



NEAR CARGILL, PERTHSHIRE

**DEFINITION**

Farm buildings are found on almost every farm. They range from old stone and slate steadings to old dwelling houses or modern purpose built metal sheds.

Of particular interest in terms of wildlife conservation are the older steadings and cottages, especially those no longer inhabited, as they can provide both ideal nesting and roosting sites for bats and a wide range of bird species. However, any farm buildings may be utilised if conditions are suitable. Features important to wildlife include eaves, access holes, roof spaces, beams and ledges. Adjacent rough ground, together with nearby trees and hedges are likely to be important for feeding and collecting nest material.

**CURRENT STATUS AND EXTENT OF HABITAT**

Farm steadings and old cottages are increasingly being renovated, demolished or converted for development purposes. Subsequently, there is a loss of traditional farm buildings on farms. As such there is a loss of suitable shelter and habitat for the bat species and birds such as Barn owl *Tyto alba*, Swift *Apus apus*, House martin *Delichon urbica*, Swallow *Hirundo rustica*, and House sparrow *Passer domesticus*.

Newly constructed farm buildings tend to provide less niches for wildlife. Existing farm buildings are often up-graded in some instances to exclude birds in order to comply with Farm Assurance Schemes, especially where buildings are used for the storage of grain.

As far as is known there is no up-to-date information available on the number or condition of farm buildings in Tayside.

**KEY SPECIES**

**P** = UK Priority Species **C** = UK species of conservation concern

<b>Mammals</b>	Pipistrelle bat	<i>Pipistrellus pipistrellus</i>	<b>P</b>
	Brown long-eared bat	<i>Plecotus auritus</i>	<b>C</b>
	Natterer's bat	<i>Myotis nattereri</i>	<b>C</b>
	Daubenton's bat	<i>Myotis daubentoni</i>	<b>C</b>

<b>Birds</b>	Barn owl	<i>Tyto alba</i>	<b>C</b>
	House martin	<i>Delichon urbica</i>	<b>C</b>
	Swallow	<i>Hirundo rustica</i>	<b>C</b>
	Swift	<i>Apus apus</i>	
	House sparrow	<i>Passer domesticus</i>	

**NATURE CONSERVATION IMPORTANCE**

Owing to the substantial decline in Barn owl numbers in the past two decades, the key sites for the species in Tayside are probably those which are already in use as roost sites or nest sites, and those within the vicinity of remaining Barn owl populations.

With woodland clearance over the years bats have adapted to, and rely heavily upon, farm buildings for roosting. As many of the species utilising farm buildings are in decline it is important that farm buildings are retained and maintained in a wildlife friendly condition wherever possible.

**ECOLOGY AND MANAGEMENT**

Species Action Plans will be available for the various species that utilise farm buildings, including Barn owl, Swift and Bats.

**Barn Owl**

The Barn Owl is a UK Species of Conservation Concern. Although the exact Tayside population is not known, declines have been reported linked to the disappearance of traditional farm buildings and the subsequent loss of nesting and roosting sites. The population decline is also linked to loss of hunting areas and the indiscriminate use of rodenticides around farm buildings.



LORNE GILL/SNH

**CURRENT FACTORS CAUSING LOSS OR DECLINE**

A number of factors affect the availability and suitability of farm buildings for wildlife:

- Many traditional steadings are no longer suited to modern agricultural purposes and there is no reason to maintain them. Consequently the buildings deteriorate and eventually become unsafe; in many cases this leads to either demolition or conversion to housing;
- Unless traditional farm buildings are classified as Listed Buildings there is no grant assistance available to maintain or restore them;
- Many timber treatments are toxic to bats;
- Building restoration may eliminate essential features such as holes, cracks and lofts used by wildlife;
- Entrances to farm buildings may be deliberately blocked to exclude wildlife in order to comply with Farm Assurance Schemes;
- Rodenticides used in and around farm buildings can be detrimental to owls and other birds of prey, particularly red kites;
- New farm buildings tend not to be wildlife-friendly.

## Farm Buildings

F2

### MAIN THREATS TO KEY SPECIES

<b>Bat spp.</b>	Loss of hibernation sites and maternity roosting sites. Insufficient insect food. Inappropriate use of timber treatment chemicals.
	UK Importance of Tayside population: <b>moderate</b>
<b>Barn owl</b>	Loss of nest sites. Rodenticide poisoning. Lack of surrounding rough ground or field margins to hunt over.
	UK Importance of Tayside population: <b>moderate</b>
<b>Swallow</b>	Loss of nest sites Insufficient insect food Lack of building materials (especially mud) from loss of wetland habitats and farm ponds
	UK Importance of Tayside population: <b>moderate</b>
<b>Swift</b>	Loss of nest sites Insufficient insect food
	UK Importance of Tayside population: <b>moderate</b>

### OPPORTUNITIES AND CURRENT ACTION

#### Legal Status

Planning permission is required where farm steadings are to be converted for non-agricultural use.

Local authorities also have a legal responsibility to establish the presence of Barn owls, bats and other protected species under the Wildlife and Countryside Act before building work commences and to require mitigation as part of the restoration work.

Any bat roost, whether currently occupied or not, is protected by law. In addition to it being an offence to deliberately kill, injure, sell or possess a bat, it is an offence to disturb a bat whether in a roost or not, damage, destroy or obstruct access to a roost. Repairs, maintenance or alterations to buildings can adversely affect bats and their roosts. Advice must be sought from SNH before any work is carried out that could affect their roosts.

#### Pipistrelle

Britain's smallest bat, the Pipistrelle, would fit into a matchbox, yet each bat can eat up to 3,000 insects during one night's feeding.

Bats need somewhere cool in the winter so that they can hibernate safely. During the summer females seek out somewhere warm to have their young. These 'maternity roosts' tend to be used for only a short time, but the loss of such a roost can wipe out all the bats over a wide area, so it is vital that these are protected.



RSPB

Barn owls are listed on Schedule 1 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1982 affording them special protection from disturbance.

Planners can play a significant role in promoting and encouraging awareness of the wildlife that utilises farm buildings. Architects, developers and planners can all encourage specific building designs which retain space for wildlife: for example Barn owl loft windows and landing ledges and Swift nest-bricks.

Some farm buildings may be listed and therefore any repairs or renovations have to be agreed by Historic Scotland.

### Agri-environment Schemes

Some farm buildings will be protected under the General Environmental Conditions of agri-environment schemes if they have been identified as being of historic interest.

### Advisory Services

Conservation advisers from SAC and FWAG work with farmers identifying features on their farms which are of value to wildlife. SNH and local Bat Groups are available to advise on bat issues.

## OBJECTIVES

Objectives	
1	Ensure that farm buildings in Tayside continue to provide nesting and roosting opportunities for those species which depend upon them.
2	Ensure that legal protection afforded to wildlife utilising buildings is fully understood by the three local authorities and that legal protection is enforced where protected species are affected by buildings works.
3	Encourage planning departments to have a pro-active approach in promoting building design which encourages wildlife.
4	Encourage new farm buildings to be more wildlife-friendly.
5	Determine which farm buildings are utilised by Barn owls.
6	Investigate the possibility of setting up a grant scheme for maintaining or enhancing farm buildings used by Barn owls.
7	Ensure landowners provide additional or alternative nest/roost sites when building work takes place (i.e. when protected species are not actively utilising the building).
8	Ensure that farm buildings are attractive to wildlife by encouraging the retention or creation of suitable foraging habitat close to the buildings.
9	Ensure that the new Farm Business Development Scheme (FBDS) is not detrimental to wildlife.
10	Increase farmers' and pest control companies' awareness of the potential threats to owls and other birds of prey, posed by the use of rodenticides around farm buildings.
11	Provide winter feeding opportunities for birds traditionally associated with farm steadings.

### Stakeholders

- Landowners, managers and advisors; statutory bodies and local authorities; community councils; architects, developers and construction companies; pest controllers, local bat groups, general public.

## Farm Buildings

F2

## ACTION FOR BIODIVERSITY

		Action - Farm Buildings	Deliverers		To take place by	Meets Objective No.
			Lead Partners	Partners	02 03 04 05 06 07 11 16	
LBAP Ref.	<b>A</b>	<b>Policy and legislation</b>				
F2	1	Work with Angus, Dundee and Perth and Kinross Councils to ensure that legal obligations regarding protected species are met.	SNH	PKC DCC AC RSPB Bat Groups	# # # # # # # #	i
F2	2	Develop and run a series of seminars for planners on the legal responsibilities of planning departments and also to encourage building designs which can encourage wildlife.	TBP	SNH NTS RSPB Bat Groups	# # # #	i, ii
F2	3	Encourage wildlife-friendly features to be incorporated into Farm Business Development Scheme (FBDS) applications for the conversion of redundant farm buildings.	FBDS Project Officers	SAC FWAG	#	viii
	<b>B</b>	<b>Site safeguard and management</b>				
F2	1	Organise a survey to determine which farm buildings are utilised by Barn owls.	Barn Owl Interest Group	NTS SAC FWAG	# # #	iv
F2	2	Investigate the possibility of a grant scheme for maintaining/enhancing farm buildings used by Barn owls.	Barn Owl Interest Group	SNH SAC FWAG RSPB	# # # #	v
F2	3	(i) Encourage landowners to provide alternative roosting sites/nesting sites when building work is being undertaken. (ii) Produce an awareness-raising leaflet.	PKC DCC AC	TBP Bat Groups SNH	# # # # # # # #	vi
	<b>C</b>	<b>Species management and protection</b>				
F2						
	<b>D</b>	<b>Advisory</b>				
F2	1	Provide advice to landowners and encourage them to retain/create suitable foraging habitat close to farm buildings (rough grass, hedges, trees, ponds, puddles, etc.).	SAC FWAG	SWT SNH	# # # # # # # #	vii
	<b>E</b>	<b>Research and monitoring</b>				
F2	1	Monitor the implementation of this plan; ensure this plan is being delivered annually and review in detail after 5 years.	TBP		# # # # # # # #	
	<b>F</b>	<b>Promotion and awareness-raising</b>				
F2	1	Work with companies constructing new farm buildings (e.g. Knapp, Algo) to incorporate nest sites, ledges etc. into new farm buildings. These could be self contained so as to comply with Farm Assurance Schemes.	SAC	RSPB FWAG SNH	# # # #	iii
F2	2	Develop a project to increase farmers' awareness of the potential threats posed by the use of rodenticides around farm buildings (particularly second generation rodenticides).	SAC FWAG	RSPB SNH	# # #	ix
F2	3	Develop a project to encourage farmers to use waste grain/tailings to feed birds during the winter months.	RSPB SAC FWAG		# # # # # #	x



