

Bedfordshire Wildlife Rescue continues to be the only wildlife rehabilitation charity in the County and has been inundated with calls to help sick, injured and orphaned wild animals this Year.

Animals Brought in

Number of Birds brought in – 591 - Number of Mammals brought in – 103

In total 694 patients were brought in and treated during 2011, which is an increase in the number of birds compared to 2010 but a decrease in the number of mammals as we are now able to refer some Autumn Orphan Hedgehogs to another local carer. Animals came in to us from members of the public, local veterinary practices, the RSPCA and as referrals from St Tiggywinkles and other wildlife carers. They are presented for various reasons – road traffic accidents, parental abandonment, predation, collisions with windows, contraction of various diseases, etc.

Orphans make up the highest of our numbers, particularly bird orphans and therefore our release rate is quite high. Of those animals recorded on our patient records this Year, 97 died or had to be euthanased, 35 were rehomed or transferred to other centres, making our release rate 80% for 2011. As with last Year, because we were able to release many of our garden bird orphans into our garden where they are observed and fed after release, we are also able to carry out basic monitoring of many of our patients to ensure their survival whilst they are adapting back to life in the wild.

We continue to work closely with other wildlife hospitals such as St Tiggywinkles, Wildlife Aid, East Sussex Wildlife Rescue, Vale Wildlife Rescue and the RSPCA with all of whom we have a very good working relationship. This ensures that our casualties have the best opportunity for survival in cases where we may not have suitable facilities for the entire duration of their care, but also where we or they have lone animals who would do better as part of a group.

We are now the **only** wildlife rehabilitation charity “approved” by the RSPCA within our own County and surrounding Counties and we expect to be busy once again 2012.

Finance

A full breakdown of our 2011 accounts can be requested from us, if not attached.

Our financial Year runs from 25th June 2010 to 24th June 2011 and for that period our income was £12,053.75 and expenditure was £10,436.38.

We were lucky enough to receive grants in the some of £5,910.02 which were for the supplies for our orphans season plus some equipment such as a new Incubator, microscope various replacement cages, and a new aviary for larger birds which has been invaluable.

We are also now receiving payment from the RSPCA, under the agreement which we signed with them in February 2011, for the animals that they are bringing in to us and we received £1,175.34 from them for a total of 110 animals.

Our own fundraising efforts have been mainly at carnivals and fetes throughout the summer months as well as via our ebay shop and we have raised £3,165.47 at those.

Our major bill this year was for animal supplies, eg food, feeding equipment, drugs and medical supplies which at £5,590.58 works out at an average of £465 pcm

Vet costs were fairly low again this year, only £998.87 as our vet, Dominic Stevens is very generous to us and also as we are able to carry out most non-surgical treatments ourselves such as first aid, splinting and strapping of limbs and administration of drugs. RSPCA officers who visited us daily throughout the Summer orphan season were able to euthanase animals that they have brought in, who were too severely injured to be treated and so our vet bills were really only necessary for surgery and euthanasia when RSPCA officers were unable to assist.

Web presence

Our website has been hugely important in getting our messages out to the public. It shows people pictures of our facility, the types of animals we are able to help and encourages them to support us in doing so. We intend to do far more campaigning regarding nest removal, feeder hygiene and first aid throughout 2012.

We have closed our ebay shop as we could not justify spending £15 pcm to keep it, but still trade successfully on ebay without it.

We now have Facebook, Twitter and You Tube pages, with a combined following of almost 1500, which is just incredible!

We have now sold 150 copies of our book, a beginner's guide to rearing baby birds, which as it is a very specialist subject we are very pleased with.

Future Aims

Our hope for 2012 is primarily to find somewhere larger for our charity premises. Whether this is a realistic hope we are not sure as of yet, but we will continue to look for a unit, farm building or similar to which we may be able to move and expand. In the meantime, we intend to make use of our storage garage which is adjacent to our current facility though that will require insulating, cladding and access points before we are able to use it.

We still have a fantastic team of 10 volunteers, and will look to recruit even more in 2012. The charity relies significantly on its unpaid volunteer work force who provide valuable assistance in running the daily operational and administration functions of the charity. It is difficult to quantify the economic value that these volunteers contribute to the charity. Their contribution is significant as without them, the charity would struggle to survive.

Thanks

We are very grateful to our volunteers who have helped us in many ways, from cleaning out cages, to helping at our events. We would also like to thank the public who have donated funds, food or items to sell or supported our charity in any way. Thanks to all the good Samaritans out there who did not look the other way but contacted us when they found a lost, ill or abandoned animal and many who provided a shelter for them until we could find room to take them in.

Highlights from 2011



On the morning of 21st February 2011 a Barn Owl was brought into us after he had been found by the side of the road. The finders had sadly kept him for almost 72 hours before bringing him in by which time he could no longer stand. The Owl was warmed up in our small incubator and once warm given fluids via a tube straight into his stomach to try and counter the effects of dehydration and hypothermia. We continued with this fluid treatment every couple of hours up until the evening when the bird was given his first feed. Within 24 hours the bird was able to stand and then amazed us all the following afternoon when we found him up on his perch. The bird continued to be force fed until we were able to see he could feed himself and went on to make a full recovery being released after only 10 days.



There seemed to be a bigger problem than ever last Year with homeowners deciding that it would be ok to remove a nest which was in the way of tree work or house repairs that they wanted to make, despite this being illegal. The case that filled us most with anxiety in May 2011 was 5 tiny week old Blue Tits whose nest had been removed from a tree and placed in a shoe box on a fence. Not surprisingly, the mother abandoned her chicks. Blue Tits are never easy birds to rear as any dip in humidity or temperature can affect them and they had already been exposed and were cold.. However, thanks to the new incubator we had been able to purchase this was not a problem. The smallest of the chicks sadly did not make it through to fledging but the other 4 went on to be released.



Another "near miss" casualty of the Summer was this dear little hoglet who had been found by a member of the public and taken home to be hand reared. Unfortunately, the inexperienced finder fed the Hedgehog on Cow's milk which generally proves fatal to hoglets. By the time the hoglet came in, she was seriously underweight and had terrible diarrhoea and urine scald. We had to completely flush out her system with fluids and give her covering antibiotics before being able to start her on the right milk formula. Luckily, she made a full recovery and was successfully released.



Quite an exciting and unexpected patient was this Water Rail who came in on 5th November after he had been attacked by a cat. Luckily he had come away from the incident unscathed and so we were able to just to give him a precautionary antibiotic plus fluids to stop him going into shock and release him in a suitable location the following morning.



We have had a number of Buzzards brought in this Year but by far the worst was this one who came in on 19th December 2011. Again he had been take home by the finder and kept for 2 days before they decided that they were not able to help and he was brought in. The bird was only semi conscious, unable to stand and unable to open his eyes. He was warmed up and given fluids via a tube into his stomach, but it wasn't until Christmas Day that he was able to stand up and fully open his eyes. This has been a most rewarding case though as we were able to release him on 4th January at which time he flew strongly off into the distance.

