



THE



HARTBEAT

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Well, here we are again. What a few months we've had, I got the March newsletter no problems, but then a few things started to get a bit much for me I'm sorry to say and my reactive depression raised its ugly head. It has happened twice before, it's not nice at all but I always find the cause of it and this time it was no one's fault at all, but just pressure and no being able to solve the unwanted animal problems. But the reasons for the extra demand was that The Wythall Animal Sanctuary had a shut down for about two and a half months while they had a major rebuild, which needs to be done, we all need to improve our facilities. Then to add to this next door at The Cats Protection League had a mystery virus which shut them down for nearly two months, during this time the pressure was totally unbelievable in all directions - the phone, the gate and the worst was animals tied up and dumped, cats in proper carriers, cats in cardboard boxes, some had obviously broken out. It was most upsetting and it got to me and as I say to all who come to Hollytrees, while we have some lovely facilities for our rescues I have to be fair to the animals that we have here and, more importantly, I need to respect our hardworking staff, the job is hard enough and I believe you have to be fair to all. As luck had it I recognised the symptoms and I asked for help and I am now back in the saddle, fighting fit, I am grateful to my doctor and my family and friends who helped me get through it all and I must apologise to any of you who have made donations and have not been thanked, it is not my style not to thank you, as with the newsletters I am sorry they did not appear, I have now found someone to help me out and I will sort it out.

I personally thank you all for everything you all do for us at Hollytrees, I'm pleased to say our wheels have not stopped turning but, my word, the situations does not get any easier. Where does the time go? It's nearly the end of November and what a few weeks we have had, after such a wet winter I would have thought Mother Nature would find herself upside down, but she has triumphed with what I can only describe as a double comeback! We've never had so many baby birds and indeed animals, probably the most interesting this year was a litter of three baby shrews, Mom had been 'got' by a cat but a neighbour could hear these three tiny mites squeaking their little heads off. I've never, ever had a litter of shrews before, Adam, our right hand man, accepted them in and soon found out they were more advanced than we thought, obviously we didn't have a teat and bottle small enough so, amazingly, they lapped milk from the palm of Adam's hand - truly amazing!

We always use a milk called Cimmi -Cat which we have a 98% success rate with, Annice and Doreen, who always help us with anything that's orphaned.

(Doreen put us on to Cimmi-Cat and it works) Little Annie, two days old and rejected by her Jack Russell mom, weasels, ferrets, kittens, puppies and now shrews, foxcubs, leverets (baby hares) and baby rabbits, it works a treat as long as you have the experience and patience you can make it work and what a rewarding result!

The same goes for baby birds, over sixty we've helped already, from great tits to great big crows, they love live mealworms which we buy from Ebay, they get sent through the post packed safely in white woven nylon bags, either one, two or three kilos. We feed them and keep them the way they should be, they eat carrots to get moisture and eat horse bran, the only thing we have to do is squash their heads so they can't start biting the baby birds we are feeding! When you see a mother bird feeding you will see them go for the head of any insect to disable it before feeding it to their young, quite a few of our rescues have been baby birds from nest boxes which have built-in cameras and if there is a runt of the brood left people can see if it's not been looked after and shout for help. It's so much easier with really small birds, the younger the better, but another secret is to keep them wild and don't let them get too dependant on you, they need to be made aware of dangers such as cats, water and traffic! It's very rewarding and interesting to see their own natural instincts come out. More often than not they just need a little helping hand, another trick is to let them see other birds eating we have a very active bird table right in front of the animal kitchen and they soon catch on, another good source of food for baby birds and animals is dried cat food which we put into a food processor that turns it into powder to which we add water and, thanks to various hospitals which I can't mention who give us out of date syringes which are a godsend, the normal ones for baby birds and the ones they use for tube feeding people as they have much bigger ends ideal for crows, pigeons etc.

I would like to get two items of sadness out of the way, just to keep you updated, this place has a lot of happy endings but now and again we get some body blows which leaves us sometimes asking why, you may recall that the Christmas card for 2013 featured Jay-Jay, a beautiful jay bird that came to Hollytrees last spring, as did many others, we all took turns feeding him until he was fully fledged and off he went (or so we thought) four day later he returned, he was *obsessed* with his mealworms! I've never, ever had a bird so tame especially as we never tried to domesticate him. He would even bring me an acorn which he spat out and gave me in return for his mealworms, most of the day if I was out and about or some of the others, he was so happy to be with you, and indeed he would often be round entertaining the staff at The Cats Protection League, I'm not sure what the cats thought of him! (Continued on Page 2)



He was a true character and I had only to call or whistle him and he was there, he was free to roam and not caged at night, as free as a bird until my daughter Wendy

went down to open up for the chickens and rabbits and to her horror spotted a sparrow hawk on the lawn in a cover position, she clapped her hands to scare it away only to find our Jay-Jay with his throat ripped open and truly dead. That's nature I suppose but again I ask why Jay-Jay, never mind, some you win and some you lose.

The second bit of bad news is you may remember we had a lovely German Shepherd bitch brought in who had a mammary tumour which had burst and I had never seen such a mess in all my life! I can only imagine that she was penned up either on a balcony or in a shed for weeks if not months, her nails were at least one and a half inches long, three were growing into her pads and had gone septic, she was a long coated black and tan bitch and her tail and her trousers were one solid mat made of the gunk and rubbish from her tumour. I wanted to meet the 'thing' that had let her suffer in such a way, she was only a quarter of her proper weight with bad ears, but despite all her ailments I could not fault her temperament, she was loyalty on four legs. She let us bath her and administer soothing creams and she followed me everywhere, what a dog, what a credit to German Shepherds!

She was found in a cave at the back of the new Kings Norton cemetery by a lovely lady who saw her some two hours earlier and put two and two together, she jumped into her car like a dream, well done to this lady as the smell and mess was unbelievable. This was on a Saturday early evening and all we could do was to make her as comfortable as possible as the law states that as a stray dog she has to be reported to the council dog warden, which we did, but I did take her to our vets first and, once again, by law our vet could not treat her as her condition was not life threatening and more importantly she was not our dog, I was so hoping the vet would say okay, off with the tumour which had engulfed at least three of her breasts but when they gave her a thorough check over they discovered she was basically full of cancer and she must have been suffering for at least nine months. Birmingham Dog Wardens always do their very best for any animals and with all the cuts etc. they really do a fantastic job so they came out first thing on Monday morning and took her to their vets who straight away decided to end her suffering, sometimes the law is a little unfair. I would have given my right arm to have given her a few months pain-free and to let her know that not all people are cruel and I had witnessed the way she had responded to a little kindness, even down to the painkillers we had given to her, it was as if she knew we only wanted to help her, she was so active and happy - if only the cancer had just been in her mammarys then never mind the cost, she would have been saved. Anyway our vets suspicions were confirmed and within an hour of leaving Hollytrees in the dog wardens van (quite happy to travel) she was professionally and painlessly put to sleep.

I often wonder why with all the animals that we deal with get through the net that I try to keep up so that we don't get

emotionally involved, it's uncanny really, I mean why did she appear on a Friday when the dog wardens have finished and why did she find a kind lady who did all she could to help her? Another case of the spirit world playing it's part? The major fact of this case and all other cases is that a dog in law is classed as **Property**, obviously most dogs found wandering are generally there by accident and if the dog wardens are on the ball and get involved there is a fine to pay, the holding pounds are only obliged to keep your dog for **seven days**, after that period your dog can be rehomed, sold to other kennels or even be put to sleep, remember seven days only! So don't let it happen to your beloved pet! One thing I don't really understand is the fact that if you or even us find a stray dog we have to notify the dog warden first then do what they recommend, you can keep it but you must keep it for a minimum of twenty-eight days before it legally becomes your property and even a rescue centre have to comply with this ruling.

I have also been kept very busy helping people who have lost their dogs usually through no fault of their own and I have mentioned before the work of **Dog Lost UK** run by a group of volunteers and it really works, within a few minutes **Dog Lost UK** notify everyone to do with animals within a five mile radius of where the dog was lost, vets, kennels, rescue centres, dog training clubs, police, dogs homes, wardens, parks department and even the local council in case it's been knocked down on the road. That works for lost animals but you can also report if you have found a lost dog and believe me it's a brilliant system that works especially when this government cuts and cuts and we only have dog wardens between 9.00am and 4.00pm weekdays and more often than not, **Nowhere** to take a dog let alone get the help from a dog warden. To register it is free and quick, in most cases the animal and owner are reunited within a few hours, but especially this time of year a lot of dogs do not get claimed - unfortunately for many people they find it easier to get another dog at Christmas.

Fireworks frightened one of a group of dogs that decided to break out, as you probably agree with me that the noise factor of fireworks is so great nowadays they are more like explosions, one such dog was Dora who escaped on 10th November 2013 when she was bought over to the UK from Portugal where she had lived as a feral dog. When caught over there the authorities usually snare them which leaves them very sensitive around the neck area, to handle and overcome this a soft material harness is used. Dora was lost in a place called Gainsborough near to the seaside just down from Mablethorpe, to cut a long story short all the stops were pulled out to catch her but no way was she being caught! She lived on all the beaches living off washed up crabs, fish and as usual with these dogs they find someone who will feel sorry for them and feed them (Thank God).

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Also lots of people put out food for foxes and they survive.

This dog survived the bad winter and ended up in Cleethorpes, the major problem was that Dora was in danger as she was getting good food and putting on weight which unfortunately caused the harness to tighten and cut into her chest and under the armpits.

I can't remember who contacted us but Hollytrees has a good record for helping catch various dogs over the years as we eventually get our man, so to speak. We make our own cage traps and use good nets to catch, we all have practical experience to make the job easier, anyway, this Dora Dog was a Portuguese mountain dog which is almost as big as a St Bernard survived the winter but needed to be caught ASAP so Emma, my youngest daughter, set off to catch her. We set up a trap on a massive caravan park where she had chosen a small wooded area to literally make a nest, she stayed in the nest during the daytime, because the beaches became busy we did a drag trail around the perimeter and trails to the trap, all set we waited until about 11.30pm and she came as good as gold, obviously very, very worried and nervous, checking every noise. We waited and waited which is all you can do. At 4.20am she came around again, this time with company, a young half grown fox cub which got into the trap and set it off right in front of Dora! Needless to say Dora clocked the situation and I knew we were wasting our time, while we were there we met a lady called Julia who had done all the ground work, setting up a feeding pattern and discovering here Dora was hiding, she also laid the foundations for us to go into the caravan park and set up. Thank goodness she agreed to put all the food in the trap to build her confidence, after a fortnight she was going in nicely, up we went again and all set for 11.00pm to wait and by 12.35pm bingo we had her! down came the mesh door and she was caught. After just over **Seven Months** on the run we had her and she behaved 100% When Dora's owner Steve who incidentally had an apartment in Portugal was contacted by Julia he was in Portugal, she eventually got hold of him and arranged for him to come back and collect Dora from Hollytrees. What a reunion they had! It had all of us in tears, she didn't walk well on the lead and didn't recognise him at first so he lay flat out on the path and then she clocked him and went berserk! He paid for her to be vaccinated, spayed, micro chipped and passported to enable her to enter Britain, considering she had only been in the country ten days and that was over seven months ago. What a lovely experience that was but Dora is only one of hundreds of dogs all over the country, a lot of them are from Romania and are street dogs and they take a lot of convincing that some people are good and it was fireworks that upset Dora over here.



Moving on 2 gypsy cob foals were abandoned in a field next to Wythall Park, they have been rehomed after it took us nearly four months to feed them up, worm them out, vaccinate them and most importantly to socialise them, they were terrified, but thanks to Christine and Peter who run **Shirley Horse and Pony Rescue**, they found us a lovely lady who has taken the pair on and they doing really well.

Can I also tell you what interesting creatures we've had through Hollytrees? Probably the strangest and the most difficult was a cormorant, what a challenge that set us! I've never, ever had one in before in fifty years of doing this work, I've never even touched one, the poor thing was bought in to us after being found by a dog in a field in Lea End Lane, Hopwood. I've always thought they were sea birds but I've found out they are not and there are some on the Bittle Reservoir in Barnt Green and also on Bartley Green Reservoir, but hated by Alvechurch Fisheries. The cormorant was only a youngster, definitely this years bird and it had an injured wing which I medically strapped and I phoned our vets to see if they could sort it out, in this day and age a digital ex-ray is so effective and quick. I was very impressed when our vet said most see birds such as cormorants take a lot of rearing as they shut down with human contact, she suggested that the strapping up was good but get it to eat first before you spend money on it! How right she was, both Adam and myself had some real struggles with this one, the end of it's beak was curved and came to a needle sharp point and with the strength in it's neck which it used as it would strike out at anyone he could catch, we had to force feed him to start with and what a game we that was, I always keeping a variety of food, fish etc. in the freezer. I managed to get sprats down him with great difficulty because as well as the sharp spike at the end of his beak were the lower beak sides were like a serrated knife. We varied his diet along with bottled water to drink (I never use tap water on any of our wildlife, we may be okay with fluoride but not animals or birds) Sadly after eight days we lost him as he just gave up, but we did try.

Another interesting one we had in was a wild mink, unfortunately it was already deceased when we got to it, it was a road accident and we were told it was a ferret! Wow, they are incredibly muscly with very strong, large teeth and what a coat it had.

On a very practical note when we do the very best for wildlife and we lose the fight, I always keep the body and into the freezer they go, hopefully one day I will come across a **Taxidermist!**

Horses still remain to the top of the Hollytrees list of problems and, my word, there are loads out there in need of help, especially this time of year. When the grass is going and good food is needed to keep them going and keep them in their fields, only last week on the A435 Hollywood Bypass a very lucky motorcyclist hit a pony which had got out of a field in Crabmill Lane, the pony was killed instantly and the motorcyclist only suffered minor cuts and bruises but his bike was written off. This happened at 5.30am, very sad for the pony but things could have been a lot worse.

One good friend we have with any horse issues is **Jane Bignall**, she has a solution for any equine problem. She had several dogs off us, as has her lovely mother, young **Val Lewis**, who's been connected with Hollytrees for years, she was one of the top reporters with the local papers and Central Television, she was brilliant, especially with animal stories, even when Iris and Les Elliott ran Hollytrees **Val** would help wherever she could. **Jane's** dad **Tom** was also good with animals, mainly horses, and would provide horse transport to anywhere in the country. Sadly Tom is no longer with us, but to Val and of course Jane also - we thank you.



We had another pleasant surprise in September when we rehomed two of our adult cats to **Paul James** and his mother whose been a member of **H-A-R-T** for years. Paul came over and chose the cats and went off happy. Paul is an avid BBC Radio WM listener as most of us are, much to my surprise I received a call from **Radio WM** stating that I had been nominated to receive what is now called a **Kelly's Hero Award** from **Danny Kelly** who has taken over from our good friend **Ed Doolan's** spot on weekdays and he's doing a good job for animals.

Now in pride of place in the office is the

Danny Kelly Award

Thank you Paul and of course your Mom.

I would like to say a **Big Thank You** to various commercial people who remember us with various goodies, food, quilts, blankets, paper, medical equipment, plasters, bandages (most of which is out of date) but as I always say to everyone animals and birds can't read! Val at **Southam County Stores** has always looked after us for a fair few years and is just one that donates really good quality food, thank you all.

I have to thank our good friends at **Tyndallwood Solicitors**, we have created, or should I say are creating a Memory Garden, which has been made possible by the generosity of the clients of Tyndallwoods - Thanks to Rob and his family, Jan and Hannah for his muscle power to create and design it, we will be accepting small commemorative plaques in memory of our lost friends and pets, it will have three nice benches and a water feature where you will be welcome to sit down and think of the good times you have together as where it is situated is very quiet and relaxing. So watch this space and I for one will look forward to this super venture.

I must finish now by thanking all of you for your continued support throughout the year, we get all sorts of help, some people come and help with gardening, pet socialising, walking, painting, home checking, helping with the paperwork, sorting bedding, jumble, bric-a-brac, spreading the word about what we do and everyone who has had our rescued animals or birds, which as I've already mentioned, keeps our wheels turning.

I also would like to wish you all a very peaceful and prosperous Christmas and an even better new year.

It's been a funny old year for us health wise but what I've had is as common as a cold and I'll make sure it doesn't creep up on me again and as I always mention don't forget to take a few moments to remember friends we've lost this year both two-legged and four-legged.



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