# FOLLY WILDLE RESCUE NEWS SUMMER 2019



On this issue Around the hospital Behind the Scenes -Part 4 Watch Out there's a nest about! Yay - it's Summer Appeal time!



follywildliferescue.org.uk

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The Folly Wildlife Rescue Trust is a registered charity dedicated to the rescue, care and rehabilitation of injured, orphaned, sick and distressed wildlife.

The Trust operates primarily in Kent and Sussex, and every year, some 3,500 casualties pass through its door.

Its education programme looks to highlight the many man-made hazards wildlife faces, as well as dispelling the myths and misconceptions that can so easily lead to persecution.

Front cover: Goldfinch – courtesy Ray Charter. All other photos Sarah Nunn and FWRT

## FROM THE EDITOR

## Welcome...

TO THE SUMMER EDITION OF THE FOLLY WILDLIFE RESCUE NEWSLETTER.

## THE SEASON GOT OFF TO A SLOW START THIS YEAR - BUT NOW IT'S BUSY BEYOND BELIEF!

And last year was our busiest yet with over 4100 casualties admitted, including 39 badgers, 408 hedgehogs and a good couple of thousand birds – not bad for an organisation that just 8 years ago was working out of two garden sheds, some poultry arks and a converted garage!

So, we've come a long way, but are by no means out of the woods just yet. The perennial problem of raising our day-to-day running costs and the fact that we just don't have enough staff are the things that keep me awake at night – the situation is slowly improving but the fact of the matter is that we rely entirely on the good-will of the public to be able to survive and although we enjoy some incredible support, wildlife isn't yet sufficiently valued in our society, and therefore fundraising is a constant uphill struggle – but we don't sit idly by and in fact are constantly looking to explore new avenues.

A good example of this is our recent push to promote the Friends of Folly supporter group – the very core of our fundraising endeavours - and with the new leaflet and smart display boards (courtesy of Tesco) now promoting the scheme, we're hoping to be able to substantially increase our membership over the coming months.

In the meantime, some timely (and very welcome) legacies have enabled us to move ahead with other projects, including the proposed Wildlife Learning Centre and the

deer facility on the newly fenced lower site - while further down the road we have plans for a bird-of-prey aviary, flight test cage, several outside corvid enclosures and a bat unit

And as usual our staff are up against it - casualties start pouring in (up to 50 a day) well before 8.00 and the phone seems to be ringing continuously. Couple that with the endless rescues and pick-ups that need to be co-ordinated and you start to get a picture of just how busy it is – the late shift are supposed to finish at around 8.00, but it's not unusual for them to be on site until 9.30 – week-in week-out.

But despite the problems, I believe the charity is going from strength to strength – our welfare standards and the facilities at the hospital are amazing and our specialist services, particularly the deer rescue unit, are second to none.

And we mustn't forget our education arm and small band of volunteers who visit schools, colleges and community groups, pressing home the message that not only is wildlife in big trouble but that it shouldn't be taken for granted either; many species are now on the brink, but we still need to stay upbeat and positive, as after all, we're doing one of the most rewarding jobs imaginable - working in one of the country's finest facilities with the support of some of the most focused and dedicated people you could ever wish to meet - and if that isn't an incentive I don't know what is!

I hope you enjoy the newsletter.





## RECEPTION/ICU

is very much the first point of contact for people bringing in casualties to Folly Wildlife Rescue, but for us it's the hub of our whole operation, dealing not only with admissions, assessments and treatments, but telephone enquiries, volunteer inductions, visitors, maintenance staff and most importantly, the coordination of casualty collections and rescues.

ICU should be a place of relative tranquillity but having reception slap bang in the middle has always been problematic - it's just far too busy - but a scheme is now coming together that should (all being well) alleviate the problem.

This plan involves putting an extension on the front of B1 that will not only house reception, but a small education centre too – after all, a key part of our work is highlighting the numerous hazards to wildlife that on a daily

basis take such a toll on their numbers – plastic netting, fishing line, bonfires, window strikes and road traffic accidents – to name just a few. We already have in place a large part of the funding for the extension and if all goes well at the planning stage, we should be in a position to make a start in the autumn.

There will of course be disruption, but we're looking to keep that to a minimum, and when it's finished it'll not only be a huge boost to our education programme – but will make for a much better working environment in ICU.

## UNIT 2

is our badger holding area and at the height of the season, its pens can house up to 6 adult animals. In addition, there are 3 cubicles where we keep groups of cubs that are weaned and waiting to go into the outside enclosures – and with a near record 15 cubs in residence this year, that's been something of a challenge! In the off-season we use these pens and cubicles for just about anything that comes along – so it's not unusual to see herons, geese or even a couple of dozen hedgehogs housed there – needs must!

## THE VET UNIT

has been very busy too this year and Andrew our vet is often run off his feet with a casualty list that seems to go on and on – but this year, over the summer months, he's been fortunate to have the assistance of a number of veterinary students who have proven invaluable. Our eventual aim is to be able to employ a vet nurse to assist him full time – but at present we just can't run to the additional expense.

And it's no exaggeration to say that having our own vet and vet unit has made a huge difference to the operation here at Folly – saving as it undoubtedly has, many, many lives.

## **B4 AVIARIES**

The B4 Aviaries have really come into their own in recent years – 6 in number, each one measures around 4m x 3.5m, so nice and roomy. These aviaries are lined floor to ceiling with uPVC hygiene wall cladding, so they can easily be washed down between occupants – and they're versatile too, housing everything from buzzards (and other large birds) down to tiny blue tits and even wrens.

## MAMMAL YARD

The Mammal Yard is seeing some changes too – the 2 heavy-duty badger pens (originally at Folly Cottage) are soon to be dismantled and moved to the new lower site (where it's far more secluded) – while the 3 holding pens are due to have their floors coated with fibre glass to make the cleaning process much easier.

The space freed up by moving the badger pens will eventually house an emergency deer-holding unit (a posh name for a reinforced shed!), as on many occasions people have bought injured deer to us in the back of their cars – and getting them out of the cars and safely contained can, at the best of times be a very risky undertaking.

THAT'S ALL FOR NOW - MORE NEXT TIME!



Unit 2's badger holding pens



The X-ray unit



The original badger pen. Folly Cottage 2008

## Casualty Roundup!

HERE ARE JUST A VERY FEW OF THE MANY CASUALTY ADMISSIONS WE'VE SEEN SO FAR THIS YEAR!



## **BABY KESTRELS**

These two baby kestrels were found on the ground after having fallen from the nest.
The finder put them back three times, but each time they plopped out again - so he bought them into us, where I'm pleased to say they're now doing very well.

## **BABY DORMOUSE**

Here's one very lucky baby dormouse, admitted after having been found with half his tail missing (so it's likely the nest had been attacked by something that had then



tried to take a bite out of him) and sure enough, the very next day, four siblings (thankfully all uninjured), were also discovered in the remains of the old nest

And because baby dormice are taught all 'the tricks of the trade' by their mother, this individual will be going into a captive breeding programme at The Wildwood Trust until it's ready to be rehabilitated - but their enclosures are large and well planted out, so it won't be a bad life for a few months.

## **SHELDUCK**

We don't know why these shelducks came to us, as they were transferred from another rescue centre, but they're now doing very well.



Shelducks are one of the largest species of duck (bigger than a mallard) and the adults are very strikingly coloured with a dark green head and neck, a chestnut-coloured band across the upper body and a red bill. Look out for them in coastal marshlands.

## **HEDGEHOG**

This hedgehog was seen out in the daytime acting very suspiciously (which normally suggests something is wrong?) but as it turned out she was just looking for nesting material. A quick health check



confirmed she was in lovely bodily condition (so was either about to give birth or had recently had babies) and so without further ado, she was sent straight back with the finders to carry on with her perfectly normal activities!

## **BADGER**

This little badger cub was found on a bank of primroses (hence the name!) in some woods in East Kent. She was initially reared by one of our foster mummy's but is now part of a group of 5 cubs being prepared for eventual release!

## **CYGNET**

It's weighing-in time for this tiny cygnet that was found wandering all alone – fortunately it was rescued before anything managed to nab it and has now been transferred to the Swan Sanctuary to join lots of others.

## **RED-LEGGED PARTRIDGES**

Some very lucky red-legged partridges that were rescued after falling down a drain outside a school. Sadly, several had already perished, but the survivors have now been successfully reared by a foster mummy and are well on the way to being released!

## Dehind the scenes!



## WE'VE NOW REACHED PART 4 OF OUR VIRTUAL TOUR OF THE HOSPITAL – THE MAMMAL YARD AND B3.

The Mammal Yard is a fairly new part of the hospital, having been built (as part of the B4 development) in 2015. It runs the length of (and is adjacent to B1) the main hospital building, but being situated behind a high fence, is often overlooked.

Its main features are the two, heavy-duty badger pens (that were practically the last pens brought over from Folly Cottage in 2015) at which time they were powder-coated dark green to smarten them up a bit.

Generally speaking, they've been a great success and in their time must have held hundreds of badgers, but because they're situated so close to the hospital (and all the coming and going) it's been a problem sometimes keeping them nice and wild – absolutely essential if we're to avoid any sort of imprinting (that would seriously compromise a return to the wild).

Next to the badger enclosures are 3 large pens that were originally intended to house squirrels and dormice, but for one reason or another, this never really worked and these days you're just as likely to find them occupied by crows or other birds; in addition too, the law is now about to change and from October, we'll no longer be able to take squirrels in.

Another (largely unforeseen) problem that's arisen is that some of the local crow population now spend the day perched on the tops of these pens, amusing themselves by tormenting the inmates – so maybe it's time to get a scarecrow!

Moving on to B3, this too was originally intended as a small mammal unit – so, hedgehogs, bats, dormice, weasels and the like - but shortly after we'd opened in 2012, the decision was made to offer the building to our sister organisation, The Fox Project (who we'd worked with for a number of years) – so although we missed out on our small mammal unit, we were able, in 2015, to add a further 5 undercover aviaries to the rear of the building (similar to, but slightly smaller than the ones in B4), and these have been very successful.

Each of these aviaries is fitted with plastic mesh and a wire front, rather than the all-glass ones in B4 - so very useful for hardening off and conditioning our fledglings prior to them being released back into the wild.

In the last few years we must have reared and released hundreds of birds from these aviaries, including some spectacular kestrels and several groups of tawny owls.



The smaller badger pen

## Watch Out there's a nest about!



Traditionally, Valentine's Day, February 14th, was always known as 'the Bird's Wedding Day' as after a long winter the first bird song heard at this time was thought to herald the beginning of the mating season – it's a quaint story and although hardier types such as robin, blackbird and mistle thrush are indeed 'early birds', when it comes to it, for most other species it needs to be a bit warmer!

And by March and April, the season is in full-swing – birds gathering nesting materials and building nests and, before you know it, hatching out their eggs.

But unfortunately, this period coincides with the first stirrings of another more deadly and destructive species – we humans – and by the end of a long winter, we're itching to get into the garden to tackle those long-overdue jobs – cleaning planters, raking leaves and most problematic of all – cutting back hedges.

Light work doesn't pose too much of a problem but removing shrubs or cutting back plants such as clematis and wisteria can lead to problems, so we all need to take care.

Many of Britain's birds are now under immense pressure, not only from new building developments, but intensive farming practices and the recent changes in weather patterns bought about by climate change; gradual, but persistent declines in populations are now being reported, with for example, tree sparrow numbers down 95%, starling 71% and even song thrush down 56%, while others, such as the turtle dove, grey partridge and cuckoo are now real rarities.

But one place where birds seem to be holding their own is in our gardens – and with more and more people now appreciating the importance of birds (as well as the pleasure they bring) there is still hope.

But even gardens can be dangerous places and every year at Folly Wildlife Rescue we see hundreds of incidents where birds have been injured by gardening activities, most of which could have easily been prevented. So, as well as over-zealous pruning, plastic garden netting, the indiscriminate use of pesticides, and the untimely removal of hedges and shrubs are the major causes of accidents.





## WHEN YOU'RE OUT IN YOUR GARDEN, THE FOLLOWING POINTS ARE WORTH BEARING IN MIND:

Trimming hedges and light pruning doesn't usually pose a problem but the key thing is to check for the presence of birds' nests before you start work.

Do this by looking and listening for warning signs – parent birds going back and forth with food or agitated adults making alarm calls; these are all signs a nest may be present.

If you do need to remove climbing plants or shrubs, put the work off until the autumn when the breeding season is over.

Exposure of a nest will very likely lead to its abandonment. Predators such as cats, magpies, jackdaws and crows

are always on the lookout, so if you accidentally expose a nest, cover the spot with cut material to shield it from view.

Never move a damaged nest to another site or transfer eggs or nestlings to a bird box or hanging basket – invariably it doesn't work.

If a nest has been damaged and the babies are on the ground, the parents may continue to feed them – but it's a huge risk and they will eventually be abandoned.

It's a myth that the parents can pick their babies up and move them to safety.

If an accident occurs call your local wildlife rescue who will be only too glad to help.

DID YOU

Did you know that under The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 it is a criminal offence in the UK to disturb or damage any bird nest, even while it's under construction, with the penalty in respect of a single bird or egg being an unlimited fine, up to six months' imprisonment or both.

But the good news is that by taking a little more care, these problems are easily avoided.

Our gardens are meant to be enjoyed but isn't it so much nicer to enjoy them in the company of birds!

## Deer Update



Once again, it's been incredibly busy on the deer front with well over 170 incidents attended so far this year – and as usual (and depressingly) the majority of calls have involved entanglements in wire, discarded rope and stock fencing – much of it so derelict that it poses a real problem to wildlife. But increasingly too this year, we're seeing a lot more dog attacks involving newborn fawns - and because they're so small and vulnerable, in most cases, it's ended rather badly.

And as you can well imagine this is very disheartening for the team, especially when for the most part, these accidents should never have happened in the first place – but happen they do, with often devastating results.

It's therefore well worth bearing in mind, that if you're exercising a dog (and it's the sort of dog that likes to chase things) it does makes sense to keep it on a lead, especially in areas where deer are likely to be found; but of course it's not only deer you have to look out for but other animals too, including fox and badger cubs, rabbits, pheasants, partridges, swans, geese and ducklings – far better to be safe than sorry.

On a brighter note, things are finally moving with the new deer facility here at the hospital. The site has now been completely fenced and (funds and planning permitting) we're looking to start on the fawn unit later this year – nothings set in concrete yet, but it's likely to take the form of a large, close-board fenced enclosure (that will give the fawns privacy and

protection from outside disturbance) within which there'll be a stable shelter and a utility unit.

Deer are very highly-strung, and any undue disturbance can lead to them panicking and in the worst-case scenario, running full pelt into the fence, so it all needs to be carefully thought out.

But in the meantime, the team carry on with the good work – and to give you an idea of the scale of it, in June alone over 30 incidents were attended – a phenomenal number but one that's likely to exceed 250 before the end of the year.

But despite all this, everyone stays focused and as upbeat as they possibly can – in the knowledge that not only is it a job well done, but one they can be justly proud of.



## Casualty Roundup! PART 2

## A FEW MORE OF THE MANY CASUALTIES THAT ARE ARRIVING EVERY DAY OF THE WEEK

## **BABY SWIFT**

Our first baby swift of the season and it was not that long ago when we could expect to see a good number of baby swifts here at Folly – but not anymore it seems, as over the last five years their numbers (in this part of the world at least) seem to have collapsed?

Swifts need to weigh in at around 35g before they're ready to leave the nest, so this youngster still has a way to go!

## **BABY HEDGEHOGS**

We have around 50 orphaned

baby hedgehogs in care at the present time. Some are out with fosterer's being bottle fed, while others, that are old enough to drink milk from a bowl and eat milky mash weaning food (a mixture of cat food mashed up with puppy-rearing milk) are here at the hospital.

All, very sadly, are victims of human activity – nests dug up, mummy hogs killed by dogs and in one recent case, a whole nest up-ended when some people about to have a BBQ discovered when they moved it, that a hedgehog had constructed her nest underneath – scattering them everywhere – the babies were uninjured but mum promptly scarpered and they had to come into care.

## **BABY WAGTAILS**

These baby wagtails were discovered on the back of a lorry where the mum had decided it would make a good nest – sadly though the lorry had then driven off and they were only discovered after it arrived at its destination.

Where they originated from is a mystery, but they're very lucky to have been discovered.

## **WOOD PIGEON**

Yet another teeny tiny wood pigeon that for some reason has fallen from the nest?

It will take about 12 weeks
before it'll be ready for release
back into the wild, but in the meantime is being
tube-fed 5 times a day – but this will be reduced
as the bird grows and starts to feed for itself.

## **HEDGEHOG**

And another hedgehog, this time the sole survivor of a nest that was attacked by an unknown predator – very tragic – but at least this lucky chap lived to tell the tale.





## AS ARISTOTLE FAMOUSLY SAID "ONE SWALLOW DOES NOT A SUMMER MAKE, NOR ONE FINE DAY" ...

...but if any bird epitomised our English summer, it must be the swallow, together with its close relative the house martin and that supreme master of flight, the swift!

Now you'd be forgiven for thinking that all three were closely related and although the swallow and martin certainly are, the swift belongs to a different family altogether and is a relative of the hummingbird.

So how do you tell the difference? Well, starting with the swallow, the bird's glossy blue back and burgundy throat make it the most colourful, while its long tail streamers are also a bit of a giveaway; the house martin too has a glossy blue back, but it has a blunter, forked tail with undersides and rump of the purest white.

As for the swift, for one thing it has a much larger wingspan and its plumage is so dark it's best described as sooty – but what really tells them apart is flying ability, for as well as being our fastest bird in level flight (up to an incredible 111km/h) it's a very vocal bird and its aerobatics are often accompanied by tremendous screeching!

Shortly after their arrival in April and May, all three species set about the business of nest building – swallows in barns and stables, martins under the eaves of houses and swifts, just to be different, within the loft spaces of old buildings and church spires.

And another difference is that while swallows and martins will always attempt

to rear at least two (and sometimes three) broods of 4-5 chicks, the swift will only attempt the one, usually of just 2-3.

All three species though share a dependency on flying insects for their food; the swallow hunting for large horseflies and wasps, martins going for smaller flies and moths and swifts feeding on whatever food is to be found, often up to heights of 1000m (and they are known to ascend to as high as 5000m!)

Young swallows and martins fledge around 3 weeks after hatching and will then spend time practicing their flying skills, as by late September they need to be able to make the long flight back to Africa – but once again swifts are different – the young never fly until the very day they fledge – but on leaving the nest they stay airborne for up to two, or even three years (no one knows exactly) until they in turn are old enough to breed - so feeding on the wing, sleeping on the wing and eventually mating on the wing – truly amazing birds!

And as soon as breeding is over, swifts head straight back to Africa and by early August they've all gone; swallows and martins linger until late September or early October before heading back too.

But all three species now face increasing challenges - insect numbers around the globe are decreasing (probably due to pesticide use but also it's thought, climate change) while nest sites too are becoming harder to come by - new buildings rarely have access into loft spaces, while the deliberate policy of some housebuilders to net off potential nest sites (that allows them to by-pass nest protection laws) is also becoming a factor – and at Folly we've seen a massive decline in numbers over the past 10 years.

Here at Folly Wildlife Rescue, we used to admit large numbers of nestling swifts, swallows and martins, as well as injured and grounded adults on a regular basis, but in recent years there's been a notable reduction – maybe it's too early to draw conclusions but something definitely seems to be amiss - but only time will tell if our worst fears are true?





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In survey after survey the hedgehog comes out as the nation's favourite wild animal – but sadly, that status has done little to avert what can only be described as a catastrophic collapse in their numbers.

It's been estimated that up until the 1950s, there were up to 35 million hedgehogs living wild in the UK but by the year 2000 its thought this number had dropped to 1,500,000 - more worryingly, recent surveys conducted by the People's Trust for Endangered Species, the British Trust for Ornithology and the RSPB suggest that numbers are continuing to fall, with half now having disappeared from the countryside and a further third from our towns and cities.

And indeed, on seeing a hedgehog here at the Broadwater Forest Wildlife Hospital, visitors are often heard to remark that 'they've never seen a live hedgehog' or 'they used to see them in the garden, but they've all disappeared'.

So, what on earth has happened? Intensive farming practices, combined with massive hedgerow loss and an increase in the use of pesticides is believed to have played a major role in their decline, while in urban areas, habitat lost to new housing developments and road building programmes, as well as the trend towards close-board fencing and paving in many gardens (denying hedgehogs access to their territories and food sources) all seem to be playing a part in their demise.

In addition, hedgehogs face a continued threat from man-made hazards and at Folly Wildlife Rescue, we regularly see hedgehogs that have been injured through entanglement in garden and games netting, falls into broken or uncovered drains, injuries caused by lawn mowers, strimmers and garden forks and increasingly, attack by pet dogs.

And what's so tragic is that in most cases, these accidents are largely preventable.

People often ask too whether badgers kill hedgehogs, and the answer is they probably do, as their powerful claws can easily deal with a hedgehog, even when it's gone into a ball, but having said that, it's unlikely they're a regular part of a badger's diet (which primarily consists of earthworms) and will only be taken in times of food shortages.

But if hedgehogs are to continue to feature in our lives, we all need to start doing something about it – responsible use of garden netting and slug pellets (use the ferric phosphate ones), bringing in games netting at night, taking care when strimming and mowing long grass, watching out for hedgehogs when taking down old sheds (there could be a nest), ensuring drains are properly covered and, if you have a dog, checking the garden before letting it out in the evening – a hedgehog could be trundling around.

Check your fences too for spaces and gaps so that hedgehogs can move freely between gardens; if you happen to have the 'close board' type, make a 5" square hole in the gravel boards - vital if they're to forage for food (and a hedgehog will easily cover a kilometre every night) and find a mate.

Finally, when clearing up hedge clippings and other garden waste, make sure you put it straight in your brown bin or composter and don't leave it in a dustbin bag on the garden – hedgehogs will often seek refuge in these bags and there's a real risk of the bag (and any hedgehogs within) ending up in the refuse lorry – a horrifying thought but not at all uncommon.

On arrival, every hedgehog admitted to Folly is given its own reference number, so that on recovery, it can be taken back to exactly where it came from, a vital tool in helping to maintain local populations - and the care they receive here is second-to-none, with injured animals not only routinely x-rayed, but tested for parasites too – thereby helping ensure they return to the wild in tip-top condition.

But this all takes up a huge amount of our resources - so next time you're in the supermarket, why not treat our hedgehogs to a small case of non-fish cat food – it all helps!!







## Say, it's Summer Appeal time!

## HERE AT FOLLY WE PRIDE OURSELVES ON NOT PESTERING OUR SUPPORTERS FOR MONEY – WELL, NOT VERY OFTEN ANYWAY – RESTRICTING IT TO THE SUMMER AND WINTER NEWSLETTER APPEALS.

And very successful they've been too, enabling us over the years to buy some very useful equipment, or, as was often the case, helping us to weather the lean winter months when our income had fallen away.

Last year the project was the new Wildlife Ambulance (funded in conjunction with Wild Crowd) which eventually raised well over double the target of £10,000 and this summer we're looking to do the same again – not to buy another ambulance - but to keep the present one out on the road and hopefully fund another day as well.

At the present time, we can only afford to operate it for two days a week – but what a difference those two days have already made to our operation. As I think I've mentioned before, we get lots of calls where the finder can't bring the animal in to us – they may have young children, are elderly or disabled or just don't have a car, and as time is of the essence, we look to pick them up ourselves.

We do in fact have a large number of volunteers drivers dotted across the region, but it's often the case that they're working and therefore unavailable - and it's no exaggeration to say that our receptionists can make as many as 10 or 15 phone calls in an attempt to find someone who is free - and still not be successful.

And that's where the new ambulance (and Phil our driver/rescuer) come in - ready at a moment's notice to head out and tackle anything that comes his way - so maybe a heron entangled in netting, a jackdaw stuck up a chimney, or a





A heron rescued from netting

badger that's been hit by a car – totally amazing! And eventually, we look to have the vehicle out on the road every day of the week – but that's still some way off, so for now, just one step at a time.

So, if you share our view that Folly's Wildlife Ambulance is a really deserving cause (already saving many lives), why not help us expand it and fund another vital day – that's what I call really Working for Wildlife!

AND ENCLOSED WITH THIS NEWSLETTER IS A LEAFLET EXPLAINING JUST HOW YOU CAN HELP US WITH THIS APPEAL!