



**THE
HARTBEAT
CHRISTMAS 2019**

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Well folks, here we are again; where on Earth does the time go? Firstly, can I say that I hope you've all had a great 2019. We've had a **mega** one, especially on the baby birds and other wildlife front. The saying is you learn something every day and that's just what we've been doing. We thought we had all of our diets and potions to suit whatever we might be helping, finding that fluids are the most important to alleviate the dehydration. However year on year we're discovering new methods. Our one greatest achievement this year has to be **Harriet** our **first ever** hand reared **British hare**. I've never before been lucky enough to hand rear one, as they are so very shy and timid. Harriet came to us via that famous Facebook, from someone that regularly takes her dog around a field in Warwickshire - a typical farmers field full of cattle and weeds. You may or may not know that British hares, unlike the rabbits, do not use holes or burrows they go for clumps of high weeds or hedgerows which make them very vulnerable. The lady was unaware that a family of hares was just a few yards off her daily walk. One fine morning her dog stood still, started to growl and the lady heard a loud screech. It turned out to be a common buzzard which hit one of the clumps of weeds and took off straight away with an adult hare. She carried on around the field only to spot another buzzard landing near the same spot and sadly it turns out the second bird took off with a baby hare. Her dog went to investigate the area finding two baby hares remaining. Fair play to her she didn't leave them to suffer and sure enough she found out about Hollytrees and brought the pair of them in to us!



As I mentioned, I've never had the opportunity to hand rear baby hares before. After a few calls to **Amicus Vets** and **Vale Wildlife** I had a plan and a task before me. We set about

bottle feeding them every hour religiously, our devoted staff and volunteers rising to the occasion as always. Unbeknownst to us one of them must have had a deep rooted injury or birth defect and passed away 10 days or so after coming in, however Harriet chugged on. She is now 6 months old and living quite happily in our back grass area, using the shrubs and pot plants to hide from us. We've found as with a lot of wildlife mother nature takes over and she always runs and hides when we, or anything else, approaches her. I intend to keep her safe until the spring when we can find a secret location with other hares and give her the **freedom** she deserves. It works with most of our rescues, whatever the species. It is so very rewarding and indeed humbling to raise an animal or baby bird that is in trouble through no fault of its own. This year has been absolutely mind blowing; the different species and the happy endings have been really worthwhile. I must thank you all who help by bringing in these unfortunate creatures, not to mention the donations that you good people make to Hollytrees.

While we accept and help **everything** that comes to Hollytrees can I ask you good people to keep a special eye out and look after our **hedgehogs**. Nice **dry shelter boxes** with cat food and water, preferably **rain** or **bottled water**. They are going through a very bad patch at the moment and I feel very strongly that one of the bigger culprits to blame are **slug pellets**. There are some safe pellets about so do try and be careful. Pigeons still remain on top of our wildlife rehabilitation cases. Hundreds, and I mean hundreds, mainly wood pigeons. They usually have one of three problems. The first problem is the weight; parents not able to build a strong enough nest to support themselves and the nearly fully fledged babies. Wind and rain is disastrous for them. Luckily these babies usually just need a few weeks of monitoring and feeding up before they're ready for release. Being so far along in development they're already wild enough that it doesn't take long to give them their freedom. Second problem is some parents start off feeding on what is called pigeon's milk, which is regurgitated into the baby from it's mom. After a few weeks the babies start to take more solid food, also regurgitated directly into the baby's crop. Depending on where the parents source their food from some get wheat which has not been shelled and the husks can be pointed and sharp which scratches the youngsters throat and can lead to an infection called **Canker**. This is a slow and painful death unless treated, **but** it can be **beaten** with tablets if we get to it in time. The third thing which we can't do much about unfortunately is predation. Whether by cats, hawks, crows or sometimes worst of all magpies who will target a young pigeon aiming solely for its food crop; they will **rip** in to get the food out and **leave** the fatally **wounded youngster**. Any we have with such injures we clean up and attempt to suture the wound using stainless steel surgical staples or cat gut. It is amazing how much these youngsters can take and bounce back from. Another little secret in rearing the baby pigeons is to use **Ready Brek**. We soak it in warm water and using a 60ml syringe that we get donated we literally syringe the crop full. All these need to be fed and cleaned, multiple times a day. For the other baby birds that we get in such as blue tits, robins, sparrows, goldcrests, wrens we will use an expensive bird hand rearing formula that our good friend Terry put us on to, it works an absolute treat. So folks if you really want to help us as well as our usual donations such as duvets and

newspaper, we can always use syringes, plasters, bandages, micropore tape; in fact any first aid stuff which, even when it has gone out of date. We get a lot of these donations in from doctors and hospitals when they're no longer allowed to use them. A huge thank you to the **Royal Orthopaedic** especially who are always very good to us.



Another plea we make now and again is for nice clean newspaper which we use all the year round. We use an **industrial shredder** to create shredded paper which is brilliant as bedding for all sorts of animals; it's really warm not to mention super absorbent. Sometimes we get brand new bundles of unsold newspaper which is a god send, so keep your eyes open, we can collect if needs be. Used quilts, blankets, curtains as always are more than useful. We have a fantastic couple from Redditch who come and pick up some of the quilts and the curtains and cut and sew them into really useful sized dog beds which are even easier to use and so easy to wash. I would also like to thank our regular donors of animal and bird feed all year round. Especially so in the spring when we are inundated with all sorts of wildlife from **Goldcrests**, Britain's smallest bird, to a massive red deer which only just fitted in the back of our van! We get lots of calls to help with deer. Most are the **Muntjac** deer which are so tough they nearly always recover from their injuries. We've had them just down the road from Hollytrees; one ended up destroying green houses, glass cold frames and a sliding conservatory door before collapsing in a garden pond with about 20 koi carp! Once you get a bag or blanket over the head you can do almost anything with them, it's only fear. A favourite for them is to wedge themselves under car or vans. This is ok if it is a parked vehicle. But a lot of the time they choose a moving one which usually results in them receiving a nasty burn off the vehicle exhaust. Thankfully that can be treated easily enough with the farmers favourite **purple antiseptic spray**. Even if they receive a break or dislocation we have access to a good old vet friend of ours who will come out and treat them. I think the secret is to half fill a stable with straw or hay so they can hide away and then either rabbit or pony mix food can be offered, preferably in the dark, and they soon start to eat. Dandelion leaves, raw cabbage and sprouts are also a favourite but keeping away seems to be the key. That's what we do with them which is actually illegal with the muntjac deer because they are not native to this country. I've seen regulations from the RSPCA that states even if they are not injured, by law they have to destroy them! With my belief in **reincarnation** I don't want to come back as a muntjac deer thank you very much! We at Hollytrees always, and I mean always, do our best to help all animals and birds 24/7. You may agree or disagree but I find the bigger the charity or the bigger the department gets they tend to lose sight of what they are there to do. Sometimes bigger isn't always better. We do what we do at Hollytrees because we genuinely love doing it.

Speaking of love, Wythall and Hollywood had an interesting electricity blackout a couple of weeks ago. A **love sick swan** was chasing it's mate and decided to collide with some **high voltage cables** at the local substation, causing absolute chaos within a 1 ½ mile radius. The swan being chased escaped ok but it's mate came down a few yards away with slight **singeing** of one wing, thankfully nothing broken. When Emma and I got there the fire brigade, police and electricity board were all there. Cables were sparking and dancing on the ground so we had to wait for the OK before being allowed near. The swan didn't put up a fight, probably grateful for us removing it from the chaos. On the way back we noticed a lone swan on our neighbour, Robert Caldicott's, pond in Batemans lane. He allows us to release all sorts on his pond. After a check up at Hollytrees, which he passed, we set him free on the pond and **YES** it was his mate! He promised me that he will behave in the future! P.s that is him in the photo below just after being released onto the pond!



What a funny old world the animal welfare world can be. I may have mentioned last year how things change, sometimes not always for the best. When is someone going to put a **stop** to the naughty practice of **indiscriminate breeding** of any animal. Not only that but then allowing these animals to be advertised virtually free of charge, at extortionate prices and with **no home checking!** As long as the money is there you can get that animal and sometimes that is the end for that creature. We've had puppies brought into us where people have paid up to four or five hundred pounds **EACH** on Preloved and Gumtree, just to name a few; kittens for the best part of a hundred pounds. No vaccinations, no flea treatment nor any worm treatment. How do they sleep at night. Also more important where are these poor things coming from? I'm not joking I can foresee in the near future we are going to go back to the way we were some 20+ years ago - packs of dogs everywhere. People won't be able to afford vet fees, they're astronomical now so what's it going to be like in 5 years! Our dog wardens are doing a brilliant job practically helping the situation, with the resources they have available. I remember so well the very first dog warden for Birmingham. He was a complete and utter gentleman; **Mr Alan Hutchinson**, a retired police dog handler. He was so good with the people as well as the dogs he had to deal with. I can confirm he was thrown in at the **deep end**. But he did it. What I found good about him was if he had **any** problem dogs or situations he would **always** come to me for help as did his boss at the City's Environmental Health Department; another well respected

officer Mr Graham Taylor. I'm not kidding you I should write a book about the times I had during the start up of the dog warden service! Nowadays they're run by young Vicky Allwood who, carrying on the tradition, isn't afraid of getting stuck in and helping out the poor creatures she finds. First and foremost the animal's welfare is top priority. You never know what might be brought through the doors at Hollytrees, or ask for help over the phone. It can be anything from sheep **escaping** from **Halal slaughter houses** in Birmingham or asking us to help trap three semi-tame mongooses, **YES MONGOOSES**. They had been living in the Stetchford area for 3 years in the security of an elderly persons complex. They were monitored using the CCTV system and yes they decided that the trio, mom, dad and junior were not causing any trouble. The local cats and fox colonies respected them. We spent several hours trying to catch them but they were having none of it, so as they say - live and let live! P.s. with the sheep we have a few each year but I always make it clear that **no way** will they go back to the slaughter house. We usually get help from Maureen and Jo from the Bromsgrove Farm Animal Sanctuary, thank you for doing your bit. We've helped each other out a fair few times in the past and it is so nice to work alongside **GENUINE** rescue groups.

We still get calls from our friends at the Highways Agency, what fantastic people they are to ask for help when an animal is in peril. They can come on the phone with anything, anytime. We never know what we are going to deal with; deer, dogs, swans, seem to be the norm but once I recall having a call about a seventeen strong herd of cattle which were on the M6 northbound! I had one especially good helper that day who saved a lot of running around: **Mandy my German Shepherd bitch!** She was fantastic! It was dark and raining with blue lights everywhere. Thank god it was 7.30pm so the traffic had eased off by the time I arrived. The police had closed the M6 at junction 5 with the herd quite settled. We just needed to find somewhere safe to pen them in. At this time I remembered on a few occasions I had with the removal of clinical waste for Mr John Speer who along with Mr John Daft ran the Veterinary Clinic on Chester Rd in Erdington. The Birmingham City Council had a recycling centre in Tameside Drive, a dead end road only one way in and out, which is under the M6. So we decided to turn them around and drive them back the way they came off junction 5 onto the Chester Rd and turned them into Tameside Drive. Mandy was brilliant she barked when needed to and she was on a long Flexi lead which seemed to mesmerise the cattle. We found a unit which was up for sale, the gates were unlocked thankfully; in they went and gates tied up, **JOB DONE**. Now that the cattle were secure somewhere they couldn't hurt themselves or the public, the police took over the situation; I never did find out who they belonged to. But mine and Mandy's jobs were done.

But as I was saying before, there are some **genuinely naughty** goings on which worry me. Why are **hundreds** of dogs coming in from Ireland, Spain, Romania, Portugal and the like? They're coming in legally; all neutered, vaccinated, chipped etc. Most of them are from **death row** centres where they may have even been born in the centres! What worries me is the fact that these poor things have been kenneled for so long they often do not know what love or kindness is. They get them to walk on a harness and over here they come.

Trust me I do see the other side of the coin. However, these dogs have been brought up on the streets with people shouting at and abusing them. They get over here, absolutely panic stricken and at the first opportunity they will **break out**. I've seen them chew through chain link and wooden fencing, dig holes, climbing all types of walls, escape is the only thing on their minds. As you must already know I'm usually the man with the van who often ends up catching them. Believe me they can be a challenge. Especially when you know some countries use all sorts of methods, snaring in particular is common in Spain and Portugal. Every case I go out on is different but we usually succeed. These creatures go into survival mode and **TRUST NO ONE**. I'm not against these poor creatures coming over but they must be given **more time to socialise** them or tell people exactly what they are taking on. Don't get me wrong quite a few do make it and are grateful for you helping them out. But there are so many that are running the streets here, with more being brought over every day, that I worry about how things will end up.



If you do visit us at Hollytrees please be aware we currently have a rescue that **won't leave** us and who loves to swoop in on unsuspecting visitors! His name is Jack and yes he's a Jackdaw. He came to us as a youngster and was treated as a wild bird but Jack thinks otherwise! Our policy is to treat, mend, raise then release. I make sure as with our own local wild birds there is always good quality food available. We feed two varieties of insect and fat balls, suet blocks, sunflower hearts, niger seed, live mealworms, wheat, waste dog and cat food, something for every species, all through winter and summer and thank god mother nature takes over and they go their own way. Not so the case with Jack. It happened a few years ago with Joe the Crow, if you remember, what a pain he was. He could undo a normal padbolt and pull the metal gate open. He'd fly off and terrorise the Cat's Protection next door, and if you happened to walk past or whistle on the allotments he'd fly into action; jewellery, badges, ears and noses were his favourite. He's still going strong with a good friend of Hollytrees - Chris, who always helps us out with crows, jays, etc., so **watch out Jack!**



Speaking of all of this rescue work we've been up to, I've got to mention one person without whom I **wouldn't** have been able to grow Hollytrees to what it is today. Yes you've guessed it my partner in crime, my **darling wife**. Hand on my heart she's an absolute cracker and puts up with a lot! Thank you Ann. We as a family had a lovely surprise this summer. Our youngest daughter Emma, I say young but believe it or not she's 18 now, decided to take up ladies American Flag Football. She took to it so well that she was chosen to play with Team GB's Gold squad and represent England in the European Championships that were held in **Jerusalem, Israel** - and guess what? Team GB got a **Silver medal!** Fantastic result, keep it up mate we love you loads. Talking of daughters we've still got others that have made their mark in life. Middle one Laura studied at Nottingham University and has chosen to study mental health care and helps run a unit up in **Yorkshire** for students and the younger generation. You may recall she was the first young poet laureate for Worcestershire. She's worked for the Cotswold's outdoor company as a buyer. Last but not least we've still got our Wendy who has been working at this complete madhouse since leaving school. Can I just say what a flaming good job she's doing. She keeps me on the straight and narrow and as you all should know by now what a tough job that can be. She's taken over my paperwork side of the boarding kennels which I must admit is not the easiest side of this place. It's been more difficult than usual this year with new rules and regulations coming in. As luck would have it we at Hollytrees are up to date and remain in touch with the latest changes, most of which are common sense but some could easily throw unprepared businesses into disarray. It has certainly caused some catteries and kennels in the area to shut down. We're very proud of our set up and thankfully it passed with flying colours. The boarding is my and my families only source of income; the rescue work and catching is **100% voluntary** and I much prefer to keep it that way. Another blow to the kennels and boarding accommodation world is the fact that the Top Hat 'n' Tail Boarding Kennels at Bickenhill had to close down. The whole complex has been compulsory purchased for the HS2 development. They used to not only board a large amount of pet dogs but were also a quarantine kennels and West Midlands police used them for any dangerous dogs. Leaving them in there for weeks awaiting court cases and the like. In other words there are **not enough** cattery or kennel spaces which puts a lot of pressure on existing kennels like ours. But with the team I've got here: Tracy, Wendy, Adam, Sophie and our horde of volunteers, too many to name, what a fantastic and loyal group you all are.

No better time than now to acknowledge our good friend the late **Ed Doolan**; I say it so often, how we do miss him. All the problems that he solved for people, animals and indeed the jobs he found for us; **200% teamwork**. A big thank you to Christine, his good lady wife for allowing him to work with us, that's what I call a brilliant legacy.

I have to take a moment to remember all our loyal supporters who have passed on this year, so many lifelong friends. There are too many to name and not to mention far too many stories to tell! I seem to be going to funerals almost weekly these days. Wherever you are now, I hope you all know you're still in my heart and thoughts and indeed are present in the very

foundations of Hollytrees. The support you all gave us translated in to many unfortunate lives saved. **Bless you all.**

On a final note can I thank each and every one of our supporters. Whatever support you offer, whether it's getting stuck in at the centre, donations either monetary or physical or even just moral support. We couldn't do a fraction of what we do without you. I can honestly say from the bottom of my heart that the animals are ever so grateful. I'm going to make another promise in 2020 to try my best to do smaller newsletters, and more often, throughout the year. Whilst I'm thanking you all it feels like a prudent time to mention what a lovely system we have for thanking you lovely members and anyone who thinks enough of us to write and donate, not just money but **bedding, blankets, quilts, towels and bric-a-brac**. I do like to acknowledge you and feel it's only right to thank you either in person or by way of a written note and receipt and for that I've got to mention young Sue Bagnall, whose family have supported us from the word go. She comes to Hollytrees and answers every single letter and donation with me, thank you ever so much Sue for your help. I do get told off by some members who say I shouldn't waste money on receipts and postage, and I do tend to agree, but that's up to you good people; If you would prefer not to receive an acknowledgment, please say so.

Well folks they're giving me the two minute warning to start wrapping up, so let me leave you till next time with this; Hollytrees is small and sweet and **here to stay!** To all of you good people from all of us here, have a great day!

Ray Dediccoat

P.s. I hope you all enjoy the Christmas Card.

On the front is me with one of our rescue dogs. I have to ask which one of us do you think is more photogenic? It has been a hotly debated topic around the kennels!

On the back is a lovely variety. Firstly me with our two oldest residents who belong to one of our oldest members! They're both over 20 years old but still going strong! Then our adorable **Luna**, another rescue who has landed on her feet after a rough start with some good friends of ours, Debbie and Barry. Next is yours truly with the **infamous Jack**, bringing me a chocolate wrapper—does that count as fat shaming?? Underneath you can see our two horses enjoying each others company in one of our fields. Next is one of our many rescue pigeons posing before being taken down to the flight aviary. Then there is one of our young kittens that was **abandoned outside in a cardboard box**, by the time we discovered it it was so cold that it was touch and go for a time! Bottom left is a fox that was brought to us with a suspected **broken back** after being clipped by a car. An emergency check up revealed it to thankfully not be that serious and some rest under a heat lamp with some good grub brought her right round. Bottom right is me posing with another one of our rescue dogs **Trixie**. We rescued her from a neglectful home, she's still with us looking for her forever home. She's wary around people and sudden movement so we're taking the time to find the perfect situation for her.