



## Updates from the Trail: July 2022

This month we wanted to use this space to tell you about a special species of concern in Massachusetts. Stay tuned in the upcoming months to learn what steps BCT is taking to help Barn Owls.

### Barn Owl (*Tyto alba*), Species of Special

#### Nesting:

- Barn owls nest in trees or buildings surround by or adjacent to large open areas, including barns, hence their name.

#### Hunting and Feeding:

- Barn owls feed primarily on rodents, including mice and voles, but they may also eat insects, reptiles, or other kinds of birds.
- Barn owls are nocturnal and hunt exclusively at night.
- Barn owls eat their prey whole, and later cough up pellets containing any fur or bones from their kill.

#### Mating and Offspring:

- Barn owls typically mate for life and are monogamous.
- Females will lay 3-8 eggs which take about a month to hatch. Almost two months after hatching, the chicks are able to leave the nest.



Stacy Howell/Audubon Photography Awards

#### Population Status:

- In Massachusetts, Barn owls are a Species of Special Concern. Their populations have been decreasing and becoming more concentrated over time. Much of this decline is due to tough winters and loss of nesting areas.

#### Fun Facts:

- A Barn owl's ears are not equally level on the sides of their head. This allows them to locate quiet sounds more easily and accurately.
- A Barn owl's feathers are incredibly soft, letting them hunt silently in the night. However, this causes them to get extremely wet in the rain.
- Female Barn owls construct their nests out of pellets that they cough up and shred with their talons, shaping into a cup as they go.
- Barn owls screech instead of hooting, making their sound much different from their Great-Horned or Tawny owl cousins.

#### North American Range of Barn Owl (Cornell)

