

Spirit of Sutterby

Our Barn Owls - 2017

This year we had our best record for owlets - 4.
We wish them well and God Speed.



Underneath the owl box Garry Steele, who has been professionally involved with our owls for a number of years, collected a significant number of owl pellets.



He has very kindly analysed these for us and sent the following report:

- ". Wood Mouse *Apodemus sylvaticus*
- House Mouse *Mus musculus*
- Field Vole *Microtus agrestis*
- Common Shrew *Sorex araneus*
- Pygmy Shrew *Sorex minutus*

Slightly surprisingly I didn't find any remains of Bank Vole *Myodes glareolus*.

There are normally one or two skulls of these amongst the always more numerous Field Vole remains.

I also found a single bird skull!

These are somewhat difficult to key out down to species level, but the closest I could get it to was Chaffinch *Fringilla coelebs*.

This was probably a bird that was either grounded through illness or injury or otherwise one of the adult barn owls had chanced across it while it was perched up night roosting.

Generally speaking bird remains in barn owl pellets are relatively scarce.

Just to remind as well that when I originally did the ringing of the barn owlets (22 June 2017) the nest box also contained the partially eaten remains of a juvenile Brown/Common Rat *Rattus norvegicus*.

It cannot obviously be said with any level of certainty that any of these prey victims inhabited the churchyard itself, but nevertheless all the victims will have been living within the 'home range' of the barn owls - something like a 3km max radius around Sutterby.

I strongly suspect the House Mice predated upon were all living in and around the nearby farmyard, as they never seem to thrive very far from man."

This information will form part of the Sutterby Natural History records and we are very grateful to Garry for his continuing support of the project and for sharing his knowledge and expertise.

August 2017

