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TITO ALBA PRATICOLA

By Merrill Wood

Can a hand-raised Barn Owl survive in the wild? A number of folks told me "No, raised without parental care, they would not survive for long." To fill a silo, a farmer had to remove five baby Barn Owls, and he gave them to me. The smallest one soon died, but to keep the other four alive for the next eight weeks required a tremendous effort to provide enough white mice from a University research laboratory and dead rabbits from the highways where they had been victims of auto traffic. The hand-raised Barn Owls grew, feathered and learned to fly by November 3, 1951, the date on which they were released in a hay-shed on the farmland of the Pennsylvania State University. One of these Barn Owls was picked up dead nearly five years later, on October 24, 1956 at Pine Grove Mills, Pa., about five miles from the place of release.
