

ADOPT | TIMES

Issue 2

Autumn 2024

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Arrived by Uber

How your support gave our little owls freedom



INTRODUCTION

Welcome to your second edition of Adopt Times!

As you receive this, the hustle and bustle of another cheeping, squeaking, often somewhat 'aromatic', yet always rewarding, orphan season begins to draw to a close. Over the last few months, WAF has been foster parent to: fox and badger cubs; owlets; hatchlings, fledglings and nestlings of every conceivable garden bird; ducklings... you name the species and we've cared for its offspring!

Now, as our juvenile foxes and our first group of young badgers, along with countless other success stories, begin to explore their new worlds out in the wild, we are making the final preparations to our hibernating hog accommodation suite. Remember, as the cold creeps in, if you spot a hedgehog out and about, looking to be below 600g, please do call us (or your local wildlife rescue) – our prickly friends need to be a good weight to survive the winter.

As always, thank you for your care and consideration of our beautiful wildlife.

Wishing you warm and well,

Lou Cowell
Managing Director



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INSIDE WAF

By Kayleigh Hawkins



Working with wildlife has always been a dream, even whilst still training to become a registered veterinary nurse. The workload is varied and no two days at WAF are ever the same. From the people that I see every time I walk in, to the animals that I treat, I never know what to expect.

A normal day, for me, usually involves working closely with the vets, assisting in the rechecking of patients under our care, and, also, the triage of new animals brought into the centre. I'm able to assess for any injuries or wounds, check the weight and hydration status of the patient, and monitor for any signs of disease or infection. I'm also able to X-ray, carry out blood tests, place IV catheters and carry out minor surgical procedures, such as suturing wounds, all under veterinary instruction. If needed, I am happy to jump in to help with daily medication rounds or animal husbandry duties, and I have also been known to take the odd photo for social media!

Sadly, a lot of the animals that come through the centre have suffered to such an extent, whether through human interactions, predator attacks or disease and infection, that the kindest thing to do is end their suffering, humanely. This has got to be the hardest part of the job for me, and it really can take its toll. I rely heavily on staff and volunteers, alike, to get me through those days. Occasionally, I am released from the treatment room and I do get to see the happier side of wildlife rehabilitation, like when some of these animals are released. And this is a really special moment for everybody involved. Those moments make everything worthwhile, knowing that without the centre, the staff, the volunteers, the rescuers and even the public, that the animal wouldn't have its second chance.



Fox News

Recovery of the year, so far!

We don't think we really have to tell you how easy it is for fox cubs to find themselves in trouble. For brother and sister, Mavis and Sully, it was one of the worst kinds of trouble. Suspected of ingesting a toxic substance, both were collapsed on arrival, and barely responsive.

With high temperatures and their blood failing to coagulate, our vet team started them on a Vitamin K medication to try and reverse the effects of the toxin, as well as providing IV fluids.

Whilst Sully bounced back in under 24 hours, Mavis kept us all on tenterhooks, as she showed serious neurological issues, including lack of co-ordination, constricted pupils, and an inability to swallow.

But our vet team was determined to give both of them the second chance they desperately deserved. After a week of treatment, fluids and support feeds with Oralade, Mavis finally turned a corner, and her neurological symptoms began to lessen. As the pair of them began to recover, they began to out-grow their pen, so, as they moved through the rehabilitation process, going from strength to strength, they were upgraded to a larger space, where they were also joined by five other orphaned cubs.



The group of seven had now become a tight-knit group, and three months after arriving, collapsed and unresponsive, the group was given its freedom into a safe 8-acre woodland.

Patients like Sully and Mavis are why we are here; we help them to fight for survival. But it is your donations that save them. The veterinary care, medications, food and housing would not be possible without you, so, thank you, from them and, as always, us!



Shot Three Times!



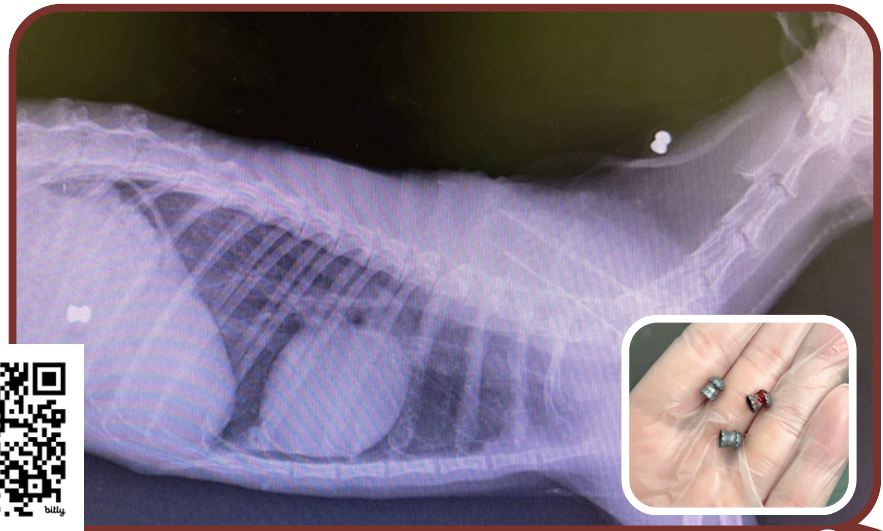
As if our beautiful red foxes don't have enough to contend with, this frail and fragile vixen had the added trauma of being shot, three times.

After this vixen was spotted, unsteady on her feet, in Chessington, a kind member of the public took the brave action of catching the fox, themselves. Incredibly, doing so successfully, the vixen was then transferred into our care, where amongst her poor condition, she was also found to have three pellets in her body.

That's three times she felt the searing pain of a pellet piercing her body. Hit in her head, neck and side, we cannot fathom what would possess anyone to want to hurt an animal that already has hunger, disease and competition to deal with.

Incredibly, this vixen was resilient, and vet and vet nurse, Judith and Kayleigh, were able to successfully remove all three bullets, safely. As she continued her recovery, the vixen was also treated for a low body condition score, as well as mange.

Whilst it may not be illegal to shoot a fox, it is illegal to cause undue suffering to any animal, and that is exactly what this fox had been put through since the pellets hit her. Thanks to your remarkable support, this vixen has been given a well-deserved second chance. Scan the QR code below to see her return to the wild.



Your adoption, so far, has helped....



443

foxes

Did you know?
Foxes can make over 40 different sounds, with a variation of barks, howls and screams.

Hedgehog Headlines



Ballooning Hedgehog

In our last edition of Adopt Times, we shared the story of the ballooning pigeon, a result of subcutaneous emphysema, where air seeps under the skin, but has nowhere to escape. The condition can be a result of trauma, injury and/or infection, and whilst it isn't a regular issue we see here, we have seen it several times.

Balloon syndrome is quite a well-documented condition in hedgehogs, and this young hog was in need of a little medical intervention, which saw him relieved of over 400ml of trapped air!

The poor hoglet weighed less than 150g, so the pressure from the air must have been excruciating for such an, otherwise, tiny frame. Given pain relief and antibiotics, he was closely monitored by our foster team, as, occasionally, the procedure to remove the air needs repeating, whilst injuries heal and infections clear.

This littlun is one of several young hedgehogs we will see over the next few months, and we need your help to give them all the best possible care.



Silver-spoon service!

We like to give our patients all the support they need to get them back to the wild, even if that means a silver spoon service. This young female arrived with a small wound to her back. Thankfully, the fly eggs on her hadn't yet hatched, but, worryingly, her breathing appeared to be causing her a lot of discomfort.



With an X-ray confirming pneumonia, the little hoglet has been receiving some extra TLC from our vet team, with support feeds and regular nebulisation to ease her breathing.

Happily, she is now sporting a very healthy appetite, and we are hopeful this little hog is on her way to her second chance.

Helpless hoglets left in a box

As if our foster team didn't have enough to contend with, these five hoglets, aka "Fleetwood Mac", arrived after they were found inside an enclosed box, filled with earth. With mum having no way of reaching her young, the three boys and two girls were lucky to have been found when they were.

These hoglets were less than 48 hours old, so our foster team had their work cut out for them. Like many animals we rear, at such a young age, with little time having been spent with mum to gain the vitally important colostrum and nutritionally-packed milk, their chances of survival fall, dramatically. But, in the, always, best hands of our foster team, we endeavour to try, knowing how incredibly important each of these hoglets is to its species.

We're unsure as to how the five ended up inside the box, but, please, always seek advice before disturbing or moving wild animals.



Lucky escape!

With so much wildlife searching for food, every day, wildlife will take an easy meal, whatever way it is presented. So, please, if you are going to use traps, ensure they are humane, and consider the impact on other unsuspecting animals.



We admitted this large male hedgehog that had found himself stuck inside a humane rat trap. The hedgehog was unable to back out of the trap, due to his size and his spines acting like hooks, but our vet team was able to cut him free; he was without injury and able to return home on the same day.

Your adoption, so far, has helped....

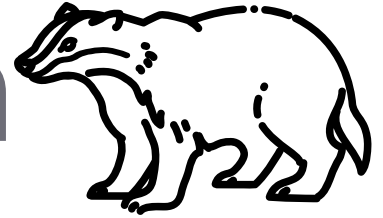
472
Hedgehogs



Did you know?

There are 17 different species of hedgehog, but the UK only has 1!

Badger Bulletin



Our smallest badger cub of the year!

...And cue the "aaaawwww". By the time tiny "Sandi" arrived with us, we had seen 7 badger cubs come through the centre, but Sandi was certainly the smallest.

Transferred over from Folly Wildlife Rescue, in Tunbridge Wells, weighing just 1kg, she was discovered in Sandhurst (Kent), hence the name, just yards away from her sett.

The finder had placed tiny Sandi into something warm, next to her sett, and monitored her via a trail camera, in the hopes that mum would appear and take Sandi back to safety. Sadly, however, no adults appeared, and Sandi was taken over to Folly Wildlife, where, lethargic and hungry, she was rehydrated and brought back to health.



With Folly already caring for an incredible 8 badger cubs, we were more than happy to help ease their load, but weighing just a third of our largest cub, King George, at the time, Sandi was still needing a little more support, where it came to eating and toileting, herself. After a few days of one-on-one care from our foster team, Sandi was brought back to the centre, and started her journey on the weaning process. However, despite Sandi's great appetite, she began losing weight and having some, well, tummy troubles. But with our expert veterinary team on hand, Sandi was quickly diagnosed with a bacterial infection and placed on suitable antibiotics, along with pro-biotics. A week later and Sandi had gained almost 300g, and was becoming quite the cheeky little badger cub!

Fast-forward four months, Sandi (weighing a hefty 9.5kg, might we add), alongside six other cubs, has been given her long-awaited freedom, back to the wild. This wouldn't have been possible without your continued support! Thank you, as always!



Where there's a will there's a "Willow!"

Simon's spirit was certainly with us when badger cub "Willow" was brought into our care. The young female was our very lucky number 13, after being rescued by the RSPCA. Willow was found with a stick firmly wedged inside her mouth, making it impossible for her to eat or drink.

With the majority of our cubs, at the time, weighing in at 7 to 8kg, Willow was a tiny 4kg on arrival, and so collapsed that our thermometers were unable to detect her temperature. As our vet team got started on warming her up, Willow proceeded to make things harder when she stopped breathing.

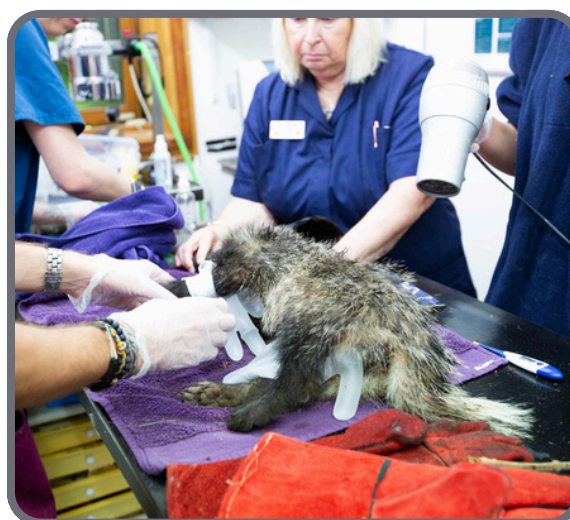
Vet nurse, Kayleigh, sprang into action to get Willow breathing again, whilst vet, Paddy, intubated her in order to assist her respiration. After 30 minutes of warming, fluids and stabilisation, Willow was placed into a warm pen, where it then became a waiting game to see if her body could recover.

At 8pm on the same day, whilst watching Willow via CCTV, Kayleigh finally saw her tiny body begin to respond.

Whilst not fully out of the woods, Willow made slow progress, but had some good badger attitude when it came to her check-ups!

8 days after needing CPR to save her life, Willow made an astounding recovery. Due to the length of time Willow had been with us, she was unable to be returned to her family sett, as the risk of them rejecting her was very high. Instead, she was introduced to are then, group of 12 humbugs, where she could continue her recovery, whilst enjoying the company of her new adopted siblings.

Willow, along with five other slightly smaller cubs, is now just a couple of weeks away from being moved to her soft-release site, which is currently under construction. Until then, you can watch Willow and the others bouncing around their pen, over on our live webcams, just scan the QR code.



Your adoption, so far, has helped....

44 Badgers

Did you know?
The name 'badger' comes from the French word 'bêcheur' which means 'digger'

Owl Tweets



Arrived by Uber!

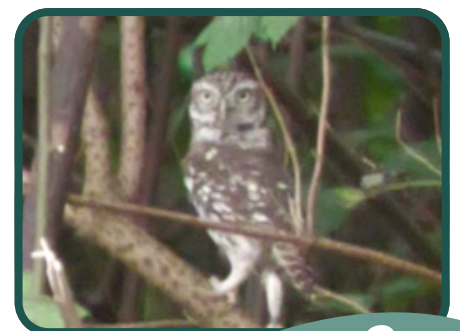
Is it just us that think a little owl's face needs its own emoji?

Having been on quite the journey after reportedly falling from a large tree, "Uber" originated from a National Trust site, he then proceeded to visit two vet practices and a pigeon rehabber before, finally, he was placed in an Uber and sent to us.

Unable to locate his nest, he was still a little too young to be wandering alone, so he was sent home with one of our fosterer carers, whilst he learnt to eat for himself. With some concern that he would be a lone owl for longer than we'd like, we began the search to find a friend for him. But the search didn't last long, as, just a few days later, another little owl arrived in care, under the same sad circumstances.

The pair were, soon after, joined by a third little owl, and the trio was given the necessary environment and enrichment to help them prepare for life in the wild, including some live creepy-crawlies, which helped the three owls hone their hunting skills, and get used to chasing what would become the main part of their wild diet.

As the three steadily grew, their soft-release pen was constructed in a 36-acre rural location with natural meadows and surrounding woodland, that they would soon call home. On August 30th, at dusk, the door of their soft release pen was opened, and it didn't take long for the owls to start their new journey, back in the wild.



Your adoption, so far, has helped....

39

Owls

Did you know?

A tawny owl is known for its call but this is two owls.

The female makes the "too-whit" part, while the male makes the "too-woo" part.



Our first owlets of the year



Returned to their nest quicker than you can say tawny owl, these adorable fluff-balls were our first, very lucky, owlets of the year.

The proactive landowners found the siblings at the base of an old beech tree, next to a sizable branch that had clearly been supporting the nest's structure. Regrettably, when the branch gave way, the nest opened up, causing the doddery owlets to tumble out.

The finders called us straight away for advice and, after a very brief visit to our hospital for a check-over, much to the owls' feisty annoyance, the pair were cleared to be returned to their nest.



With the invaluable help of Treeline Services Ltd & Arboricultural Association, the nest was quickly located, including the discovery of a third owlet. Using natural substrates, the open side of the nest was able to be blocked off, preventing a repeat fall, but allowing the parents to still return to their brood.

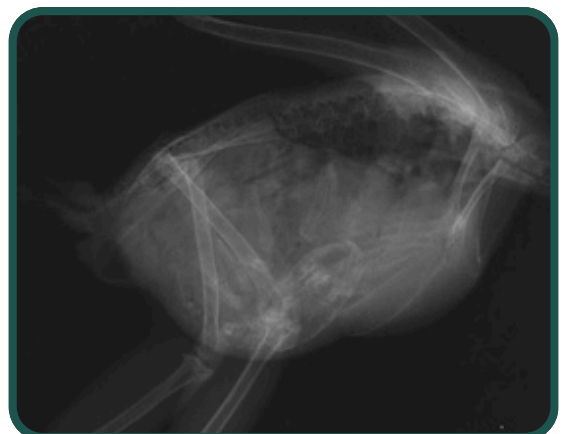
Over-indulged!

Well, we've all been there, just one too many roasties at a Sunday dinner and that's it, we're stationary for at least the next four hours.

With a birds' light-weight structure allowing them to effortlessly take to the skies, it's no surprise that the consumption of prey three times their size - in this case, a wild rabbit - rendered this barn owl flightless.

A kind gentleman who had, previously, seen this owl out hunting, during the week, knew something wasn't quite right when he came across the grounded bird, whilst out on an evening stroll. Despite his approach, still the owl didn't take flight.

Upon X-ray, the skeleton of a rabbit could be clearly seen and, with no other reason for the bird to be grounded, we're pretty sure, as we've seen in a range of other birds of prey, this bird has simply over-indulged and needed a few days to digest.



Deer Daily



Hay-net hazard!

It's true what they say, team work makes the dream work, and this entangled fallow deer was lucky enough to have the RSPCA, Wallington Animal Rescue and WAF come to his rescue, after he became entangled in a hay net used for the resident horses.

In just 4 minutes, the assembled rescuers were able to restrain, cut free, and release the large buck. Time really is of the essence in these incidents, with rescuers all too familiar with the dangers of capture myopathy.

The deer was observed after release, as it ran across fields, inspiring hope that it had been freed just in time.



Roadside Surgery!

Even slow-moving traffic can cause some pretty nasty injuries, as this poor adult roe deer found out.

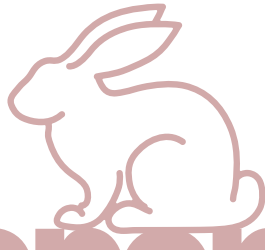
After a call from our friend Louis at the RSPCA, vet, Paddy, and manager, Douglas, rushed to Cobham. There, they found an injured male deer, suffering with wounds to his lower back.

Louis had rightly covered the deer's head, drastically reducing stress for the otherwise highly-strung species. Paddy set to work assessing the injuries. Thankfully, as the wounds were just superficial, he was able to clean them and apply Terramycin, a broad-spectrum antibiotic spray. One of the lower wounds required a few sutures, which Paddy was swiftly able to provide.

With the deer un-sedated for the entirety of his assessment and treatment, our concerns turned to his behaviour. However, after some sub-cut fluids to help with the shock that he was likely experiencing, Paddy, Doug and Louis lifted the deer over the fence to safety and, once the towel was removed from his head, we were over the moon to see his wild instincts kick in!



Rabbit Report



Our first orphan of the year

Sound the alarms, batten down the hatches, and get ready for an overload of cuteness! Our orphan season began on the 1st of March and it started us off with a challenge!

This tiny 39g rabbit kit, only a few days old, arrived after his nest was disturbed. Sadly, with no sign of mum or siblings, and the little one being pretty unresponsive, the finder swooped in, scooped up the hairless cutie, and whisked him off to one of our amazing home carers, who knew just what to do.

He went from strength to strength, and, on May 29th, he hopped back into the wild. You can enjoy a 30-second clip of the little bundle of cuteness practicing her digging, before she'd even opened her eyes, just scan the QR code, above!



Rescued from a bonfire!

"Bonnie" was found, alongside her sibling, underneath a bonfire (now you get the name, right?), by one of our very own volunteers. Knowing to check bonfires before lighting them, our volunteer saw the two bunnies, with Bonnie's sibling not looking in the best condition.

Quickly brought over to us, Bonnie's sibling had, sadly, not survived the journey. But, we held out hope for Bonnie. After giving her a health check, our vet, Morgan, placed her into an already warmed-up incubator, allowing her to warm up before he could give her fluids.

After a couple of hours, Bonnie was like a different bunny, and was actually giving Morgan the run around, even with her eyes still closed!

Transferred to one of our fosterers for one-on-one care, she made a full recovery from her ordeal, and was released into a safe location with an existing population of rabbits.



Pigeon Post



We're never sure how to express cases like this poor pigeon's.

This poor pigeon was the victim of horrific cruelty. According to eyewitness reports, he was captured by a group of children before they cut off the feathers on both wings with a pair of scissors. If this wasn't bad enough, they then repeatedly threw him into the air to 'see if he could fly'.

It was only thanks to the intervention of a member of the public that he was rescued. Arriving with a head injury and massive feather loss, stabilising him took time, but if he was going to get his freedom soon, we had to surgically intervene.

If you've followed our work for a while, you may have heard of a procedure known as 'imping', a process whereby 'donor' feathers are implanted into the existing feather shafts. Although the damaged feathers would eventually moult naturally, this process can take a long time; imping avoids the stress of extended captivity.

Using colour-matched feathers from a donor bird (one that had, sadly, already passed away), our vet team set to work on the imping procedure. Each feather was carefully measured and cut to size before being glued into the existing feather shaft, using an internal wooden dowel.

With care being taken to preserve the shape of the wing (vital for flight) both wings were looking as good as new in no time, and after giving the pigeon some time to adjust, he was successfully able to return to his waiting flock.



Shot with a catapult

Creating behavioural change, where it comes to how our wildlife is treated, is one of our biggest challenges here at WAF, but it is a challenge we will continue to take on, to save as many animals as possible from unnecessary suffering.

This feral pigeon was shot with a catapult ball-bearing, which became imbedded into the bird's abdomen, on top of this, he had suffered a fracture to his wing, and was caught after becoming entangled in netting. What an horrific ordeal this bird had gone through, and all completely unnecessarily.

We will never understand what possesses someone to cause such cruelty. But, we need your help to change such behaviour, to teach the next generation how important our wildlife is and the incredible benefits it brings to our world. Without our wildlife, we simply wouldn't be here.



It's raining pigeons

As the saying goes, when it rains, it pours, and, currently, it's pouring pigeons. Unlike many of our garden birds and bird of prey species, pigeons can, and do, breed all year round, but there are definitely peaks around spring and autumn. These 7 youngsters, just a week or so away from fledging, were saved from pest controllers by a kind member of the public.

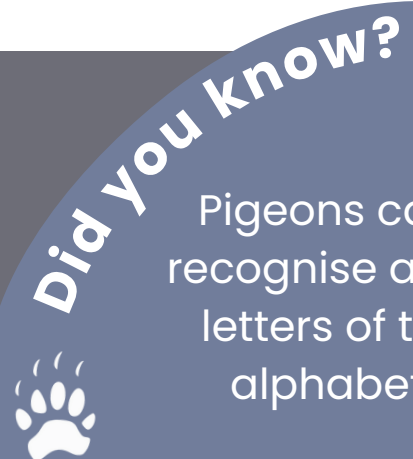


With the parents able to flee, the remaining 7 squeakers were given the chance to finish their growing, and be released into a safe, pigeon-friendly location, amongst an existing flock.

As a social and adaptable species, pigeons often do very well, once released, owing to their remarkable ability to learn new things, quickly.

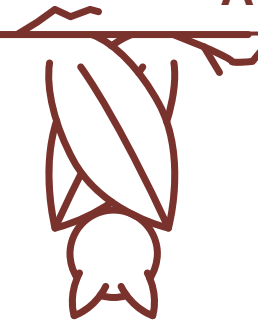
Your adoption, so far, has helped...

1121
Pigeons



Pigeons can recognise all 26 letters of the alphabet!

Bat Broadcast



Cat-attacked bat



It's almost as if Halloween is around the corner, because the bat casualties just keep on coming!

After admitting 45 individuals of the bat family, this grumpy adult Pipistrelle arrived having been apprehended by a certain popular pet species.

As you can see, unfortunately, he did not escape unscathed, with multiple tears to his right wing membrane. Thankfully, bats are super cool!

Whilst their flight membranes are essential to their survival, one issue bat species have is the regular damage that can be done to the incredibly thin wing tissue, but, just as their echolocation ability is one amazing super-power, their ability to heal incredibly fast is another!



Sent to receive one-on-one care as he heals up, we're hoping this little one will steer clear of any feline neighbours, in the future.

Have you ever seen a baby bat?

This tiny little youngster (seriously, he was only 2cm long!) is a juvenile pipistrelle, and he needed a little help after being found alone on a pathway. At this age, young bats should still be clinging to their mother, so he was definitely not having a good day!

Arriving cold and quite dehydrated, he was gently warmed (a vital step before rehydration or feeding) and given Oralade oral rehydration solution.

Once a little more stable this tiny youngster was transferred into the capable hands of Steve, from Surrey Bat Rescue, giving him the best possible chance of returning to the wild!



Your adoption, so far, has helped...

45
Bats



During echolocation a bat can contract its larynx 200 times a second

Adoption Impact

At Wildlife Aid, we play host to nearly 200 British wildlife species, and your support plays a part in rescuing and rehabilitating them all. Let's dive into the wild world of some other quirky critters we get to help.



With this special species, rarely arriving at this age, it's understandable that their identity wasn't immediately known by some of the team. However, with a couple of eagle-eyed twitchers in our arsenal, they were quickly identified as swifts. Just days old, sadly, their nest was disturbed the previous day, by a roofer, and the siblings were left without a returning parent. The red-listed, always hand-fed, must-grow-with-absolute-perfection, with-not-a-feather-out-of-place swifts, were going to take some serious dedication, so we were over the moon when swift expert, Kasia, was able to take them on. 44 days later, Kasia successfully released the siblings in flawless condition.

This little one looked like he'd gone 10 rounds with Tyson (the original), suffering a wound to his side and bruising across his abdomen and the entirety of his back. But, clearly, he's the Rocky of robins, because he's back up and ready to fight on!

Literally, this helpless nestling survived a predator that is 1000 times his size (please, don't quote us on that maths); is there anything more inspirational than the strength of our beloved wildlife?!



We get it, not everyone would call a rat "cute," but this little guy was an absolute sweetheart, last week! Caught by a pesky neighbourhood predator, he was looking pretty unsteady - wobbly, dehydrated, and underweight. Seemingly still in a state of shock, as rats aren't usually the easiest patients, this little pup was oddly obliging, allowing our vet to give him a thorough check-over. To help with his hydration and shock, Meriem gave him a special cocktail of fluids, vitamins and minerals, and just a few days later he was bright, alert and ready for freedom!

This peregrine's reason for admission was due to being attacked by another peregrine - whether this was his parent or a rival bird, we're unsure. Either way, the newly-fledged youngster didn't quite get the start to life in the sky that he expected. Suffering with a wound to his left wing and showing some less than cooperative behaviour when it came to eating, the falcon was with us for a little longer than we'd have wanted, and with neither parent still on his nest, the bird was in vital need of being taught how to hunt. So, he was transferred to an experienced falconer, who will give him the best chance of returning to the skies.





Thank you so much for your continued support.
If you've enjoyed reading our patients' stories,
scan the QR code for more.



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