

Geoff Sheppard – Dumfries and Galloway RSG

Geoff Sheppard was born in Somerset and moved to Scotland in 1973. He became secretary of the newly formed West Galloway Scottish Ornithologists' Club branch in 1976, the BTO regional representative in 1983, and he is also the BTO *Atlas* organiser for Wigtownshire. An active bird ringer for 30 years, he is also ringing secretary for the North Solway Ringing Group. As a member of the Dumfries and Galloway Raptor Study Group, Geoff monitors the breeding Hen Harriers in his area, but is best known for his long-term study of Barn owls. Soon after arriving in West Galloway he quickly became aware that traditional nesting sites for these birds were disappearing. With the help of local farmers and landowners, he embarked on a programme of installing and monitoring Barn owl nest boxes throughout the area. Adults occupying the boxes are ringed and then monitored and their chicks are also ringed. The study is arduous, with as many as 100 sites having to be checked at least three times a year; in a good year chicks and adults ringed can number in their hundreds. This work has led to an outstanding 25 year study, providing insight into the lives and breeding success of Barn owls in this area of Scotland.