

2021 Nantucket Barn Owl Nest Box Program – Late Spring Survey Results



July 7, 2021

Hi Friends of Nantucket Barn Owls!

The Maria Mitchell Association's 2021 Late Spring Barn Owl Nest Box Survey took place from Tuesday, June 22 to Thursday, June 24. Ginger Andrews, Mitch Blake and I, with help from Tucker and Jen Reinhard, checked fourteen nest boxes, installed three new nest boxes, moved one nest box, and modified the back doors on six nest boxes. This was a follow-up to the earlier survey conducted in May. June allowed us to return to nest boxes that had eggs or small young in May and that needed cleaning or repair work.

We now have fifty-eight adopted nest boxes in the Maria Mitchell Association Barn Owl Program, more than ever before. The eleven eggs that had not hatched in late May yielded nine new young so the total for the season was thirty-nine owlets. Of these we banded a total of thirty-three.

As I mentioned in my last report, this is the poorest reproduction that we have found in years and among the lowest adult population as well. We did not find any additional dead adult owls nor further evidence of poisoning, but we do suspect that the population is suffering due to the apparent increased use of rodenticides on Nantucket. As we monitor the population with each survey, we will let you know what we learn. We will continue to monitor the population and investigate this further.

Here are some tips to help improve nesting success:

1. Do not use any kind of rodenticide poisons on your property and encourage neighbors not to use them. You can use live or snap traps to eliminate local rodents.
2. Do not disturb your nest box during daylight hours. If you go near, touch, or shake a nest box, the resident adult owl may flush. If eggs and/or tiny young are present in the nest box, they could be chilled and die without their parent's protection. Or, the flushed adult could be attacked by crows. Crows can kill Barn Owls directly.
3. Do leave an area of at least a ten foot radius from your nest box unmowed or otherwise un-disturbed for most of the year. If you have to mow or clear around a nest box, do it after sunset when the crows have gone to roost, and the owl parents can return to the nest box soon thereafter in the dark.

4. You can watch your nest box after sunset and just before full darkness from 100 feet or more away to see them come and go. This is particularly rewarding when the young leave the nest box while learning to fly and to be fed by their parents.

Fall Survey Dates (Save the Dates): Monday to Thursday morning, September 27 to 30, 2021. During this survey, we will visit all of the nest boxes. We hope that many of you will be around then so that you can join us either at your nest box or when we check other boxes.

Below is a summary of what we found during the 2021 Late Spring Survey.

Thanks again for your support of the Maria Mitchell Association Nantucket Barn Owl Nest Box Program! Hope to see you in September!

Happy Owling!
Bob, Ginger, & Mitch

Maria Mitchell Association
4 Vestal Street
Nantucket, MA 02554

Bob: 508-577-4105
Bob: osprey02554@yahoo.com



Maria Mitchell Association Barn Owl Nest Box Program Report Summary - Barn Owl Survey - June 22 to 24, 2021

Boxes located east of Town

Box #	Box Owner-Location	Adults	Eggs	# of Young	# of Young Banded	Nest Box Notes
11	Medouie Creek	0	0	0	0	Heavy usage, many pellets
11 Old	Medouie Creek	0	0	3	1	Young 5 weeks old
91	Pocomo	0	0	0	0	New Box
14	Polpis	1 ♂	0	0	0	Adult already banded; New back door
90	Polpis	0	0	0	0	New Box
75	Quaise	0	0	0	0	Moved Nest Box
19	Shimmo	0	0	0	0	Owl feathers
66	Monomoy	0	0	2	2	Young 4 to 5 weeks old; Nest Box cleaned
62	Tom Nevers	0	0	0	0	Removed branches around Nest Box

Boxes located in Town; south or west of Town

Box #	Box Owner-Location	Adults	Eggs	# of Young	# of Young Banded	Nest Box Notes
89	Cisco	0	0	0	0	New Box
67	Town	0	0	3	3	Young 15 to 20 days old; Nest Box cleaned; New back door
38	Town	0	0	5	5	Young 4 to 5 weeks old
27	Dionis	1 ♀	0	2	2	Adult not caught; Young 4 weeks old
28	Dionis	0	0	0	0	New back door
35	Madaket	0	0	0	0	New back door

Boxes located in Town; south or west of Town continued

Box #	Box Owner-Location	Adults	Eggs	# of Young	# of Young Banded	Nest Box Notes
34	Madaket	0	0	3	Young previously banded	Young 5 to 6 weeks old, youngest owl of 4 found dead in Box; New back door
49	Madaket	1 ♀	0	4	0	Adult banded; Young too small to band age 2 to 6 days old; New back door
	Total	4	0	22	13	

Previously Banded Adults Captured May 25 to 28, 2021

Box #	Box Owner-Location	Adults	Band No.	Date Banded	Age When Banded	Box Owner Where Banded
66	Monomoy	1 ♀	1947-40005	6/21/2017	Nestling	60
66	Monomoy	1 ♂	1947-40038	5/23/2018	Nestling	66
52B	Polpis	1 ♀	1947-20484	6/28/2016	Nestling	27
28	Dionis	1 ♂	1947-40019	9/27/2017	Adult	64
34	Madaket	1 ♂	1947-40088	5/28/2019	Adult	52

Previously Banded Adults Captured June 22 to 24, 2021

Box #	Box Owner-Location	Adults	Band No.	Date Banded	Age When Banded	Box Owner Where Banded
14	Polpis	1 ♂	1947-20483	6/28/2016	Nestling	27
49	Madaket	1 ♀	1947-47349	6/10/2020	Nestling	63
67	Town	1 ♀	1947-20453	6/18/2015	Nestling	3