



## CEDAR LAKES OWL RELEASE PROGRAMME

The Cedar Lakes Owl Release Programme was initiated by a small project team of six residents in about August 2017. It is part of EcoSolutions' award-winning "Owl Project", which started initially as an education project for schools in and around Johannesburg.

This project aims to rehabilitate, acclimatise and stage the release of rescued owls. From an educational point of view, it also addresses the wide stigma of owls (particularly barn owls) as being an omen of death. Apart from schools, EcoSolutions has installed release enclosures in several business premises, housing and eco estates in Gauteng.

EcoSolutions works with universities, wildlife organisations, vets and others to return rescued owls back into the wild. They are licensed by GDARD (Gauteng Department of Agriculture and Rural Development) to provide the post-rehabilitation transport, temporary accommodation and release of wild birds. When the rehabilitation, which requires an onsite vet, is completed, and the owls can fly and feed themselves, they are placed for release.

Cedar Lakes is very proud to be one of the top release sites in this EcoSolutions programme. A four-person project team consisting of Jeanette Budd, Nicola Sadler, John Griffin and Mike Prior, liaise with EcoSolutions a few times each year to have some releases placed with us.

A group of 20+ "feeding volunteers" take turns feeding the owls until they are pronounced ready to leave. At this time, the door to the release enclosure is opened and the owls are left to exit at their own leisure. We continue to leave food out for the released owls, until they stop taking the food and are deemed to be self-sufficient.

**Read more about owlproject.org** <https://ecosolutions.co.za/township-owl-box-project>

The garden surrounding the Owl Pen in Cedar Lakes was opened in early October 2019, coinciding with the arrival of Zennifer – she was named as a result of being the first "zen" owl to be privy to the zen surrounds.



The following table shows the owls that have so far been in our care:

Release #	Owl	Names	Owls types	Arrived	Released	Notes	Info
1	1	Noddy	Barn Owls (Tyto Alba)	01.10.2017	15.11.2017	released	Juveniles
	2	Nameless			13.11.2017	released	
2	3	Scruffy	Spotted Eagle Owl (Bubo Africanus)	18.12.2017	24.01.2018	released	Reason for rescue unknown
3	4	Max	Black Winged Kite (Elanus Caeruleus)	05.03.2018	14.05.2018	released	Hit by car - broken wing
4	5	Jack	Barn Owls (Tyto Alba)	04.06.2018	20.07.2018	released	Rescued from a construction site
	6	Jill			released		
5	7	Themba	Barn Owls (Tyto Alba)	02.09.2018	19.10.2018	released	Rescued from ceiling in Soweto
	8	Thandi			released		
6	9	Chris	Barn Owls (Tyto Alba)	14.11.2018	15.03.2019	released	Attacked by a dog, recovered
	x	Carol			28.11.2018	died	
7	10	Tyto	Barn Owls (Tyto Alba)	04.06.2019	12.07.2019	released	Rescued from a ceiling in Diepsloot
	11	Alba			released		
8	12	Zennifer	Spotted Eagle Owl (Bubo Africanus)	10.10.2019	25.11.2019	released	Fledgling handed to Jhb Wildlife Vet
9	13	Roadrunner	Spotted Eagle Owls (Bubo Africanus)	19.12.2019	31.01.2020	released	Rescued running in busy road
	14	Coyote			released	Handed to SPCA with injured leg	
10	15	Whiskey	Barn Owls (Tyto Alba)	13.08.2020	21.09.2020	released	Rescued from ceiling in Soweto
	16	Wine			released		
11	17	Chancer	Spotted Eagle Owls (Bubo Africanus)	18.12.2020	16.01.2021	escaped	Midrand, attacked by a dog twice
	18	Comet			escaped	Rescued from muti sellers, Walkerville	
	19	Dancer			escaped	Rescued from muti sellers, Walkerville	
12	20	Pfizer	Barn Owls (Tyto Alba)	12.07.2021	17.08.2021	released	Handed in to SPCA Germiston
	21	Johnson			released		
13	22	Elsa	Barn Owls (Tyto Alba)	22.06.2022	25.07.2022	released	Parents must have died; rescued by SPCA & Wildlife Vet treated as they were dehydrated and underfed.
	23	Anna			released		
	24	Olaf			released		
14	25	John	Spotted Eagle Owls (Bubo Africanus)	13.12.2022		released	Handed in to Onderstepoort
	26	Paul			released	Rescued and sent to Onderstepoort	
	27	George			released	Rescued and sent to Onderstepoort	
	28	Ringo			released	Handed in to SPCA (gummy eyes)	

## African Spotted Eagle Owl (Bubo Africanus)



This is the most common owl in Africa, the most common feature being the tufts of feathers which it erects as horns. They are not ears, as is commonly thought.

It is 43 - 50 cm tall with a wingspan of about one meter.

The plumage is varied but mostly grey; some have a reddish-brown tinge.

They roost during the day camouflaging against trees or rocks. At sunset, they fly out and find a perch to hunt.

The spotted eagle owl communicates by hooting. The male owl gives a double hoot: "hoo-hooooe". A female will answer with a triple hoot, "hoo-hoo-hooooe".

They find partners to breed around May to August. The female usually lays two eggs about 2 - 4 days apart, and rarely 3 or 4, and only one brood per year. The eggs hatch after 32 - 34 days. They don't build nests but find

suitable sites in trees, rocks or even on the ground. Chicks leave the nests at about 6 weeks old, and are able to fly at about 6 - 7 weeks of age.

The food they eat depends largely on habitat, but includes insects such as crickets, lizards, snakes, rats, small/baby mammals and other birds sometimes as large as they are.

## **Barn Owl (Tyto Alba)**



The Barn Owl is the most widely distributed species of owl in the world. It is most recognisable by its white heart-shaped face, dark eyes, and prominent beak.

It is about 32 - 40 cm tall and has a wingspan of about one meter.

The plumage is a light brownish colour, with noticeable “speckles” of dark brown or black.

Barn owls communicate with a piercing “shree” scream – quite ghostly and goose-bumpish on a dark, quiet night. They readily live in urban areas and nest in man-made structures.

They feed on insects, rats, frogs, lizards, and small mammals.

They breed usually in March to May. They do not build nests but lay eggs in any suitable depression. They brood usually once per year, but sometimes more. Their brood is more prolific than

other owls and depends on the scarcity or abundance of food available; usually about 3 - 5 eggs, but not unusual to have up to ten and even more. Eggs are laid in 2 – 3-day intervals and hatch after about 30 - 31 days.

Most youngsters die within the first year, if the food is short, and given the number of hatchlings. Youngsters can fly after about 7 - 8 weeks of age.

