



THE HARTBEAT CHRISTMAS 2020

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Well well well, what on Earth is happening to this wonderful world we all live in? I hope that this newsletter finds you all **safe and well** in these **crazy** times. It has been a year like no other at Hollytrees. Ready to burst at the seams with wildlife and inundated with calls for rescue animals - but very little coming in!

Firstly let me say that all of us at Hollytrees are safe! We have so many restrictions in place we can't wait to get the green light to carry on as before. Sadly we've had a few members and friends fall to the Covid-19 virus. But we've ploughed on with our rescue work because there are **always** animals in need of our care! In the 35 years that I've been here at Hollytrees I've **never** seen this usually smooth run establishment in such **turmoil**. Just 6 rescued dogs, 4 adult cats and 3 kittens. But enough other rescue animals to be keeping us busy; chickens, rabbits, guinea pigs, our old rescue ponies and horses. And I must admit it has been one hell of a year for **wildlife**, right from the get go. Everything from pigeons to deer to foxes - **even bats** - have been pouring through the doors. But at least we accept them and do our best for them. Iris and Les Elliot who originally ran Hollytrees strongly believed in **reincarnation** and I tell you I believe in it also. Some of the things that have happened at this place you wouldn't believe! For those of you who haven't heard my favourite saying before; help **whatever** you can because you **never know** what you'll come back as! And that's why at Hollytrees our policy has always been to help **anything** brought to the door!

Without a doubt the number one thing brought to us are **pigeons**. All sorts of pigeons find their way to us. Most of them are babies that grow too big for the flimsy nests the parents build. Some high winds and heavy rain and down they come, too early. We don't mind though, they are so grateful and so easy to deal with. We use 60ml tube feeding syringes donated from various hospitals, which reminds me of a story I will tell you later. The supplies are generally all out of date and considered not suitable for human use, but there's nothing wrong with them and at least our animals get to **benefit** from them! Going back to the pigeons we mix **Ready Brek** with warm water and fill their crops up, at least 8 times a day.

Obviously what goes in must come out and that's where your donations of newspapers and towels all come in handy! As usual we've also had a large amount of seed eating and insectivorous baby birds such as finches, sparrows, tits, all a joy to rear. In fact we even had a couple of **Goldcrests** in, Britain's **smallest** bird. One survived but we sadly the other was clipped by a car and succumbed to his injuries. We honestly never know what's coming to our gate. One thing we use plenty of which isn't too nice are the **live mealworms**. They are irresistible to all sorts of animals, but especially the baby birds; not to mention so, so good for them. We start the insectivorous tiny babies off with a good dried cat food. We mince it up in a blender then mix the powder with some water then using a syringe straight into the bird like a worm, similar to the pigeons with the porridge. But once they're old enough the mealworms are great because not only are they full of **nutrition**, they also encourage nature to **take over**. The birds soon become independent enough to survive in the wild. Mealworms are the secret to all our bird life and indeed we even use them on bats and baby hedgehogs. A surprising favourite for the adult hedgehogs though is the day old chicks that we buy ready frozen from a firm in Evesham, 1000 at a time. Whilst a grim task they are also absolutely **essential** for the birds of prey we get in, especially any baby owls that get brought to us to hand rear. This year we had 2 Tawny owls and 3 Barn owls to rear and it delights me to say they were all able to be released! We **always** choose safe release sites but mostly we release here at Hollytrees. With woods either side of us, allotments over the road, it's a great place for wildlife. It saddens me to say again we seem to be the **only** centre to deal with wildlife, we get patients brought to us from **all over** the West Midlands. It's an all day job but what a rewarding one! The bit I like most is how at the start they rely 100% on you for food but then you start to notice them getting that little bit of independence, nature takes over and **off they go!** But as I mentioned Hollytrees is their safe base with all sorts of nutritious treats all year round!



Now talking of birds and wildlife we've had a case you **wouldn't believe**. The chap came over from Leamington to us with a Robin that had got **stuck in a glue trap!** I have heard this happens quite often but I've never seen one still alive before, usually we hear about them **too late**. The gentleman has had a rat problem but needed to put a stop them. He's a kind man he feeds the birds all year round, but the rats think it's for them, so he went to the local DIY shop. He wasn't confident with using poison so the shop sold

him a glue trap and told him to put it near or on the rat's run; they usually keep to a safe route due to them being very short sighted. All was well till the next morning when he found an innocent adult Robin **completely stuck** on this glue trap! All of its chest feathers, beak, all of its tail, even his legs were firmly flattened to the trap. Somehow he had heard about us after everyone telling him to kill it and put it out of its misery. Over he came with the poor thing, and even I thought, **what the hell can I do for it?** Only its eyes were moving. But then like I always say the spirits came through to me. I thought "*What about petrol or thinners or even paint stripper?*" We were all in the animal kitchen when something told me to look up on the top shelf to the left and what was sitting there? Yes, a yellow can of Ronsonol lighter fuel. My knees turned to jelly. I did a test area not near the bird and it rendered the glue **inert**, basically like water! I couldn't believe it! I poured a bit on his tail feathers and almost immediately he was able to lift his feathers up and off the board followed by his legs, **perfect!** The hardest was his belly and chest. We were so, so proud. Some of the feathers were stuck fast but that little fighter got himself off the board. All we had to do, using a paint brush, was clean him off as much as we could. We've had him 2-3 weeks and he's eating and drinking well. We're planning to release him back where he came from because Robins are so territorial. We're all so pleased with this **happy outcome**. I've come across these cruel devices before when field mice or even shrews have died after getting stuck. Most of the time they just give up. So please **DO NOT** use these **indiscriminate** and **inhumane** traps!



*Above left you can see the Robin stuck fast to the glue trap and on the right is him 5 minutes after his **freedom!***

Something else we've been busy with this whole year are all types of deer and thankfully we've been reasonably successful with them. Over the years we have learnt the best ways to deal with them based on their injuries. More often than not it's due to being hit by cars, so broken bones and limbs are the norm. We strap and plaster up where we can and place them in a small stable with deep straw for them to rest on. Horse food loose over the floor where they can mooch for it along with fresh grass, dandelions and cabbage. We have a **mobile CCTV camera** thanks to young Adam that we can put anywhere and monitor them. Incidentally he has the whole site covered with recording cameras, sadly a sign of the times we are in. Getting back to the deer though the **Highways Agency** are who we get a lot of our deer calls from. They are a

group of animal lovers over there. They either bring them to us or we go to them. Not just deer either; calls about dogs running the highways aren't uncommon. Some having **escaped** from cars after accidents and others whilst stationary at lights or petrol stations! Remember to always secure your pets whilst they're in your vehicle because you just never know. The traffic officers are genuine but they get hardly any help; apparently it's down to insurance cover. But we're always ready to help where we can.

I'd like to take a moment to **commend** all you fox feeders out there, keep up the good work. They need a bit of help, especially this time of the year. We've had plenty of them in the centre too. Usually as the result of traffic accidents, but we've also seen **fighting injuries** due to mating aggression. They're very territorial. I've seen it here with the foxes we feed; the alpha male will turn really nasty on his juveniles to make them find their own patch. We also get calls about the poor Foxes that get the dreaded **fox mange** which left untreated is a **KILLER**. I plead with you all to try and prevent it where you can. The very, very best thing to both prevent and cure are some tablets called **Flea Guard**. You can get them online or the only place I've seen them sold is Pets At Home. We use them as follows: to cure it in foxes that already have it you need ½ tablet every night for 10 nights then ½ tablet every other night for 10 nights, by which time your foxes affected skin should start to turn white. You then need to reduce to ½ tablet once a week. As a preventative ½ tablet weekly should suffice. They need the help with it, it's such an **awful** way to go out.

We've had a few rare cases this year but one that really stood out for me was a **Manx Shearwater** who was found totally exhausted in Sutton Park. In the many years Hollytrees has been open I've only ever had one in before! They look like a cross between a cormorant and a penguin! **Really different**. We always make a point of keeping food in to cater for all sorts and for these, like the many gulls we see every year, we keep a supply of small **sprats**. They all go crazy for sprats. Thankfully the Manx just needed a rest and was released back where he was found a few days later! Incidentally most of these gulls we take in have probably **never seen the sea**, but the ones that can be released go to an old friend of ours young **NICHOLAS HUMPHREY** who resides in Brixham down in Devon. He's a professional when it comes to all animals and birds, he knows everything. Thank you Nick, as always.



Above you can see another rare sight we had this year, two Kingfishers! As with the gulls they also enjoyed their fill of sprats! On the right is a baby Seagull who seemed to prefer skateboarding rather than learning to fly!

As you can see we never know what we're going to answer the phone to. For example, we had a call from a bloke to say his neighbour had been surprised with an uninvited guest at 7.30 that morning. It turned out to be a **juvenile swan**, on perhaps his maiden voyage! The taking off is generally fine, but it's the landing which is so dodgy. Usually they make mistakes such as a wet road looking like a canal or river or, like in this case, the roof of a large **conservatory** looking a lot like a **pond**! When we got there the people were so good. In the process of crashing he had removed 2 panels from the roof but he appeared uninjured. There wasn't enough room in the garden for him to run and take off, but he wanted out. With swans and geese the trick is not to give them a chance to plan their move; just go in, grab them and **immobilise** them as soon as possible. Then keeping the wings secure to their body, **bag them up**. With the proper carriers they are secure, comfortable and so much easier to deal with. To cut a long story short we brought him back to Hollytrees where we released him on our grass area. He started to eat immediately so as with all swans we contacted the **BEST** swan rescue out there. It was started many years ago by a young lady called **Jan Harringay** over in Droitwich. She's fantastic to all she takes in. Within an hour her right-hand man **John** was knocking on our door and off he went with him! I salute you good people. Geese have been getting into all sorts of problems as well. We've had several off Earlswood Lakes recently with fishing lure issues, wing injuries etc. We sort them all out eventually. A lot of the time it is bruising or muscle damage, they just need time and rest. Whilst we are talking of waterfowl I would like to say a **huge thank you** to one of our neighbours a Mr Robert Caldicott and his lovely wife Anne who own that **massive** and **fantastically well designed**, naturally fed lake in Batemans Lane. Robert and Anne allow us to release onto the lake and use it as a **rehabilitation** area. Thank you both! P.s. I've remembered Tiny Tom's name!

Now please sit yourself down because I have some Dediccoat family gossip for you all. Eldest daughter **Wendy** has come home to tell us that she has made Ann and I **GRANDPARENTS**. Yes you read correctly. On the 18th of July little **Amelia** joined us in the Dediccoat household and what an absolute **delight** she is. I call her my anaesthetic because after a long day at the kennels I head over to the house, get comfortable in my chair and they'll plonk her in my arms and no joke within minutes the both of us are **sound asleep**! I did reach the grand old age of **70** on May 8th this year which may have a small part to play in that! Before all the birthday celebrations however I was called into the wonderful **Royal Orthopaedic Hospital** to sort my left hip out! I can't praise these people enough believe me. I've suffered with my left hip for a few years now after a fall on the patio floor. At first I didn't take a lot of notice but after several months it got to the stage where I dreaded going to bed! Whilst I could get off to sleep fine the problem was when I rolled over in my sleep a series of **sharp pains** always woke me up. Then it would take an hour to get back to sleep. And the same would happen again. I got some help from our local GP and his fantastic team, but the issue never fully went away. Anyway I went to the Royal Orthopaedic where I was X-rayed, scanned,

poked and prodded, and then to my horror I was asked to please wait as one of the surgeons wanted to see me! A **Mr Dunlop** saw me and said "I know you..." Oh! I thought. Have I upset him somewhere along the line? It turns out he was a friend of **Ed Doolan** and he remembered me coming and catching the duck and ducklings which used to hatch out in the pond in the hospital's garden. As with a lot of the hospitals they have a quadrangle area with a pond as somewhere for the residents to enjoy. These are perfect for female ducks to fly in and hatch and raise their brood. However if the local crows and magpies spot them the patients and staff have to witness them **killing the distressed babies** and taking off with them! The other issue is of course everyone wants to feed the mom and sometimes 12-14 ducklings. What a mess it makes, and a haven for rats in no time! Then management made a rule across all the hospitals **NO FEEDING DUCKS**. Everyone was up in arms this included the Royal Orthopaedic, Heartlands, Solihull, Moseley Hall. Eventually someone reported into Ed's show, and we all know what happened then! As you all know Ed was **more** than an animal lover. The city erupted! Offers of safe houses for the duck families. People volunteered to help catch them. I even had one family who said they would camp out if needed. People wanted to trap the crows and magpies! In the end I used to wait for them to hatch out and I'd take up the offers of a **safe haven** where people could feed regularly and release them after 3 weeks; once the babies were less attractive as food. One interesting fact is no matter where we sent the mom and ducklings, the mother ducks would **always** return to their chosen nest site! So this ended up being something I would do year after year. The staff would let me know when she arrived, then as soon as they'd hatched they would be on the phone to me again! We still collect ducks from some of them to this day! I'll always remember two duck rescues in particular. The first was at a large house which had been turned into a very smart nursing home. Everybody was so concerned about these ducks but as with the others they created a health hazard. The issue was this family had decided to be different and make their nest in a really thick ivy clad wall, about **12 feet off the ground**. The staff had filmed the mom and dad calling the babies out from the nest onto the slab path below! It was amazing to watch and unbelievable that **none** were injured! The staff and residents had a collection for the HART charity because they were so pleased to know they were going somewhere safe. **Over £100** in the end! The second was in a proper **roof garden**. You'd never guess where, so I'll tell you it was the John Lewis shop in Solihull. Yes right at the very top where the staff had a fully equipped restaurant, changing facilities and restrooms. How the devil the duck found that safe haven I'll never know. She was a wise one. I swear she recognised my voice in the end. She had to be caught first so the babies wouldn't panic and disappear down the drainage system or even jump over the edge! The one year she flew off and kept us waiting **4 hours**, but we got her in the end. Now the staff at John Lewis donate loads of continental quilts samples to us. They're only a quarter of the size of a quilt but perfect for our dogs! Thank you all.

Now I have to take a moment to bring up something that is really **worrying** us all, the fashion of advertising **animals on the internet**. Preloved and Gumtree are the main ones. I strongly feel that it should be **banned**. It's just a pathetic way for people to make mega amounts of money, and I mean **MEGA** money. It's nothing but greed and stupidity. These poor creatures have **no home checks, no health checks**, as long as you've got the money you can buy whatever you want. And when you get fed up with it or you can't cope you simply put it back on the internet! I really don't know where it's going to end up. When I say mega money, I mean mega money. Take Jack Russell puppies for example, 3-4 years ago they were £100-150 but now they are **£800-1000!** Then you take the cross breeds like Cocka-poo, Jacka-poo or a Bich-poo and these are up to **£2000**; Labradors and German Shepherds are up to the **£3000!** And finally I do hope that all these animals receive the standard of care as they go through their life that they **deserve**. Don't get me started on the out of control veterinary fees. Vaccinations are being left for up to 3 months after being due when usually they'd make you start a whole new course if you're over by a day! And with this Covid-19 situation have you tried to get an appointment? What few dogs we've had in for rehoming we've had to hang onto for months waiting to get them neutered as our policy is **NOT** to rehome them unneutered, especially the females. 4 months we've had to keep some of them! But thankfully they've been done now and will be in their forever homes by the time you read this.

Well they're telling me to wrap up now so we can get this out the door to you good people! But before signing off I want to take a moment to **remember** and say farewell to the people who have left us this year. Hollytrees members and friends, both close and far away. It has been especially difficult this year; I've lost some very good and hard working friends, not just to the virus. Whilst you may be gone I will remember you all and appreciate everything you did to help the animals at Hollytrees. I've also got to mention how proud I am of our staff who have helped Hollytrees navigate this **crazy** year. Auntie Tracy who has been with us over 28 years now, still can't find a way to get rid of her! Adam who is the brains behind us at Hollytrees and is coming in to his 10th year with us. Young Sophie who has been with us 4 years now, she would barely talk when she first started but now we can't find the off switch! Oh and I nearly forgot eldest daughter Wendy who made me into **Granddad Ray**. Thank you all. Now I want to take some time to give my **sincerest** thanks to everyone who helps and supports what we do at Hollytrees. The saying is true that every little helps. From the physical donations of newspaper, bedding and food, to the monetary donations from the friends and members of Hollytrees and everyone who gives us words of encouragement. It all helps. A huge thanks to **Auntie Sue Bagnall** who helps me with the thank you letters and our treasurer extraordinaire **Annice** who handles our finances and makes sure every penny gets put to good use. Hollytrees strives on the generosity and kindness of our volunteers, we couldn't do as much as we do without your help. Sadly due to Covid-19 we have had to

restrict volunteers coming to help in order to keep the core staff and their families safe. We do dearly **miss you all** and when we finally see the back of this we can't wait to see you all again. In the meantime **PLEASE STAY SAFE**. A huge thanks to our regular volunteers who usually help me keep on top of this place. **Uncle Eric** who used to come 3 days a week and tackles any task I can think of; also thank you wife **Anne** for letting him come and play! **Young Matt** who is a changed man since he started volunteering with us. He used to come nearly every day and it seems to have caused all his hair to fall out! You ask him to show you the before and after photos! Mondays and Fridays we had **Belle** who would come to help with the cats and aviary birds, I'm certain she misses seeing them. I can't forget **Rob and Jan** who came up every Sunday to help me tackle the **MAJOR JOBS** like our log cabin base and Memorial Garden. Also **Heidi** who used to come and get stuck in over the weekend with her two girls. I also have to give a special thanks to our one and only **Little Sue** and of course her **3 little girls**. They do a fantastic job helping us rear hedgehogs, pigeons and seagulls. But they get into problems with the neighbours who don't like being bombarded by ultra tame pigeons and pooping seagulls!! The list could go on and on. But just know we miss you all and once this horrible virus has gone away we'll have to have a **MASSIVE Open Day to celebrate**; a good old fashioned get together!

We all wish you a very Merry Christmas and, it's got to be, a better New Year! Much love to you all.

Ray, Ann and everyone at Hollytrees xxx

P.S. Hope you've enjoyed the photos on the card this year. On the front you can see me with one of our rescue horses **Stella** who is now a permanent resident at Hollytrees! On the back you can see a variety of the different birds we've had at Hollytrees over the year. On the left is a hen with her two chicks and below you can see them all grown up! The babies soon grew to be taller than mom! The centre top is the juvenile swan who made the unexpected landing in the conservatory, with a Canadian goose we had in that morning. Below them are two of the Barn owls we reared this year. On the right at the top is a Black Headed gull who was clipped by a car; thankfully only minor bruising and was happily released a few weeks later. Below him is one of the many duck and ducklings we helped relocate this year. In that picture they are enjoying mooching for food on our driveway!

Here's to another wildlife packed year ahead of us!

