

GOWER BIRD HOSPITAL

Issue 12 2008/2009

£1.75



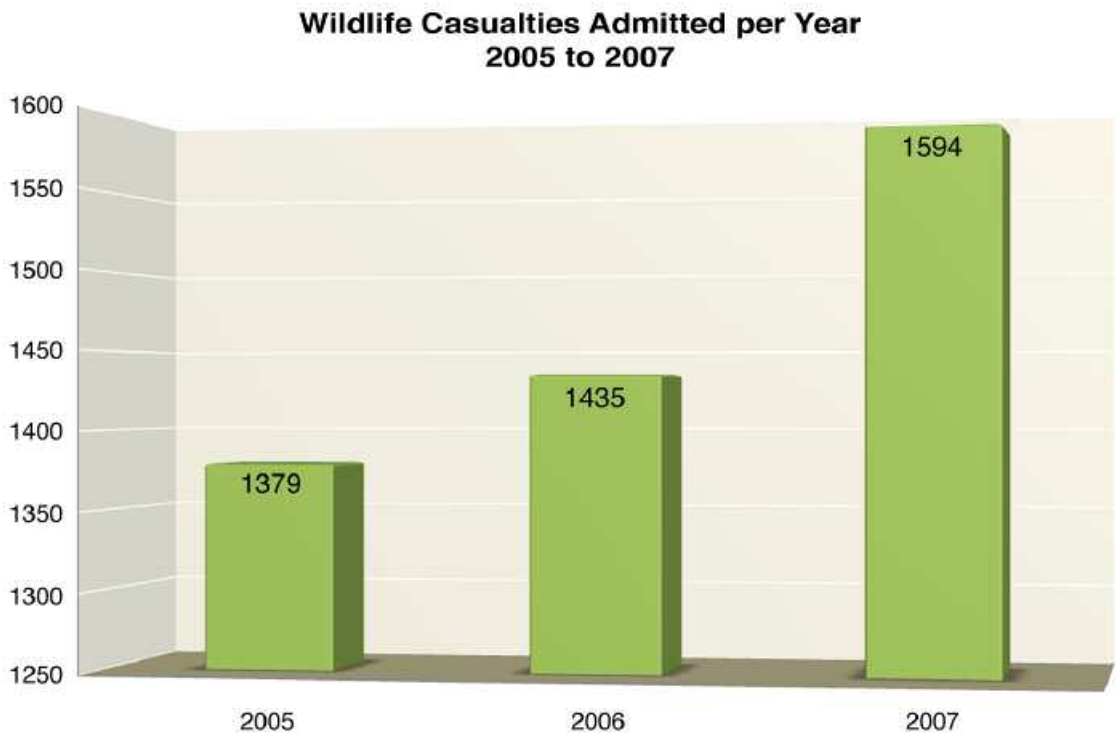
Patrons:
Paul Llewellyn
MPhil, CBiol, MIBiol
and Iolo Williams
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Keeping wildlife wild

cover story page 8

Hogging the limelight

When we registered Gower Bird Hospital as a charity in 1996, our aim was to provide rehabilitation facilities for injured wild birds; but injured and sick hedgehogs also kept arriving. Now hedgehogs account for almost a quarter of our admissions. Gower Bird Hospital needs to be here! This graph shows the number of wildlife casualties admitted over the past three years:



Just rewards for everyone involved



2007 proved to be a good year for receiving awards! Gower Bird Hospital received a Certificate of Meritorious Service from the trustees of the Llys Nini branch of the RSPCA. We also received the Elsie M J Evans Award for outstanding kindness in the



field of animal welfare presented by the chairman of the RSPCA council at the national RSPCA's annual meeting in London. Simon and Karen are pictured above with the RSPCA chairman receiving the Elsie M J Evans Award and back at the Hospital in working clothes.



Newsletter no 12

First of all, a big thank you to all our supporters—many of you have been with us since 1996. We never forget that the achievements and successes at Gower Bird Hospital are only possible with your help.

Since 1996 over 16,500 wildlife casualties have been brought to Gower Bird Hospital, almost 1600 were admitted in 2007.

Every year sees an increase in patients arriving at the Hospital needing our specialised skills and facilities.

It currently costs around £50,000 to run Gower Bird Hospital for a year—an average of £30 per patient.

Treating wildlife is very different from treating domestic pets. A sick cat or dog will be used to people and will be comforted by petting and attention. A wild bird or animal will be frightened by the presence of people and terrified when being handled.

Our patients are wild animals with a healthy and instinctive fear of predators (including people) and our protocols and rehabilitation

aviaries are designed to minimise the amount of time we spend handling the patients.

All our aviaries are camouflaged so the birds can't see us and we can't see in, as they need as much peace and privacy as possible to aid their recovery. This is the complete opposite of a zoo where animals are on display. CCTV is installed in all our facilities so we can observe our patients without disturbing them.

Gower Bird Hospital cannot be open to the public as this would cause too much stress for our patients. This is why we appreciate your support so much—we do not raise funds by putting our patients on display as the welfare of the wild birds and animals comes first.

Gower Bird Hospital depends on donations from people who understand our principles, helping us to keep wildlife wild.

Kaver + Simon

What's inside

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Back to nature

Why saying goodbye is our main aim

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Friends in far places

Gulls from here to Africa



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Secret world of the hedgehog

A glimpse into the wonders and perils of being a hog

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Tribute to our unpaid heroes

Volunteers who keep us going

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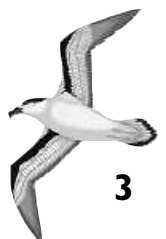
Paying the food bills

Why every little helps

- ◆ Out into the real world
- ◆ How to get in touch – back page

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Giving our charges the best possible start

It's a question



LEAVING HOME

House sparrow nestlings in one of our incubators and above, four weeks later, house sparrows ready for release.

ALMOST 80% of our patients arrive during six months of the year—April to September. In 2007, 1263 of our 1596 patients arrived during busy season!

Of these, half were adults— independent birds and animals already equipped with the skills to survive in the wild — and the other half were very young and still dependent on their parents.

As well as the 127 baby hedgehogs, we admitted nestlings of 49 different species of birds including barn owls, blackbirds, blue tits, collared doves, goldcrests, herring gulls, house martins, house sparrows, song thrushes, starlings, tawny owls, tufted ducks, wrens and many more.

All these youngsters depend on Gower Bird Hospital to raise them as wild birds so that when released they can lead full independent lives interacting with their own species. The most important aspect of hand rearing is not to make the birds tame.

Luckily, the fact that we have so many youngsters arriving means that we can rear them in groups of the same species — this is vital for the individuals to be able to communicate with their own kind. Hand-rearing wildlife is not just feeding and releasing — they also need to have all their normal instincts and skills for surviving in the wild.

When nestlings arrive they are often still bald and



Greenfinch fledgling.

would be dependent on their parents for warmth as well as food. We have thermostatically controlled incubators to maintain a constant temperature.

The nestlings are fed throughout the day and this is done without speaking as we don't want them to associate human voices with food. The incubators have opaque doors so that natural light can get in but the nestlings don't see people more often than necessary.

As soon as the nestlings have enough feathers to keep themselves warm, they are transferred to one of our rehabilitation aviaries outside.

This is very important as they would naturally be outside experiencing different weather conditions, seeing the sun rise and set, seeing and hearing other birds and exploring their natural habitat. These are all vital learning

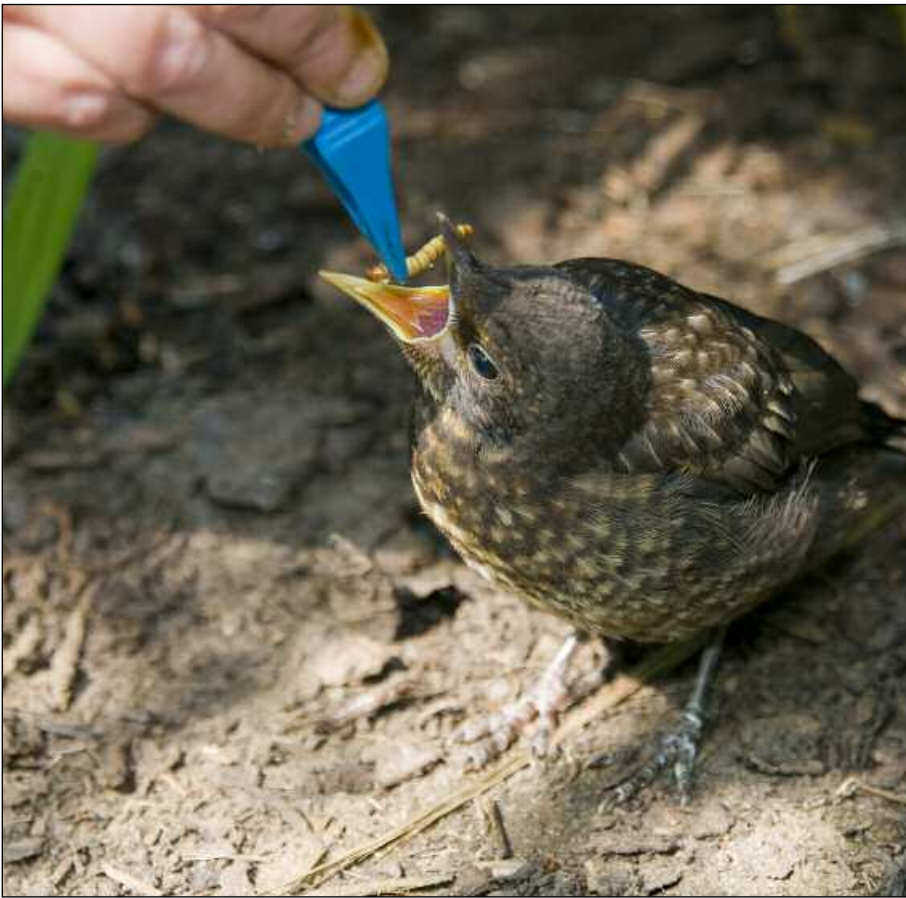
experiences increasing their chances of surviving in the wild.

Using the CCTV system installed in all our aviaries, we keep a close eye on the youngsters as they start exploring their outside world. We supply natural food in the aviaries and as soon as they start foraging and finding food for themselves we stop hand feeding.

It's extremely important to stop hand feeding as soon as possible as this helps the birds develop naturally and greatly increases their chances of surviving in the wild when released.



of survival



FEEDING TIME A blackbird being fed at the hospital.

Making a proper job of it

WE fit British Trust for Ornithology (BTO) rings to as many released birds as possible, including hand reared birds, as this gives us a good indication of their survival.

During the summer of 2007 we noticed a male blackbird with a BTO ring in the grounds of the Hospital. He found a mate, built a nest in a large ivy covered hedge and raised two broods. We knew it was probably a blackbird that we had released but couldn't tell exactly which one as we couldn't read the number on the ring.

One day we were cleaning one of the aviaries and left the door open. The male blackbird hopped inside and we suddenly had a golden

opportunity! We gently closed the door, Simon grabbed a net and was able to quickly catch him and read the ring number.

The blackbird was not at all impressed, but we released him immediately and he went straight back to finding worms for his demanding family. The ring number showed that he was one of our previous year's patients, brought in as a young nestling.

This was great news as he was now raising a family of his own—if it wasn't for the BTO ring we would have assumed he was a wild blackbird. That's when we know we've got it right—when we can't tell one of our rehabilitated birds from the wild population.

Chick alert

Many of the nestlings arrive at Gower Bird Hospital because people have (accidentally or deliberately) destroyed the nest. Cutting hedges, shrubs and trees in the spring and summer often results in a nest full of chicks on the ground. The best thing then for you to do is to phone for advice and get the birds to the Hospital. This could all be avoided if hedges were cut in very early spring or autumn when the breeding season has finished.

Food for thought

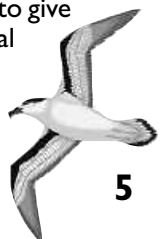
VERY young nestlings open their beaks and call for food instinctively—at this young age their natural fear instincts are yet to develop. If they hear a noise or see a movement (any movement, even a cat!) they will beg for food.



Fledgling robin.

Understandably, people often find the begging irresistible and start feeding them, talking to them and cuddling them like pets. The youngsters develop very quickly, for example a blackbird is independent from the parents just three weeks after leaving the nest, so a few days of being treated like a pet can be enough to interfere with its normal mental development.

Please resist the temptation and get the young birds to Gower Bird Hospital as soon as you can to give them a real chance of survival when released into the wild.



Everybody
wins from
the
intelligent
appliance
of science

Success on a global scale

PRE- and post-release research is one of the most important things we do at Gower Bird Hospital.

All our research is non-invasive and the welfare of our patients is paramount at all times. These studies are carried out to make sure we are doing our best for the wildlife casualties in our care at all times.

To maximise our results we recruit students from Swansea University. Students need to complete projects to achieve their degrees and we can provide projects which will improve standards of care for wildlife casualties.

It's a win-win situation and some projects have already changed protocols in other wildlife hospitals across the country.

Our pre-release studies are carried out using hours of recorded CCTV footage of patients in the rehabilitation aviaries and help us improve the quality of life for our temporarily captive patients.

All wild animals get very stressed when in captivity and we try to provide the best accommodation, emulating their natural environment, to reduce stress as much as possible.

A study of hand-reared blackbirds in one of our aviaries via CCTV showed the birds to be initially quite interested in exploring their surroundings, but after just three days they were showing signs of boredom, stress and depression.

There was also a lot of bullying as they tried to establish a natural pecking order and competed for the highest perch. We improved their accommodation by increasing the number of high perches.

More leaf litter on the ground meant they had to work harder to find food as they would in the wild. By improving their environment they were less stressed and gained weight more quickly, thus reducing the time spent in



ON THE CASE Simon supervises our student projects and right, a blackbird fledgling.



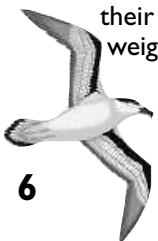
captivity.

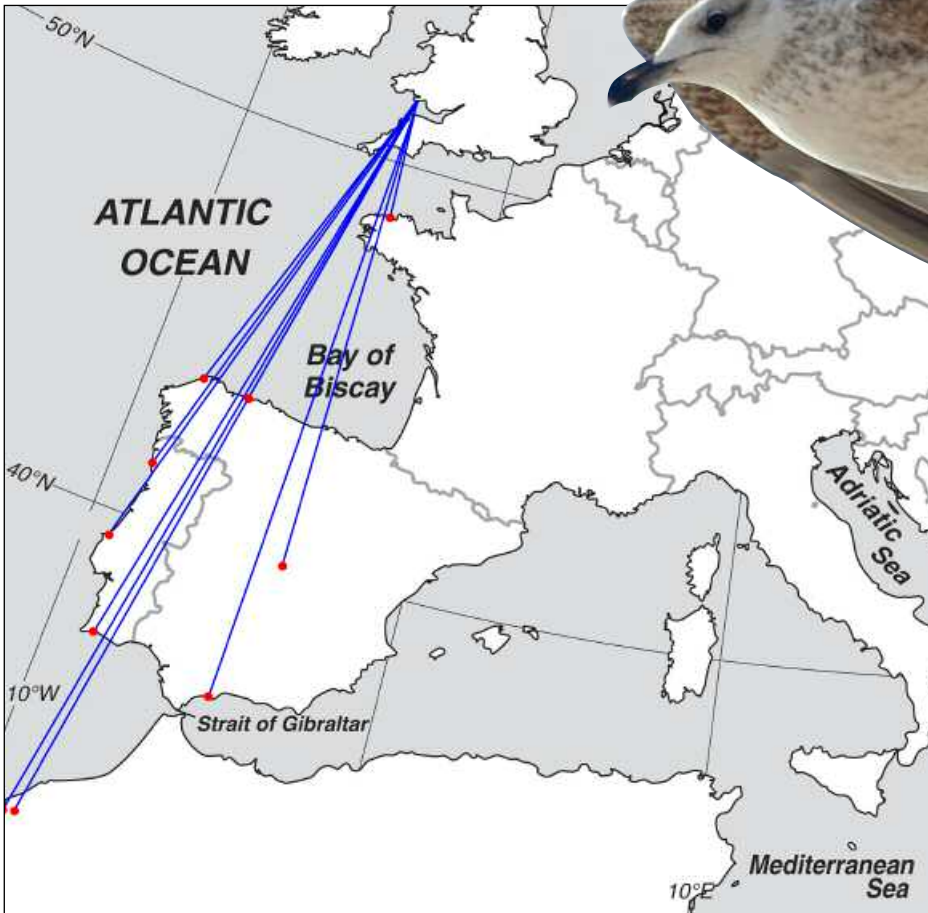
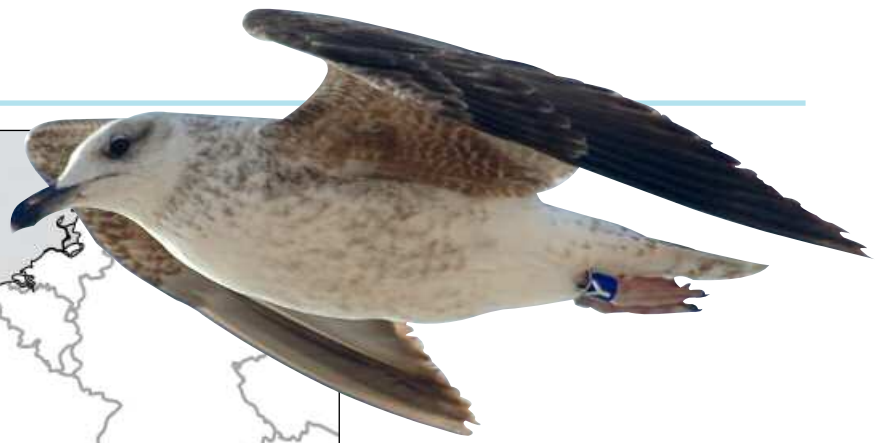
Similar studies carried out using infra-red CCTV

recordings of over-wintering hedgehogs showed that these naturally solitary animals become very distressed in unnatural confinement with other hedgehogs.

Their behaviour changed remarkably, the hedgehogs became much more aggressive and extreme bullying occurred causing severe bite wounds and prolonged fighting.

This just wouldn't happen in the wild as the hedgehogs would simply walk away from each other. Since this study, we over-winter hedgehogs in individual pens and this practice has been adopted by other wildlife hospitals across the UK.





MOROCCO BOUND

One of our gulls.

Picture: ' Arild Hansen

Worldwide after-care

POST-release studies are carried out after the patient is released to monitor the bird or hedgehog and find out if it is indeed surviving.

This can be done by using rings on birds' legs and microchips in hedgehogs so the patient has a permanent ID.

Radio-tracking is also vital as it enables us to follow patients after release to observe their behaviour and find out if our rehabilitation techniques are working.

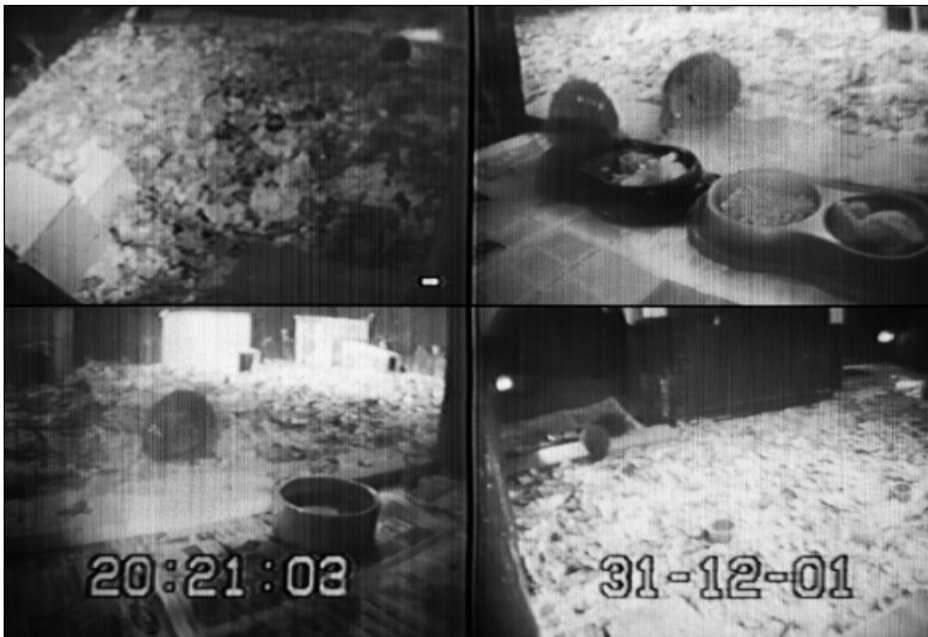
As well as fitting BTO rings, Gower Bird Hospital has a unique colour ringing scheme for gulls.

The tiny BTO rings are almost impossible to read from a distance but the lightweight blue rings with a large white letter 'Y' can be seen through binoculars or even the naked eye.

As you can see from the map we have had reports of our lesser black backed gulls from across Western Europe and North West Africa.

Another project underway is a comparison of numbers of species admitted at the Hospital compared to the BTO Breeding Bird Survey.

Initial results are very interesting, high admissions seem to correspond with successful breeding years and conversely if we don't admit as many of a species as a previous year it seems to indicate that particular species is having a problem in the wild. This means we can flag up potential problems in the wild population as well as treating the individuals that arrive at the Hospital.



HOGGING THE SCREEN 24-hour care for our hedgehogs.

Better understanding

The conservation value of wildlife rehabilitation is increasing all the time. Post-release monitoring expands our understanding of wildlife behaviour, movement and use of habitat.



Cover story



This blonde hedgehog was brought to Gower Bird Hospital as it was attracting too much attention!

The kind gentleman who intervened on her behalf explained that because of her pale colouring she was very easy to see and many of his neighbours would pick her up in late evening and carry her around to show her to their friends.

If she had just been left alone to carry on her normal routine she could have remained happily foraging around the housing estate and surrounding area.

Unfortunately, she was just too conspicuous and, although most people understood that she would be fine if left alone, there was soon talk about putting her in a rabbit hutch as she would be a nice pet for the children.

Our behaviour studies have proved how distressed wild hedgehogs become in captivity and this would have been extremely cruel. Although we always try to release our patients in the area they were found, we agreed this was an exception and found a similar (secret!) release site with sympathetic people.

As she is so easy to see in the dark, we often receive reports on her progress and she has settled in well, enjoying her freedom.

It's a hard l

MANY of the hedgehogs arriving at Gower Bird Hospital during summer and early autumn of every year are dependent young.

Occasionally the mother has been killed on the road. When the baby hedgehogs become cold and hungry they will squeak loudly – sometimes they will crawl out of the nest looking for their mother.

True orphans are rare, more often a dog has dug up the nest or people have decided to tidy up that wild bit of garden and disturbed the nest, resulting in the mother abandoning the young.

If you do find baby hedgehogs in distress, it's very important to keep them warm and contact us for advice; they will need the specialised facilities at the Hospital for their best chance of survival.

Other problems hedgehogs encounter are: getting tangled in garden netting, plastic can holders and elastic bands; trapped in garden ponds, swimming pools, garage pits; road traffic accidents and injuries from strimmers and garden forks. Hedgehogs can also suffer illnesses such as enteritis, ringworm and chest problems.

Every year Gower Bird Hospital receives hedgehogs which have been trapped in steep sided garden ponds. The poor hedgehog has usually been struggling to get out all night and is eventually spotted and rescued the next day.

These hedgehogs arrive exhausted, very cold and with a great risk of pneumonia from inhaling the water. These accidents could be so easily avoided by providing ramps for the hedgehog to climb out or by designing the pond with natural sloping edges.

HIBERNATION is a complex process. Hedgehogs do not hibernate at a set time every year, it mainly depends on the weather and how much natural food is available.

During October 2007 we had a flurry of healthy hedgehogs brought to the Hospital having been picked up at night by well meaning people, all because a



A REAL HANDFUL baby hog

popular wildlife programme on television had said that hedgehogs hibernate in October!

As a good general rule, hedgehogs spotted during the night are usually fine however a hedgehog seen out in the cold (whatever the time of year) is in trouble.

Hibernation is all about conserving energy. As the weather gets colder, the hedgehog's food supply of beetles, worms etc becomes more difficult to find.

A hedgehog would use up more energy looking for food than it gets



Life as a hedgehog



Babies get a good start in life.

from the food it does find. By hibernating it uses as little energy as possible until the warm weather and abundant food supplies return in spring.

Before hibernating, the hedgehog needs to build up good fat reserves to provide the energy to keep the hedgehog alive during hibernation. This can make up one third of the body weight in the autumn.

During hibernation, the hedgehog's body temperature drops and the heart and breathing rate slow down.

The hedgehog wakes up every week

Look before you light



SOME of the most horrific injuries are burns caused by bonfires. Hedgehogs find a pile of branches and garden rubbish and immediately set up home as this is a perfect environment to build a nest. The bonfire pile is often left undisturbed for days or even weeks so the hedgehog has no idea of the danger it will be in when the pile is lit. This can so easily be avoided: either move the whole bonfire on the day it is to be lit, or start a small fire a little distance away and feed the fire from the original pile.

or so during hibernation. It may venture outside if the weather is mild or it may not leave the nest, slowing down into hibernation again. This occasional waking is essential for the hedgehog to survive hibernation.

Hedgehogs do not hibernate in the open – they make a robust nest of dry leaves and hibernate in the middle, completely hidden from view. A curled up hedgehog in the open in daylight is NOT hibernating, it is simply too weak to make it back to its nest.

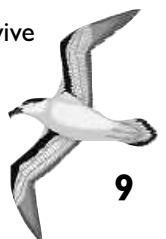
The nest or hibernaculum is very important as it has to insulate the hedgehog throughout the winter. The insulation obviously serves to protect the hedgehog from the cold but also maintains a constant temperature in the nest, even when the odd mild spell raises the outside temperature.

Dry leaves are essential. The hedgehog

chooses a suitable site in a pile of twigs and branches, or under a shed for example, then collects leaves in its mouth and stuffs them into the centre of the nest. It then circles inside the nest pulling the leaves into position with its spines so they are all lying the same way.

A good nest will be made of lots of dry material such as twigs, leaves and even plastic bags with the centre being a ball of closely packed leaves up to four inches thick. This is an important reason why hedgehogs shouldn't be released in an area where hedgehogs are not naturally present.

Even though there may be plenty of food and adequate nest sites during the warm summer months, if there are not enough dead leaves from deciduous trees in the autumn the hedgehog will not be able to build a proper hibernaculum and may not survive hibernation.



*Birds of prey
going back
to nature*

Out into the big



ROOM WITH A VIEW The hacking aviary in position and inset, an excellent view of their surroundings.



MANY thanks to Raptor Rescue for donating another of their very well designed hacking aviaries to Gower Bird Hospital – it found a use very quickly!

“Hacking” is a falconer’s term for allowing young birds their freedom to develop flying and hunting skills. The hacking aviary is designed to provide shelter and a good view of the new environment.

At the back of the aviary is a tube so food can be put in each day without the birds seeing people approaching – this is very important as becoming too used to people would do them no favours when released into the wild.

Part of the roof of the aviary can be opened using a pulley system – again out of sight of the birds. Food is still provided after the aviary is opened so that the youngsters can practise their hunting skills but still come back for a meal if they don’t catch anything.

In July 2007 a young barn owl was found on the ground at a school in Aberdare. The RSPCA were called and they brought it to Gower Bird Hospital.

At the Hospital we examined the rather thin bird and from the feather growth we were able to estimate it was around seven weeks old. At this age it was still dependent on its parents to bring food but it wasn’t possible to get the youngster back to the nest.



As it was in poor condition, there was also doubt about the parents being able to feed it, so we had no choice but to rear it and hack it back to the wild.

At the Hospital we have a freezer kept full of various food items including fish for seabirds and chicks and mice for birds of prey. The barn owl was set up in a privacy unit and took readily to defrosted mice, eating five mice a night. As it was old enough to eat the mice itself, contact with people was kept to an absolute minimum so that it wouldn’t associate people with food.

We knew that this baby barn owl would need the company of another barn owl to develop the necessary social skills needed in the wild and to reduce the possibility of mal-imprinting. Two days later, just as we were about to start ringing other wildlife hospitals to find a companion, the school rang us to

say another young barn owl had been found and the RSPCA would be bringing it to us the same day.

It duly arrived, was reunited with its sibling and wolfed food down just as enthusiastically. While it was sad that both youngsters had got into difficulties, at least they were together again which greatly improved their chances of surviving in the wild.

Four days later they had both gained weight and were transferred into a much larger aviary outside to get more exercise. We chose a suitable site for their release and transported our portable hacking aviary to the location. We also equipped the aviary with an infrared CCTV camera to observe the birds without disturbing them.

THE barn owls were fitted with British Trust for Ornithology (BTO) rings and moved into the hack aviary. Food was supplied each evening through the tube and the aviary was opened a month after they had arrived.

Both barn owls left the aviary the same night. When we watched the recording the next day, we were very relieved to see both barn owls flying back for the food.

They needed to practise catching their own food but this wasn’t going to happen overnight – normally the

To page 11



wild world



Adult tawny owl.

From page 10

parents would be helping them out – so we continued to supplement feed the owls for several weeks.

After a couple of weeks there were odd nights when only one owl would come back to feed or maybe neither of them. Then an amazing piece of luck: we were still recording every night and one night we saw one of

the owls bringing up a pellet.

Owls eat all of their prey and then regurgitate the indigestible fur and bones. We dissected the pellet, looked at the bones under a microscope and identified the remains of a field vole and a common shrew. This was a fantastic result as it was positive proof the owls were

successfully finding food for themselves.

We continued to supply food but less and less was eaten as the barn owls improved their hunting skills and became independent, living freely in the wild.

Chick alert

Many species of raptors (birds of prey) arrive at the Hospital including barn owls, tawny owls, buzzards, sparrow-hawks, red kites and kestrels. We always try to return chicks to their parents but



Tawny owl chicks.

youngsters that can't be returned to their parents have to be hacked back like the barn owls.

Recovered adults are always returned to the area where they were found — if released into an area they are not familiar with they could starve to death as they would not be able to immediately hunt successfully.

Tawny owl chicks are often found on the ground and picked up by well-meaning people. Tawny owl chicks will often climb around the nest site and sometimes tumble to the ground but the parents will continue to feed them and the chicks (unlike barn owls) are capable of climbing back up the tree trunk using their beak and talons.

If you find a healthy, uninjured tawny owl chick on the ground, the best thing to do is lift it back up into the tree to lessen the chances of someone else picking it up.



Without whom all this would not be possible



INTENSIVE CARE Michelle monitoring a hedgehog recovering from anaesthesia in our veterinary unit.

GOWER Bird Hospital has more than 40 volunteers doing all sorts of things to keep Gower Bird Hospital running.

During 2006/07 we secured a grant for the employment of a volunteer coordinator.

Although the grant funded position has ended, having a designated person was a great help and did actually co-ordinate our volunteers!

A huge thank you to all our volunteers (old and new) who do everything from hands-on work at the Hospital, veterinary work, administration, record keeping, maintenance, website design, accounts, publicity and, of course, essential fundraising.

Thanks to donations, grants and fundraising, Gower Bird Hospital has a well equipped veterinary unit which includes an anaesthetic machine, operating/examination table, laboratory facilities, an autoclave for sterilising instruments and a full dispensary providing antibiotics,



EXPERT HANDS Brita at work.

analgesics and other essential medicines.

Our volunteers Brita Webb MRCVS and Michelle Rees Dip AVN (Surg) RVN can arrive and get straight to work helping many of our patients who need professional veterinary treatment. The running costs of the veterinary unit are around £1,500 a year.

Many thanks to Brita and Michelle who donate their valuable time to Gower Bird Hospital.

Having on-site veterinary facilities means that we don't have to drive our patients to and from veterinary surgeries which greatly reduces the stress of already traumatised birds, hedgehogs and other wild animals.





THE GOOD AND THE GRIM
Louise releasing hand-reared house martin — and cleaning AstroTurf for the aviaries.

A volunteer's tale

MY name is Louise. I was studying for a degree in environmental conservation when I came to volunteer at Gower Bird Hospital.

I went for a 'get to know you' meeting with Karen, Simon and Cheryl, feeling very nervous – I needn't have worried, they were friendly and down to earth.

What impressed me the most was their willingness to learn and their openness to suggestions from others – they never profess to know it all and are constantly looking for ways to improve the hospital and the care for their patients.

Since then I have spent as much time as I can working there, doing the nice and the not so nice (sometimes smelly and mucky) jobs.

Feeding and treatment usually starts my day, followed by cleaning and improvements such as repainting the

facilities. In the summer, feeding of the nestlings carries on throughout the day and you are constantly admitting patients, there is little time to carry out maintenance but cleaning is always important.

The aquapens constantly need to be sterilised and power-hosed, one of the dirtier jobs I do. However, when I see the seabirds washing in the water I know the smelly fishy job was worth it.

The atmosphere at the hospital is quiet and calming and since working there I have really come to appreciate the usefulness of the CCTV, I handle patients as little as possible and am constantly being trained so that I cause as little stress to the animals as possible.

I am amazed at the huge area that the Hospital get their patients from – the nearest equivalent wildlife hospital is in

Taunton in Somerset.

The RSPCA brings almost all the wildlife casualties it collects to Gower Bird Hospital as there isn't an RSPCA wildlife hospital in Wales.

I suddenly understand the importance of fundraising and help out at any fundraising events I can – without funds Gower Bird Hospital simply wouldn't be here and the wildlife casualties would have nowhere to go.

For me the best part of the job is the release of the animal and when the post-release monitoring I undertake shows that they are successfully surviving in the wild.

I am constantly learning about the ecology of the patients, as well as the best methods of treatment. I hope to continue to learn from all the staff at the hospital and like them I hope I will never stop.



Money, money, money

It currently costs around £50,000 a year to run Gower Bird Hospital which is a comparatively small amount for the work we actually do – an average of £30 per patient.

Gower Bird Hospital relies on donations, grants and fundraising – no donation is too small, every pound is very much appreciated.

Standing orders are also most welcome as they allow us to plan for the future knowing that funds are coming in. Many people donate by cheque but if you prefer to use plastic you can now donate securely online via our website
www.gowerbirdhospital.org.uk

Occasionally we receive donations in lieu of flowers at funerals. We are always touched by this act of kindness at a sad time and feel honoured to be chosen – many thanks.

Sponsored events

□ Our regular fundraising hero **Rhydderch Wilson** ran the **2007 London Marathon** raising almost **£600** and is running in the **2008 Cardiff Marathon for Gower Bird Hospital**.

□ **Rob** ran the **2007 Snowdonia Marathon** raising over **£100**.

□ Just to prove a sponsored event doesn't have to be athletic, **Vicky of Llanelli** organised a sponsored **Mince Pie Munch** – many thanks to **Nicholas, Gareth, Cathy, Haylee, Scott and Jordan** who raised **£140!**

□ We can provide sponsor forms for anything that takes your fancy – just get in touch.



SIZE IS NOT IMPORTANT – we do our best for all the wildlife that is brought to Gower Bird Hospital including wood mice.

To those who make it happen

WE would like to thank The Gower Society, Jean Sainsbury Animal Welfare Fund, The Llysdinam Trust and Gower Friends for grant funding and donations and Raptor Rescue for the donation of a hacking aviary.

Many thanks also to the RSPCA who collect wildlife casualties and bring them to Gower Bird Hospital – without the RSPCA many patients wouldn't get to the Hospital to receive the specialist care they need.

Many thanks also to shanty group Baggyrinkle for their donations of £147 from their many performances, Tawe Vets in Sketty for over £300 raised through waiting room sales and raffles, Murton Short Mat Bowls Club donated £25, Angela raised £20 by selling hand made greetings cards, Martin of Bishopston who not only volunteers at the Hospital but also gives talks to local groups and donates his fees (over £100 to date) to Gower Bird Hospital and the Plough and Harrow, Bishopston for donations raised through their pub quiz.



... it's all thanks to you



MILK OF HUMAN KINDNESS A year's supply of the special milk needed to hand feed orphaned hedgehogs costs £170.

Every little helps

IMPORTANT funds come in through our collection boxes, we now have over 50 in and around Gower bringing in £2000 a year. Special thanks to Fay of Pennard who found new shops willing to host our collection boxes and raised over £200 in 2007.

Gower Bird Hospital also raises vital funds through eBay, the internet auction site.

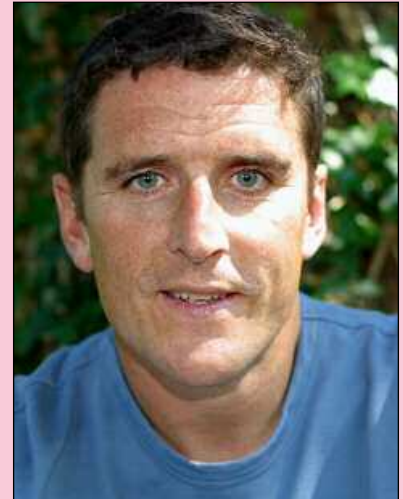
Many thanks to Sarah of Gorseinon

who deals with all the technology and has raised over £1300 selling donated items since 2005. Donations of easy-to-post small ornaments and costume jewellery are very welcome.

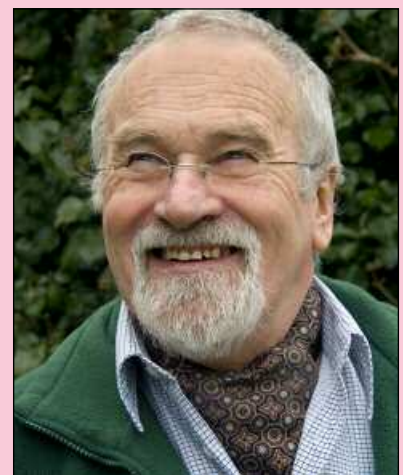
There is also a facility on eBay for individuals selling items to donate a percentage to their chosen charity and we are grateful to everyone who has nominated Gower Bird Hospital, donating £160 in the last two years.

If you would like to send us a donation but the form is missing from this magazine, please make cheques payable to Gower Bird Hospital and send to the address overleaf or you can donate via our website. Please include your name and address for our mailing list.

Words of support



□ **Gower Bird Hospital is a shining example to all wildlife rehabilitation centres** naturalist **Iolo Williams.**



□ **I am delighted to have Iolo as a fellow patron, as this reinforces the excellent quality of ongoing work at Gower Bird Hospital** Paul Llewellyn.



Back to the open water



A great crested grebe being released where he was found at Eglwys Nynydd. He arrived at the Hospital with a large wound across the front of his neck and chest. Brita, our vet, anaesthetised him and carefully stitched the wound.

This sort of injury is always complicated in water birds as it has to heal perfectly — any gap in the plumage can act like a leak in their waterproofing. As these birds are adapted to spending all their time on the water, any

deficiency in their waterproof plumage could be fatal as they wouldn't be able to successfully hunt for fish.

After two weeks recuperating in one of our aquapens, we were very relieved to see him constantly floating, feeding and preening in the water — a sure sign that he was completely waterproof and could be released.

Many thanks to Brita for her excellent surgical skills!

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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