

Nest Box Monitoring Protocol and Ethics

It is a privilege for us to be able to see these shy, scarce endangered owls nesting in Calvert County.

A. Please remember to respect their extreme sensitivity to human disturbance by following these guidelines:

1. Remain as quiet as possible. Please whisper while around the nest box. Close vehicle doors quietly.
2. Do not bang on a pole or box. If a female barn owl is flushed from the box during the day, a hawk could kill her.
3. Do not touch or handle the owls. Wild Barn Owls are highly stressed by human contact, since they think we are a giant predator! They are a federally protected bird that requires licensed banders to handle them. You may not even collect owl feathers, by law, as a protected species.
4. Importantly, do not reveal the location of the owl boxes publicly and do not post photos of owls or locations we work with on social media. In the past, Calvert Co. barn owls have abandoned nest boxes that were bothered too frequently by photographers and noisy visitors. One of our barn owls was tragically found shot dead below a barn box.
5. Enter and exit as quickly as possible. Many boxes are in exceptionally beautiful locations and it is tempting to linger and enjoy the views but human disturbance greatly affects these owls.

B. We rely on the generosity of landowners who host owl boxes, so please:

1. Always, ask permission for every visit on their land.
2. Respect the owner's instructions on how to access their land, which roads to use and where to park. You may have to walk to nest box sites to avoid damaging muddy farm roads at their request.
3. Never, drive or walk over a crop field. When accessing a marsh box in waders, avoid tearing up marsh grass. Drive carefully! Neither Calvert County Government nor Calvert Nature Society will cover any damage to private vehicles, even when used for volunteer purposes.
4. Close all gates and leave no trash.
5. Do not post landscape photos that would identify the location of the farm on social media.

Thank you for following this code of protection for these beautiful rare owls and their habitat.