

more News from

GOWER BIRD HOSPITAL



In this Issue:

- New technology
- Equal rights
- Casualties statistics
- Grant funding
- New facilities
- and much more

Number 7



£ 1.75

Patron: Paul Llewellyn, MPhil, CBiol, MIBiol

Registered Charity No: 1053912

Happy tale of ten tiny chicks

The goosander is the largest of the three sawbills found in Britain. Goosanders breed on the shores of lakes and rivers. They nest near the water, usually in a hole in a tree.

The chicks are precocial. This means they can see, walk, swim and, to a certain extent, feed themselves immediately after hatching.

As soon as the chicks hatch, they leave the nest and the parent leads them to the safety of the water. They remain with the parents who protect them and guide them to food sources.

Goosanders feed almost exclusively on fish – the beak has “saw teeth” along the edges to help them catch fish underwater.

Our ten tiny chicks had been found running along a road in Talley with no sign of the parent bird - the family must have become separated while trying to cross the road. Mr and Mrs Ackroyd from Aberystwyth spotted the youngsters and scooped them into a box.

Luckily they were on their way to Gower and were able to bring the birds to Gower Bird Hospital the same day.

On arrival, the goosanders were extremely distressed by their unfortunate adventure and in a very agitated state – burning off valuable energy trying to escape from the box. They were immediately put into a seclusion area with a heat lamp to provide warmth and a shallow pool of water so that at least they could drink while we prepared their food.

Having had extensive experience of raising mallards (another precocial bird) we adopted the same approach with the addition of chopped whitebait and mini mealworms to the chick crumbs.

The goosanders were then left alone as much as possible to reduce stress – the last thing they wanted was a person looming over them, frightening them even more! A quick, quiet peek that evening showed them all snuggled in a group under the heat lamp, sleeping peacefully at last.



Ten tiny chicks, each around the size of a tennis ball, arrived at Gower Bird Hospital. They were quickly identified as goosanders and their natural history researched.

The next morning, some of the food had gone. We quickly weighed each one while cleaning the pool and putting in fresh food and were relieved to find they had all gained a little weight.

After a week in the “nursery” they were strong enough to try one of our outside aquapens with free access to deeper water and a covered heated privacy area to dry off and keep warm.

The deeper water was much appreciated. They swam and dived – all good exercise to build up their muscle tone. As they grew they were able to eat whole whitebait, up to six bags a day! Frozen fish can lose valuable vitamins so special supplements were added to prevent any deficiencies in the growing birds.

Ten weeks later, they had developed all their feathers and thanks to the facilities and care at Gower Bird Hospital were in very good condition – completely waterproof, you can see the water “pearling” off the feathers in the photograph.

They were released at the lake in Talley where their parents had originally intended them to go. Within a minute of diving under the water, one of them surfaced with a fish in its beak and quickly ate it.

The goosanders were back where nature intended, not tame and able to hunt for their own food.



Gower Bird Hospital store room before and after being transformed into a new treatment unit.



Welcome to newsletter number 7

EVERY year since 1996, Gower Bird Hospital has been making good progress and is now a nationally recognised wildlife rehabilitation centre.

Despite being a small charity, our use of CCTV and pre- and post-release studies have stamped us firmly on the map as a widely respected organisation.

Our illustrated talks about the work of Gower Bird Hospital have really helped us to reach many more people in the Swansea area.

We were very proud to be asked to speak about our techniques in February 2003 at the British Wildlife Rehabilitation Council's Annual Symposium in London.

Treating wildlife is very different from treating domestic pets. A sick cat or dog will be used to human company 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.*

Gower Bird Hospital has a Minimum Contact Policy – skilled, experienced staff can quickly assess the problem and administer treatment.

This means the patient doesn't burn up valuable reserves of energy through stress, will recover more quickly and be released back into the wild as soon as possible.

Many thanks to all our supporters – some 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.

Gower Bird Hospital has again made major improvements to facilities for wildlife casualties. We now have a second treatment room that was in use as soon as the paint was dry! The total cost of the refurbishment was over £10,000.

This unit houses hedgehogs needing intensive care and also provides an operating theatre for our voluntary vet to examine all patients needing a general anaesthetic and treatment.

Another important feature is the reception area where the birds and hedgehogs are admitted – Gower Bird Hospital admits more than 1200 patients every year. Without your support, South Wales wouldn't have a wildlife hospital and these wildlife casualties would have nowhere to go for the specialist treatment they need.

Karen Simon



The battle for survival

Every spring and summer around 500 young birds are brought to Gower Bird Hospital. We have been raising nestlings and fledglings every year for more than ten years and learned a great deal in this time.

Raising a nestling or fledgling is not just feeding and releasing. To have a real chance of survival in the wild, the birds must be able to function in exactly the same way as their wild counterparts.

If a bird becomes tame it can grow up to believe that humans are its parents. This will often result in the bird having problems socialising with its own species and even looking at humans as possible sexual partners.

If it is a large bird such as a buzzard or crow, there is a real danger of injury – the bird will try to land on your head and a beak or talon could take an eye out. Often the bird is rejected by its own kind as it doesn't communicate properly so

it will be attacked as the wild community realises that it doesn't fit in.

It can be a real problem if a single nestling or fledgling arrives, as it needs the company of its own species to avoid becoming dependent on us. Fortunately, Gower Bird Hospital receives so many different patients that a single individual can be introduced into a similar age group already at the Hospital.

Each species has its own natural history – what does it feed on and what is the normal behaviour of the species? How does it find food in the wild?

Feeding a young blackbird exclusively on cat food and then releasing it will probably result in it looking for cat food in the wild instead of its natural food source.

At Gower Bird Hospital, every effort is made to provide as natural an environment, with the correct food source, as possible.

Out into the big wide world

AROUND 70 ducklings (mostly mallards) arrive at Gower Bird Hospital every year. These birds are precocial – as long as they have seen the parent bird when they hatched out of the egg, they will know exactly what they are.

They are able to see, walk, swim and feed themselves immediately.

We use the techniques described for the goosanders, with the addition of duckweed and other pond plants which also contain natural invertebrates (thanks to our neighbours who supply this fresh from



Mallard duckling.

their garden ponds!) We leave them alone as much as possible to ensure they don't become tame.

As soon as the primary (flight) feathers are developed they can be released.

The mallards know how to dabble and find their natural food so when they are released they are familiar with natural food sources and their biggest surprise is their freedom!



Birds on a learning curve

SOME birds are altricial – born blind and bald – they need constant attention from the parents to survive. After three to four weeks in the nest they fledge but are still dependent on the parents.

The parents continue to feed the youngsters and at the same time teach them how to find food such as insects, worms, fruits and carrion.

We have no option but to hand-feed these youngsters and it would be very easy to produce tame birds, which would have a much lower chance of survival when released.

To avoid this we have a strict protocol of not talking to the birds at all and as soon as they have enough feathers to keep themselves warm, the substitute nest is moved into an outside

aviary. It is important that they see the sun rise and set, experience different weather conditions, hear natural sounds and see a natural environment.

As much natural food is supplied as possible and the aviaries are designed to attract insects inside.

When the birds fledge out of the nest, we continue to hand-feed for a few days but also keep an eye on them through the CCTV cameras.

When we see the youngsters foraging and finding food for themselves we stop hand feeding and supply earthworms, mealworms and extra insects such as grasshoppers and fruit flies.

New homes for housemartins

HOUSEMARTINS build mud nests under the eaves of houses. Every year, Gower Bird Hospital admits around 30 of these nestlings.

Sometimes the nest has collapsed but unfortunately many of the martins' nests have been deliberately removed as people object to the droppings! The simple installation of a temporary shelf would stop the droppings falling onto the patio but this often seems to be too much trouble.

These are specialised birds, feeding on the wing (eating flying insects) and in early autumn flying back to Africa for the winter. The nestlings fledge after 19 to 25 days.

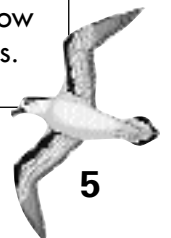
Parent birds can raise two or three families in one summer and the juveniles sometimes assist with the feeding of second and third broods. Again we have to hand feed these nestlings but as soon as they fledge from the nest, they are capable of flight.



Housemartin nestlings.

As soon as they have achieved a flight around the aviary, we release them into a local house martin community. It is truly amazing to see these tiny birds take off into the air – totally at home in the open sky. They call, other house martins will answer and they quickly join the group.

We hope they are accepted into the community and if they need supplement feeding the older house martins will help out. A radio tracking project is being set up to follow these youngsters and monitor their progress.



Brood to perfection

An important consideration is how many broods are raised per year. Birds that raise just one brood every year (such as the jackdaws and bluetits pictured here) are more susceptible to becoming tame. The youngsters spend a long time with their parents, forming a family group.

Birds such as housemartins and blackbirds have second and third broods in the same year. These youngsters become independent much more quickly and it is important to stop hand-feeding as soon as possible to allow this natural independence to develop.

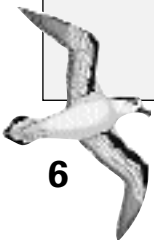
Jackdaw nestlings are another routine admission at the Hospital. Nests are often built on chimneys and many nestlings arrive as a result of chimney cleaning. This could easily be avoided by fitting a cowl on the chimney to prevent the nests being built.



Jackdaw nestlings.

Once they are feeding independently in the rehabilitation aviaries, they are left well alone, but spend a little longer in the aviaries before being released as a group.

BLUETITS also raise one brood a year. The youngsters fledge after 15 to 23 days in the nest. Again, it is vitally important not to talk to these birds while feeding them and they are moved into a rehabilitation aviary as soon as possible.



Equal rights to a good life

Sometimes people ask why we treat birds that are considered “pests” such as feral pigeons, jackdaws and mallards. The policy of Gower Bird Hospital is that every individual deserves the same treatment.

We have learned a lot from these birds – diagnosing illnesses or injuries, wound management, housing, rehabilitation techniques and feeding preferences.

Just as our experience with mallard ducklings proved invaluable for the goosanders, if a rare species such as a chough is presented to the Hospital, we can draw on our vast experience of

caring for jackdaws and give it a real chance of recovery.

Another question, and one we often ask ourselves, is “are we interfering with nature?”

Every patient is recorded on Gower Bird Hospital’s database. We now have more than 7,000 patients’ details on database and cause of injury or illness is always noted.

As you can see from the table below, only 20 per cent of birds and 33 per cent of hedgehogs are suffering from natural causes, most problems are caused through human activity.

Problem	Percentage	
	Birds	Hedgehogs
Unnatural injuries Birds: from entanglement in netting, elastic bands, plastic, fishing line and hooks; flying into windows or powerlines; shot. Hedgehogs: from entanglement in netting, elastic bands, plastic, fishing line; garden tools; burns from bonfires.	33%	22%
Natural causes Injuries from natural predators, illnesses, infections from natural wounds, congenital defects etc	20%	33%
Domestic pets Cat attacks and dog bites (mainly cats for birds and dogs for hedgehogs)	16%	7%
Dependent young May have been unnecessarily removed from the wild; nest destroyed by garden clearance. (Also in the domestic pets, natural causes or trapped categories)	15%	23%
Road traffic accidents	11%	9%
Poison/pollution Usually oil pollution	3%	1%
Trapped Birds in chimneys; hedgehogs in garden ponds, drains, swimming pools etc	2%	5%



Adult birds have special needs

Adult bird casualties are already equipped with the skills needed to survive in the wild. The capture site is a vital piece of information.

An adult bird will know its own territory and should always be released where it was found to have the best chance of survival.

Gower Bird Hospital's minimum contact policy is just as vital for adult birds as for nestlings and fledglings. All wildlife has a healthy, instinctive fear of people and an already ill or injured bird needs peace and privacy to recuperate.

Again, a good understanding of the individual's natural history is essential. What does it eat? How does it feed? What sort of habitat does it require?

Hérons, for example are very easily unnerved and their immediate reaction to being startled is to fly away.

Obviously, while in temporary captivity at the Hospital they can't fly away so their next reaction is to vomit any food they have eaten.

We provide a seclusion area at the Hospital for these nervous birds with a small pool for the heron to wade and find the freshly defrosted fish supplied.

Staff enter once a day to medicate and replenish fish and fresh water. Observation is through the CCTV system, causing no disturbance to the heron, ensuring it recuperates as quickly as possible.

Water birds always need our aquapens – aviaries with pools and shelter areas. Free access to water is essential for keeping plumage waterproof and also for the birds to simply rest by floating on the water, taking the weight off their legs.

Small injuries to the feet can result in bumblefoot – a very painful infection which can spread into the bone and is very difficult to treat. Therefore we cover all hard, flat surfaces with Astroturf to prevent callouses forming on the feet.

IN the wild, gannets dive at tremendous speed from high up in the air straight down into the water to catch fish.

The beak has no external nostrils because of the extreme pressure when they hit the water. When handling a gannet the beak is very powerful and could cause serious injuries to an inexperienced person.

Some people make the mistake of taping the beak closed to prevent injuries. One poor gannet arrived at Gower Bird Hospital having been put into a box with its beak taped, resulting in the poor bird dying of suffocation before it reached us.

Gannets arrive at Gower Bird Hospital, usually with no injuries but very thin and exhausted. They spend time in an aquapen, sometimes having to be hand fed whole mackerel until they start eating the fish for themselves.



Running up a £5,000 food bill

More than 90 different species of birds arrive at Gower Bird Hospital every year. Species range from wrens, tits, wagtails, song birds, woodpeckers, nightjars to all types of sea birds and birds of prey.

Gower Bird Hospital needs to have a large and varied larder. Whatever species of bird arrives it will need appropriate food immediately.

We always have a freezer full of food for sea birds and raptors, a stock of corn and various seed, special insectivorous feed, chick crumbs for ducklings and live food such as mealworms and waxworms is ordered weekly. Every year, the food bill alone is more than £5,000.



This young kestrel needed its natural food – small mammals such as mice, shrews and voles and insects. Our neighbours kindly give us their cats' victims which we freeze and then defrost before feeding to our patients.



Collared doves.

Problems of being on your feet

Any bird in the temporary captivity of our rehabilitation aviaries is spending a lot more time on its feet than it would in the wild, simply because it can't fly away.

We are always aware of the foot problems this may cause and a lot of effort goes into providing appropriate perches – small springy twigs of varying sizes for smaller birds and thicker branches for larger birds.

Behaviour studies carried out by students from Swansea University have also helped greatly in the design of our aviaries. Students watch hours of video tape recorded through the CCTV system and note the behaviour of the birds.

For example, blackbirds would be quite

interested in exploring their new surroundings when first put into a rehabilitation aviary, but after just three days would show signs of boredom and stress.

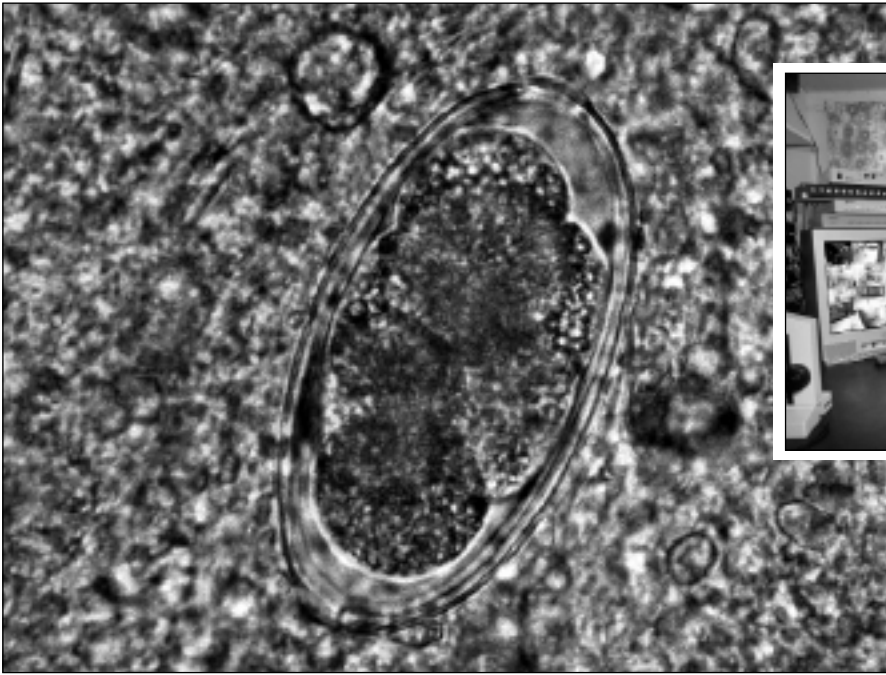
To relieve this stress, the aviaries are furnished with as many varying perches as possible – some high, some lower, some very thin and bendy, others more solid.

More plants and shrubs are grown in the aviary and food such as mealworms is scattered into leaf litter so the birds have to work to find it.

The mental health of our patients is just as important as physical fitness.

Our aim is always to get them back to full health as quickly as possible so they can be released back into the wild.





Microphotography – a helminth egg found in a faeces sample.
Inset, Simon in the lab.

High technology always helps

Gower Bird Hospital is always looking for ways to improve facilities for patients. We have made tremendous progress since registering as a charity in 1996.

We have always kept meticulous records. Every patient's details are recorded on database enabling us to answer questions and predict trends.

More than 1 200 patients are brought to Gower Bird Hospital every year and as much history as possible is noted. So far, the first fledgling to arrive is always a blackbird in early April!

The microscope is another very useful piece of equipment. Samples of all bird and hedgehog droppings are looked at and parasite burdens monitored.

We are in the process of compiling an extensive range of photographs and video recordings which will be useful to wildlife hospitals everywhere.

The CCTV system is invaluable when assessing patients' fitness. All wildlife will be wary of predators and people are seen as predators by most birds.

If a bird can see you it will try to disguise any weakness – in the wild a weak specimen is always targeted as easy prey. Standing next to an aviary and looking in will

produce three different behaviours: the bird will hide behind the privacy screens provided, remain absolutely still or panic and hurl itself at the aviary walls trying to escape.

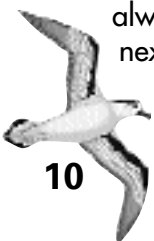
None of these actions give us any idea of the true condition of the bird. Left alone and observed through the CCTV, the bird will relax and again drop the painful wing, close the sore eye or lift the weight off an aching leg.

When we see the bird is showing no signs of discomfort, we know it is fit enough to be released and will have a good chance of surviving in its natural habitat.

Hedgehogs also hide their injuries when frightened. An infra-red camera was set up in one of our local soft release pens.

All activity in the pen was recorded onto video using timer switches. The door of the release pen was open and the hedgehog under observation was going out to forage for food and returning to the safety of the nest box for the day.

Watching the recordings we could see that she was limping badly on one of her back legs. We took her out of the nest box to examine her and because she was frightened by the disturbance she showed no sign of a limp – she even ran across the lawn. Without the CCTV, we could not have known she was in trouble.



Increasing our knowledge

THE use of CCTV also gives an excellent opportunity to observe behaviour. Footage is recorded and studied, leading to great improvements in aviary design and the mental well-being of our patients.

Students from Swansea University use the facilities at Gower Bird Hospital to carry out research projects.

The welfare of our patients is paramount. No experiments are carried out to induce stress – we record normal activities at the Hospital and only this behaviour is studied.

We simply wouldn't have the time to do all this vital but time-consuming work ourselves, but we do spend a great deal of time supervising the students and organising projects which are beneficial to both students and Gower Bird Hospital.

Stam, our most recent M Phil student has studied more than 1,000 hours of video recordings of hedgehogs over-wintering at the Hospital. These are young hedgehogs too small to hibernate.

Like many other wildlife hospitals, our

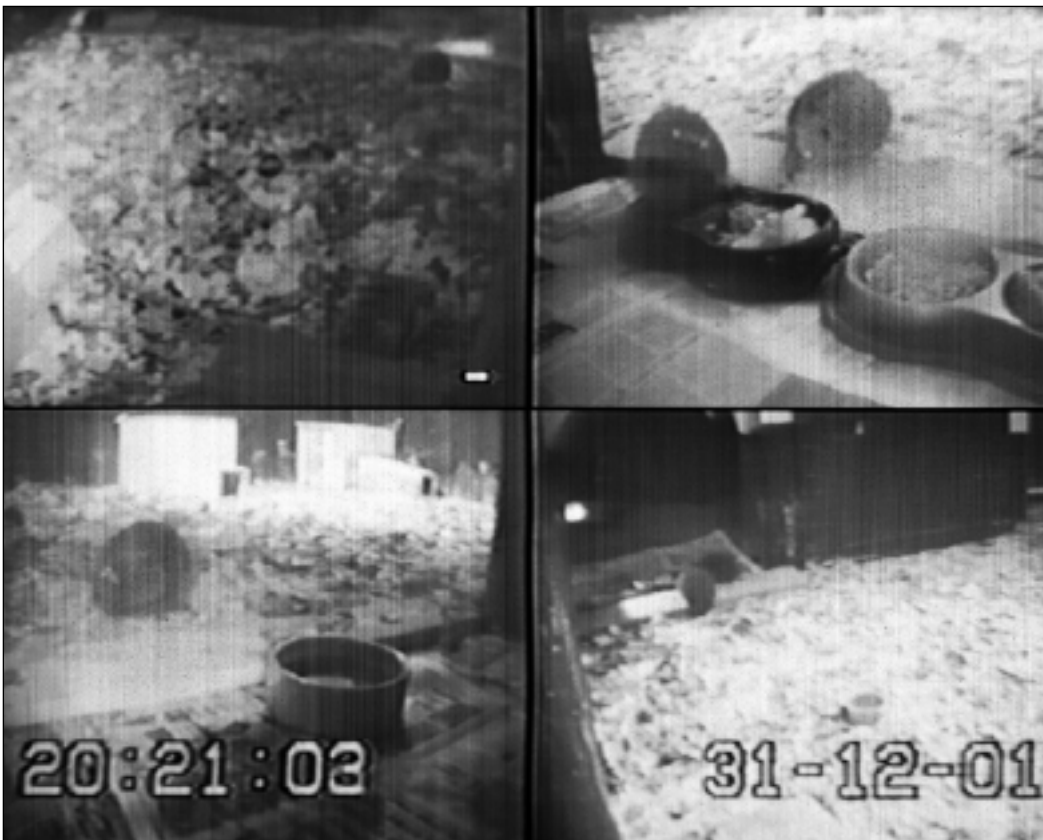
protocols are to keep a number of hedgehogs together in a designated room. We provide as much variety as possible using dry leaves and bark chippings on the floor, a selection of nest boxes and different foods.

As hedgehogs are normally solitary animals, we were worried that close confinement with others, even if siblings, could result in stressed hedgehogs.

We had already observed signs of bullying – this simply wouldn't happen in the wild as the hedgehogs would always be able to move away from each other. Our concern was that the unnatural confinement might be leading to aggressive behaviour.

The hedgehog room was flooded with infra-red light and four cameras recorded the hedgehogs activities. Different groups of hedgehogs were filmed – all-male, all-female, a mixture of sexes, different sizes.

When this study is complete it will answer some important questions and hopefully, will improve the quality of life for over-wintering hedgehogs across the country!



A still from the infrared CCTV, the screen has been split into four to record as much hedgehog behaviour as possible.





Left, a burned hedgehog. Right, a hedgehog with severe ringworm. Ringworm is a fungal infection which can be passed to people – always wear gloves when handling a hedgehog.

Don't cook your hedgehogs

Gower Bird Hospital also provides veterinary treatment and care for hedgehogs and other small mammals. Around 200 hedgehogs are admitted every year.

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 their day nest, or even the hibernaculum for winter.

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.

If it survives, the hedgehog appears to have badly singed spines. What actually happens is that the spines conduct the heat into the flesh under the skin – the hedgehog is cooked alive.

These burn injuries can be so severe that the hedgehog has to be put to sleep to save it from suffering even longer.

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.

Other problems hedgehogs encounter are: getting tangled in garden netting, plastic can holders and elastic bands; trapped in steep sided ponds or swimming pools; road traffic accidents and injuries from strimmers and garden forks.

Hedgehogs can also suffer illnesses such as ringworm and chest problems (usually associated with a parasitic burden).

Keeping track of hogs in the wild

From early autumn onwards, Gower Bird Hospital over-winters approximately 30 hedgehogs.

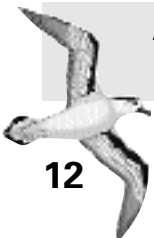
These are youngsters born late in the year and too small to hibernate successfully. By November, many of these youngsters have gained enough weight to be released but we have never done this – we are worried there may not be enough food or nest building material available.

Our next project is to radiotrack hedgehogs released in late autumn. Thanks to the radiotracking we will be able to keep a very close eye on their progress.

If they encounter any difficulties finding food or building a hibernaculum, we will be able to help immediately.

If they are successful we will be able to release more hedgehogs, avoiding the stress of being kept captive over the winter months.

A reminder – if you see a hedgehog out in the day it is usually in trouble and will need help. Ring Gower Bird Hospital for advice.



Being mum to a hedgehog

Over a quarter of the hedgehogs arriving at Gower Bird Hospital during summer and early autumn of every year are dependent young. Sometimes the mother has been killed on the road or a dog has dug up the nest of youngsters.



These hedgehogs are only 36 hours old.

These very young hedgehogs, when cold and hungry will squeak loudly. Sometimes they will crawl out of the nest looking for their mother.

If you do find baby hedgehogs in distress, it's very important to keep them warm and NOT to give cow's milk. We have found that fresh unpasteurised goat's milk or the puppy milk substitute, Esbilac, are most suitable.

Another vital part of hand-rearing is toileting. Very young hedgehogs (like most mammals) cannot urinate or defecate efficiently themselves.

The mum will help things along by vigorously

cleaning the babies, stimulating urine and droppings to be passed.

When hand-rearing the hoglets we mimic the action of the natural mother by wiping with damp cotton wool ensuring that what goes in does come out! Again, Gower Bird Hospital's Minimum Contact Policy works well for these baby hedgehogs.

Once they can feed themselves, handling is kept to an absolute minimum and a nocturnal routine established as quickly as possible.

IN the wild, baby hedgehogs stay with their mother for six to eight weeks, accompanying her on foraging trips and learning to find their own food.

Our hand reared babies have had none of this natural experience and we were concerned – could they actually fend for themselves when released? To answer this question we radio-tracked them.

First they were set up in a "soft release" pen. The pens have a sleeping compartment and a mesh covered run allowing access to natural ground for foraging practice.

When they had established a good nocturnal rhythm, sleeping all day and active at night, and achieved a good weight of 400g to 500g they were fitted with a radio transmitter.

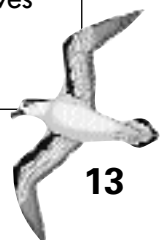
The release door at the end of the pen was opened. Stam, our intrepid M Phil student, also



Hand-reared hedgehog ready for release with temporary radio transmitter in place.

established a good nocturnal rhythm, following the hedgehogs for weeks throughout the night! We were very pleased with the success of our orphans. They coped very well, finding food and building very good day nests.

The tags are not permanent and are meant to fall off after three or four weeks but this gives us enough time to ensure that they will be able to cope in the wild.



Thanks, and thanks again

Gower Bird Hospital is a registered charity entirely dependent on donations. Last year's running costs were £36,000.

Major local donors are the Gower Society and Pennard Community Charity, both providing funding for the completion of the new treatment unit and reception.

Thanks also for donations from the GC Gibson Charitable Trust, RSPCA, Barry Green Memorial Fund, Jean Sainsbury Animal Welfare Trust, Care for the Wild International, The Philanthropic Trust,

Raptor Rescue and The Llysdinam Trust.

Local businesses also support Gower Bird Hospital. Thanks for donations from Montagne Jeunesse, Atlas Fire Engineering, Altron Communications and Taliesin.

Thanks also to the RSPCA Animal Collection Officers and Inspectors who bring wildlife casualties to Gower Bird Hospital almost every day. Without their services many of the patients wouldn't be able to reach us.

A GRANT from Swansea Development Fund has enabled Gower Bird Hospital to employ a part time wildlife care assistant for two years, purchase fleeces and shirts with the Gower Bird Hospital logo, purchase a projector and screen for slide shows, provide mileage expenses for volunteers and pay the printing costs of our new leaflet "What to do if you find injured wildlife."

Gower Bird Hospital has a great (and expanding!) team of volunteers. More than 40 volunteers now keep Gower Bird Hospital running, doing everything from accountancy to placing collection boxes, helping at fund-raising events to filing record cards.

Obvious Hospital needs are veterinary skills, carers to clean and feed patients and experienced "rehabbers" constantly reviewing and improving rehabilitation protocols for all species.

A core of four people does this specialised work – only two receive part-time wages for their full-time jobs! Other key volunteers with excellent administration skills support this vital work – project planning, applying for grants, organising fund-raising events and keeping accurate financial records.

A big thanks to Keith for our first website.

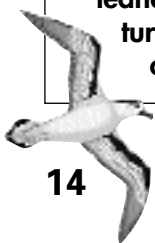
Special thanks to Chinch for his stunning photographs and design work used in our magazines, leaflets, posters and slide shows, and Eifion for turning Karen's text and Chinch's photographs into our magazine!



Swansea Development Fund group visit the Hospital.



Rhydderch Wilson ran the Swansea 10K for Gower Bird Hospital and raised £111.50.



We couldn't do it without you

It is because of the generosity of existing and new supporters that Gower Bird Hospital's work with wildlife casualties continues and expands. Your support is always very much needed and appreciated.

Gower Bird Hospital is a registered charity dedicated to the treatment and rehabilitation of wildlife casualties with the sole intention of returning them to the wild. Every year more than 1,000 birds and 200 hedgehogs arrive in need of our help.

Your donation helps directly with the running costs of the Hospital, ensuring these birds and hedgehogs have a real chance of recovery. If you choose to donate even a small monthly amount by standing order, the Hospital can plan for the future knowing that funds are coming in.

Donations also help Gower Bird Hospital to apply for specific project grants – grants are usually awarded to charities that are well supported by the community, so your donation helps us twice!

Every supporter receives the Gower Bird Hospital magazine, which keeps you up to date with our activities and progress.

Please use the enclosed form to give a donation/standing order. If you pay income tax, tick the Gift Aid declaration as this increases your donation by 28 per cent at no extra cost to you.



Fledgling mistlethrush.

Gower Bird Hospital needs your support and is very grateful for all donations – if the form is missing, cheques can be made payable to Gower Bird Hospital and sent to our address on the last page.

A huge thank you to everyone who gives a donation or helps at fund-raising events.

You can recycle this newsletter by passing it on to someone else



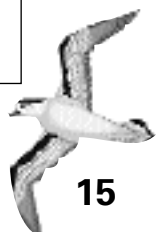
Bye, bye, Blodwen

BLODWEN died peacefully at Christmas 2002, after 15 years of a very happy life, which we were privileged to share with her.

She loved the new reception, as her paddock was right next to it so she could meet people bringing patients.

Blodwen contributed much to Gower Bird Hospital, providing milk for orphaned hedgehogs, featuring in all our newsletters and appearing on television.

Thanks to everyone who took her into their hearts.



How to contact us

People often ask to have a look around the Hospital but this really isn't in the best interests of our patients. Wild creatures are very easily frightened and need as much peace and privacy as possible to aid their recovery.

Staff spend as little time as possible with the birds and animals to minimise stress. The CCTV system was installed for this reason.

As described earlier, all the aviaries are camouflaged so the patients inside have privacy and feel secure, which is the complete opposite of a zoo where animals are on display. Many of our supporters congratulate us for keeping the welfare of the wild birds and animals our first priority.

As patient admissions steadily increase, Gower Bird Hospital would love to buy its own and larger premises. As well as enabling us to expand our rehabilitation facilities for wildlife casualties, larger premises would include a designated visitors' centre.

This centre would be able to provide information about the work of Gower Bird Hospital and house educational and volunteer facilities. Can you help us with this vision?

We would also be interested in hearing from anyone willing to sponsor wages for one or more of our dedicated volunteers.



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Tel: 01792 371630

A phone call is always appreciated prior to admission of a casualty.

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Patron: Paul Llewellyn, MPhil, CBiol, MIBiol.

Trustees: Simon Allen, Christine Griffiths, Sylvia Gooding, Barry Hicks, Nigel Haworth