



↓ **HIDE OUT**

Little Owls can spend a large amount of time, sitting around, not doing much

David Tomlinson

Kestrels and even Grey Partridges. Living alongside Little Owls is fascinating, for though I can watch them from my bedroom window, they are still mystery birds.

I often see them sitting round during the day, usually on fence posts, but I've never seen them hunting during daylight hours, even in the summer when the days are long.

My Leica Noctivid 10x42s are perfect for viewing them at dusk, as these binoculars have exceptional light-gathering ability, allowing me to carry on watching when in the past I would have given up. However, despite numerous observations, my owls give little away. Another puzzle is song. Now, Little Owls have a distinctive and far-carrying song, a low-pitched hoot with a sharp emphasis on the first syllable, and repeated with a five to 10 second interval. It's a song I've heard many times elsewhere, but I have never heard my birds, if I can call them that, make it.

 **WHERE TO WATCH?**

Little Owls can be seen in rural villages, quarries, parkland, smallholdings, on mixed lowland farmland and coastal flood plains. If you're lucky, you may see one in your garden! Juveniles can be spotted on their natal territory from June until late autumn. Their markings and colourings are similar to adults, but their feathers are softer, shorter and paler.

Little Owls are mostly found in England (central, southern and south-eastern areas) and Wales (borders), with a few in southern Scotland.

Why not? I'd love to know the reason. It may be that there are no other pairs within half a mile, so they don't feel the need for a proclamation of territory. The male and female will also call in duet in the spring, but I've never heard my pair do so. They do, however, make a lot of other noises. During warm summer nights, when the bedroom window is wide open, I often hear them chattering and rattling to each other.

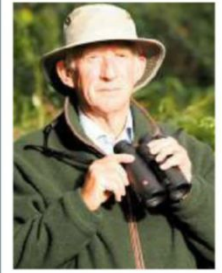
These calls are relatively quiet and subtle, and, if you didn't know it was the Little Owls, you might well be puzzled as to who or what was making the sounds.

On bright winter days when I'm working in the garden, I often hear a few calls, suggesting that something has woken up the slumbering owl, before they go quiet again. They are much less diurnal in the winter, so I see them less often.

At the end of December last year, I was delighted to spot a Snipe feeding in my field, so I set up my scope to watch it from my living room. As I watched, a Little Owl flew into view, perching above the Snipe on one of the posts I have erected especially for hunting owls.

It was a magical moment, but living with Little Owls is always a constant source of pleasure. 🦉

**DAVID'S KIT FOR OWL WATCHING**



Leica Noctivid  
10x42 binoculars  
**RRP:** £2,210  
**Web:** [uk.leica-camera.com/Sport-Optics/Leica-Birding](http://uk.leica-camera.com/Sport-Optics/Leica-Birding)

↓ **WELL INSULATED**

Well feathered from foot to beak, the Little Owl is very capable of coping with our winters



Calum Dickson/Alamy