and it is hoped that they will successfully breed with the males in the Cope.

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- *Phew, what a scorcher!*
- *Members' Evening*
- *Photo Competition - the winner is announced*

# British Owls - the full set!

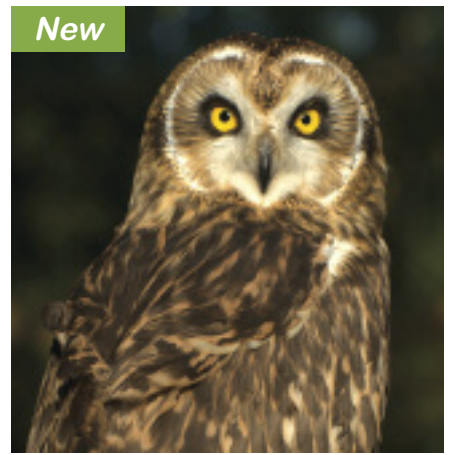
We've had cause for excitement this spring when we acquired two rather rare species of native owl. Our collection is now complete, and we have all seven British owls for visitors to see.

In March we collected a pair of long-eared owls. The pair, named Quil and Embry, are on display in the outside aviaries. The shy and secretive long-eared owl is a handsome bird with golden eyes, prominent ear tufts and a tall, slim stature. These highly efficient nocturnal hunters boast excellent night vision and acute hearing. They are native to the UK but rare in captivity, so it's been quite an achievement for us to acquire a potential breeding pair. The hope is that we may be able to breed these wonderful owls here.

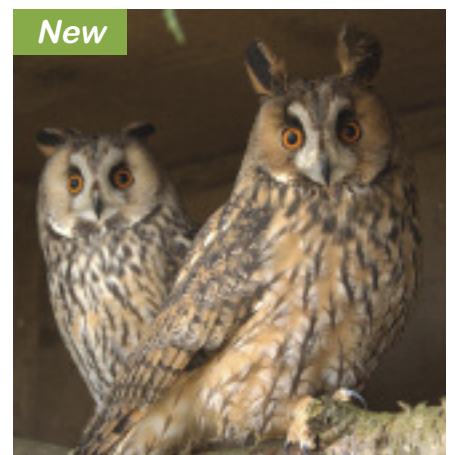
In April we managed to track down a female short-eared owl at a centre in Derbyshire (though she was hatched in Belgium). This was no mean feat, as just four short-eared owls were captive bred in the whole

of Europe last year. She will be housed in an aviary next to the long-eared owls and will be making appearances on the glove during open days and Photographic Days. She has been named 'Fawkes'. The striking short-eared owl has large, penetrating bright yellow eyes. Part of the Latin name, 'flammeus', meaning 'the colour of fire', is thought to refer to the colour of its eyes which are said to glow like flames when the owl is in flight. Its ear tufts are rarely visible but are displayed when the owl is alarmed or in defensive pose. They are active during the night (nocturnal) and day (diurnal) and unusually for owls they are ground nesting birds and roost on the ground or in low bushes.

Keep an eye open for these beautiful new residents on your next visit.



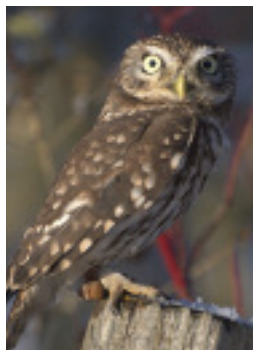
Short-eared Owl



Long-eared Owl



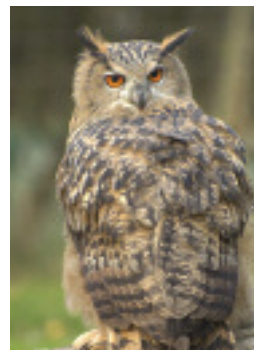
Barn Owl



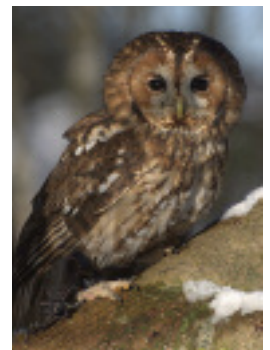
Little Owl



Snowy Owl



Eagle Owl

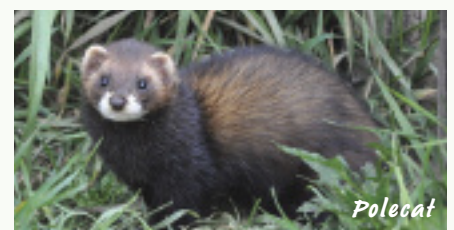


Tawny Owl

## Hamish enjoys the high life



In the last issue we reported on the new overhead pine marten runs around the Dell. They have proved to be a great success, particularly favoured by Hamish, our young male, who likes to watch the owl displays from on high. He's less than a year old and bursting with energy. He is certainly not the shy, retiring type, being quite at ease around people and already hand-feeding.



As the runs proved to be such a hit we thought the polecats would enjoy them too and have now fitted a set above their enclosure. Look out for the polecats and pine martens up in the new runs and viewing the world from their elevated positions.

Members: please see the back page for full details...



## Matt takes a flier

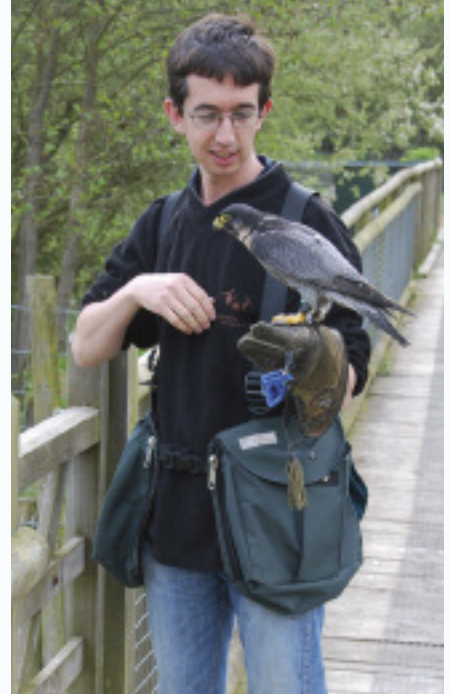
We're always keen to try new things and provide more for our visitors to see. To this end, Head Keeper Matt took on the challenge of falconry. As a beginner he faced quite a steep learning curve.

With some expert coaching from seasoned falconer Paul Davies, Matt got down to some practice sessions, free-flying his own kestrel (also a beginner) last autumn.

As Matt's skills improved he was ready to fly a more substantial creature. Ethel, our one year old eagle owl, with a 6ft wingspan, fitted the bill! Hand-reared by our keepers, Ethel was already comfortable on the glove and she proved to be ideal for free-flying. In

January she featured on Countryfile with presenter Matt Baker. Her flying performance was perfect and filmed in just one take. Ethel is now a key member of our free-flying team. Visitors enjoy seeing her along with snowy owl Hedwig at the owl display in the Dell, every afternoon on open days. The flying team will be joined by barn and tawny owls later this year (see page 1).

Jack, the peregrine falcon, joined us in February, initially on loan. Both



*Left: Ethel the eagle owl in full flight  
Above: Matt about to fly Jack*

Matt and Jack have been fast learners and within two weeks Jack was off the line and free-flying for the first time. In recognition of the many hours of effort Matt has invested training Jack and building a bond, his owner kindly let us keep him for good. Matt can be seen flying Jack in the Deer Park on many of our open days (times will be shown at the Admission Desk).

## What to spot when it's hot!

Remember 1976? If predictions are to be believed then this year could be as hot or even hotter and we may be in for some 'scorchio' pavement-melting temperatures. For many birds and animals (and humans!) the summer heat can prove too much. Most species reduce their activity at the hottest part of the day.

To avoid exposure to heat, birds nestle in trees, close to the branches. You may notice how quiet they become as they stop their chirruping and singing. Birds don't sweat, so may be seen with their wings spread and beaks open to reduce excess body heat. To give them a helping hand put a shallow container (like an upturned dustbin lid) filled with water out in the garden for drinking and bathing, and ensure bird boxes don't face south

or west, as the direct sun would risk overheating young birds.

The run of cool, wet summers we've experienced were disastrous for certain species of insects, including rare butterflies and moths. The knock-on effect for birds was food shortages and starving chicks. The hot conditions predicted this year will be perfect for insects and these will provide vital food supplies for our native wildlife as well as the UK's summer migrants, such as swallows and swifts.



*An adder basks on warm earth*



*A grass snake cools in the shade*

In common with all reptiles, cold-blooded snakes enjoy a warm summer. Unlike mammals, snakes cannot regulate body temperature and in cold conditions they become sluggish and are easy prey. They rely on external heat sources, like the sun or sun-warmed objects, to keep warm. Warmth energises them, so in hot summers more snakes can be seen out and about. To avoid overheating they will move to damper, cooler sites away from direct sun. Log piles and compost heaps provide ideal cool shelters for snakes and are a haven for insects and small mammals.

...of this year's Members' Evening on 10th July

## Members Evening 2010

*Saturday, 10th July, 5 pm - 8 pm*

The summer Members' Evening is a must for all British Wildlife Centre members, old and new. This evening gives you the chance to meet your fellow BWC members as well as enjoying talks and special feeding sessions not included in our normal daily schedule. The Members' Evening takes place on **Saturday 10th July**. We will be open to the public in the day, but after 5 pm we remain open for a further 3 hours until 8 pm. The evening is a members-only event and is free!

The evening starts with a welcome and update by Centre owner David Mills, followed by a full schedule of treats for wildlife fans; free-flying demonstrations, riveting keeper talks, our young owls out and about, and more. Our keeper team will be available throughout the evening to answer your wildlife questions.



The coffee shop and gift shop will open during the evening. To help us plan our staffing, we'd be grateful if you could let us know if you are attending. Please email us at: [info@britishwildlifecentre.co.uk](mailto:info@britishwildlifecentre.co.uk) or if you're not on email please do call us. Thank you.

### BWC Wildlife Photography Competition *Spring results*



We've had a huge response to our Photographic Competition launched in spring, with over 100 entries. From the five shortlisted photographs chosen by our Keeper team, renowned wildlife photographer Andy Rouse selected the spring winner. Congratulations to Mark Coventry with this fantastic image of a red squirrel in our Copse. Mark's image will go on to compete as the overall winner for 2010.

The summer competition is now open. You may enter up to two images which must be taken here at the BWC in 2010.

To enter, upload your image at our official British Wildlife Centre Group at:

[www.flickr.com/groups/british-wildlife-centre](http://www.flickr.com/groups/british-wildlife-centre) in the 'BWC Summer Photo Competition' thread within 'Discussion'.

Or email:

[competition@britishwildlifecentre.co.uk](mailto:competition@britishwildlifecentre.co.uk)

Deadline: 5th September 2010



*Spring winner - Mark Coventry*

## THE BWC ON FILM

The British Wildlife Centre has been fortunate to feature on a number of TV wildlife and news programmes in recent years. Excerpts of some of the best can be viewed via a new 'Film Footage' page on our website, found on the side menu. The links take you to YouTube, where you will find our video group, 'BritishWildlifeCentr'. The group also includes excellent wildlife footage, taken by Head Keeper Matt, including Flo's fox cubs, dancing adders and the pine martens. His footage can also be viewed on the Keeper's Blog, accessed via the News page of the BWC website.

### *British Wildlife Centre*

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Surrey RH7 6LF  
01342 834658

We're open every Saturday, Sunday and public holiday from March to October and daily during all school holidays.

#### *Summer/Autumn school holidays:*

Summer holiday  
Sat 24 July to Sun 5 Sep

Autumn half term  
Sat 23 Oct to Sun 31 Oct

Please call us or go online for information on membership, animal adoptions, school visits, private tours and special access for photography and film.

*We would like to thank all our members and supporters.*

Wildlife News - photography, text and design: British Wildlife Centre  
*Next issue Autumn/Winter 2010*