



Three Owls Newsletter Spring 2014

Report by Nigel Fowler

As I write this issue of Three Owls News, we are gripped in a rut of extreme wet weather that has persisted throughout the past eight weeks, causing major and life-threatening problems for wild birds throughout the country. Many areas have flooded, by far the worst being in Wales and the south of the UK. Coupled with severe gales in excess of 100mph, it really has been a rough couple of months. The only positive point has been that so far the winter has been relatively mild, however, we are only in February and there's still plenty of time for cold weather. It has been heartening however, to find that the calls to the Advice Helpline have not diminished because of this, and despite their personal tragic circumstances, people are continuing to look after injured and displaced birds throughout the flooded areas.

The Three Owls Reserves have all been affected to different degrees; the Home Reserve at Rochdale is the most affected, with the water table being so high that the stability of some of the trees there is under threat. We have been keeping a close eye on things on a very regular basis, and will take what action is necessary to protect the Reserve. Sadly, the severe gales have brought down a number of dead standing trees and boughs; left up to provide food and nesting places for the birds. If necessary, we will repopulate the area with nesting boxes for this year's baby season, so that the resident birds are not left 'homeless'.

The very wet and windy winter has meant we have had to suspend our winter maintenance programme for safety reasons. Time will tell as to how long this impacts upon us, but if we do get a window of opportunity to undertake the work required, then we shall do so, otherwise it will have to wait until after the baby season – and of course, the herons are already sitting tight in their nests, and I expect will be laying their eggs within the next 2-3 weeks.



The Three Owls Wood at Tarleton again has suffered with excess water; thankfully it does have an underground drainage system which takes a lot of the surface water into the boundary drainage ditches, but these ditches water levels too are very high. We are keeping our fingers crossed that the young trees will come back to life, once the growing season resumes.

The Field Reserve at Wigton in Cumbria also has suffered from excessive rainfall, thankfully a fair amount of this reserve is on a slope and so can drain down, but it makes for a very wet walk for those birds and animals which use it on a regular basis.

As I write, we are setting up a large fourth reserve, which will play a major role in continuing the rehabilitation work of rescued birds and animals. As well as specialist release aviaries, there will be a recreated water meadow within the site, as well as a sandy bank to help encourage the sand martins back to where they used to nest each year. (The water meadow and sand bank are features which used to be on the land, but were lost when the land was previously farmed.) Updates to this new reserve will be available on the website and the next issue of the Newsletter. It has been a major investment for Three Owls, and we are all very excited to bring it to fruition.



Looking back

As we embark our 52nd year of helping wild birds, it is good to look back over the previous twelve months to see just how much further we have come in that short time.

January brought us a huge amount of snow, some 14" falling in just 4½ hours. We also saw temperatures fall as low as -12degC, and winds of 80mph. We also gave a Grant to support Raptor Rescue at Chorley. This enabled them to build some new aviaries to assist them with their rehabilitation work.



We looked at the Advice Helpline tally for 2012, and noted that we had handled 6256 calls, totalling 26314 minutes of advice; that's 438hrs and 34 minutes of advice given out, meaning I was on the phone for over 18 days solid!

February brought us into the breeding season, and many birds were observed on the nature reserves, pairing up and sorting out nesting boxes for some, and nesting 'sites' for others.

I also answered a popular question via the website regarding tawny owls; who does the too-whit (female), and who the too-woo (male).

With a break in the weather, we dashed in to do some tree maintenance on the Home Reserve; which required the felling of three unstable trees. I was pleased by the number of people who contacted me to report 'persons on the reserve', who were taking down trees. At least we know that we still have lots of support in the locality, and people are keen to ensure that the Reserve remains a 'safe haven' for lots of birds and animals.



March 1st brought us our first anniversary of the new website going live. We were celebrating an increase of traffic through the site; up from a previous 70,000 visits per year, to a huge 200,000 visits during that initial 12 month period.

Yet another anniversary, but this time a sad one; the 18th anniversary on 5th March of Mrs Eileen Watkinson MBE passing – the founder of Three Owls Bird Sanctuary & Reserve. She is buried on the Home Reserve, amongst all the animals and birds she cared for over all those years (1962-1995).



I was lucky enough to work on a one-to-one basis with her from 1978-1995, and learned a huge amount; knowledge which I continue to pass on through the Advice Helpline and email on a daily basis. Despite the loss of the hospitals and aviaries some four years ago, Three Owls has continued to strive to push forward, breaking new grounds in furthering its work in helping wild birds in distress, and bringing forth into reality Mrs Watkinson's own dream of Three Owls Wood at our Tarleton Reserve.

We received a further donation of £31.07 from the www.easyfundraising.org.uk team. Now, some people may think that it doesn't seem a lot, but when you realise that this can equal the postage on over 62 letters - it really adds up. So please keep on clicking via the [easyfundraising.org.uk](http://www.easyfundraising.org.uk) website, and if you haven't yet registered, then now's the time to do so. Just look at the top of our 'Can You Help' webpage. No amount is ever too small. Remember; these donations cost you nothing but a few extra seconds of your time.

In the office at Rochdale we receive all the mail for Three Owls from around the world. Often I answer the emails from the Advice Helpline mobile phone, as, along with the voice calls, they are from people who have a bird in urgent need of help. We do still however, receive a fair number of letters by post, and not everyone remembers our address correctly - so the Post Office sometimes have to put their thinking caps on!

Only this week we received a letter addressed to; 'Nigel, Three Owls Nest Sanctuary, Schofield House, Rochdale.' It still got here safe and sound, along with its own very welcome donation. Another letter simply addressed to 'Nigel Fowler, Three Owls, Lancashire' also arrived without issue, so a big pat on the back to all involved at Royal Mail.

At the end of the month came Easter, and with it our very own Easter chicks by the way of baby herons! There was some concern that this first clutch might not make it following the recent heavy snowfalls and severe frosts - but our herons are a hardy lot, and from the first clutch of five eggs laid, we have four youngsters all clamouring for attention (and food!). Over the next few days, more chicks arrived in the other nests, and we hoped that the harsh frosts we had endured that winter would soon be at an end.

It was lovely also, to welcome Sue Lewis from Rochdale Hedgehog Rescue on a visit to the Reserve that day. As well as bringing a dove in for a 2nd opinion as to its care needs, she accompanied me on my tour of the Reserve and could see the abundance of life which the Home Reserve supports. We wish her well with all the wild lives she has currently in her care.

In **April** the sun finally came out, and with it, a multitude of birds eager to make the most of the better weather and get on with building nests ready to rear their young.



The magpies and crows were whizzing around with huge twigs - some many times bigger than themselves, and you wonder how they manage to fly with them let alone lift them from the floor. The small birds such as the tits, robins, and wrens were collecting so much moss in their beaks, you wonder how they could see where they were flying! I was amused to watch a blue tit having collected a huge clump of moss, struggling to push it through the hole in the nesting box! Another amusing sight was early one morning on one of the neighbouring farms; to see about 9 jackdaws descending on a white pony which itself was shedding its winter coat. The birds were landing on the pony's back and pulling out huge beakfuls of hair (the pony didn't seem at all bothered) and when they flew off it looked they had had great big white moustaches!

On April 22nd I was thrilled to see our first returning swallow to the Home Reserve - if a little concerned as to how few flies we currently had around. These birds eat on average 10,000 flies per day; no mean feat to find all those, and we all hoped that the weather didn't take another cold turn and threaten these migratory birds, who had just battled around 8,800 miles to get here.

The sunny weekend brought forth a huge surge of calls to the Advice Helpline; mainly people finding young wood pigeons and doves out of their nests too early. There had been a few songbird hatchings too, and I was only looking at some discarded blackbird eggshells on the Reserve that afternoon. (The parents will carry away the empty shells after hatching and drop them well away from the nest to minimise the chances of a predator finding the nest.)

It was on **May** 5th that we were able to return to Three Owls Wood in Tarleton, to begin the years mowing. We had to finish early the previous year due to the extreme wet weather, and that years' start was delayed due to the long winter, so there was a fair old covering of grass for this first mow of the year (About 12-15" long over 7.5 acres!). It's important for the young trees that the grass around them is kept short, to prevent the voles nibbling the bark which would ultimately kill off the trees we are nurturing.

It was lovely to be visited by one of our supporters Mike Hough whilst I was there; and he passed comment (as many people have remarked since the trees were planted); "It's 4 or 5 times bigger than I had envisaged, and I can now see why it's such a big job to keep the grass cut short."

I was also thrilled to see that the first of the swallows had returned, and these splendid acrobats of the skies were busy catching all the flies disturbed from the grass by my mowing.

David Unwin – our trustee nearest the Wood visited the following day to have a look at my handiwork, and noted his delight to find nearly all our three thousand trees have made it through the winter.

As he arrived, a huge buzzard flapped lazily away to watch from a safe distance as he walked round. Next, a very smart oystercatcher in the newly mown grass, followed by an equally smart lapwing. A pair of mallards crept away without flying up - probably as their nest was nearby. Invisible but easily identified by their song; skylarks were somewhere overhead. There was also a pair of Wheatears - just smaller than a song thrush with a clear white bar visible on the rump as they flew away. Finally, as he came away, a robin was perched on the gatepost.



The baby season was now in full swing and calls for help were coming in thick and fast. These ranged from the usual cat-attack victims (which can be attributed to the vast majority of fledgling bird casualties), through to window-strikes, and car/children strikes. There are young birds which appear lost and orphaned; but only in a small number of instances is this the case; please contact us for advice if you are unsure. There is plenty of advice available within our website too.

I was pleased to take a succession of calls recently from Austria, and was able to guide the caller almost daily over a number of weeks to help the newly hatched birds on his balcony right through to the point when they all fledged.

Only about 20% of the calls come from the north-west, many more come from the Midlands, Wales, and the south of Britain. Although we do take calls from Scotland, they probably only amount to about 5 or 6 a week, whereas we are currently handling around 30 calls per day.

We had a visit from Jennifer from her city-centre sanctuary, bringing a pigeon to me for a 2nd opinion as to how best to treat a badly broken leg. In this case the leg is beyond repair, but the pigeon will manage very well back in the wild on just the one leg, following a successful amputation by our veterinary surgeon.

It was lovely to be able to sit outside alongside the Home Reserve, watching a pair of very busy robins collecting caterpillars and grubs for their obviously very hungry brood, and we could just make out the new heron nest at the top end of the reserve (alongside the very tree where our original heronry nest started out). Collared doves galore were floating about, as well as the usual blackbirds, starlings, swallows and jays and we listened to the calls of the baby jackdaws from within the neighbouring chimneys.

June saw us making the most of a lovely sunny spell, David and I have spent a fair chunk of one weekend mowing at the Three Owls Wood. I was amazed to find that in such a short period of time since our last cut, the grass had grown to over two feet in places! This cut was strictly limited to around the trees themselves; the pathways and rides were left untouched as these were now home to nesting birds such as pheasant, skylark, and oystercatcher - hence a much more sedate mowing style to intrude as little as possible on their lives. It was good to see our resident hares were in fine fettle, although I only saw a single leveret over the weekend. Many thanks to our supporters who travelled over there again that afternoon, and gave me a hand to weed out the grass growing within the tree shields, and to straighten out any shields which had become out of alignment either due to the mower or prevailing winds.

Both David and I marvelled at how well the trees had grown that year. All the trustees are very proud at what has been achieved at the Woodland in such a short time; bringing the dreams of Three Owls founder Mrs Eileen Watkinson MBE into reality - all through unstinting support from kind supporters like yourselves

The Home Reserve was absolutely jam-packed during June with all the young jackdaws having fledged from the neighbouring chimneys and from the church tower in the village. The parent birds always make a bee-line for the Reserve where they mass in numbers of up to 200; almost as if taking a role-call! This I am sure is due to the fact it is a safe-haven, and where literally hundreds of birds seek safety and sanctuary over the course of the year. They can also be seen over the forthcoming weeks teaching the young birds to feed on the adjacent recreation ground fields, where the beetles, worms, and insects are easy to find.

Alfred (one of our resident wood pigeons) had been away for a couple of weeks - possibly sitting on eggs? - was now back most days and busy feeding on the seed and insects in the grass. The robin chicks had now fledged and gone, and I was watching a pair of Goldcrest, investigating some wood I had stacked up over the previous weekend - clearly it was going to provide an ideal nesting site for them too.

Another Milestone was reached during June; in that after only 16 months since its inception, we have passed over a quarter of a million visits to our new website. I receive lots of feedback on the Advice Helpline as regards how the information the site contains has helped save huge numbers of bird lives in many different parts of the UK and abroad. If you can think of a topic we've missed off, and you feel it would be useful for others, then please do send us an email and we'll look into it further. The Advice Helpline gets a huge amount of praise too, as it is 'always on' and not fixed to 9-5 Monday to Friday like so many other care services. Donations are then gratefully received via either our Website or in the post; for the former, it's just a few clicks and we have your gift, ready to continue our work in supporting the wild birds all around us.

We have been pleased to work with Bridgewater School in Manchester who have conducted a study from a number of Barn Owl pellets found at Three Owls Wood, as part of their A-Level Biology Course. Read on to see the results of their analysis;

Investigating Owl Pellets:

Joe Forrester and Alice Royle-Pryor with the aid of their A-level biology teacher Mr. James Selby carried out an investigation regarding the predatory patterns of the Barn Owls at Three Owls Wood in Tarleton. The following page is their account:

As two young and keen A-level Biologists of Bridgewater School, we set out to investigate whether there was any significant difference in which prey the barn owls at Three Owls Wood predate on. In order to do this we analyzed closely various pellets of the owls to see what we could find. We were given a sample of 15 owl pellets from the site. These owl pellets were from the resident wild barn owls and are formed when the owl regurgitates the indigestible parts of their prey which in most cases they will have eaten whole.

A variety of skull fragments taken from the owl pellets

Here is how we did it:

Taking the owl pellets and microwaving them to ensure all bacteria were killed, we firstly soaked the dry pellets in warm water to break them up. Then came the delicate part; we carefully picked through the pellets with tweezers, picking out the small-undigested bones of the Owls' prey. Once collected, the skulls and lower jaw bones were compared to pictures of the skeletons of each prey type so that we could identify the Owls' prey of choice!

What we found was interesting to say the least! After a tiny woodlouse carapace and many very similar looking bones we found that voles (probably field voles) were the most favoured prey of all the animals we found, making up 36% of the total. Wood mice made up a similar, but slightly lower percentage of the prey

with no bird skeletons found at all. 9% of the skull fragments and lower jaws were identified as shrew. Finally of interest was evidence that young rat had also formed part of the diet with a skull fragment and lower jaw seeming to come from a small, young rat. Overall, we found investigating the predatory patterns of the owls both interesting and a lot of fun. We'd like to thank Miss Frew for passing the pellets to us on behalf of Mr Fowler.



We do receive lots of calls from many different and interesting places, but a call from Wimbledon Arena on **July** 3rd was the first from that such attraction. A pigeon was in distress there and the caller had hoped we could 'pop round' and pick it up. Sadly, we are a little too far away for that, but I pointed them in the direction of one of the London-based rescue centres and heard no more, so hopefully all went well.

It **IS** noticeable whenever there is an event with television coverage being broadcast; the Advice Helpline goes very quiet while it is on, then gets swamped at the adverts or after the programme has finished! This was very apparent in the quarter finals between Andy Murray and Fernando Verdasco!

On 14th July, John Thorpe once more braved the elements to fundraise for us on the Manchester to Blackpool Sponsored Bike Ride

The total amount raised this year was down from previous years as feared, but we still raised a very healthy £152.50 from quite a number of supporters, and lots more people have congratulated John for his efforts but been unable to support us financially at this time. This shows we are not lacking overall support by any means, but simply that peoples finances are already stretched to the absolute limit.



Certainly, with speaking this year with other wildlife charities, charitable donations are down by around 70% across the board; similar to what we have found at Three Owls.

If you want a feel for how your efforts have benefited us, the money raised will pay for the fuel for four months-worth of mowing at the Wood; a considerable saving for us indeed.

Once again, many thanks to everyone for yet another wonderful effort.

"We have just heard that this years Manchester to Blackpool Sponsored Bike Ride will be on Sunday 13th July. If you are able, could you consider a contribution to show our support for John Thorpe, and how much we appreciate his unstinting efforts to support Three Owls."

All good things come to those who wait – and that was certainly true in **August** that year; - It's a phrase we have often heard, but for some it can have a far greater meaning and none less than for our colleagues at Knoxwood Wildlife Rescue Trust at Wigton near Carlisle.

It was around 18 months previous when we received an urgent call for assistance from our friends George, Isobel, and Emma who work so hard alongside their staff and volunteers to keep Knoxwood going. A plot of land had come up for sale alongside their sanctuary (almost unheard of in recent times), and they were trying to get as many pledges of support as possible to see if they could possibly afford it.



An emergency meeting was called for the Three Owls trustees and we unanimously agreed to make a grant of £30,000 which would enable the purchase to go ahead. A quick dash round the trustees ensured the cheque was sent off that same week. Sadly, at the auction the land sold for many times the estimate price, and certainly outside the reach of any local prospectors.

However, the sale did prompt a neighbour to offer to sell a portion of land they previously rented to the Trust, and so many months of negotiations followed. Finally, the light proved to be the end of the tunnel (and not a train coming the other way!), and the sale completed.

Now, this new land is being set up as a new release site, and in recognition of the grant from Three Owls - without whose assistance the purchase would not have been possible, it has been named the Three Owls Field Reserve (our third nature reserve, alongside our Home Reserve at Rochdale, and our Three Owls Wood at Tarleton. The reserve will be owned and managed by Knoxwood to enable for them to further their aims and objectives to get as many wild animals and birds safely back to the wild.

You will recall that back in 2010, Knoxwood answered our own call for assistance in taking in all our gulls, crows, magpie, and jays. Also several ducks and a swan; which they continue to support and care for to this day.

I travelled up to Knoxwood in August to visit them on their Open Day, and to see first-hand the new reserve and all their latest charges. It was pleasing to see also just how well the new hospital is doing since we kitted it out in 2010 from our own nearly new purpose-built facilities.

A further mowing weekend at Three Owls Wood in August, also saw me creosoting the entire stable-block. Whilst mowing, I also saw a caterpillar of the Elephant Hawk Moth, which struck me as being massive! Later in the day, I was joined by Jennifer (who brought us Alfred the wood pigeon from her sanctuary), and Sue (from Rochdale Hedgehog Rescue) who both helped me check the entire stock of trees for any loose/broken stakes. Sue will hopefully be using the Reserve for future hedgehog releases, and as if to prove suitability, just as we were packing up, she spotted a young hog on his early evening excursion around the woodland!

It was in **September** that we reported our first issues to O2 that we were having with our Advice Helpline handset. In reality, it had been playing up for a few months previously, but as it was so heavily needed with the baby birds, we had delayed asking for help. Alas, we had an absolute nightmare at trying to get things sorted, and time dragged on and on, eventually culminating in us having to purchase another handset ourselves, as those supplied by O2 simply didn't work. They have since offered to upgrade us to a different phone, but as the handset is currently working, we will upgrade as soon as this one starts to wear out. Given the amount of use it gets, we cannot really blame the handset itself – I don't know of any others which work so hard day-in-day-out.

September also saw the final mow of the season at Three Owls Wood – and what a marathon session that was! A full 12 hours 'in the seat', means you are walking a bit like John Wayne when you do finally call it a day. It was however a good day and I was pleased to have been able to mow virtually every square inch of the 7.5 acre site.

Once again, I was amazed at how well the woodland is growing and developing - just two years on and it really does feel like a woodland; even the leaves on the trees are now starting to change colour with the onset of autumn.



It was quite late-on before the two adult hares came out to play; there was no sign of the young leverets this time, but this was good as I didn't want them to become too used to people. During the course of the day, I noted that it really had been a good Ladybird year, and this time there were dragonflies too. There were a pair of kestrels busy hunting for most of the day, and I noted the absence of the swallows - and hoped they would all have a safe and successful journey back to North Africa. In my final hour of mowing, I was very pleased to see the pheasants flying back in onto the Reserve; I hadn't seen them for a couple of months, but here they were in fine fettle.

It was in **October** that I received quite a number of enquiries regarding how people can help 'their' garden birds, in light of the impending storm that was due to hit the UK in the following 24 hours.

In reality, the birds themselves will know where to go, and you will find trees such as conifers offer them the best shelter in a bad storm.

Where you CAN help however, is after the storm there will be little in the way of food immediately available, as much will have been blown or washed away. For instance the small birds need to eat daily, and your help in this case can be a lifesaver.

Take a look on our Advice pages, and our Emergency Bird Feeds section on our website; you can see how best you can help our feathered friends recover from a traumatic experience.

Rest assured however, the birds will know before you do, when the storm does strike - you'll struggle to find sight of one whilst the storm is at its height.

Towards the end of **October**, I took a call on the Advice Helpline regarding a young swan that had been sat in a cul-de-sac roadway, and had been put into a residents garden for safety.

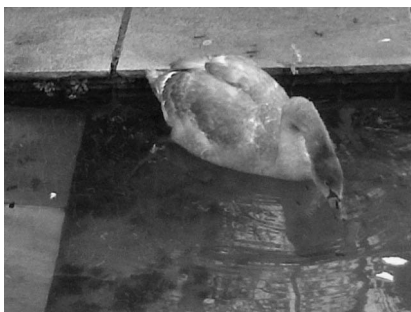
The advice I had given out HAD been followed, but sadly neither the RSPCA nor the local bird hospital in Bury were prepared/able to go and do a rescue. The lady whose garden it was in, sat up all night with it to ensure the foxes didn't get it, and then I received a further call for assistance from Sue Lewis at Rochdale Hedgehog Rescue; who was prepared to go and rescue the youngster.

By sheer coincidence, I was at a property just around the corner, and so popped around to see what was needed.

The cygnet was indeed a young bird, and barely fledged - I suspect on its maiden flight, when it had clearly come a cropper in the strong winds.

Anyway, quickly popping it under my arm, it was quickly transferred into our care, and is now happily lodging on one of the ponds, while we try and track down where its 'true home' really is. It is rung with both a BTO metal ring, and a blue plastic ring (usually denotes a Lancashire bird), however the early suggestions of Queens Park Lake in Heywood or Rhodes Lodges in Middleton (two recorded places in Rochdale where swans have bred this year according to the BTO Breeding Bird Survey Organiser in Wigan), both proved incorrect as the cygnets there are still in residence with their parents. I have lodged an Information Request with the County Bird Recorder, and he will let me have the info as soon as he gets it himself.

Consequently, 'Sally' as her finder named her, lodged with us while we researched to find out where she was from, or to relocate her to an alternative safe waterway. Meanwhile, she enjoyed the luxuries of Three Owls hospitalities!



It was into **November** when we had all the pieces of jigsaw in place as to what had happened to 'Sally the swan';

Following a combined effort from many different organisations, we were today able to conclude that she was one of a brood of 4, which were rung in September this year.

The parents had started flying off and leaving them for longer and longer periods in recent days, and the cygnets flew off last weekend, spending a full day on Syke Pond where they drew a number of admirers and photographers.

Fast forward a few days and Sally becomes separated from her siblings, crash-landing on a housing estate in Caldershaw during the recent windy weather.

Following a call to our Advice Helpline, despite the advice given; the caller was unable to get anyone out that evening, and so gave the cygnet the protection of her back garden - staying up all night with it to protect it from attack by foxes. (The local cats watched from the safety of the fence-top!)

The following day, the lady made arrangements with Sue Lewis of Rochdale Hedgehog Rescue to attend to rescue the cygnet, and Sue herself contacted me for advice and assistance. We met at the house and I recognised that this was simply a lost youngster rather than an injured bird in need of hospital care. We had the bird checked over by Stewart Jennings of Manchester Street Veterinary Surgery - who is the Three Owls vet - and pronounced it fit and well. The cygnet was then taken to one of the Three Owls reserves where it could be cared for in a protected environment whilst we tried to locate its family.

Following a suggestion that Sally could be the single offspring of either the swan pair at Queen's Park in Heywood, or from Rhodes Lodges in Middleton; both sites were checked but those cygnets were still with their parents.

We would like to thank Ian McKerchar; the County Bird Recorder, for his help in identifying the ring information.

Also Steve Christmas who rung the birds on behalf of the BTO, and was able to pinpoint the swans breeding area and give me some background into the habits of this particular family of birds.

Wes Halton, of the North West Swan Study group, for co-ordinating the research.

Tommy Downes and Mike Cummings, Rangers of Queens Park in Heywood, and Rhodes Lodges in Middleton respectively.

Also to some of the residents of Syke in Rochdale who have kept note of the cygnets movements to enable a release decision to be made for Sally.

Also to the Wardens at Hollingworth Lake who gave me a personal escort to the back of the Lake (not normally open to public vehicles), in order to get Sally into position with the minimum of fuss.

To Sue Lewis from Rochdale Hedgehog Rescue for attending the initial rescue, and for her assistance during our searches and release.

Finally, thanks to the lady who found (and named) Sally, for caring and offering sanctuary in her garden when it was most needed.

If you go up to Hollingworth Lake in the coming months; keep an eye out for Sally; she has a plastic blue ring on her leg number 4ABI (You won't be able to read the metal ring on her other leg). She is brown and white now, but will increasingly become pure white as she matures. This gives you an insight into some of the work that goes on in the background, when caring for the wild birds around us. Sally spent just 3 days with us, but made quite an impression and we wish her well for a long and happy life.

Also during November, I gave another interview for an educational study. Some of the questions posed were very thought provoking, and I thought I would share them with you; "What has changed in how people contact you for help in the past decade?" Certainly, the Helpline is busier than ever, and now with the use of not just voice-calls but also text and email, people of all ages and abilities are able to contact us for help from all over the world. We do still receive a small number of letters by post, but by far email has become the most common form of communication we currently receive. With the increased use of Smart-phones, email is so accessible it has even taken over from text - which just five years ago was the most used facility.

I do still do some hands-on medicinal work with the birds; whether that be strapping a broken wing, or giving advice on the best course of treatment for birds in a wide-variety of problematic circumstances. The best use for knowledge is when it's shared!

I do still get recognised and stopped in the street (which I don't mind), though am rarely in the paper or on the TV with the running of the sanctuary these days. One other notable point from the questions raised, was that we very rarely are sought out nowadays by Directory Enquiries. These days it's a Search Engine such as Google or Bing from which we are located.

In **December** we heard that The Local Villages Initiative in Tarleton had agreed in principle to fund THREE - yes three habitat improvements for this 7 1/2 acre reserve Three Owls Wood, they are:

1. A wildlife pond 20 by 10 metres.
2. A wildflower meadow of almost an acre, under the power lines where we were not allowed to plant trees.
3. A mixed orchard.

We are very grateful for the generous support of this local group of forward-thinking folk. Already we have started the ball rolling with the planning application for the pond, found a local farmer to start ploughing, and the British wildflower charity "Landlife" have given advice on wildflower species to sow next spring

Here is the full breakdown of all the calls handled by our Advice Helpline during 2013. It was a similar year to 2012 work-wise, though the figures are slightly down due to our malfunctioning handset earlier on in the year (it's since been replaced);

1-1-13 to 31-1-13

533 calls 2479 mins = 41hrs 19 mins

1-2-13 to 28-2-13

372 calls 1941 mins = 32hrs 21 mins

1-3-13 to 31-3-13

392 calls 1626 mins = 27hrs 6 mins

1-4-13 to 30-4-13

307 calls 1459 mins = 24hrs 19 mins *

1-5-13 to 31-5-13

344 calls 1445 mins = 24hrs 5 mins *

1-6-13 to 30-6-13

562 calls 2977 mins = 49hrs 37 mins

1-7-13 to 31-7-13

729 calls 2218 mins = 36hrs 58 mins *

1-8-13 to 31-8-13

628 calls 2084 mins = 34hrs 44 mins

1-9-13 to 30-9-13

494 calls 1944 mins = 32hrs 24 mins

1-10-13 to 31-10-13

426 calls 1703 mins = 28hrs 23 mins

1-11-13 to 30-11-13

396 calls 1566 mins = 26hrs 6 mins

1-12-13 to 31-12-13

323 calls 1315 mins = 21hrs 55 mins

Annual Totals

Calls - 5506

Minutes - 22757

Hours - 379 hrs 17 mins

Overall average call length 4 mins 8 secs

* April lost 4 days data (phone error)

* May lost 10 days data (as above)

* July lost 5 days data (as above)

Once again I thank you all for your continued kind support. It is through your donations that we can continue our much-needed work, and from these efforts countless birds' lives are being saved each and every day.

We do still have some Three Owls personalised items left in our online shop. These can be just as easily purchased by post as online, and paid for by cheque/PO rather than PayPal online.

See below what is available – remember P&P is included in the price, no matter how many you order;

Three Owls Ballpoint Pen (Retractable supporters pen)

A very popular item with all ages, these pens are lovely writers and sit easily in the hand. There are five different colours available; white / black / blue / burgundy / green. Please state what colour(s) you require (they all write with black ink), otherwise they will be sent out randomly.

£ 2.00



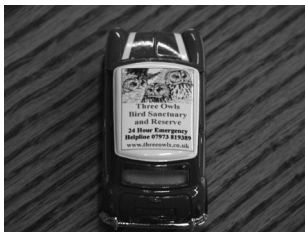
Three Owls Model Car (**Very Limited Edition** Three Owls Mini)

**** Last Few Remaining****

From a very small run of just 29 cars produced, these are the very last available in this design.

Produced by Corgi Classics Ltd this beautiful metal diecast car features the Three Owls logo and contact details on its roof. Grab the opportunity to get one of the few left - when they're gone they're gone!

£ 10.00



Three Owls Placemat (Heat resistant placemat of Three Owls logo)

A heat-resistant placemat of our own Three Owls Logo in line drawing, with a complimentary green border. Produced for us by Cotswold Rural Crafts. Measures approx 40cm x 27.5cm.

£ 4.00



Three Owls PVC Apron (PVC Apron in our own design (one-size))

Whether you're cleaning, cooking, painting, or even bathing the dog; this wonderful apron makes a very useful addition to the home - or an ideal (easily posted) gift for family or friends. Measures 85cm x 54cm with 27cm tall neckloop.

This design has been with us now since the 1980's, and yet proves as popular as ever. Easily recognisable, it has often been a good talking point for visitors to your home, whilst helping to support our charity.

This design is also available for our matching PVC Tote Bag.

£8.00



Three Owls PVC Tote Bag (PVC Tote Bag in our own design)

A handy-sized 50cm x 30cm tote bag, with generous 22cm tall handles ensure all your shopping can be carried safely, securely, and kept dry too!

This design has been with us now since the 1980's, and yet proves as popular as ever. Easily recognisable on the street, many supporters have met over the years whilst using this handy bag to support our charity.

This design is also available for our matching PVC Apron.

£8.00

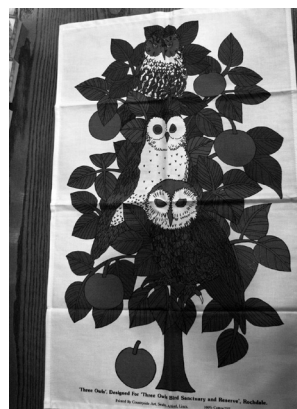


Three Owls Tea Towel (100% cotton tea towel in our own design)

This beautiful tea towel makes a very useful addition to the home - or an ideal (easily posted) gift for family or friends. Measures 74cm x 47cm. 100% cotton, and produced for us by Countryside Art.

This design has been with us now since the 1970's, and yet proves as popular as ever. Easily recognisable, it has often been a good talking point for visitors to your home, whilst helping to support our charity.

£5.00



Thank you all in advance for your ongoing support.

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.**