

Randpark Ridge Village Association



Artificial Habitat Executive Summary

2026 OWL AND BAT BIODIVERSITY PROGRAMME

Overview

The Randpark Ridge Village Association (RRVA) continues to demonstrate how urban green spaces can be managed to support biodiversity while providing practical ecosystem services to the surrounding community. EcoSolutions completed the 2026 annual service of the RRVA Artificial Habitat Programme during July 2026, maintaining a network of **nine active artificial habitat structures** comprising one Bat Bank, two Rocket Bat Hotels, four Spotted Eagle Owl Boxes and two Barn Owl Boxes.

The strongest ecological result in 2026 came from the bat habitat network. **All three bat habitat installations showed current occupancy.** Both Rocket Bat Hotels were occupied by Cape Serotine Bats (*Laephotis capensis*), while **two of the three roost units within Bat Bank 1 were occupied.** The bat programme has now been maintained since 2020, and continued occupation following replacement of ageing structures in 2025 indicates that these sites have become established roosting resources within the local landscape.

The owl habitat network required greater structural intervention. **Two Spotted Eagle Owl Boxes were replaced**, including one that was missing and another with a damaged structural spine. One Barn Owl Box was replaced and relocated after African Honeybees occupied the previous site, while Barn Owl Box 1 was serviced and identified for replacement at the 2027 annual service. Spotted Eagle Owl Box 1 was again occupied by Egyptian Geese, following similar non-target use recorded in 2024.

These findings demonstrate the importance of **annual servicing, monitoring and adaptive management.** Artificial habitat is continuously exposed to weathering, structural deterioration and competition from other species. Regular servicing allows these issues to be identified before they result in the long-term loss of valuable nesting or roosting habitat.

2026 Programme Highlight

100% of RRVA's bat habitat installations showed occupancy in 2026, while targeted maintenance across the owl network ensured that suitable breeding habitat remains available for future seasons.

2026 Programme at a Glance

Programme Indicator	2026 Result
Total active habitat structures	9
Bat habitat installations	3
Bat installations showing occupancy	3 / 3
Rocket Bat Hotels occupied	2 / 2
Bat Bank occupancy	2 / 3 roost units
Spotted Eagle Owl Boxes	4
Spotted Eagle Owl Boxes replaced	2
Barn Owl Boxes	2
Barn Owl Boxes replaced / relocated	1
Barn Owl Boxes identified for 2027 replacement	1

A Long-Term Urban Biodiversity Programme

The RRVA programme has developed progressively since the first bat habitat structures were installed in August 2020. Spotted Eagle Owl habitat was introduced in 2021, followed by Barn Owl habitat in 2023. By 2025, several of the original structures had reached the stage where replacement was required, demonstrating that artificial habitat programmes require long-term maintenance rather than once-off installation.

The 2026 results show the benefits of this continued investment. Replacement of the ageing bat structures in 2025 was followed by strong occupancy in 2026, including confirmed Cape Serotine occupation in both Rocket Bat Hotels.



Figure 1 Development and long-term management of the RRVA Artificial Habitat Programme from 2020 to 2026.

Bat Habitat Success

Cape Serotine Bats (*Laephotis capensis*) were recorded in both Rocket Bat Hotels during the 2026 annual service. Bat Bank 1 also remained active, with two of its three individual roost units occupied.

This is particularly significant because the RRVA bat network has been maintained for approximately six years. Continued occupation across successive service years indicates that the artificial roosts are functioning as established habitat within the suburb rather than being used only opportunistically.

Insectivorous bats provide an additional ecosystem service by consuming nocturnal flying insects while foraging across gardens, greenbelts and open spaces. Maintaining secure daytime roosting habitat therefore supports both urban biodiversity and natural insect regulation.

Long-Term Habitat Value

Continued occupation after the replacement of ageing structures demonstrates that servicing protects established roost sites and allows the ecological value of the programme to persist over time..

Maintaining the Owl Network

The 2026 service illustrates why owl habitat requires regular inspection before future breeding seasons.

Two of the four Spotted Eagle Owl Boxes required replacement. Spotted Eagle Owl Box 2 was found missing, while the structural spine of Spotted Eagle Owl Box 3 had been damaged. Both were replaced. Importantly, Box 3 had recorded owl occupancy in 2023 and 2024, making the retention of suitable habitat at this site particularly valuable.

Barn Owl Box 2 also required intervention after African Honeybees occupied its previous location. A replacement box was installed at a new site, while Barn Owl Box 1 remained functional during the 2026 service but should be replaced during the next annual service.

Non-target occupants are a normal component of artificial habitat programmes. Egyptian Geese (*Alopochen aegyptiaca*) again occupied Spotted Eagle Owl Box 1, while African Honeybees (*Apis mellifera scutellata*) necessitated the relocation of Barn Owl Box 2.



Figure 2 Non-target occupants recorded within the RRVA owl habitat network. Competition for artificial nesting structures reinforces the importance of annual monitoring and adaptive habitat management.

Supporting Natural Pest Management

The RRVA programme provides ecological benefits beyond habitat provision alone.

Bats contribute to the natural regulation of flying insects, while Barn Owls and Spotted Eagle Owls prey on rodents and other small animals. Together, these predators can form part of a broader **Integrated Pest Management approach**, complementing good property management while reducing dependence on chemical pest-control methods.

This is particularly important for owl conservation. Rodenticides can expose owls to secondary poisoning when poisoned rodents are consumed by adults or fed to chicks. Maintaining owl habitat is therefore most effective when it is supported by responsible, poison-free approaches to rodent management.

Opportunities for an Integrated Approach

EcoSolutions can extend the existing biodiversity programme through complementary measures including:

Poison-free rodent management using humane automatic traps to control rats and mice without introducing rodenticides into the food chain.

Rodent exclusion to seal entry points and interrupt established movement routes around buildings and infrastructure.

Additional owl habitat and hunting perches in suitable greenbelt areas where natural rodent suppression could be strengthened.

Humane bat exclusions where bats enter homes or buildings in unsuitable locations, allowing conflict to be resolved while protecting indigenous bats and, where appropriate, providing alternative roosting habitat.

Together, these interventions allow pest management and biodiversity conservation to be approached as part of the same ecological system.

Recommendations

EcoSolutions recommends continuing **annual servicing of the complete RRVA artificial habitat network**, with particular attention to the following priorities:

- Replace Barn Owl Box 1 during the 2027 annual service.
- Monitor the newly relocated Barn Owl Box 2 for future occupation.
- Continue monitoring Egyptian Goose activity at Spotted Eagle Owl Box 1.
- Monitor Spotted Eagle Owl Box 3 following replacement, particularly given its previous owl occupancy.
- Maintain annual monitoring of the established bat network and consider strategic expansion into suitable greenbelt areas.
- Encourage poison-free rodent management throughout the community to protect resident owls and other predators.
- Install **educational signboards at selected bat and owl habitat sites** to explain the purpose of the structures, introduce residents to local species, highlight the ecological importance of bats and owls, explain secondary-poisoning risks and show residents how they can support the programme.

Educational signage would be particularly valuable within RRVA because the artificial habitat structures are visible community assets. Linking the physical structures to short, accessible environmental information can turn the habitat programme into an ongoing conservation-awareness initiative rather than something residents encounter without context.

Additional EcoSolutions Services

As part of our integrated ecological pest management approach, EcoSolutions can further assist the RRVA through the following services.

Bat Exclusions

Where bats establish within residential roof spaces or buildings in unsuitable locations, EcoSolutions provides humane bat exclusion services, together with appropriate sealing and, where suitable, alternative artificial roosting habitat. Exclusions are undertaken in accordance with applicable wildlife legislation and seasonal ecological considerations.

Integrated Rodent Management

Where bats establish within residential roof spaces or buildings in unsuitable locations, EcoSolutions provides humane bat exclusion services, together with appropriate sealing and, where suitable, alternative artificial roosting habitat. Exclusions are undertaken in accordance with applicable wildlife legislation and seasonal ecological considerations.

Communicating the Success

The RRVA programme provides a strong, measurable example of community-level urban conservation in action.

The Association already communicates the owl and bat programme through its environmental webpage, previous service reports and an interactive installation map. The 2026 results provide new material for community newsletters, social media, website updates, environmental awareness campaigns and educational signage.

A particularly strong communication message is the longevity of the programme: RRVA has progressed from the establishment of its first bat structures in 2020 to a maintained network of bat and owl habitat supported by annual ecological monitoring.

Suggested RRVA Website Update

Our Owl and Bat Programme Continues to Support Randpark Ridge

Randpark Ridge's artificial habitat programme continues to provide safe roosting and nesting opportunities for indigenous bats and owls throughout our green spaces.

During the 2026 annual service, all three bat habitat installations showed occupancy, with Cape Serotine Bats recorded in both Rocket Bat Hotels. Our owl boxes were also inspected, serviced and replaced where necessary to keep suitable habitat available for future breeding seasons.

Through ongoing monitoring and responsible maintenance, the RRVA is supporting local biodiversity while encouraging natural insect and rodent control within our neighbourhood.

Building on Success

The strong performance of the bat network provides an opportunity to explore **targeted expansion of artificial bat habitat** into additional suitable greenbelt locations.

Similarly, future owl habitat expansion should be guided by available nesting habitat, surrounding foraging areas, rodent activity and long-term monitoring rather than simply increasing the number of boxes.

The next phase of the programme could therefore combine:

Habitat provision + annual ecological monitoring + poison-free pest management + educational signage and resident engagement

This would strengthen the RRVA programme as a broader urban biodiversity and Integrated Pest Management initiative.

Conclusion

The 2026 service confirms that the RRVA Artificial Habitat Programme remains an established and valuable component of the suburb's biodiversity initiatives.

The strongest result was recorded within the bat network, where **all three installations showed occupancy**, including confirmed Cape Serotine use of both Rocket Bat Hotels. At the same time, replacement, relocation and servicing across the owl network ensured that damaged, missing or compromised habitat did not simply remain unavailable.

After six years of continued management, the programme demonstrates the value of treating artificial habitat as **long-term ecological infrastructure**.

Through continued servicing, responsible pest management, community education and strategic habitat expansion, RRVA can build on this foundation to support bats, owls and the wider urban ecosystem while delivering practical benefits to the Randpark Ridge community.