

ADOPT | TIMES

Issue 3

Spring 2025

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Growing up together

How your support gives our orphans a second chance

INTRODUCTION

Welcome to your third edition of Adopt Times!

As the daffodils and the crocuses hold their colourful little faces up to the sun, I don't imagine I'm alone in feeling a sense of relief that the worst of the cold weather is behind us for another few months. Some of my friends are lucky enough to have fox families in their gardens. Year after year, the first sighting of mum and cubs is met with much excitement (especially by me, upon receiving the various WhatsApp videos!). In an ever-complicated world, the simple joy that these brand new little furballs exhibit, as they explore and play, is a pure delight to behold. Enjoy them.

Be mindful, too, that this big blue-green marble, spinning around the sun, is a space for us all to share. If you can, support these young families as they grow, in a world that presents them with more and more challenges to navigate.

Here at WAF, we will be taking in hundreds of orphaned wild creatures, over the coming months, that have been displaced, injured or become, in some way or another, the victims of human impact – whether intentionally or unintentionally.

So, roll up those football nets after use, pick up your litter, fill your garden with pollinator-pleasing plants, scatter some wildflower seeds, create a log pile... there're so many ways we can collaborate with a natural world that already gifts us so much.

Warmly wishing you really well,

Lou Cowell
Managing director



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INSIDE WAF

by Jacqui Adams

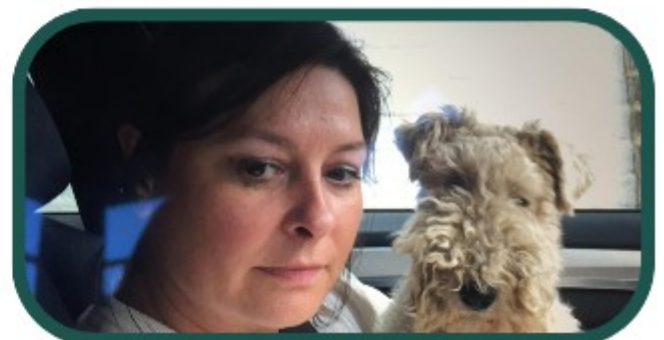
I joined the team back in 2012 as a volunteer receptionist, after spending 22 years in a corporate customer-facing role. I was looking for a change of scenery and, with a deep appreciation for the benefits nature and wildlife provide, I was delighted to find the Wildlife Aid Foundation, a hospital that takes in injured animals with a rescue, rehabilitation and release ethos. I jumped at the chance to be actively involved.

My knowledge of wildlife was limited, but I soon became immersed in the animals that came into our care and my passion grew, along with a desire to learn more... I continue to do so, thirteen years later.

Now as a permanent member of the office team, so much of my work involves working with people, whether that's taking donations from the general public, organising the volunteer rota, helping our work experience students during orphan season, advising callers on our helpline, admitting injured animals or organising rescues. I work closely with Alice, our office manager, and our ever-growing reception team who politely put up with my singing!

Seeing animals in distress can be challenging, but with the generosity of our supporters, who donate, and our volunteers, who willingly give their time, working in the hospital, educating, running stalls and raising money, we can and do make a difference.

Being part of the WAF family is very rewarding, there is nothing like seeing a release, a bird flying back into the sky, a fox running off into the night, and although it's a cliché, it really is a wonderful journey and I'm so glad to be part of it.

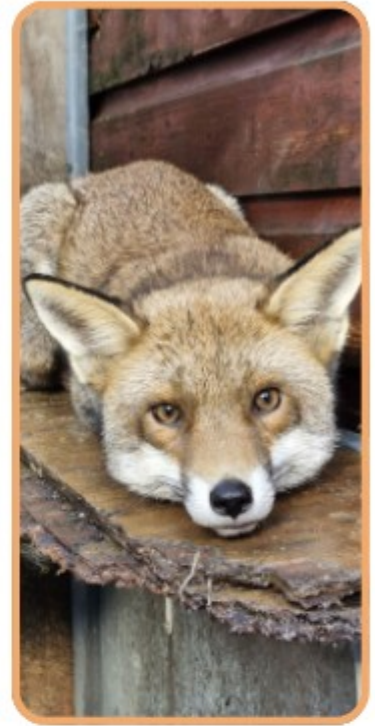


Fox News

Fox on the Road

Erm.... excuse me, sir, you seem to have an invalid license, no insurance, and a lack of opposable thumbs.

On a serious note, this adult male was seen clipped by a car, but then scooped up and brought to us. Whilst very brave, we, for obvious reasons, wouldn't advise placing an un-secured wild animal into a car, because despite the fox being collapsed for the journey to us, once they had arrived at the centre, the fox had come-to, and decided he would take a tour of his chariot.



Thankfully, with our rescuers on site, he was able to be secured and transferred over to our treatment room, where he had gotten away pretty unscathed, bar a wound to his chin. He was kept in for some r&r to ensure he had no residual effects from his collision. During his stay, he could frequently be seen up on his outside shelf, watching all the goings-on.

After just five days in care, this handsome guy was able to be returned to his home turf.

Caught in a Gate

Scan me



Honestly, these poor guys must just have an in-built trait for getting stuck!

"Gatetrude" was, quite literally, trapped by her own leg. We assume she'd mis-judged the gate when trying to go over it, something she's probably done many times before. But, thankfully, rescuer, Mike, arrived to save the day. With signs that Gatetrude had been struggling for a while and the pre-programmed "escape danger at any cost" mindset that wild animals possess, we were expecting some major damage to have been done.

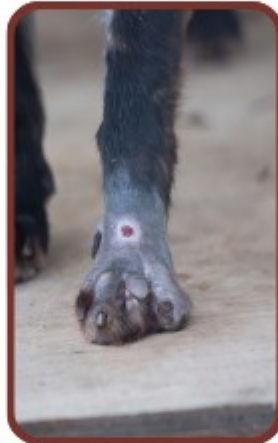
However, some swelling, bruising and temporary inability to use her leg, found Gatetrude to be one lucky fox! She remained with us until her leg returned to full function. Once she began demonstrating she was able to successfully jump, climb and avoid us at all costs, it was only fitting that her rescuer, Mike was given the honours of returning her to her home territory. Watch Gatetrude's rescue, assessment, and release by scanning the QR code, above.



A Christmas Gift

This fox was relegated to the naughty list, over Christmas, after making it near enough impossible for our vet team to check how his foot was healing! Arriving with a severe foot injury that included a broken toe, exposing the bone, we think we'd be pretty grumpy, too, though.

After surgery to repair the damage, "Krampus" as he was appropriately nicknamed, decided to inappropriately share his disdain for being in care, even snapping at our volunteers during the morning clean-outs. Who can blame him, though, he was in a strange place, with strange smells, and a poorly foot, when, really, all he wanted was to be out chasing the ladies.

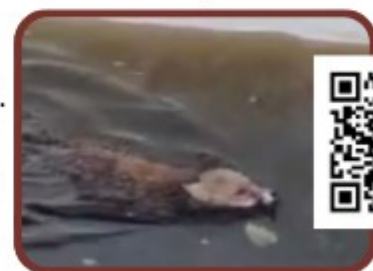


Lucky for Krampus, after three weeks in care, his foot was all but completely healed, and the feisty boy was ready to get back to whispering sweet nothings into his lady-friends' ears, and our vet team was able to breathe a little easier, knowing all their limbs were safe and sound!

Ice-swimmer

This vixen, nicknamed "Cath" (Google Cath Pendleton, for the reference), somehow, against all odds, survived over an hour in a partially filled swimming pool. Having fallen in, Cath was incredibly lucky to have been spotted by the homeowner, and was even luckier to have our friend Neil from Wallington Animal Rescue, come to her aid. With ice and snow surrounding the pool, Cath began swimming from one side to the other, clearly in desperate want of help, until giving up and hunkering at one end, allowing Neil to grasp her and pull her to safety.

Our vet team continued warming Cath's shivering body. With only a minor wound to her groin, requiring just a couple of sutures, Cath had survived the odds and was left to rest and continue her recovery in peace.



Scan me

Since Jan 2024, Your adoption has helped....



719
foxes

5



Did you know?

With amazing hearing, a fox can hear a watch ticking 40 yards away!

Hedgehog Headlines

Hypothermic Hedgehog

The frequency of hypothermic patients arriving, over winter, really put our vet team to the test!

In one weekend we admitted several foxes, all with dangerously low temperatures... that was just the foxes.

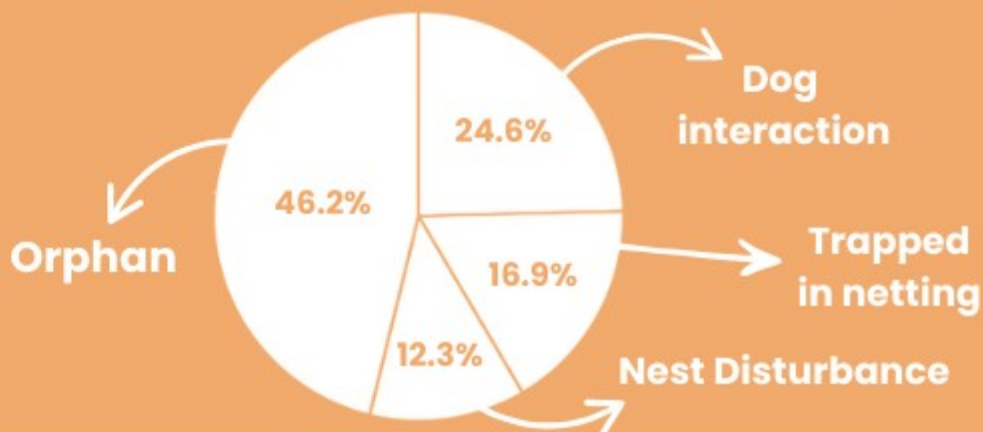
This adult hedgehog was another victim of the cold. Described by his finder as "walking like he was drunk", it was only when our vet nurse, Carina, took his temperature that we discovered why he was so disoriented. With his body temp failing to register and no obvious injuries, the priority, as with many of our patients at that time of year, was to get him warmed up and his body functioning properly, again.

We suspect the hog had come out of hibernation, but struggled to find food, however we couldn't rule out that he'd struggled to find a nest site.

So much of our green space is being lost to development that finding safe and warm homes is becoming increasingly difficult for our precious wildlife.



2024 Hedgehog Reasons for Admission



Tiny-Toes

We're just going to give you a second to recover from this scumdidlyumptious image we have provided you with! And, now, we will tell you all about this little guy's story. Weighing a tiny 136g, he was our first autumn hoglet to arrive with the dreaded ringworm; which is a fungal infection that causes red, itchy and flaky skin, that left this poor guy open to secondary infections.

Thankfully, with a swift diagnosis, the hoglet was quickly started on his anti-fungal baths, much to his dismay, but they would stand him in much better stead for a successful recovery. Being way too small to be out on his own, he stayed with us until he was big and strong, and able to survive in the wild, independently.



Hunk of a Hedgehog

We've seen some chunky hedgehogs in our time, but this guy was enormous!

Understandably, we all questioned why this otherwise healthy hedgehog was with us, but, given he'd been found out and about during the day, the finder rightly brought him to us for a check-up. Weighing an impressive 1.3kg on arrival, the adult hog was able to curl up perfectly, so his weight wasn't an issue, and further investigations found nothing of concern.



To be on the safe side, we kept him in to monitor his behaviour, but with all signs positive, this hulk of a hedgehog was given the all-clear to return home.

It's always best to seek advice if you find any wild animal acting a little abnormally.

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

855
Hedgehogs



Did you know?

Hedgehogs are good runners, proficient climbers and can even swim.

Badger Bulletin



A Journey from Orphans to Independence

These six badgers came to Wildlife Aid, one by one, with the first arriving on the 24th May 2024, to the last on the 9th July 2024. All of them were found alone and in need of care. Without the opportunity to grow up naturally, they would miss out on critical social skills, essential for survival in the wild. So, to help them learn these skills, the cubs were raised together, as an artificial clan, allowing them to socialise and play, just as they would have been doing with their real families.

As the orphans that remain in our care the longest, it wasn't until October that these, by then 12kg+ cubs were able to be moved to their soft-release site, an 8-acre ancient woodland, a giant playground for them.

For those unfamiliar with the term, "soft release" refers to a gentle re-introduction to life in the wild. For badgers, it's a little different. In order for the cubs to seamlessly re-integrate to a wild life, they need a sett to call home. So, alongside their 'artificial' siblings, they are also built an artificial sett. The sett, built by willing and always amazing volunteers, consists of several chambers and tunnels, exactly what a natural sett would include.

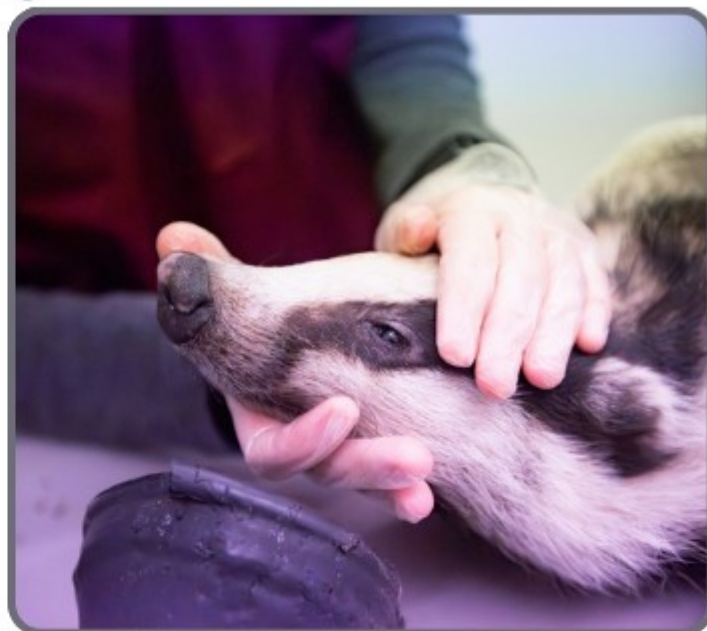
The cubs are transferred to the artificial sett on their release site, where they remain in and around the sett for 2 to 4 weeks whilst they acclimatise to their new home. After this time, the external fencing is removed and the cubs begin their new start, in the wild.



It's not all Happy Endings

The biting cold certainly took its toll on several of our patients, over winter, including this female badger, who, despite our vet team's best efforts, was unable to be saved.

When the call came in for this poor girl, found shivering in a field, and we learned that a member of the public was able to lay blankets on her, our concerns dramatically increased. Even in their worst state, a wild animal can usually still put up some degree of fight, but she had nothing left to give.



With no injuries or obvious reason for her terrible state, the mountain of fleas leaving her body, on arrival, was the only issue vet, Judith, could find. X-rays were clear, her body condition and age weren't of concern, and even her dehydration was minimal.

But sadly, her body just wasn't strong enough to fight back, and she passed away peacefully. We want to say a big thank you to Warwick and Julie of the East Surrey Badger Group for rescuing and getting her to us so quickly, and whilst it wasn't the outcome we wanted, she knew care and warmth before she passed.



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

56

Badgers

Did you know?
A badger clan can consist of up to 23 individuals!



Owl Tweets



Giving The Gift of Flight

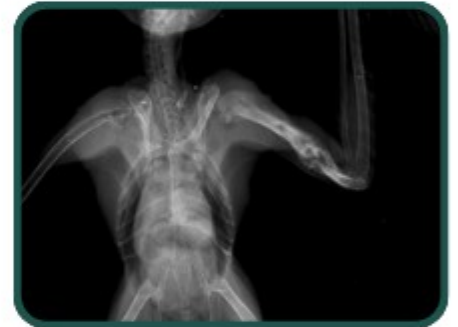
Giving the ability of flight back to an injured bird is a pretty big deal, so, when 'Dasher' arrived in our care, just before Christmas, we knew we had to pull off a Christmas miracle.

With a fracture to his humerus (for those of you who didn't pay attention in biology class, that's the bone between your elbow and shoulder), he was in need of surgery, but, luckily for him, we don't just have an ace vet duo, full time, we also have the dedication of several volunteer vets, who come with an array of backgrounds, expertise and, of course, passion for wildlife.

So, after we were sure he was strong enough, vets, Judith and Dan, set to work in placing several surgical pins, to realign the bones and keep the structure in place. The external fixator to hold the humerus bone together had to remain in place for 4 weeks, allowing a callous to form.

A month on, with a strong callus formed around the fracture, Dasher had the external fixator removed. After another week of rest, Dasher began the tough job of rebuilding strength in the wing and the surrounding muscles.

When we were sure he was ready, Dasher was moved into one of our aviaries, where he continued to rebuild his strength, and finally gave us the gift of seeing him fly, again!



Since January 2024,
your adoption has helped

48
Owls

Did you know?

Owl eyesight is actually very poor. Most owls hunt with relying on sound for 100%.



Another victim of barbed wire

Last year saw us admit several owls that had become victims of barbed wire.

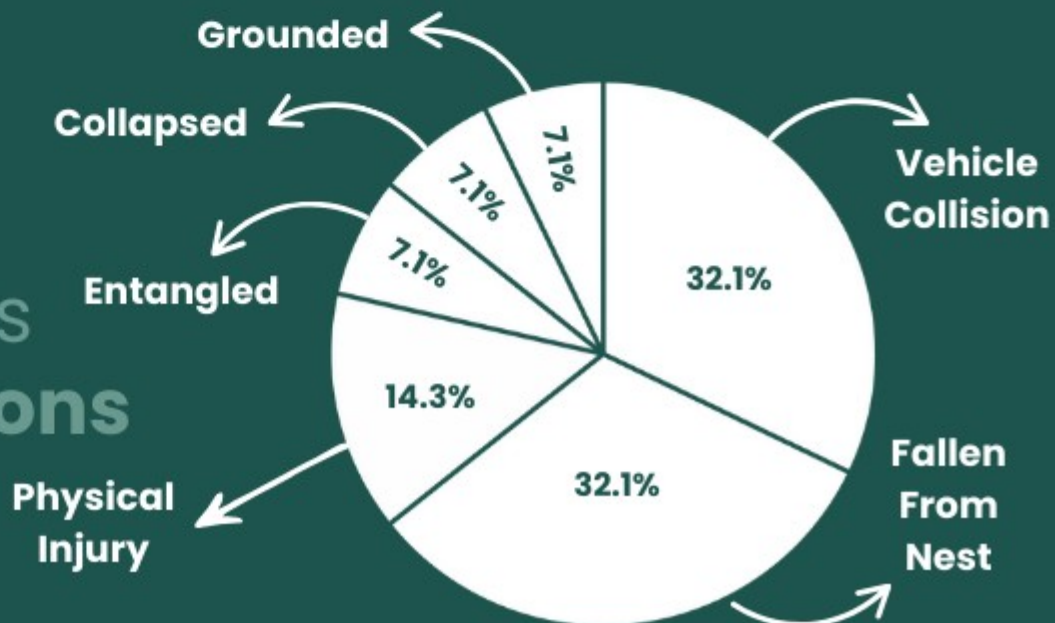
The extensive damage that this type of fencing causes is often irreparable and for this tawny owl the outcome was no different. Having had to be cut away from the wire fence with a portion of the metal still embedded in her wing, we cannot fathom the excruciating pain she must have been in. Once she arrived at our hospital, she was immediately sedated, the wire was removed and the damage assessed. With the muscle, tendons and ligaments shredded by the unforgiving fencing, our vet team had no choice but to end her suffering.

PLEASE, remove barbed wire and use one of several alternative, wildlife-friendly methods, instead, such as:

- **Adjustable top strands - allows larger animals, such as deer, to pass through or over the fence without harm**
- **Living fences - incorporates plants, trees and shrubs to create natural barriers that also provide shelter and habitat**
- **Smooth, visible materials - reduce the risk of entangled animals**



2024 Owl Reasons for Admissions



Deer Daily



Learn more



Protecting Wildlife from Pets

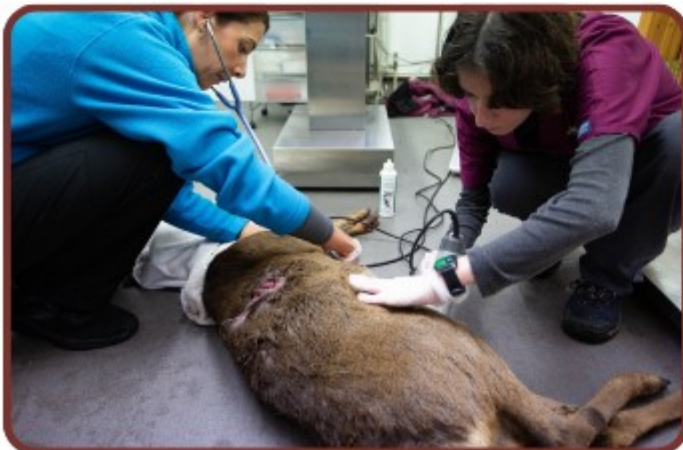
Wildlife rehabilitation is an undeniably rewarding field of work, but it's not without its heartbreaks and ethical challenges. Recently, our vet team had to deal with one of the most traumatic cases that even Lou, our managing director and daughter of Simon, had seen in her 40 years of growing up with the charity.



This adult female roe deer was brought to us after she had been attacked by a dog. She was unable to stand, had wounds to her neck and side, and was bleeding from her orifices. She had little to no reaction and was clearly in a state of shock. Upon initial assessment, vet, Judith noticed the size of the doe's abdomen, suspecting she could be pregnant. Roe deer mate in late summer but have four months of no embryonic growth followed by five months of foetal growth, with fawns usually born in May or June.

With sedation provided for the doe, the injuries and likelihood of survival for her was low, but, whilst sedated, the vet team took the opportunity to carry out an ultrasound, which, indeed, confirmed she was pregnant with two fawns. The ethical and emotional dilemma emerged: could the two fawns be given a chance? After further investigation, the answer became clear—the underdeveloped fawns would never have survived without their mother. Whilst under sedation, the doe's heart rate began to murmur and her breathing became efforted, leading the vet team to make the heart-breaking decision to euthanise her and, in turn, her two unborn fawns.

On this day, we lost three lives, two that never got the opportunity to experience their rightly-deserved life of freedom. THIS. IS. AVOIDABLE. We are now in the season where it isn't just lost or injured orphans, it's the mothers-to-be, the fathers those mothers rely on, and the unborn generations that may never get the chance to contribute to the UK's ever-dwindling wildlife numbers. Every life matters.



Rabbit Report



First rabbit of the year

Found sheltering at the side of a car, we weren't sure whether this terrified bunny was the victim of an RTA or a predator attack.

With blood coming from his mouth and nose, and bruising around his neck, his finder kindly took him to Vets Now in Guildford, where he was stabilised and kept safe, before being transferred to us.

Able to move around well, our priority has been to provide pain relief and a stress-free environment, because shock really can have a fatal effect on rabbits. In the dedicated hands of our long-standing home-carer, Angela, we are keeping our fingers crossed that our first bunny of the year will get his second chance at life.

Predator attack victim

With a swollen face, this wild rabbit was the victim of a predator attack. Sadly, for rabbits, other than a bit of a kick and their ability to freeze, they don't have much in terms of defence, if they are caught.

Although he's started looking a little brighter, with the initial swelling to his face reduced, he is showing no interest in eating, which poses a whole other problem. Due to their unique digestive systems, rabbits need a constant supply of food passing through their digestive tract to help keep their digestive system working properly.

And this is where we have to combat the issue of stressful handling with the need for the patient to eat! Thankfully, in home-carer Angela's kind hands, with regular input from our vet team, he is receiving oral feeds, which he is, well, tolerating.



Pigeon Post



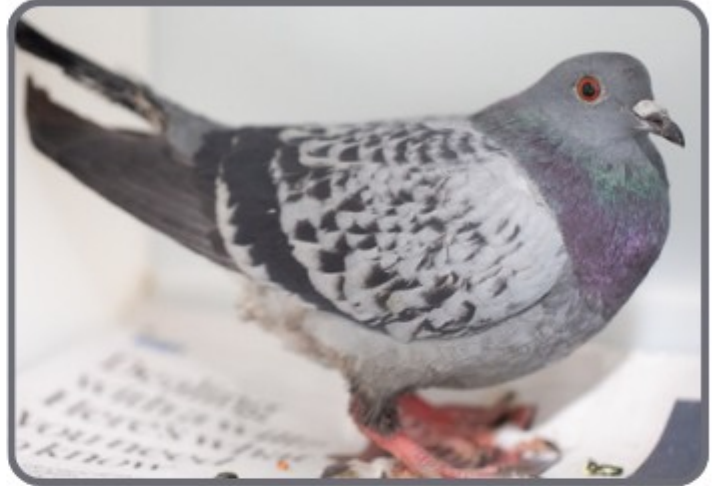
Toasty Pigeon

Sometimes our patients will go to great lengths for a bit of warmth, but who can blame them in the winter months?

We think this feral pigeon may have taken things a smidge too far, though. "Phoenix" (can you see where this is going, already?) found herself at the bottom of a chimney, where, you guessed it, the homeowner had recently had a lit fire. We mean, it's the right time of year, it's where a fire should be, and who can afford to turn their central heating on these days, anyway?!

But, unfortunately for Phoenix, despite her biblical rise from the ashes, she sustained some pretty damaged feathers and mild burns to both her legs. Initially the vet team were going to consider giving Phoenix the gift of new feathers, also known as 'imping'. But, once she was flight tested to see what her abilities might be, our rehab team were pleased to discover she managed to still maintain flight well.

We're happy to report that after several debridements of the burns to her legs and, sadly, a toe removed due to complications from the burns, Phoenix was finally given the all-clear for release. She returned home to her flock. We hope, with the weather a little warmer, she'll avoid chimneys for a while!



Meet Mich & Elin

Dumped at a tyre shop with no indication of how they ended up orphaned, these feral pigeons will now be with us for the next few weeks, being hand-reared.

The adorable duo, nicknamed Mich & Elin (we deserve an award for these ones), are just days old, evident by the presence of their egg tooth. What in the world is an egg tooth? Well, it's a temporary, sharp projection at their end of their beak that allows them to break out of their egg. Cool, right? The egg tooth disappears after a few days, sometimes longer.

The siblings will grow up in each other's company, vital if the duo is to be successfully returned to life in the wild.



Pigeons love a bridge!

This young feral pigeon was spotted by a member of staff at the side of a very busy road, under a bridge! Yes, feral pigeons love a bridge! As regular nesting spots, bridges are great, providing shelter from the elements and prowling predators, however, it's what goes under the bridge that poses a problem.



With the bird a little underweight and dehydrated, his routine checks have revealed a heavy burden of coccidia, causing the fledgling weakness and, thus, preventing it from being able to fly back up to its roosting nest.

He remains with us whilst he completes his treatment, before he can, hopefully, be returned to his family.

Your adoption, so far, has helped...

1781

Pigeons

Did you know?

A wood pigeon's winter pecking rate when feeding increases to a 100 pecks per minute.

Bat Broadcast

Disturbed sleep

We are, already, in double digits where it comes to the number of patients we've admitted because of disturbed nests!

With the weather slowly improving, the calling for the annual spring clean becomes stronger, and those house renovations that you've been waiting all winter to start are commenced. As such this is when you discover the wildlife that hasn't quite a woken from its winter slumber yet, in your roof!

For this very grumpy (completely understandable) long-eared bat, it was roof works that found her suddenly thrust into human hands and on her way to us.

In perfect condition, she has now lost her home and has the challenge of finding a new nesting-site with spring already beginning to spring!

But, she will be transferred to the very caring and capable hands of Steve, the Bat Man, from Surrey Bat Group, where she can receive the specialist care and considered release she needs to return to the wild.

Because bats tend to return to the same roosts each year, these sites are protected legally, whether the bats are present or not.



Your adoption, so far, has helped...

56

Bats



Bats are more closely related to humans than they are to mice.

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.



This red-listed dormouse was found at the bottom of a recycling bin in January, a rather unusual nest choice for hibernation. Usually curled up and snoozing in hollow tree branches or dense shrubs until around March, the bottom of a bin is no place to dwell in freezing temperatures.

Once in care, "Walnut" became quite the WAF superstar, winning over everyone's hearts with her endearing enjoyment of her food. After receiving advice from the Surrey dormouse group, Walnut remains with us (under license as a protected species), where we have placed her in an artificial nest inside a secure pen, allowing her to re-enter hibernation.

We're not usually thankful for a cat attack victim, but we have to give credit where credit is due; our volunteer's cat, actually, may just have saved this great tit's life.

Our vet team removed the smallest of ticks from this great tit. Yup, a tiny bloodsucker that has the capability of killing this precious little garden bird, but, thanks to the cat for picking him up and not actually causing any injury, just a few missing feathers, he was able to be brought to us and get his second chance.



This smooth newt decided to make a visit to his local vets. Yep, spotted on the ground outside a vet practice, the unusual visitor was scooped up and taken in. With his sluggish demeanour, uncertain of his origin, we're not sure if he'd been disturbed from his hibernation a little too early, or he'd awoken himself and gone looking for food.

Newts typically emerge from hibernation in early spring, but, like many of our wild species, the milder winters and unpredictable weather patterns are confusing lots of our resident wildlife and catching them out, when food isn't quite as available as they'd like.

Suffering a closed fracture to his right ulna, this common starling was rendered grounded. Vets, Judith and Dan, had the difficult task of stabilising the fracture using a surgical pin. Once the pins were placed, the bones began to heal together reforming their structure, we know, anatomy and physiology is so cool!!

Whilst still in care with us, we're hoping, in just a few weeks, this beautiful bird's bones (say that three times, fast) should, hopefully, be fully repaired, and he will begin his rehabilitation for flight!





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



Follow us for more - @Wildlifeaid

