

GOWER BIRD HOSPITAL

Number 9 2005

£1.75

Live
or
let
die?

– page 2

In this issue



Hedgehog heaven



Fund-raisers



All at sea

Patron: Paul Llewellyn, MPhil, CBIol, MIBiol Registered Charity No: 1053912



Yes, there's even a place for pigeons

YES, we treat feral pigeons! Treating feral pigeons has taught us a lot about bird anatomy, wound management and disease.

Gower Bird Hospital is not 'speciesist' — we do our best for any species of wild bird brought to us (see page 11). Interestingly, we admit twice as many hedgehogs as feral pigeons, and blackbirds top the list of more than 100 different species of birds that are admitted every year.

Where did feral pigeons come from?

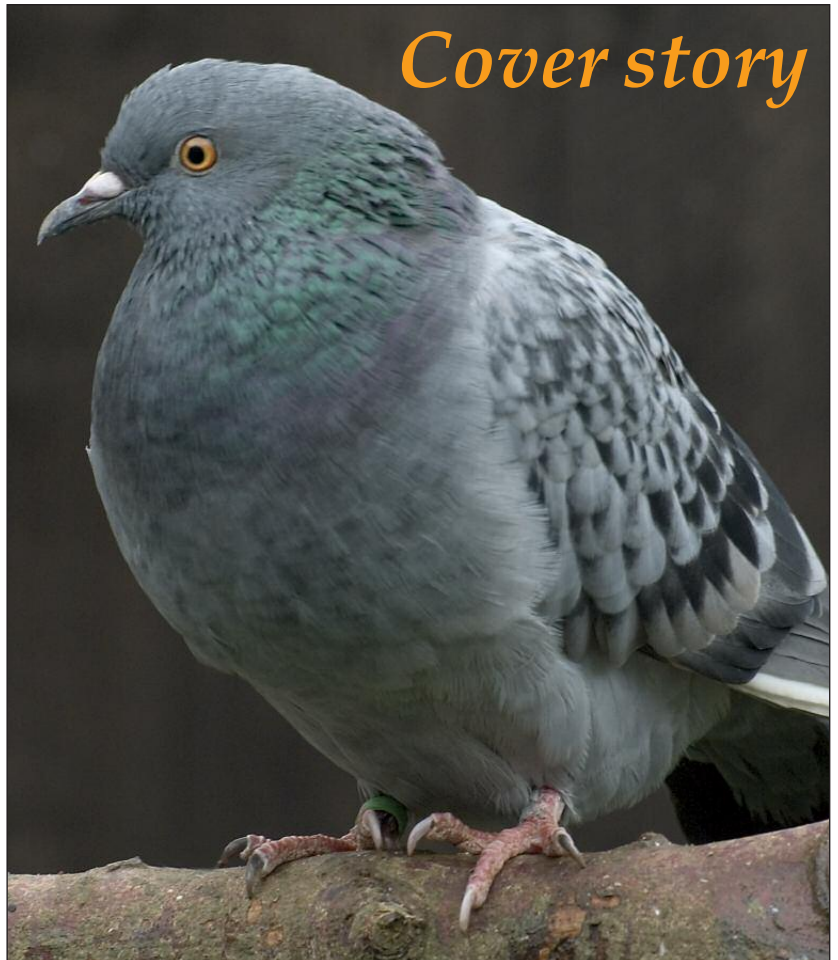
The original rock dove lives on coastal cliffs. Over many generations, people have captured and domesticated rock doves. Initially kept as a source of food, they were also bred to produce racing pigeons and fancy doves with unusual plumage.

As their original habitat is rocky cliffs, escaped or released pigeons have adapted well to living in towns and cities with large buildings providing many ledges for roosting and breeding. Food is readily available from people in towns, either dropped as rubbish or fed as bird food.

Why are they a nuisance?

The main problem is that what goes in must come out.

Pigeon droppings accumulate on streets and buildings and must be cleaned up. As the pigeon population increases so does the amount of droppings.



What is the solution?

Old fashioned methods of killing pigeons by shooting and trapping have no real effect on the numbers as the food source remains the same.

Feeding contraceptives has also been tried with no success — it is impossible to guarantee the pigeons eating the correct amounts and other species are at risk from the drugs.

The Pigeon Control Advisory Service (www.PiCAS.org.uk) has carried out significant research into the best ways of controlling pigeon numbers and their results are encouraging and humane.

Just as people created the problem by domesticating rock doves in the first instance, the best method of control is to provide pigeon lofts and control food supply. First, certain areas of the town are chosen where people can legitimately feed the pigeons, and then lofts are built next to these areas where the pigeons are encouraged to roost and build nests.

These lofts are well maintained, being cleaned weekly and removing any eggs that have been laid. During one trial, this reduced the population of pigeons by half in four years and huge quantities of pigeon droppings were removed which would otherwise have ended up on buildings and streets.

Newsletter no 9

Welcome

LAST year was another extremely busy year for everyone at Gower Bird Hospital — more than 1,500 patients arrived needing our help and facilities.

Thanks to your support, we were able to build two new aviaries which were in use almost as soon as the last nail had been hammered in. These are specially designed for song thrushes, blackbirds, starlings and smaller species such as sparrows, finches, tits and wrens.

Keeping wildlife wild is our motto and the very reason for our existence. We believe that wildlife should be living freely in the wild and make every effort to ensure that our patients are released with the best possible chance of survival.

Our rehabilitation techniques are well documented and we have been invited to share our knowledge and experience by giving presentations at several prestigious wildlife symposiums as well as contributing to the British Small Animal Veterinary Association's Manual of Wildlife Casualties.

Our work over the past 15 years has established Gower Bird Hospital as a nationally recognised wildlife rehabilitation centre, providing care for injured, sick and orphaned wild birds and hedgehogs with the **sole intention of returning them to the wild**. During 2004, Simon was invited to become a member of the Steering Committee of The British Wildlife Rehabilitation Council.

We need your support more than ever — a big thank you to everyone who gives a donation, raises funds or contributes by standing order. **Gower Bird Hospital needs to exist and needs to expand** so that injured, sick and orphaned wildlife casualties have a real chance of recovery and, most importantly, being released back into their natural habitat.

Please keep supporting us!



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The call of the wild

Getting our feathered friends airborne

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Taking care of one of Britain's most fascinating little mammals.

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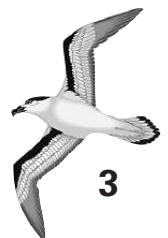
Patron: Paul Llewellyn

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Published by Gower Bird Hospital. Designed and typeset by Eifion Jenkins ☎ 01834 831624. All pictures © Chinch ☎ 01792 371323

Printed by Scanagraphics, Cardiff ☎ 02920 493711

(except where indicated otherwise)



Bringing up baby

The call

AROUND 400 nestlings and fledglings are brought to the Hospital between May and August. Nestlings are still dependent on their parents for food and warmth; fledglings have left the nest but are still being fed by the parents.

The song thrush nestlings pictured here were brought to us in May after someone cutting a hedge inadvertently lopped the branches holding the nest. If hedge cutting was done at the correct time — autumn to late winter — many nests would be safe.

The nest could not be replaced so these nestlings joined the 'hand-feeding section' of the Hospital. (During the busy months we can be hand-feeding around 20 or more youngsters every hour, as well as caring for another 70 or 80 other patients.)

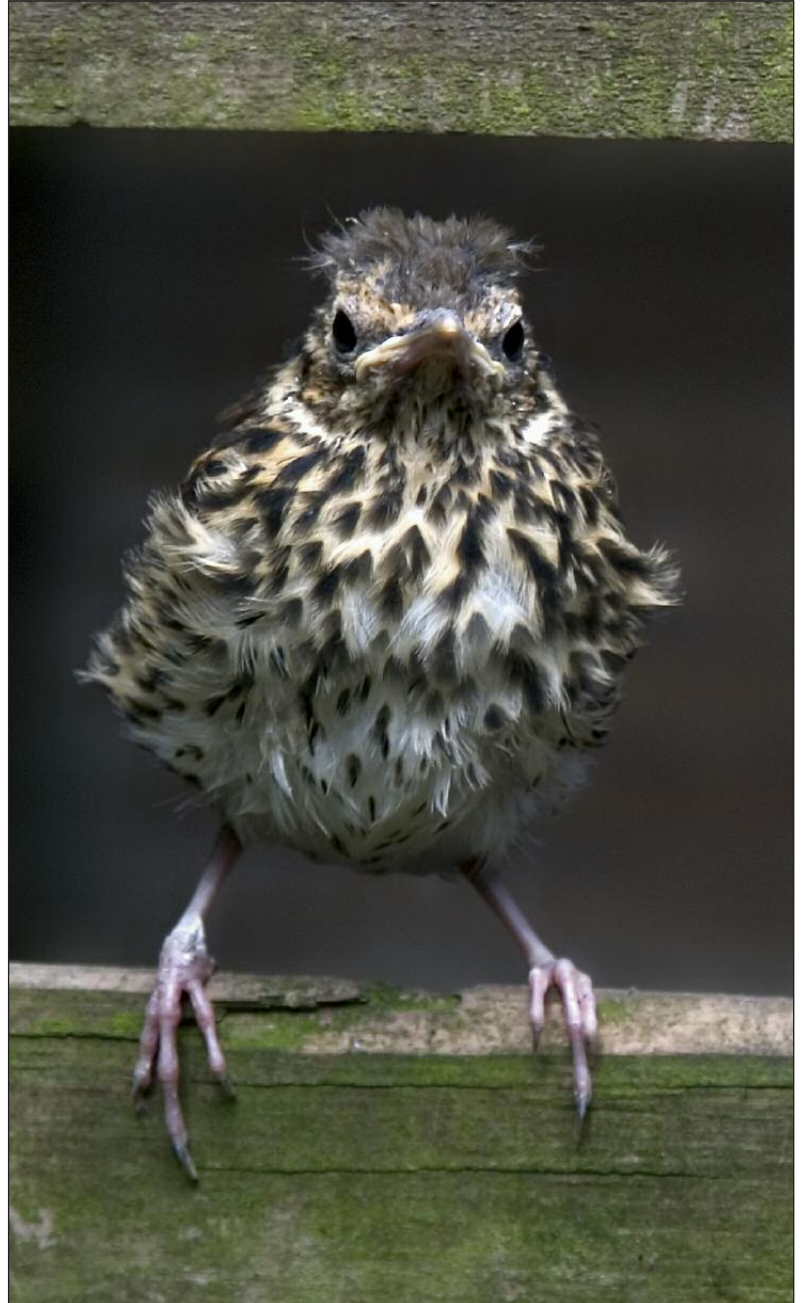
We have now been able to purchase specially designed brooder units. The heating is thermostatically controlled to maintain a constant temperature and the nestlings are fed as natural a diet as possible.

As their feathers develop and they are able to maintain their own body temperature the heat is gradually turned down and they are put outside into one of our rehabilitation aviaries as soon as possible.

It is vital that even small birds like these do not become tame or imprinted. They may not be that dangerous if they land on someone's head but they may take up a territory and not recognise their own species as mates. The territory would then be 'wasted' as the birds would not raise any young. Song thrushes are in decline and we need as many breeding pairs out there as possible!

The aviaries provide as natural an environment as possible: plants and shrubs are grown inside, the natural earth floor also has twigs and leaves strewn around, insects are able to fly in and out and we supply food such as earthworms and mealworms.

We can continue to hand feed and observe the



ALMOST READY TO FLY Songthrush fledgling.

fledglings through the CCTV system installed in all our aviaries. As soon as they start pecking and foraging for themselves, we stop hand-feeding and top the food supply up just once a day to minimise disturbance. Within four weeks these song thrushes were completely independent and were released.



of the wild

THE Hospital is never empty and cares for adult birds and hedgehogs throughout the year, but spring and summer are always the busiest time when many youngsters arrive needing our specialised care.

From May to September the Hospital is caring for around 100 patients every day. Tawny owl chicks are admitted every year and often the only help they require is being reunited with their parents.

Tawny owl chicks leave the nest while still covered in down. To the inexperienced eye they look lost or abandoned but this is normal behaviour for the youngsters and they are quite capable of climbing back up into the trees.

They are often picked up by people and brought to the Hospital. We examine them for any injuries and check that they are in good condition — if all is well we take them back to where they were found as quickly as possible, as the parents will be frantically searching for their offspring.

We need to get them back within 48 hours, preferably 24, or the parents will give up on their missing chick.

Returning the youngsters to their parents is always the first choice but sometimes this is not possible. People will sometimes keep the babies for a week or more before deciding to bring them to us, or youngsters are referred from vets or other organisations with no information about where they were found.

The youngsters then have to go into a hack situation. This is a specially adapted aviary in a suitable release site. Food is provided through a chute so that the bird doesn't see the person and doesn't associate people with food. This is essential as a tame or imprinted bird of prey could be a real danger to people if released. When the tawny owls are fully feathered and flying strongly the aviary is opened. Hunting skills take time to develop,



HOME AGAIN Simon returning a young tawny owl to its parents. Inset, song thrush nestlings.

Back to the real world . . .

food is still supplied in the hack aviary every evening so that the owls can come back to a meal if needed.

An imprinted bird sees humans as its own kind and will try to defend its territory from people or mate with them.

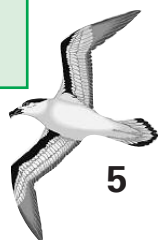
Imagine a large bird with sharp talons trying to land on someone's head to mate with them or using their talons to defend their territory from someone they see as competition.

Either way, they can inflict serious wounds to the person. The alternative is to keep the bird in permanent captivity which, for tawny owls, can mean up to 20 years sitting in a small aviary on one perch . . .

At Gower Bird hospital we do everything possible to prevent wildlife casualties becoming tame or imprinted so that they can be released back into the wild where they are meant to be.

Human *confusion*

AN imprinted bird sees humans as its own kind and will try to defend its territory from people or mate with them.

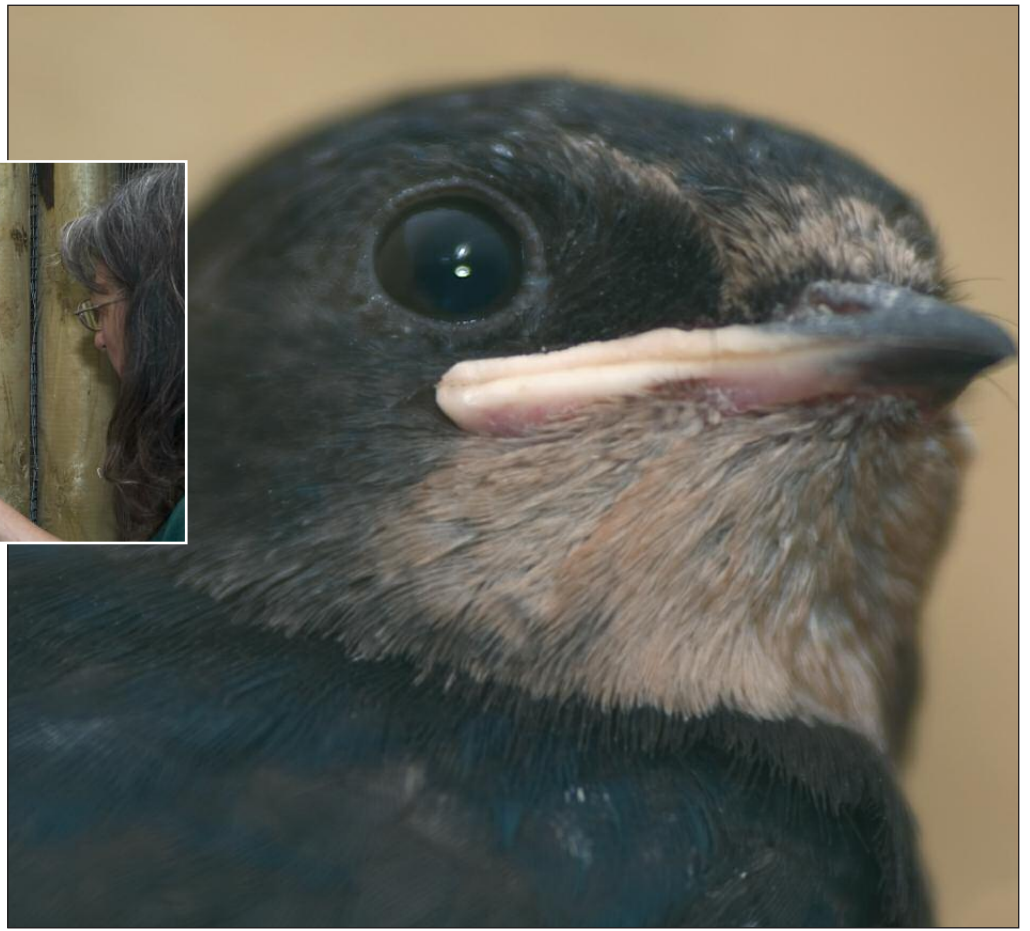


Swallow this!



TOP Karen feeding the swallows.

ABOVE The nest built in the tractor.



Rescued from a tractor

SWALLOWS, house martins and swifts are regular hospital admissions in summer. Usually the nests have fallen, or have been deliberately knocked down by people who object to droppings on their patio.

One nest arrived from Aberystwyth with a more unusual history. A farmer had bought a second hand tractor which had to be transported to his farm. When it arrived a few weeks later, he discovered a swallow nest had been built under the wheel arch.

The nest was beautifully constructed and very secure and still contained three swallow nestlings. As it was impossible to relocate the tractor for the parents to continue feeding the youngsters, he called the RSPCA who collected the nest and brought it straight to Gower Bird Hospital.

The nestlings were pretty shocked by the whole ordeal and would not feed when they arrived. As usual, we already had several house martin and swallow nestlings at the Hospital, so the newcomers were transferred into a nestbox and joined the others in one

of the rehabilitation aviaries. The established nestlings were already feeding from tweezers and when the new arrivals heard the twittering of the others being fed their instincts kicked in and they opened their beaks for food.

They didn't look back from that point and hourly feeds of nutritious mealworms and waxworms, supplemented with a little extra puppy food ensured that all the nestlings grew quickly into strong fledglings.

They did not become tame or imprinted as they had the constant company of their own kind — we did not speak to them at all when feeding them as they would quickly associate human voices with food which would be no help to them at all when released.

We often heard them chattering to each other as we passed the aviary, even during the night. As soon as they take the first flight out of the nest they are ready to be released.

Thanks to our radio tracking research last year we now know that we can release them into the local communities of house martins and swallows, confident that they will integrate with their wild counterparts.



Sitting duck

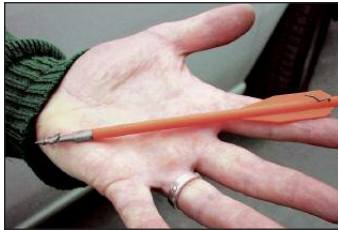
Bolt from the blue

A MALLARD drake on the Brecon and Monmouthshire canal was shot with a crossbow bolt. The bolt had gone through his back and into his breast but amazingly had missed the vital organs.

RSPCA officer Keith Hogben caught the duck and brought him to Gower Bird Hospital. Our vet, Brita, treated him with antibiotics and he was able to recuperate in one of our aquapens — an aviary with an integral water pool.

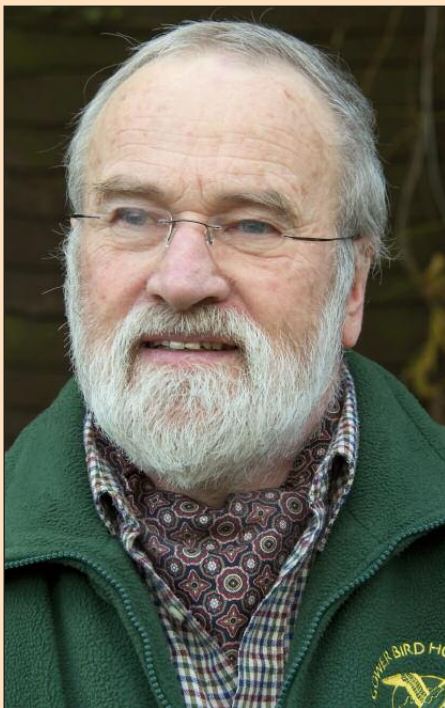
As well as the medication, reducing stress for this poor drake was essential, as he was terrified when being handled by people. Thanks to our CCTV we were able to observe him as he relaxed in the privacy of the aquapen.

We could see that he was eating well and watch the progress of the healing wound. Within two weeks, he was returned to the canal, fit and well after his ordeal.



CRUEL SHOT Keith with the duck. Inset, the crossbow bolt.

©Keith Hogben/RSPCA



Man of the moment

EVERYBODY knows Paul Llewellyn! That's how it seems — he is much loved by the people who know him and much respected by the people who work with him.

Paul is an environmentalist with an instinctive insight into ecology and has been involved with Gower Bird Hospital from the beginning. When we first started looking for advice on wildlife rehabilitation in the 1980s, his name popped up time and time again as he had already done a lot of work with birds of prey, including radio-tracking released casualties to monitor their progress in the wild.

Paul set us on the right track — a common sense approach with great respect for nature. Our first aviaries were designed with Paul's help and he instigated our first projects working with students from the University of Wales, Swansea.

One of the original members of the British Wildlife Rehabilitation Council, Paul was delighted when Simon was accepted as a member of the BWRC Steering Committee.

Paul now works as an Environmental Consultant but, as Patron of Gower Bird Hospital, is always there to give us the benefit of his vast experience and knowledge.

Thanks, Paul!



Prickly customers

Helping han

MORE than 300 hedgehogs are brought to Gower Bird Hospital every year suffering from illnesses and injuries. Thanks to our voluntary vet Brita and the facilities at the Hospital we provide exceptional care for these fascinating little animals.

Our hedgehog unit accommodates sick, injured and dependent baby hedgehogs in large pet carriers which are easy to clean. Each one has a heat pad underneath it to provide warmth if necessary.

This is essential for animals in poor condition, as they don't waste their energy keeping themselves warm and can recover much more quickly.

Once on the road to recovery, like all wild animals, they can easily become stressed in captivity and again waste precious energy trying to escape from their unnatural confinement.

We do all we can to reduce this stress — as soon as the hedgehog is well enough it is transferred to a rehabilitation pen outside. These pens provide a more natural environment with a nest box for the hedgehog to spend the day sleeping and access to natural earth and grass to forage through at night.

We always try to keep hedgehogs in their own individual pens as they are not naturally sociable creatures and bullying can occur when they have to share an unnaturally small area.

We try to return recovered hedgehogs to their original home range as quickly as possible. However some illnesses can take up to two months to cure.

Ringworm is a fungal infection resulting in loss of spines which have to re-grow before release. Abscesses caused by dog bites or other injuries also take a few weeks to heal.

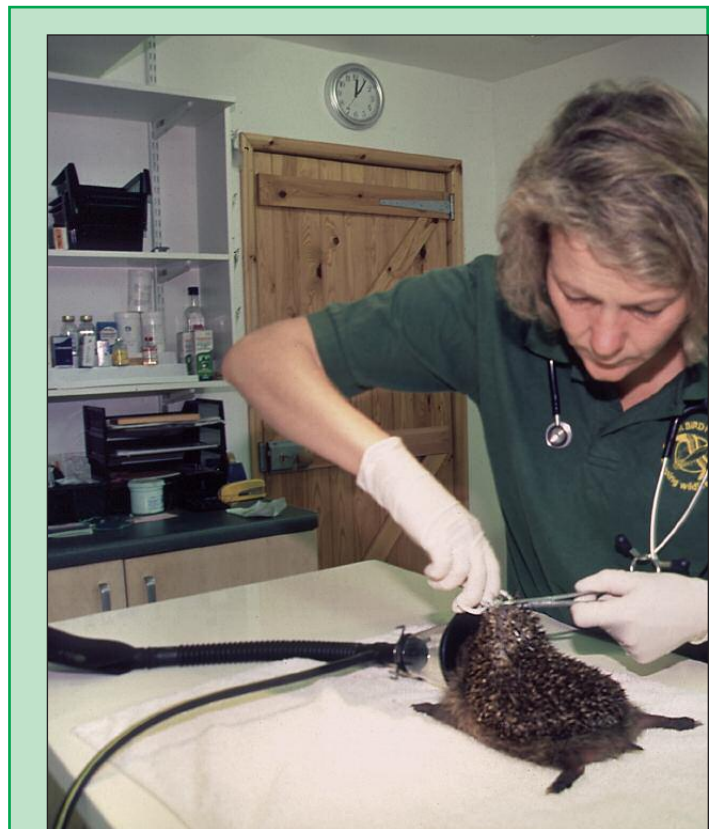
As well as antibiotic treatment prescribed by our vet, Brita, the hedgehog will usually need to be anaesthetised several times to ensure the wounds are fully cleaned.

Sometimes we can't return a hedgehog to its home range, if for example a site has been cleared to build houses.

In one instance, Dianne, one of our supporters from Llanelli, spotted a tiny hedgehog wandering in the grass of a roundabout surrounded by busy roads. Dianne parked her car (safely!), walked back to the roundabout and found a total of three very young babies weighing around 100g each.

The mum was probably killed on the road and the starving youngsters were desperately searching for food.

Thanks to Dianne's prompt action, the baby hedgehogs soon arrived at Gower Bird Hospital. They were



OPERATION HEDGEHOG
Brita microchips a hedgehog
under general anaesthetic.

T
FAR RIG

dehydrated and hungry but too weak and stressed to feed.

We gave them subcutaneous fluids (fluid injected under the skin to absorb into the body) and set them up together in the hedgehog unit with the heat pad providing vital warmth. The next day, they were much improved and started lapping the Esbilac milk replacement.

Within a week, they had all gained around 50g and were also eating mealworms and mashed cat food. Another week later, they were big enough to go outside into one of our rehabilitation pens where they built excellent nests from leaves and straw we had provided and were very pleased to do some natural foraging in the earth.

They were behaving quite normally, sleeping all day and feeding through the night. One month after being rescued the three hedgehogs all weighed over 550g and were ready for release.

Obviously we couldn't release them back where they had been found, so they were released in Pennard, complete with microchips for future identification.



d for hedgehogs



OP A hedgehog self-anointing.
HT A hedgehog with ringworm.
RIGHT In good health.



Happy tale of a hog's homecoming

ALL hedgehogs released at sites near the Hospital are micro-chipped with electronic chips which can be scanned, just like pet dogs and cats. This gives each hedgehog a permanent 'identity' and provides us with very useful information.

Hedgehogs brought to the Hospital are scanned to see if they are previous patients and healthy hedgehogs going about their normal business during the night can be quickly scanned and weighed to monitor their progress.

One female hedgehog, chipped and released in 2002 was spotted again in May 2003 making a lot of noise snuffling and snorting while being courted by a large male. She was so intent on her mission that we were able to run the scanner over her and record her ID number without her noticing us!

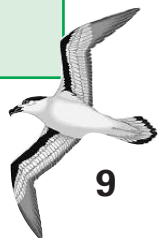
She turned up again in June 2004 having fallen into a

hole dug in a neighbour's garden and unable to climb back out. A month later, she triggered a security light in another neighbour's garden and when examined was in very good health and producing milk, obviously having babies to feed.

As she was originally one of our rehabilitated baby hedgehogs, her successful survival in the wild proves our rehabilitation techniques are working very well.

Did you know?

WHEN young hedgehogs discover a new smell (such as cat food) they often 'self-anoint', salivating and working up a lather which they then spread over their spines with their tongue. No-one really knows the reason for this behaviour but it is quite common and the hedgehogs must have a good reason for it!



Wildlife casualties

It's our problem

ARE we interfering with nature? We are very aware of the natural balance in the world, but many changes to that balance are brought about by human activities.

Detailed records of every patient are kept (more than 9,000 now) and the reason for admission to the Hospital

is always recorded using the National Wildlife Casualty Recording Scheme.

Natural causes only account for 20% of birds and 29% of hedgehogs which means that 80% of birds and 71% of hedgehogs are suffering because of man-made problems.



KEEPING THE BALANCE
One of our volunteers in the busy office at Gower Bird Hospital.

How we take our toll

Problem	Birds	Hedgehogs
Unnatural injuries: entanglement in netting, elastic bands, plastic, fishing line and hooks; flying into windows or powerlines; shot; road traffic accidents; oil pollution; poison; garden tool injuries; trapped in chimneys, cavity walls, garden ponds, drains, swimming pools; burns from bonfires.	48%	41%
Dependent young: nests destroyed by garden clearance or unnecessarily removed from the wild.	16%	23%
Domestic pets: cat attacks and dog bites (mainly cats for birds and dogs for hedgehogs)	16%	7%
Natural causes: injuries from natural predators, illnesses, infections from natural wounds, congenital defects etc.	.20%	29%



Birds of a feather

WHY do we treat birds that some people consider 'pests' such as feral pigeons, jackdaws and mallards?

The policy of Gower Bird Hospital is that every individual deserves the same treatment. We have learned a lot by treating these birds — diagnosing illnesses or injuries, wound management, housing and rehabilitation techniques.

If we just sat here waiting for an unusual species to be brought in, what experience would we have to draw on? Our experience with mallard ducklings has proved invaluable for rehabilitating goosanders; if a rare species such as a chough or turtle dove is presented at the Hospital, we can draw on our vast experience of caring for jackdaws and feral pigeons to give it a real chance of recovery.



RELATIVELY SPEAKING Goosanders have been helped through our experience with mallards.

Our earlybird warning system

Gower Bird Hospital also provides an important source of environmental monitoring — if something starts to go wrong in the environment, casualties will arrive at Gower Bird Hospital alerting us to the problem.

We then communicate with other environmental organisations such as the RSPB. For example, we are helping the Veterinary Laboratories Agency (VLA) monitor the UK bird population for evidence of West Nile Fever.

West Nile Fever is mainly an infection of birds, but it can be passed on to other animals and to humans by the bite of infected mosquitoes. Recent evidence suggests that the disease is spreading into temperate climates, becoming a risk to the UK.

There have been no cases reported in the UK, but in 2004 two cases were found in the Republic of Ireland in people who had visited Portugal. As a precaution, a team of researchers at the VLA has been monitoring the UK bird population for evidence of the virus.

Birds which die at the Hospital, or are put to sleep due to terminal illness, are sent to the VLA centre. They conduct an autopsy on the bird and test for West Nile Fever. In North America crows, rooks, ravens and jackdaws are heavily infected.

Birds from wetland habitats are also of interest due to the high level of mosquitoes in their environment. We also submit birds that have died secondarily to showing neurological clinical signs. (No birds are euthanased because of this survey.)

The VLA in return gives us feedback in the form of post-mortem reports, bacteriological culture and analysis of chemical and poison residues in birds.

This is valuable information for us at Gower Bird Hospital, helping us to understand the underlying problems of our patients.

Furthermore, it is important information for general public health, disease surveillance and animal welfare.



Back to the open spaces

All at sea

MANY species of gull arrive at the Hospital — black headed gulls, herring gulls, lesser black backed gulls, great black backed gulls and the (not so common) common gulls.

Adults arrive with all sorts of problems having swallowed fishing hooks, been hit by cars or suffering from botulism. And every year chicks arrive — tiny bundles of fluff which have usually fallen from roof top nests.

These chicks will learn to peck food for themselves quite quickly. This is vital as we want them to become independent as soon as possible.

As discussed earlier, imprinting is a serious problem - raising one of these chicks on their own will produce an imprinted bird which can't socialise with its own kind. Once released, a fully grown imprinted seagull swooping down on someone's head could cause real injuries; this is not fair on the bird or acceptable to the public.

We group the gulls arriving at the Hospital according to age and they soon learn the social skills essential for joining a gull colony — jostling for food and shouting! They spend around six weeks in one of our largest aquapens with space for flying and a water pool where they

spend much of their time swimming and preening.

Free access to water is essential for their plumage to be in good condition and waterproof. As soon as they are fully feathered and able to fly, they are released into an established colony of gulls where they quickly join in the normal routines, integrating well with the natural population.

● To page 13



FREEDOM Back to the sea. Below, a nestling gull.

Take a tip

NEVER attempt to wash an oiled bird at home — this is a highly skilled job, simply removing the oil is not enough, the feather structure must be waterproof and the bird will need specially designed rehabilitation facilities. Releasing a non-waterproof bird is simply condemning it to a slow death through hypothermia, drowning or starvation.



is a way of life

GUILLEMOTS spend most of their time at sea, only coming onto land to nest. Their body shape is perfectly adapted to swimming under water where they hunt for fish. They are very vulnerable to oil pollution and often arrive at Gower Bird Hospital with oil on their chests and underbelly. The oil destroys the waterproofing of the plumage forcing the birds to come ashore.

Non-waterproof plumage is like a leak in a drysuit, the insulating properties are lost, the bird becomes cold, the feathers become waterlogged and the guillemot starts to sink. Many drown before they make it to the shore.



Kittiwake

FULMARS belong to the order Procellariiformes, highly specialised for life on the open sea. They have specialised beaks, commonly known as 'tube noses'. The tubes around the nostrils play an important part in salt excretion enabling these birds to live much of their life on the ocean without requiring fresh water.



GANNETS arrive at the Hospital throughout the year. These are very specialised birds, diving at speeds of up to 60mph into the sea to catch fish.

If you look closely at the beak, you can see that there are no external nostrils. This is to protect the gannet when it is plunging at high speed into the water. The front of the skull is also much thicker than in other birds to protect it from the impact.

The beak itself is very powerful and the gannet will strike out in defence when frightened - it is important to wear safety goggles and keep control of the head when examining these birds.

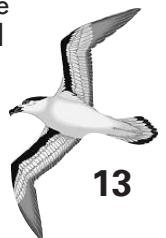
One poor gannet was brought to the Hospital in a large box. On arrival, the finder said: "He was putting up quite a fight in the box, but he seems to have calmed down now."

When we opened the box, we discovered that the person had taped the gannet's beak tightly closed and the gannet was dead — without external nostrils, he was unable to breathe with his beak taped shut and had suffocated. An unfortunate accident — good knowledge of natural history and anatomy is essential when dealing with wildlife.

● From page 12

Other species of seabirds such as kittiwakes, little auks, gannets, manx shearwaters, cormorants, guillemots and fulmars also need Gower Bird Hospital's facilities.

As well as the obvious need to swim in the pools to exercise and keep plumage in good order, they also need to be returned to the wild as quickly as possible as the unnatural confinement can quickly lead to weakened muscles.



Money matters

Thanks

AS a registered charity, Gower Bird Hospital is entirely dependent on donations, fund raising and grants.

Thanks to everyone who gives a donation, raises funds and those kind people who have included Gower Bird Hospital in their will.

If Gower Bird Hospital didn't exist, many wild birds and hedgehogs would simply die in cardboard boxes as there would be nowhere for them to go to receive the specialised help they need.



READY, STEADY The Gower Bird Hospital Team ran the 5K from Blackpill raising £466. ©Andrew Jenkins

IN THE RUNNING London Marathon runner Rhydderch raised £690 and is running again this year. Right, Brita is presented with the cheque.



SPONSORED SUCCESSES! Danielle raised £309 with a sponsored swim of 2,000 metres — that's 80 lengths!

©Romain de Kerckhove

More thanks

KENFIG National Nature Reserve organises an annual sponsored walk. This is worth doing as you get the extra bonus of a warden identifying the flora and fauna as you walk - there's always something new to learn and 2004's walk raised £338 for Gower Bird Hospital!

MANY thanks to Sarah of Penclawdd who is raising

funds for the Hospital by selling items on eBay, also to Liz of Emerald Aisle www.emeraldaisle.co.uk who gives a percentage of her sales of jewellery to Gower Bird Hospital every month.

SPECIAL thanks to Keith, Bruce and Chinch for designing Gower Bird Hospital's new website.



to you . . .

GRANTS are usually awarded to charities who are well supported by the community. Your donations not only help directly with Gower Bird Hospital's running costs but also help us when applying for grants.

In 2004 Gower Bird Hospital received some very welcome and needed funding in the form of grants.

Major local donors are **The Gower Society, Pennard Community Charity, Swansea Development Fund, Atlas Fire Engineering** and the **Lord Mayor of Swansea's Charity Fund**.

Thanks also to **The Barry Green Memorial Fund, The Llysdinam Trust, Jean Sainsbury Animal Welfare Trust, The Royal Pigeon Racing Association, Alcoa, Centrex** (Police training centre, Specialist Dept) and **Raptor Rescue**.

The Gower Society also kindly made space for a Gower Bird Hospital information stand at the Gower Show. Permanent educational displays are also at the **Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust** (thanks Nigel!) and at **Pine Needles** at the Gower Heritage Centre. A big thank you to Pine Needles for promoting the work of Gower Bird Hospital all through the year.



ABOVE The Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust display.



RIGHT The display at the Gower Show last year.

GOWER Bird Hospital collection boxes provide very welcome donations for the Hospital — thanks to all the shops, veterinary surgeries and individuals who hold one for us and the volunteers who collect the (hopefully full!) boxes and replace them three times a year.

Cwmbwrla Day Centre produces beautifully made nest boxes which raise funds for the Hospital and provide much needed nesting sites for many species of wild birds.

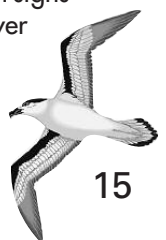
Thanks also to Dianne from Llanelli for raising £85 by organising a raffle and Lynne who made a collection from work colleagues at Swansea University raising £175.

Every little *helps*

AT present, Gower Bird Hospital's day to day running costs are around £1,500 every month. Many thanks to everyone who gives a donation and/or raises funds — Gower Bird Hospital couldn't exist without your support.

Donations can also be given by monthly standing order enabling us to plan ahead as we know money is coming in. No donation is too small — every pound counts!

Many thanks to Isis for making the lovely wooden signs to guide people bringing wildlife casualties to Gower Bird Hospital.



Caring for casualties

What to do

If you find an injured bird you can save its life simply by putting it into a cardboard box. All wildlife has an instinctive fear of people. Putting an injured wild bird into a cage with nowhere for it to hide and constantly looking at it will rapidly put it into a state of shock and shock can kill.

The first treatment is always a warm, dark, quiet environment — a closed box with torn-up newspaper — to minimise shock. To provide warmth, a plastic bottle wrapped in an old towel makes a disposable hot water bottle and can be transported to Gower Bird Hospital with the patient.

A bird in a dark box will not feed and a bowl of water can be dangerous — if the bird gets wet, it can become very cold and die.

If you have a bird that has **flown into a window** it could simply be stunned. Leave it well alone in the box for about three hours (or overnight if you found it late evening).

Try releasing it, if it flies away — success! If not, put it back in the box and contact us.

Many **fledglings** are unnecessarily 'rescued' by well meaning people. It is easy to mistake a perfectly normal, healthy fledgling for an abandoned baby.

Fledglings have left the nest but can't quite fly properly, giving a helpless impression, when in fact they are still being supervised and fed by their parents. If left with their parents, they will usually be flying quite strongly in less than a week. (Blackbirds are completely independent just three weeks after leaving the nest.)

If you do find a fledgling, it is best to leave it well alone for a few hours and return to check on it later on. If the fledgling is in a public place such as on a path, just replace it a few feet away, under some cover if possible, to lessen the chances of someone else picking it up.



Hedgehogs are nocturnal creatures so any hedgehog seen in daylight hours is usually in trouble. It could be suffering from an injury, starvation, dehydration or an illness.

Put the hedgehog in a box with torn up newspaper as bedding. If it feels cold add a warm (not too hot) bottle. Make sure the box has small air holes and a secure lid as hedgehogs are remarkable escape artists, even when ill!

If it is not possible to leave the bird and you have to remove it from the wild, ring Gower Bird Hospital. To have a real chance of survival and being released back into the wild, the bird will need our specialised facilities within 24 hours.

Getting in touch

Tel: 01792 371630

A phone call is always greatly appreciated prior to the admission of a wildlife casualty

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