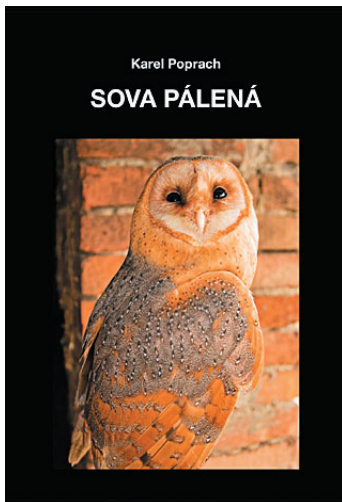


Book review

Poprach K 2008: Sova pálená [Barn Owl]. Tyto, Nenakonice, 400. [In Czech] ISBN 978-80-254-2144-4. Price not provided.



In the last decades, no other owl species in the Czech Republic has been given more attention than the Barn Owl. Hundreds of churches, barns and other suitable constructions were examined. Wire mesh were removed from church towers, hundreds of nest boxes were fixed, dangerous openings in farm buildings were closed and hundreds of juvenile and adult birds were ringed. All these great efforts were paid with the only aim to create favourable conditions for the conservation of this marvellous owl species. The whole effort was driven by the Moravian ornithologist Karel Poprach, who now presents a very narrative book about this species in Czech Republic to a broad audience. The book is structured into several chapters, which are organically linked and create a realistic picture of the Barn Owl in Czech and Moravian lands in the beginning of the third millennium. The opening describes the historical relationship between man and owls in general, then a short text is devoted to taxonomy, range and abundance of the Barn Owl. Relatively large part of the book is concerned with a detailed description of this owl species followed by information about its vocalizations. An important part of the work is concerned with breeding sites (detailed description of recorded breeding habitats), its altitudinal range and breeding biology. Then

follow the data on feeding, movements of Barn Owls (based on ringing data), occurrence of the Barn Owl in the Czech Republic (including past breeding sites). Part of the text is concerned with the breeding density with many case details. The following part of the book is mainly devoted to conservation, discussing the causes of decline, deaths and needs for conservation of the Barn Owl (including legislation regulations).

The book came to be published only thanks to it's author's immeasurable effort. The publishing of this book was supported by governmental and non-governmental non-profit organizations and various national and foreign funds. The book includes hundreds of high quality colour photographs, which makes me wonder why also some black and white photographs were used at all. Names of the photographers are abbreviated which makes the lookup of credits unnecessarily disturbing. Description of some features includes in fact too many photographs (e.g. pages 33–49 on the coloration of Barn Owls nesting in the Czech Republic). In my opinion the author of this work quite redundantly presents all data in the text body and discusses them with other works including foreign sources. This could have been made clearer by using simple tables including references. This makes the reader lose track about what was actually achieved in this ambitious project in the Czech Republic. Great credits can be given to the graphical presentation of this book including dozens of tables, graphs and maps. These representations facilitate the understanding of various aspects of life history of this fascinating owl species.

As a conclusion I would say that the author prepared this book with great attention to detail. In spite of this I cannot escape the feeling that less information often gives clearer picture. Reducing the number of photographs and using summary tables more often would allow reach the same goal in lower number of pages. However this is my personal view which may not be shared by the readers and users of this book. Nevertheless I am very positive about this book and the growing number of breeding pairs of the Barn Owl in the Czech Republic is probably the greatest prize that can be given to the author of this work and dozens of his committed collaborators throughout the Czech Republic.

Libor Schröpfer