



RSPCA EAST WINCH WILDLIFE CENTRE

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ROUND UP OF OUR YEAR

The hard weather in January and February resulted in an increase in the total of ringed owls, particularly Barn owls recovered nationally. Many of these birds were found starving due to their rodent prey being more difficult to hunt during snowy conditions (BTO blog). The harsh weather unsurprisingly also led to a slight increase in the number of owls being admitted to the Centre. Most surprisingly perhaps is that this total included 3 Long-eared owls. This species is seen less than annually as a patient here, with just 2 birds in the past 5 years. Although the species does breed locally in our region, Long-eared owls are more typically observed during the winter months when birds arrive from Eastern Europe to escape the even colder weather there.



An adult mute swan from Wroxham was admitted in January as it had been caught up in fishing line. The line was wrapped around its tongue and wing with a hook anchoring the line to the neck. The line and hook were removed but there was a deep laceration to the underside of the tongue which needed treatment. An X-ray was taken to check for any fishing tackle that may have been swallowed but luckily this was clear. However, the X-ray did reveal that the swan had also been shot in the tail, which was a disturbing finding as shooting swans is illegal. With continued treatment for the tongue laceration the swan made a complete recovery and was successfully released.

In April an inspector made a shocking discovery when responding to a call in Spalding. In the two plastic barrels and Hessian sack he found 18 fox cubs. The cubs were alive but very

dehydrated and distressed as it was a very warm day. All the cubs responded well to treatment and made a full recovery after their traumatic experience. They were all released into sites with sympathetic landowners as many land-owners are not keen on foxes and we would never release without landowners permission.



Fox cubs inside plastic barrel



Two of the fox cubs recovering in an outside loose box

As the season progressed we became aware that there had been an increase in the number of ducklings being deliberately hurt in our area. We had a marked rise in the number of ducklings injured by young people – throwing stones, toys or stamping on them. We also had an increase in the number of reports of cars swerving to hit ducks while crossing the roads. Many orphaned ducklings reportedly came in as a result of mum and some of their siblings being run over deliberately.



We have admitted over 388 ducklings this year.

Orphan season was once again very busy with fledgling birds, leverets, rabbits etc. arriving daily. We have a dedicated “orphan room” filled with bird cages and staff are on hand to feed the baby birds as their parents would in the wild - sometimes as often as every 5 minutes. These have been admitted for a number of reasons – they have been ‘catted’, abandoned or their parents killed.



We admitted 1319 animals during July, August and September and released 740. At the height of the season in July we had 600 patients in our care.



The future for this hog would have been very bleak if it was not for the quick thinking of a member of public. They spotted it walking on the road with the tin can stuck over its head and its spines preventing it from removing it. The hedgehog was brought to the Centre where the tin can was immediately removed under general anaesthetic. After a short stay at the Centre the hedgehog was released.

Bird of Prey Flight Aviary

Funded by the Katherine Martin Trust this was officially opened in May by the Katherine Martin trustees. The aviary's first occupant was not a bird of prey but a heron. The aviary performed beyond our expectations as the bird was only able to make one weak length of the flight when we first put him in but as the days went by his fitness improved and he was flying strongly from end to end before he was released. Next to use the aviary were juvenile hand reared tawny owls, in the past we have felt they left the centre plump so they benefited from fitness training prior to release.



Framework up in March



Our magnificent new bird of prey flight aviary

Electricity supply to loose boxes

The Katherine Martin Trust have also funded running a power supply to all our loose boxes and sheds used to over winter hedgehogs and house foxes, badgers and deer. This is an enormous help as in the past we could only give additional heat to 2 loose boxes and had to choose which animals were the neediest but now we can give them all heat if required.



July saw the start of the common seal pupping season for us with two tiny emaciated and dehydrated pups in our isolation unit. Both needed three hourly oral rehydration solution feeds on arrival followed by fish soup feeds every three hours.

August was the height of our seal pup admissions with 23 pups in isolation. Many of the pups were very sick and needed careful intensive nursing. The majority of these had gingivitis and abscesses around their muzzles which needed gentle bathing as well as their three hourly feeds.

Mary Rose – first pup in July 2011

September was calmer as the pups were coming in less frequently and the older fitter ones had progressed to eating fish on their own.

The first pups were released on the 18th October and we have continued to release the common seal pups after they have been in the outside seal pools gaining fitness and reached their release weight of 35kg.



The first grey seal pup of the season arrived in November. This was flown to the local air field in East Winch from Wick in Scotland. If you would like to help us care for seals - for a minimum of £20 you can name a seal (see attached poster). To feed fish to a seal for one week costs £23.10

The Centre also contributes to wildlife research, undertaking various projects to prove how successfully released rehabilitated animals continue to survive in the wild and also contribute to other projects on wildlife welfare and conservation. 2011 saw the third and final year of collared dove tracking, with 6 juvenile hand-reared birds being released and tracked.

We are continuing our project to radio track hand-reared juvenile roe deer fawns post release. Two male roe fawns were released on the 24th October 2011, unfortunately one was found poached 6 days later. The other fawn is still being radio-tracked and has been out for 3 weeks now.

We have had some fascinating ring returns throughout the year which shows the value of ringing as a way of establishing survival after treatment.

Mute swan ring number U5600 – initially rung as a juvenile in 1994 and had been back into care 6 times, she had been hit by a boat, caught in a barbed wire fence, had fishing line embedded in her chin twice and had feet injuries. Sadly, she was found dead 16 years and 140 days after her first visit.

Mute swan ring number W10203 – has been sighted for the 4th time in Essex, 8 years and 106 days after release. The bird was ringed as a juvenile in 2002 and was released in Ipswich, Suffolk.

LBB gull ring number GN60097 - is our most encouraging gull recovery to date with 6 years 233 days out in the wild. The bird was reared then released in 2004 at Blackborough End tip, then popped over to Huelva, Spain for the winter in 2005, back to Blackborough in 2008 and was seen again in Huelva, Spain in January and March this year.



Kestrel BTO ring no. EL88269 was admitted as a very thin adult with a head injury was released after gaining weight and strength a month later in November 2007. The bird was found dead 4 years and 79 days after release.



Woodpigeon BTO ring FH17207 was admitted as a juvenile in 2007 with a back injury. The injury was treated and the bird released in East Winch. The pigeon did not go far and was found in East Winch 3 years and 238 days later.



Blackbird BTO ring number CW69004 was unfortunately killed by a cat in June. It was hand reared at the Centre in 2007 and was part of our radio tracking project to see if juveniles survived and integrated once released. The bird had done exceptionally well, having survived for 3 years 361 days.

The RSPCA only exists because of public donations so the staff at the Centre are always fund raising, usually in their own time

Every two years we open our doors to the public and this year's Open Day was a great success. Huge crowds enjoyed activities such as owl pellet dissection, following the hedgehog trail, seeing swans being weighed, seals being fed as well as talking to the staff. It was a great team effort and we raised the fantastic sum of £6,500.



Owl pellet dissection at the Open Day

The art and photography competitions were a huge success at our Open Day with 270 entries in our art competition. The 3 winning pictures of the art competition were framed and shown as part of the Wildlife in Art Exhibition held at King's Lynn Art Centre in September this year. Mr. Peter Borrman who puts on the Art Exhibition very kindly donates 10% of the proceeds to the Centre and we were delighted to receive a cheque for £179.60.

Staff and volunteers went tin rattling at Tesco during RSPCA week in May raising £214.19 and at Morrisons in October raising £171.93 as well as attending various local events e.g. Wild about Wensum and Wild about Norfolk. A 9 year old girl from East Winch had a yard sale for us in the summer and raised £144.08. We were also nominated to be Waitrose charity of the month and received a cheque for £590. So thank you if you were one of the shoppers who placed their chip in the container on the way out of the store.

Staff also undertake various sponsored events and one of our vet nurses, Zoe, is undertaking The Tough Guy Challenge in January 2012 and others are proposing to raise money by being sponsored for fire walking next year. If you would like to sponsor them please contact the Centre where I know they would be delighted to have your support.

We are always delighted if members of public or groups want to make a donation or fund raise for us as we always have a very long "wish list" of items that we need to help us care for wildlife.

On behalf of all the staff at East Winch Wildlife Centre, we would like to say a massive **"Thank You"** to everyone who has helped and supported us in 2011.

"Thank You" to all of the volunteers who have generously donated their precious time, to the hundreds of people who have given a donation and to those who have supported our events. Every single donation has been invaluable to us.

Hedgehogs are nocturnal animals and any hedgehog out during the day is in trouble. A hedgehog that appears to be bright and walking well is usually just on the edge of succumbing to illness and can die within days without proper diagnosis and treatment. To feed a hedgehog for one week costs £1.82. At present we have 150 hedgehogs in the Centre.

If you find a hedgehog or any animal that is sick, orphaned or injured please bring it to East Winch Wildlife Centre, Station Road, East Winch or contact the RSPCA 24 hour helpline 0300 1234 999.

Struggling to know what to buy a loved one or friend

Why not help us care for seals by naming a seal



Or

Sponsoring accommodation for hedgehogs in 'Hedgehog Mews'



See attached posters for details