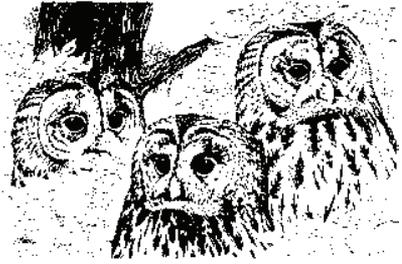


Three Owls Newsletter

Report by Nigel Fowler



Summer 2023

Another very busy year for us all...

It has been a difficult time for so many of us recently in so many ways; the Covid pandemic, bird flu, brutal wars around the globe, the passing of Her Majesty The Queen, and now the financial crisis ... but we keep going, and the work of Three Owls continues to save and enhance lives of wild birds both near and afar.

Although our annual newsletters look back over the past year, we are already well into this year and our work continues apace. Technology too plays an important part in our work, and I have noticed over the past year a reduction in the number of text and email queries coming in, but a huge number now coming in via WhatsApp (calls/chat/video), and of course the usual voice calls via the Helpline.

For an example of how much help we provide, in the last 18 months we have given out over 734 HOURS of advice, in thousands of Helpline calls. The average call time is less than 5 minutes, though if explaining procedures or advising on treatments with vets and other rescues, a few calls may be considerably longer.

It still amazes even me how when faced with a bird query I can recall a similar instance/injury/casualty some 20/30/40 years ago, and be able to advise upon the best course of action; the brain is an amazing organ ... when put to good use!!

I have been asked a few times if we have a Facebook page, or are we on Instagram or Twitter ... the answer to these is No; we simply do not have the time or people to cover such things. However our website does provide such a wealth of information and is frequently updated to provide the latest information and news for you all to read. I do get regular 'thanks' for the assistance that both website and helpline provide, and I am pleased to hear from 'new' contacts about where they have received our details from, and how they have been able to use the knowledge gained to go on and save the lives of birds in their own areas.

I like to give people a greater insight into the working of Three Owls where I can, and when in company often discuss the situation someone has encountered and reported via the Helpline. Of course they have heard my response while on the phone, but giving the opportunity to tell 'both sides' of the situation helps people understand just how varied the appeals for help can be, and I then hope they can pass this information along if a similar situation occurs in their own lives.

I was particularly warmed to this when a close friend had given such advice out simply as their enquirer knew they were a good friend of mine ... then rang to check they were correct. As always, "knowledge is best when shared".

I have expanded my usual following monthly reports from Three Owls this year to include some of those situations encountered via WhatsApp, as well as those featured on the Website. Alas I can't show you video clips, but often a photo accompanies a query so I can share these with you.

January

A number of people were avidly following the progress of a Tawny Owl admitted on 12th December last year.

Found as a heap of feathers at the side of a lane in West Yorkshire and pretty much devoid of life, I have been guiding and advising Kathy and her staff at Meltham Wildlife Rescue as to its needs and ongoing requirements every few days, as I have nursed many such casualties over the years.

I am therefore thrilled to report that following one-to-one care over the past three weeks, the owl made significant progress and regained full sight in both eyes. He went out into the aviary for several days, and was successfully released back to the wild later in the month.

Top marks to Kathy for believing me that such a repair and rehab was possible, no matter how poorly the bird was on admittance. Also for being an excellent pupil and following my guidance to the letter, and for providing and maintaining an ICU cage for an extended period in the hospital.

Knowledge is best when shared!

Our own Helpline changed network from '3' to O2 due to lack of a signal. We had persevered for a number of weeks with promises of an improvement, however things seemed to be getting worse rather than better, so we made the switch and '3' did not charge for early release from contract. WhatsApp was our saviour during this downtime for calls, chat, and video conferencing.

We received a cry for assistance for a beautiful Bullfinch in someone's garden which had trichomonosis (Canker to you and me). Sadly, this was too advanced to treat to save its life, but I gave advice as to how to catch it and to take it to a vet to have it painlessly put to sleep.

Canker is usually started by a bird eating mouldy or contaminated food, and is very easily spread through other birds feeding from the same source, or sharing the same drinking/bathing water. It affects all the seed eaters (and predators of them), but those which suffer the most are doves, pigeons, and finches.

David reported from the two new reserves at Banks to say;

For the last few weeks we have been working to 'improve' our new reserves from a wildlife perspective.

Here you see a huge digger starting a pond. I had tried myself but the results were a little disappointing, it leaked so we just ended up with a hole rather than a pond! This time we have dug another hole nearby to mine some clay so our new pond can be clay lined. Fingers crossed!



Elsewhere we have planted an area of 'scrub' -lower trees and bushes like Hawthorne, Blackthorn, Privet and Dog rose. This forms a habitat different from actual woodland and one this is in short supply. We are so grateful to volunteer Simon Tobin for helping with the biodegradable matting and tree shelters

Lastly we have a new bridge over one of the drains -so welcome because it shortens the walk to work on the land by half a mile.

We have seen brown hares twice already this week and lots of Whooper swans fly over the reserves twice each day.

February

David excitedly reported the latest from the Marsh Reserve following recent works;

I was so excited to go down to our new marsh reserve to find it looking like an actual marsh!! The recent rains and digger work have resulted in a big change, look!

The actual water is quite large -about half an acre so far. Next is sowing the area with wildflowers suitable for a wet area. HURRAH!!

We received a call for assistance from someone out walking who had found 'an injured hawk of some kind'. Using the power of the internet with Google Maps and what3words, we were able to pinpoint where exactly they were and advise where the nearest wildlife rescue was, as their phone battery was running low. Alas I did not receive a follow-up, so do not know how the bird fared.



March

“Give It Time” was a phrase Mrs Watkinson, the Three Owls founder often used to say to me ... and how right she has been proved time and time again. Today, on the 27th anniversary of her passing, it was lovely to see just how benefitting these words were in regard to a Buzzard I have been helping treat in West Yorkshire.

Admitted with totally paralysed legs and unable to feed, it has made small but steady progress and here we see it ready for onward transport to Knoxwood now standing, flying, and self-feeding (albeit still on cut-up food just at present).

Many thanks to the RSPB officer for bringing it in, and to Kathy at Meltham Wildlife Rescue for giving it the hospital care and aviary space as it has recovered over the past few months. Hopefully, it will be fit to return to the wild later in the year.



We had just a single heron chick hatch out on the Home Reserve at Rochdale this year. Many fingers were crossed for its survival, but sadly we found it dead on the floor just over 2 weeks later. The adult birds now haven't nested successfully for a number of years, though an increased number have been reported at nearby Queens Park in Heywood (only a couple of miles away), so we are hopeful that they have moved down there.

We were asked to identify a fluffy bird this month; these birds are often described as baby seagulls as the colours and markings are so similar, so I have got used to asking if they have webbed feet first! If you are still unsure; it's a baby Lapwing.

Although they would naturally nest on moorland or farmland, in the last 25 years many have moved onto factory and supermarket roofs to nest – which is fine until the chicks hatch and then invariably fall off. Whether they feel the profiled roofs resemble the furrowed fields is not certain, but certainly it is now a common occurrence to find them nesting on these metal roofs.



April

This was the first large-scale release of the year; all birds nursed back to full health over the winter, and being released at Three Owls Wood just in time for this years' breeding season.

Alas for photographic purposes, the first 66 birds all whizzed off before I was able to take a photo! However number 67; the Red Legged Partridge was happy to pose for the camera whilst calling out to our resident flock - which he strutted off to join up with.

Many thanks to both **Meltham Wildlife Rescue** and **Hebden Bridge Bird Rescue** for their care and attention over the winter to assist these casualties.



Some lovely feedback received this week from our colleagues at the Barn Owl Trust in Devon. Many of you will recall how we transferred the resident owls down to their care when we had to close the hospitals and aviary operations on the Home Reserve Rochdale site back in 2010.

They still, after all this time have a good number of these birds in their care, and a number of which will now be pushing 30 years of age. We have continued to financially support these birds in their care, and although we are always gratefully thanked for each contribution, it is very much appreciated for them to make such a public gesture of Thanks by printing the pictured article in their very popular Feedback Newsletter for Spring 2022 (Issue 67).

It is through your own kind donations and legacies that we are able to continue not only with our own much-needed work on our reserves and our Helpline and information services; but also continue to support like-minded established organisations in their own work with wild birds.

A Huge THANK YOU to The Three Owls Bird Sanctuary

Once again we have received generous financial support from the wonderful Three Owls Bird Sanctuary!

The Three Owls Bird Sanctuary is a registered charity that makes grants to established organisations who help wild birds and they have kindly supported the Barn Owl Trust for many years.



This sanctuary has an extraordinary history which you can read about here: www.threeowls.co.uk but in essence it was started by Mrs Eileen Watkinson in the 1960's, and then, following her death it was taken over by Nigel Fowler. Nigel was awarded the 'Volunteer of the Year Award' in 2000, for his dedication and work at the sanctuary.

Sadly, although the charity carries on (see the information on their website) the sanctuary and its aviaries had to close in 2010, and the Barn Owl Trust were approached to take on a large contingent of Tawny Owls. With the help of volunteers from Western Power, a new aviary was designed and built on the BOT site over a period of 4 (extremely busy) days. Western Power were able to do this for us as part of the community projects their trainees were encouraged to become involved in. We remain very grateful to Western Power for their support; the aviary is still functioning well and housing our resident Tawnys. The extremely tight build deadline was because 45 Tawny Owls and 2 Barn Owls from the Three Owls Bird Sanctuary were to arrive the following week – all the birds arrived safe and well and were moved into their brand-new home. The Three Owls Bird Sanctuary provided generous funds towards their future upkeep. Quite a few of the Tawny's are still alive in the sanctuary here at BOT, living well beyond their normal life expectancy.

Over the years, BOT has retained its links to the Three Owls Bird Sanctuary and have been the grateful recipients of several very generous grants. And now, post-pandemic, the wonderful Nigel and his fellow Trustees have considered us yet again and last year gave us a fantastic grant of £10,000 towards our costs. We were pleased to receive this grant which was very helpful in enabling us to recover from the impact of the pandemic, where so many funding streams were closed to us for 18 months.

Advice Please – was the title of a *WhatsApp* chat late one evening this month (11.15pm).

*“Hi, my cat brought in what seems to be a fledgling, it has been in a box with some seed and water now for a couple of hours and it is still alive, would you recommend taking it to a rescue in the morning, or leaving it in a hedge hopefully for the parents to find it? Should we keep it in the box overnight? Thank you so much for any advice you can offer, D*****”*

Good evening D*****, thanks for your message.

I would give it a drink of sugared water as detailed on our website; this will help it settle from the trauma of the attack, and then it should sleep on a towel in a box, completely in the dark.

If perky in the morning and bouncing around with no obvious injuries, yes, you can keep your cat in, and set the bird free in the garden. Its parents should reconnect with it if you've only had it overnight. They will feed it every 2-3 hours, and not every few minutes as they did when in the nest.

If injured, then take it to your nearest wildlife rescue centre (link available from the top of our website page).

[This is typical of the calls for help we receive between March and September each year.]

May

If you have cause to ring one of the many UK wildlife rescues whom we work alongside this year; do not be surprised to be directed to our very own Website for further assistance in locating an alternative wildlife rescue centre near to where you are.

Lots of rescue centres and bird sanctuaries are only just struggling to get back on their feet after the Covid pandemic, and many are short on staff and volunteers. One of the knock-on effects of this is a limited amount of time for telephone conversations - when the various rescues know that the information being asked of them is readily available online...on Three Owls very own website.

Simply look to the top of the main page, and click on the tab marked **"Finding Your Local Rescue Centre"**. This link suggests numerous different sites to help you (and your casualty) in their hour of need.

With Three Owls operating out of EIGHT different sites in the UK, very occasionally people are confused and turn up at one of the six Lancashire reserves with injured birds, whereas it is only the two Cumbrian reserves that have hospital facilities alongside. Again, the website link comes into its own in locating the nearest wildlife hospital able to assist.

Thank you for caring about the wild birds around us.



We're now on the 2nd main brood of mallard ducklings. Many however are inadvertently taken away from their mothers by mistake, when they should have been left with mum for the best chance.

Occasionally they fall prey to cats or herons, and sadly some are also orphaned by mother being killed when escorting them across the roads

These days it is not uncommon for ducks to hatch out their eggs under a bush in a garden, up to a mile away from the nearest safe waterway. It is rare that they nest TOO far for the ducklings to walk, but they would certainly appreciate a human escort along those busy roads.

If you DO have to catch mother and babies; catch mother first and put in one box, then babies 2nd and put into a separate box. This is to stop mother panicking and trampling the babies to death.

When you reach the waterway, release the ducklings first, and they will group and shout loudly. Then release mum and she will fly directly to the babies and take them away from you.



David reported from one of our reserves at Tarleton this month...

WOW! I went down to the Three Owls Wood today and orchids everywhere!! Also the biggest they have ever been! Looks like our regenerative agriculture experiment with the Winter sheep really paid off. They ate out all the undergrowth so our orchids could see the spring sunshine. HURRAH!!



Please look from a distance – but don't touch....

It's the time of year again when all the tawny owlets leave the nest a good few weeks before they are able to fly. This is usually caused by a bit of over-exuberance when mum and dad return with food, and the youngster tumbles to the floor.

Worry not however, they are designed like little 3-wheelers and using their beak and very sharp talons, can climb straight up the tree trunk and back onto a branch. However some do prefer to live on the floor while they grow up, and other than being moved off a path or roadway to the back of a broad-leaved tree – they should be left where they are. Mum and Dad owl will continue to feed them whether they are on the floor or in the tree.

The photo in this report is just one of several dozen we have advised on this year alone



Three Owls Meadow Reserve at Banks; Bird Count May 2022

Many thanks once again to Rob Yates for his skills and for getting up so early to accompany David Unwin to do this count. The Barn Owl was not seen that morning but on several evenings prior, also many owl pellets were found under a post in the meadow

30 species!

Blue Tit, White Throat, House Sparrow,

Wren, Barn Owl, Cornbunting,

Magpie, Robin, Starling, Linnet

Chaffinch, Greenfinch, Blackbird,

Song Thrush, Swallow, Oyster catcher,

Dunnock, Collared Dove, Pied wagtail,

Skylark, Longtail tit, House martin,

Grasshopper Warbler, Blackcap, Lapwing,

Meadow Pipit, Shelduck, Greater Spotted woodpecker,

Sedge Warbler, Great Tit



June

I had been invited to the Outer Hebrides for a 'Trip of a Lifetime' many months ago, and took the opportunity to go as it was nearly ten years since my last holiday, and may be the same length of time before the next! The only 'risk' was that the Helpline may not receive sufficient signal for voice-calls, though I would have internet service at all times...hmmm...



Taking this also as an opportunity to have some Helpline downtime, I was able to advise via the website that we may struggle with the signal for voice calls, but to instead use WhatsApp – which worked an absolute treat for 99.9% of the time.

I returned fully refreshed, having enjoyed an amazing break around the Outer Isles, including a visit to St. Kilda; where it was quite simply amazing to see seabirds nesting quite unafraid of humans just a couple of feet away. The Helpline too benefitted greatly, with me being able to defragment and tidy-up to keep the handset in tip-top order, without a call coming in mid sort-out.

I also noted this month that this year there is a huge shortage of baby blue-tits. We usually have at least six of the nine nesting boxes in use on the Home Reserve; this year just one box has been occupied, and only six of the chicks have fledged.

Why, you may ask, as there are still a similar number of adult birds around?

Quite simply, there is a lack of food. For some reason, there are very few greenfly around this year - and this is the main diet for the young tits both in the nest and when fledging. Quite why this has happened is something of a mystery? It is however common for adult paired birds to restrict the size of the brood, or even abstain from nesting if they feel there is insufficient food available to sustain them.



The robins have increased in number and the wrens seem to be static as do both thrushes and blackbirds. The larger birds such as the jackdaws have flourished this year, and with the young having fledged just 9 days ago, already the parent birds are relining the nests to get another brood in this year.

David gave us a further report from Southport with regard to finding out what the wild barn owls living on the reserves had in their diet...

So a few days after the bird count with the help of my grandson Leo (aged 8) I dissected out the largest of the Owl pellets. First we soaked it in cold water and then teased all the fur apart and found an amazing number of tiny animal skulls -TEN!!

This is how Barn Owls deal with all the indigestible fur and bones of their pray, they cough it all up as a pellet!

The large skull is a rat, then eight field vole skulls and one with very different teeth - a shrew. Leo cleaned them all very carefully to make the display you see here.



Another *WhatsApp* chat was regarding a fledgling magpie with a condition similar to Wryneck (this looks like the neck is all twisted and unable to feed or drink). Also known as Torticollis, (which affects humans too) and is a condition where the neck muscles cause the head to twist and tilt to one side. Other rescues had suggested euthanasia being the only option – hence being approached from quite some distance to Three Owls.

I treated this casualty remotely with warmth and passive joint mobilisation, and was thrilled to receive the following message back just a few days later; "Hello again I called you about the baby magpie with what seemed like wry neck. I just wanted to give a massive thank you very much.. He or she is great now just like you said. Little cheeky magpie thanks so much"

July

MANCHESTER TO BLACKPOOL BIKE RIDE 2022

It is that time of year again dear readers, and I must first apologise for the late write up before the event. Time seems to have gone nowhere, and I realised the other day that I hadn't checked the date for the event this year. It is actually next Sunday the 10th of July, and therefore I thought I had better be quick and do a piece for the website so that Nigel could get it in, in advance.

This time will be my 33rd consecutive event, which says a great deal about my mental state or, if you're being extremely charitable, my intestinal fortitude and dedication! Last year's event was disappointing from the sponsorship perspective, and I do not intend to dwell on the reasons for the lack of support. As always I do the ride for my sake, to test myself for another year, and of course to raise funds for Three Owls, which I'm proud to have been associated with for so long.

It is not my business to tell anyone whether they should or should not support my efforts, that is entirely for them to decide, and that is as it should be, of course. My motivation is exactly the same as it has always been, and any support of my efforts is of course fully appreciated and never taken for granted, either by myself or Nigel and the other Trustees. Likewise, as I always have said, the opinions in my write ups are entirely my own, and in previous years people seem to have appreciated them all the more for the humour I try to inject, and the honesty of my comments. For those who do not, I can only say, to quote an old saying "He who tries to please everyone, ends up pleasing no one".

Regardless of the level of support, I will be pitting myself against the road and the uncertainties of the ride, but it would be all the more satisfying if readers showed their support in the customary manner.

At the end of the day we all care about the work of Three Owls, and I do what I can within my means and abilities, I would respectfully ask that supporters do the same

Best wishes to you all, and I will hopefully survive to write up an *account of the day in due course.

John Thorpe

*John's full account of the ride can be read in the news section of our website, but the details were;

Ride no: 3550

Mileage 77.2 miles

Number of riders: Probably 4000 plus.

Ride time 7hrs 50 minutes total, minus 1 hr 5 mins for breaks etc - 6hrs 45 minutes travelling

Total amount raised in sponsorship was £90.00; thank you to all who contributed, and for Johns' superb efforts.



Hot weather – Help!

A huge number of calls received these past few evenings regarding birds struggling in the heat over recent days. As always, access to clean water is as important to our wild birds and animals, just as it is for us and indeed our own pets.

There is an added problem for the migratory birds such as swifts/swallows/house martins, as the mud which 'sticks' their nests to the walls of our houses and outbuildings, is in grave danger or drying out prematurely, with the result that the nest can come crashing to the ground.

You may also find other birds struggling in the heat; if you find a bird which has collapsed, it can often be revived using a sugar-water solution (half a teaspoon of sugar dissolved in a mug of water - to get the correct consistency). Depending on the type/size of bird, it may open its beak for you to drop the water in, or you may need to dip the birds beak into the liquid, or (if a small bird) run the liquid along the crack of its beak, whereupon it should get a taste and open its beak for some more.

Keep the bird confined and on a towel while it recovers from the heat - don't forget the air holes in the box, and keep the box in the shade

If feeding the wild birds with dried mealworms - please remember to soak them for 30 minutes first; otherwise the parents may feed them to their young and leave them severely dehydrated as the nestlings cannot get out for a drink themselves.



The Meadow Reserve

David sends us the following report from Banks...

Just two acres with incredible biodiversity. The new hedge is huge now. Home to Linnets, Whitethroat and Songthushes. House Martins have moved in attracted by the mud banks round the new pond to make their nests



Doctors' Rest; 15 Acres of wild flowers...

David sends us a 2nd report, this time from the other new reserve at Banks...

I could smell the clover before I got there! 15 acres of wild flowers, I counted 15 swifts and house martins hunting overhead. The Brown Hares are loving that clover, I nearly trod on a leveret - I expect there are others.



Another **WhatsApp** video and chat regarding a 'non-flying' juvenile Corvid in the garden;]

Hi, my parents have this bird in their garden. I believe it is a raven. Physically it looks ok but it doesn't seem able to fly very well. It can fly in short bursts like you would see from a fledgling. When other similar birds come into the garden it isn't scared of them and will chase and peck them until they go away. It looks quite big and strong but obviously has some problem as it has been living in my parents' garden for about a month now.

Just wondered if you think it is worth catching or should we just leave it and keep feeding it? Thanks

Hi there, thanks for your message and videos.

It's a juvenile crow or rook, definitely NOT a raven as the head shape is wrong and it's way too small.

If it's been flightless for a whole month, then it could be either disabled or have been the runt of the nest, in which case it could take a further 2-3 months before it's capable of flight. It could also be down to poor diet as it can only eat what it can find/catch on the floor.

Any bone damage it has sustained will have set after 3 days, and with birds' bones being hollow there is no option to re-break and reset as there is with a human.

If your parents are happy to continue feeding it, then I suggest you carry on, rather than confine it to a rescue aviary – you may struggle to find a rescue that could accept it just now, as many are full up at present.

Ensure the birds' diet is mainly red meat (not liver or bacon), and either scrambled or hard-boiled egg chopped-up.

It can have a few mealworms, but don't exceed 10 a day or it will get dehydrated with the runs. Dried dog food soaked first in water is ok to bulk a meal up, but not tinned dog food and never any form of cat food (for any wild bird).

Have a look on our Emergency Feeds List on the website for more in-depth dietary options.

Thanks Nigel, and presuming it is still living and like this come the winter time I presume it will need some kind of shelter to live in for the night?

Yes,

Yes, it would be good if you could provide a hutch or similar for it to pop into when it needs shelter, though hopefully it will be flying well before the winter arrives.

I have had disabled jackdaws both living and breeding freely in the wild before, so nothing is off the cards if the support is there.

Thanks for the advice.

August Coming to the end of the baby season...

Well, here we are pretty much at the end of yet another extremely busy baby bird season. Yes, there are still a few nestlings around (mainly wood pigeons as pictured in this report), and of course the migratory birds such as the house martins and swallows. The swifts have already started their migration southbound in many areas.

I have seen many wildlife rescues suffering real hardship this year with the knock-on effect of the Pandemic; very limited numbers of volunteers and of those good volunteers whom had to be restricted due to space limitations/regulations ... many have found 'new interests' and not returned to helping save those wild bird lives.

new interests' and not returned to helping save those wild bird lives.

A further knock-on effect of this means the Sanctuaries having to limit their own intakes so they can cope with the number of staff/volunteers now available, and thus in June/July of this year I have seen more rescues 'closed to new admittances' than for a long long time. Hopefully as August proceeds, this will ease as the young birds' progress, and then we can get back to sorting out the walking wounded and once again collectively return huge numbers back to the *wild*.



Hard and Hot work!

It's been a tough last couple of Sundays with up-to nine volunteers each week on the Home Reserve for this years' Himalayan Balsam pulling. The growth this year has been quite incredible and some of the plants were reaching heights of between 11-12 feet! The very hot weather has also made it tough going for our volunteers at times. It was very good however to see the staffroom full of 'bums on seats' once again - something not seen since before the pandemic.

Building upon last years' effort by Andrew and myself; this year with many extra hands we have made a huge difference and cleared around 35-40% of the weeds from this reserve. As we have managed to achieve this prior to the plant seeding, then I am hopeful that next years' growth will be significantly less and if we can make an earlier in the season, we can make further huge strides forward in protecting this well-used reserve which is both home to a myriad of birds, plants and animals; but also a very well used release site for many juvenile birds from other rescues.

Thus, we must say a HUGE thank you to; Stewart & Janet, Iain & Shelley, Phiebe and Harry, Mary and Andrew. (If you are counting; I was the ninth person!)

The two photos show a massive transformation of the reserve which was completely covered by the weed prior to our attendance.



I was so happy to host an exciting moth trapping evening at The Meadow Reserve recently. We found over forty species! The Gold Spot moth shown here was for me the most spectacular. Most of us have no idea the diversity of the hidden moth world. Many Thanks to Richard Walker and Rob Yates for organising the event and identifying all the moths.

Southport Mothing Group meeting Three Owls Meadow Reserve Aug 18 2022

- | | | |
|---|--|--|
| 1. Agapeta hamana | 19. Large Yellow Underwing | 36. Small Square-Spot |
| 2. Epiphyas postvittana | 20. Lesser Broad-bordered Yellow Underwing | 37. Large Yellow Underwing |
| 3. Celypha lacunana | 21. Bright-line Brown-eye | 38. Least Yellow Underwing |
| 4. Eudonia mercurella | 22. Common Wainscot | 39. Lesser Broad-bordered Yellow Underwing |
| 5. Chrysoteuchia culmella | 23. Angle Shades | 40. Setaceous Hebrew Character |
| 6. Agriphila tristella | 24. Common Rustic | |
| 7. Udea lutealis | 25. Small Wainscot | |
| 8. Nomophila noctuella | 26. Saltern Ear | |
| 9. Pleuroptya ruralis | 27. Ear moth | |
| 10. Blood-vein | 28. Silver Y | |
| 11. Small Fan-foot Wave | 29. Straw Dot | |
| 12. Common Carpet | 30. Lesser Common Rustic | |
| 13. Common Marbled Carpet | 31. Common Carpet | |
| 14. Yellow-barred Brindle | 32. Gold Spot | |
| 15. Iron Prominent | 33. Common Rustic | |
| 16. Dingy Footman | 34. Common Wainscot | |
| 17. Ruby Tiger | 35. Flame Shoulder | |
| 18. Flame shoulder | | |



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Identifying the nestlings...

And still the queries come in ... we don't mind; knowledge is best when shared (have you heard that before?!!) Again, from the WhatsApp Helpline chat...

The initial description was that the bird was a seagull - but when I asked if it had webbed feet, the caller was less sure ... so I asked for a photo to fully identify it...

Hi Nigel, thanks for checking here are the photos, looking at its feet I'm unsure if it is a seagull now."

Hi, it's a nestling wood pigeon.

It shouldn't be out of the nest yet, so if you definitely don't know where the nest is, it needs taking to a wildlife rescue as it can't feed itself at that age, and is 100% reliant on its mum and dad.

If you can't get it there tonight, make up some sugared water (half a teaspoon of sugar dissolved in a mug of water). If you dip its beak into the solution and tilt the bird up so it's facing down ... it should automatically take a drink. This will both rehydrate it and provide some sustenance.

Another **WhatsApp** chat follows, for a different type of bird and needing very different and more urgent attention;

*Hi I have a young bird maybe a fledgling must have fallen out of its nest onto the pavement. No sign of mother or nest but there were 2 dead chicks nearby. Have put him in a hamster cage kept him warm and have been feeding him over the last 7 hours. He's feeding and is very vocal. Just wondering if you have any advice for his care? Thanks J*** W*****



Looks like a nestling Goldfinch. If you are near to our hospitals I can arrange admittance, but if not, then follow the link at the top of our website page to locate your nearest wildlife rescue centre.

For tonight, sugared water to drink and cooked scrambled egg to eat.

Thank you. I'm in Wigan so I'll have a look at the link. Thanks for the dietary advice. How often do you think he needs feeding?

Every 30 minutes until 9pm, then start again as soon after 5am as possible



September

We were deeply saddened to hear of the passing of Her Majesty The Queen on the afternoon of 8th September, and passed our sincere condolences and deepest sympathies onto all the members of the Royal Family.

Three Owls has been privileged to have enjoyed the Queens interest in its work with wild birds for decades, from Mrs Watkinson [pictured] herself being awarded the MBE back in 1992, to my latest correspondence with Her Majesty in 2020.

Alas we never met in person, as when I attained the Queens Scout Award in 1989, she was not doing the Award presentations that year. My other opportunity in the new Millennium with an invite to a Queens' Tea Party had to be foregone as the Sanctuary was simply too busy at that time with baby birds to allow me to make the journey down to London to attend. Thankfully David & Jen Unwin attended in my absence and on my behalf for Three Owls.



Bird Flu update

Sadly the situation with Bird Flu has continued throughout the year (rather than petering-out by April as it usually does).

Although few wildlife rescues have been internally affected (where contained birds have had to be euthanised), the knock-on effect from local commercial premises has been far more widespread, and today's announcement of a premises near Crewe in Cheshire will force two important wildlife rescues to temporarily close their doors to new bird admittances (Lower Moss Wood Wildlife Rescue, and Stapeley Grange RSPCA Wildlife Hospital). The loss of both of these rescues will be far-reaching, as this now leaves the whole of Greater Manchester without an established wild bird rescue facility in operation.

[NB the former Greenmount Bird Hospital in Bury remains closed following an RSPCA operation in 2019, though I understand it may be re-opening under new management (renamed *Kirklees Valley Wildlife Rescue*) at some point in 2023. *Ainsworth Wildlife Rescue* (also in Bury) closed earlier this year when their key rescuer relocated to another organisation. And sadly Every Feather Bird Rescue in Bolton also closed recently due to a family bereavement.]

The DEFRA website is updated (usually daily) with the latest situation and can be viewed at the following address;

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/avian-influenza-bird-flu>

If you find a **SICK** bird, then please do check their page for advice.

If you find an **INJURED** bird, then contact your nearest wildlife rescue, your nearest vets, or the RSPCA in order to get it admitted for treatment. Please bear in mind that with a number of rescues closed to new admittances due to bird flu restrictions, you may need to travel a fair distance to get it admitted - sometimes to an adjacent county.

October

David sent us a report in from the reserves at Banks;

We have planted for a late season nectar supply and just look at the results!! Gold Spot Moth, Tree Bumblebee, Red Tailed Bumblebee, Small Copper Butterfly, Small Tortoiseshell and a wonderful Peacock butterfly

Makes me so happy!



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Ongoing drought issues...

I have noticed this year that there are an abundance of seed pods on the Sycamore trees ... but they seem more reluctant to fall than the leaves this autumn.

The photo below comes from our Tree of Life alongside the Home Reserve at Rochdale, and you can see the tens of thousands of pods (helicopter leaves) seem reluctant to leave the branches this year? Those that have fallen are germinating fine, so their effectiveness clearly hasn't been compromised.

We will have to see if there are any other lasting effects next year (such as smaller leaves), or lack of seeds.



Just sometimes circumstances dictate that the person finding the bird is unable to get to a rescue, or the local rescues are all full and the casualty cannot survive without medical care.

It can be upsetting for both advisor and rescuer when we have to advise someone that the final option is to have a bird put to sleep, but we have to look at it from a welfare and quality of life point of view; and not whether a bird can 'exist' in a cage. Here follows another **WhatsApp** chat...

Hello, I've a bird in my garden that can't fly. It was here all day yesterday. Last night I took it to the vets as i didn't expect it to be a fledgling at this time of year. They kept it overnight and I picked it up a couple of hours ago and released it. It still can't fly. Vets think a fledgling but Kinder Birds [another sanctuary] (who can't take it and are full) say it is not and looks a damaged wing. Just looking for advice, are you able to take it? Thank you.

*I'm in Ramsbottom and can drop it off if I can catch it again, depending on how close you are. [video sent on **WhatsApp**]*

You have an adult female blackbird with a broken wing.

Ideally you need to take it to a wildlife rescue who can strap it up while it repairs. Although we can take it, you are 120+ miles from our hospitals at Wigton, so I would have thought it better to take it to one of the Lancashire/Manchester rescues, your local vets, or the RSPCA.

To find your nearest wildlife rescue follow the link at the top of our website page.

Ah poor thing

Okay thank you

I'll take it back to the vets I think

All the rescues seem full or far away

No problem. It's a female blackbird that most likely has been hit by a car, or hit a window hard.

Poor thing. The vet last night said a female but kept saying a fledgling. I was convinced it wasn't a fledgling.

I imagine vets may just put to sleep

But best option I think to go back there, I've one more rescue I'm waiting on a reply from

This time of year, you would expect to find a rescue within an hours' drive.

A fledgling would have a different shade-colour of beak at this time of year.

Yes possibly, but better than a cat/magpie getting it and tormenting it.

Good luck.

Exactly...poor thing

Thanks again.

November

Please think of others...

Well, 'that' time of year has come around and there will be bonfires and fireworks a plenty this weekend.

Please remember to check your bonfire stacks before lighting to check for hedgehogs and frogs who may have taken up residence during this rather wet week we have endured.

Also, try to use 'quiet' fireworks where possible; there is just no need for using the loud explosive ones - just as good a show can be enjoyed with the quiet ones which do not scare the birds / wildlife / pets / older people / those with mental health issues.

Above all, be considerate to others, keep safe and have a good time with friends and family. It would be awful to hear of another tragedy such as that we endured at the Home Reserve in Rochdale **nearly 20 years ago**.

[<https://www.manchestereveningnews.co.uk/news/local-news/bonfire-party-organisers-have-blood-on-their-hands-1161369>]

Super Supporters!

What a wonderful surprise this week, to receive a lovely letter from our friends at Knitting Nan's, enclosing an amazing cheque of £150 towards our work with the wild birds.

Any donations coming in during these last few weeks of the year are especially welcome, as understandably peoples' thoughts turn to Christmas and their own festivities ... but here at Three Owls we always have to ensure that the wild birds in our care continue to receive their much-needed support, by way of food and shelter, and to be prepared to assist whatever new birds come our way through the colder months of the year, when 'natural' help is harder to find.

I have earmarked this money to help in two specific ways; we will purchase the usual high protein & fatty foods to help support the birds currently with us, plus we will get the fallen trees from the past 12 months logged up over the winter, and create an extended network of habitats on our Home Reserve at Rochdale, thus providing homes and nesting areas not only for the birds, but also for a myriad of other wild animals and insects - all needed to keep the eco-system of the nature reserve very much alive. These wood piles last for many years as they rot down, and have been very successful on a number of our Nature Reserves.

If anyone can spare us any wild bird seed, mealworms, or fatballs; these will all be very gratefully received, and can make sure that Knitting Nan's donation can go even further than ever this year. We will try and arrange collection where local and possible.

Many thanks once again to all the 'Team' at **Knitting Nan's**.



Ann Karen Caroline Ann Nellie

We Are....."Knitting Nan's"

To be found at
Rochdale Borough Council
No 1 Riverside
Smith Street
Rochdale
OL16 1XU

on Thursday's 9.30am - 12noon

"We are Knitting for you"

Donation £150.00
For Three Owls Bird Sanctuary & Reserve

All proceeds are donated to local charities. Treasurer: Mrs Ann Packer,
49 Two Bridges Road, Newhey, Rochdale. OL16 3PP (0780 1145194)

WhatsApp again – but in a different way...

In the autumn each year, we often receive requests to visit primary schools with owls as they are undertaking projects with owls being the subject matter. We have never done this, as the birds we admit are wild birds with the intention of returning them to the wild.

The people who do undertake such displays should use captive-bred birds which have been hand-reared, and the owner be **fully licensed** and insured for such displays.

*Hello, apologies if this is the wrong number to contact. I am a nursery teacher in the Lancashire area hoping to organise an owl visit for our topic 'owl babies' which we have been doing this term. Does the Three Owls charity facilitate educational visits? Thank you, O******

Hello O*****.

Although we do have nature reserves in Lancashire and Cumbria, our captive owls are housed at the Barn Owl Trust in Devon; a long way from where you are. None of our nature reserves are currently open to the public, so we are unable to assist you directly at this time.

I suggest you get in touch with a rescue in your locality using the link at the top of our website page "Finding your local Rescue Centre", and see if one can offer the service you require.

Bear in mind that some will be closed at present due to bird flu restrictions in their respective areas.

December

Bird Flu interactive map

I am being asked a great deal at present, as to where the restrictive areas are in relation to Bird Flu, as many people are finding their local rescue centres closed to new admittances - not because they have an infection on the premises, but because they fall within a restrictive zone.

I am therefore grateful to DEFRA who have sent me this link; [<https://defra.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=8cb1883eda5547c6b91b5d5e6aeba90d>]

..which is their APHA Interactive Avian Influenza Disease Map. Just remember to 'refresh' the map once open, to get the latest up-to-date results.

Keep safe, and many thanks for caring about the wild birds in your area.

What is this strange bird??

This was a video sent in of an 'exotic-looking bird' in a garden.



It is, of course a Muscovy drake.

They are too big to fly, (females can for a short distance) so someone local must have lost/dumped it. I advised to approach the neighbours to see if someone had lost it. If no joy, then to approach a domestic bird rescue. We did have to appreciate however, that this may have extra complications due to the current bird flu restrictions, and any rescue would be within their right to refuse entry until the bird had been given a clean bill of health by a vet.

Final appeal of the year – but very different than usual...

Unusually, I had to appeal to the public for greater consideration towards rescue sanctuaries following a number of reports of abuse being brought to my attention. Although you can never please everyone, it seemed that the knock-on effects of bird flu were pushing people beyond being 'reasonable';

I have been saddened to both endure first-hand and speak to other Sanctuaries who are being verbally abused by a few members of the public who have been unable to find a wildlife rescue as close to home as they would like, upon finding a casualty.

We do appreciate the frustration you are under if you find your local rescue is full / prevented from admitting by bird flu restrictions / or sadly has closed the rescue either temporarily or permanently. However this does not excuse the verbal abuse which some people are giving out; often the recipient people on the phones are volunteers who are simply doing their very best to help, and I have seen/spoken to such who have been reduced to tears by these extra unnecessary pressures.

Those sanctuaries that use social media such as Facebook should also not have to endure such responses; those who use these media do have the option to report the written word onto the sites' owners for their direct attention.

Please do use the link at the top of our main website page to help you locate your nearest sanctuary/rescue centre, but also bear in mind this may be a car journey away of up-to an hour.

Finally, may I wish everyone all the very best for the New Year; and respectfully request people NOT to use explosive fireworks as they welcome in 2023, as these terrify the wildlife and birds (as well as some pets and people), many of whom are already persecuted in life.

Manchester Street Veterinary Surgery



0161 624 4596

www.oldhamvets.co.uk manchesterstreetvets@hotmail.co.uk

Christmas wishes

We would all like to wish you a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year, and to thank each and every one of you for your continued support for our work with wild birds in distress.

The year 2022 has been challenging in many ways, not least emerging from the Pandemic and all those restrictions it placed upon us, but also a world with new financial challenges, along with ongoing issues and restrictions from Bird Flu. The different strikes we are all suffering under have meant many supporters struggling to get funds through to us by post, and the number of postal donations, cards and letters this month have dramatically fallen - they may be stuck in the system; the next few weeks will tell, but e-cards sent online are now coming through, as well as direct bank payments and PayPal gifts are on the increase too.

Just as I have this year; a good number of supporters have given a donation to charity instead of cards/presents this year; cutting down on paper-waste, and unwanted gifts. We have REALLY appreciated this new flow of income into the charity for what can be a very lean time of year. Perhaps this will become 'the norm' in future...we will have to see?

Thank you so much for all the emails and verbal/text/WhatsApp messages of support; they are all very much welcomed and appreciated.



Three Owls Bird Sanctuary and Reserve

(Affiliated to the Jean Sainsbury Animal Welfare Trust)

Wolstenholme Fold, Norden, Rochdale, Lancs. OL11 5UD

Tel: 07973 819389 (Advice Helpline)

Website: www.threeowls.co.uk

Email: info@threeowls.co.uk

Registered Charity No: 298352



ALL I NEED IS A BIT OF
UNDERSTANDING.

Trustees:

Dr David J Unwin FRCGP MbChB (1973 to present day)

Nigel S Fowler (1978 to present day)

Stewart M F Jennings BA, Vet MB, MRCVS (1979 to present day)