



January – Tree Sparrow
Passer montanus



February – Black-bellied Dipper
Cinclus cinclus



March – Skylark
Alauda arvensis



April – Nightingale
Luscinia megarhynchos



May – Bee-eaters
Merops apiaster



June – Red Kite
Milvus milvus



July – Young Barn Owls
Tyto alba



August – Kingfisher
Alcedo atthis



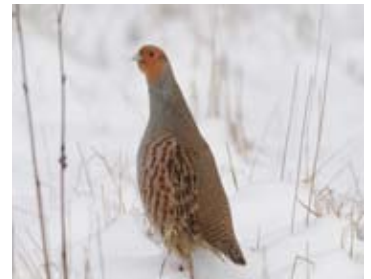
September – Barn Owl
Tyto alba



October – Water Rail
Rallus aquaticus



November – Waxwing
Bombycilla garrulus



December – Grey Partridge
Perdix perdix

Front Cover – Retiring Little Owls! *Athene noctua*

RICHARD BROOKS became a professional wildlife photographer in the early 1990's, and although best known for his association with Lesvos and especially his book *Birding on the Greek Island of Lesvos* (which first appeared in '98), he has now been photographing wildlife near his home in Fulmodeston, Norfolk since moving there full-time fourteen years ago. Apart from 60's and 70's music and sampling as many different beers as possible, birds of the feathered variety are his main passion – especially owls, and in particular the Barn Owl (which he photographs whenever possible from his 4x4 by using it for the purpose for which it was intended rather than for weekly trips to the supermarket!). Owls also figure prominently in the range of limited edition greetings cards, prints and framed pictures he produces; whilst his articles and images feature regularly in the bird watching press. He won the professional section of the *Wild Bird Photographer of the Year 2000* run by *Bird Watching* magazine, and has frequently been placed amongst the top ten entrants in the annual *British Birds* photo competition. From October 2004 he took the logical but painful step of embracing digital photography, and he now owns two Nikon D300's and has recently upgraded his trusty Nikon 500mm AFS lens to the new Image Stabilised (or VR) version for the cost of a small family car! Other than financial repercussions the main downside to all this is having to spend a number of hours a day downloading and editing images over the computer instead of being out in the field or indulging in his increasingly time-consuming and largely unpaid conservation work, which has now seen him virtually single-handedly site close on 600 Barn Owl boxes throughout North Norfolk. All are now regularly monitored under licence (yielding much useful information on the birds' breeding success and eventual dispersal) and currently provide a secure home for 100+ pairs – pride of place going to the birds which in 2008 finally tenanted the owl hole he had installed in the end of his cottage 16 years ago (a site they reluctantly shared with a family of Jackdaws and is now viewable on CCTV!). Apart from his annual spring trip to Lesvos he also enjoyed ten days of glorious weather in mid-Wales in late May - enabling him to finally improve on his Red Kite image (see left) on the September 07 Royal Mail stamp issue, which led to a short feature on About Anglia, an EDP article and an hour long stint on What's Rockin' Norfolk - Radio Norfolk's version of Desert Island Discs. He also spread his wings from Lesvos to check out the birding potential of the neighbouring island of Limnos in September (lured partly by the offer of free hospitality, flights and car!). The trip proved very worthwhile and is due to be combined with Lesvos next spring - with a possible article (or even a new book) in the offing. His return coincided with the hatching of a late brood of Barn Owls in his owl hole (which in spite of supplementary feeding sadly all died of starvation). This, the loss of his garden Tree Sparrows, a dramatically deteriorating right knee (the left was fixed in February!) and the publication of a rival Lesvos birding guide all marred an otherwise pleasant year.



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