



The Rehabilitator

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+ BWRC NEWSLETTER +

Capture Myopathy: A Rescuers Nightmare

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Top Ten Kit List



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Word From the Chair

A very warm welcome to you all to the latest BWRC newsletter. There is an excellent range of articles and topics suitable for all levels of professional practice and as ever we are extremely grateful to everyone who has contributed their time and expertise in producing articles; I very much hope that you enjoy the newsletter.

Avian influenza continues to create very challenging for our sector and I wish to encourage everyone to share their views and experiences on how this pervasive disease continues to affect our care and rehabilitation of wild animals. If you have any comments or suggestions please do get on touch, we appreciate hearing from you,

**Very best wishes,
Dan**



Sussex dolphin project, Sussex cetaceans

Written by: Thea Taylor, Head of Sussex Dolphin Project

Sussex Dolphin Project is the local flagship project of the World Cetacean Alliance, a global partnership of organisations dedicated to the conservation of cetaceans (whales, dolphins, and porpoises). The WCA has partners in 41 countries around the world, but with their main office in Sussex, it was important for them to have a project in their local area. Historically Sussex is an incredibly poorly studied area for marine mammals. It is often assumed that there is very little marine life out there, it is cold, shallow, and noisy due to heavy shipping and fishing activity, not ideal habitat for dolphins, or so you would think!

From a combination of citizen science data and historical evidence, we now know that we have two cetacean species seen regularly in Sussex, and two rarer visitors.

The Bottlenose dolphin (*Tursiops truncatus*) is our most common cetacean species, with an average of 38 sightings in the summer season between May-September, but with visiting pods throughout the winter. Our second most reported species, and my personal favourite, is the Harbour Porpoise (*Phocoena phocoena*). These small and elusive cetaceans spend much of the year around the Seven Sisters, feeding on the fish around the chalk reefs and headlands that form this iconic coastline. With their small dorsal fins, and tendency to avoid boats, the fact that we get so many sightings around this coastline is encouraging.

Our visiting species are the Common Atlantic dolphins (*Delphinus delphis*) who appear towards the end of summer, and the White-Beaked dolphin (*Lagenorhynchus albirostris*), an offshore species most commonly spotted by fishermen and sailors more than 10 miles out.

Since our launch four years ago, we have worked with local fishermen, as well as recreational sea users and coastal users to gain a good understanding of the species and distribution of marine mammals in the Sussex seas. Not only have we worked with them to collect data, but we also offer training and talks to raise awareness of the marine mammals in Sussex and provide guidelines on vessel interactions for people out on the water.



At SDP we believe that we must take a holistic approach to protecting our cetaceans. As apex predators, the best way we can ensure their future is by protecting the marine environment they call home. We run three main programmes within SDP. Our research programme has until 2022 worked predominantly with opportunistic data and we are currently training local people to collect data both from the land and the sea. Our land-watch training sessions launched in the summer have trained over 30 people to collect and record data along the Sussex coast, and we are already getting important data coming in.



Our awareness programme works with local, national, and international media to raise awareness of the amazing marine life we have in the Sussex seas, and the threats that they face. Our winter campaign focuses on the threat of bycatch by the international supertrawlers (otherwise known as factory ships) that can reach lengths of 146m and catch an astounding 6000 tonnes of fish in a single trip. From local strandings data, the increase in strandings during the period of supertrawler activity off the Sussex coast (13 out of 19 strandings in 2020) are too significant to ignore or overlook. We are trying to raise awareness of this out of sight issue, and campaign for better remote monitoring on board these vessels to record bycatch.



Our education programme works predominantly with local schools and colleges, educating the children about the importance of a healthy marine ecosystem to not only protect the dolphins, but also their own futures as coastal communities. We also run educational sessions and training events with local adult groups such as local yacht clubs and diving groups.



I will admit that the hardest challenge we face as an organisation is the apathy local people seem to feel towards their coastline and their seas. The Sussex waters rarely look inviting, but hide a wealth of animals that many people would expect to see on a coral reef such as tub gurnards and cuckoo wrasse! Once people begin to realise just how rich our local seas are, and that there are dolphins out there, our job will become significantly easier!



We All Started Somewhere

Written by: Pete Foggon, Founder of Sompting Wildlife Rescue

Some larger, more established rescues may call us a "back yard" rescue, and to a degree I guess that's correct, but that doesn't mean we compromise on care or facilities, and everyone has to start somewhere. My name is Pete, and I'd like to tell you a bit about the work we do at our wildlife rescue, Sompting Wildlife Rescue.

Sompting Wildlife Rescue is situated at the foot of the south downs national park, in Sompting, West Sussex. We cater for all wildlife across Sussex. We have our limits on what, or how long we can treat an animal, but we will always help if we can.

My wife and I are both veterinary nurses and have been rescuing and treating wildlife for 20 years or so. It was only when we moved to a larger house 5 years ago, we set up Sompting Wildlife Rescue.

Our main casualties tended to be from our workplaces, animals that needed somewhere to go after initial treatment at a veterinary clinic. Wounds that required flushing and dressing several times a day, fractures that needed time to heal and possible physio, that larger rescues do not necessarily have the time for. Our little niche was perfect for what we do. We launched Sompting Wildlife Rescue officially in 2019, gaining charity status in 2020.



In 2020, we saw wildlife care change, the pandemic came, and people were at home more watching the wildlife in their gardens. This of course meant that animals that were previously left to their own devices, were under scrutiny and in some cases interfered with when they didn't need to be. My wife and I continued to work throughout the pandemic, but along with this we saw a significant increase in wildlife needing care. People unable to get help at veterinary centres or couldn't travel to larger rescues meant our service became essential. We started taking in more animals than ever before and even enlisted the help of our three daughters for feeding and cleaning out, and they still help today with great enthusiasm for the work we do.



Being a smaller home run rescue meant in the past we were funded out of our wages. The sudden increase in admissions meant we had to start asking for money to help with animal's care. Anyone who knows us knows we do not like asking for money, but a sad fact is that it is needed to continue to grow and offer the best treatments.

Last year we were left a small legacy from a lady we had never met, and as far as we were aware, have had no dealing with! This injection of cash has meant we can replace old tatty aviaries, and best of all, with begging and pleading, are building a small Hospital unit in our garden. This unit is being fitted out with stainless steel kennels instead of previous wooden ones, as well as all the mod cons you'd expect of a clinic. This should also open us up to be able to ask for volunteers to help too.

Any larger wildlife we attend or aid that we can't keep longer term will normally be transferred to a larger rescue with the correct facilities for that species.



We've worked hard on building relationships with other rescues and in return some have sent animals our way that may require some extra 1 to 1 care.

This year Bird Flu has been the biggest issue for most of us. We've some fantastic local animal welfare groups that have been collecting and transporting wildlife to vet clinics for check-ups and then onto wildlife rehabilitation centres. This has limited, at times, what we can take as we have had to isolate every bird that has come our way.

Unfortunately, a larger wildlife rescue close to us, closed due to retirement. This increased calls and admissions significantly for everyone in the local area.

We now see all wildlife and provide rehabilitation or, if we can't, we'll send it where it needs to go! It's now become a full-time job overtaking the hours our usual day jobs put in.

Things have changed significantly since we started and costs have spiralled upwards, but as long as we can get funding through the door we'll keep going, onwards and upwards.



Note From the Editor:

Whilst “backyard” rescues may still be at the nestling stage, its important to work together to help these smaller rescues fledge. No wildlife rescue is perfect but its crucial to educate, share knowledge and ideas between us. Almost every big hospital began in a back garden, some of the most respected names in the industry started in their garden, kitchen, shed or just one person in a car delivering animals to vets. The same passion runs through the veins of the rehabber, no matter the size of the hospital they work in.



The Red List

Written by: Keith Marley, Founder The New Arc

The North East Wildlife & Animal Rescue Centre better known by its initials as The New Arc is what might be considered, in UK terms, as a medium sized wildlife rescue based about 20 miles outside Aberdeen, Scotland. We have been established since 2006 and initially dealt with both wildlife and domestic animals and birds. In 2017 we became increasingly aware of the decline in both our natural habitats and our native wildlife and decided to focus all our efforts on wildlife. For the past 5 years we have constructed a variety of aviaries, pens and paddocks to deal with an ever-increasing number of orphans and casualties

In 2021 we finally realised a dream and opened the doors on our Wildlife Hospital equipped with shiny new cages, a dedicated ICU with incubators, an Inspection room with microscope and 2 spacious rooms housing a variety of cages and equipment as well as an office, kitchen and possibly most exciting, a toilet and hot & cold running water in each room.

Last year we dealt with over 1650 wildlife cases consisting of 1320 birds (81 species), 328 mammals (19 species), around 30 reptiles and amphibians and despite everything, the occasional lost or injured domestic.

This year has seen a very slow start to the season, but one good thing about that is the chance to catch up with the dreaded accounts and associated paperwork. It also gave the chance to carry out what might loosely be called a 'performance review' so it was interesting to have a look at our 'Ins and Outs' just to see how we had done overall.



I've always thought that Wildlife Rescue and Rehabilitation centres are an overlooked and undervalued Conservation asset. Especially knowing that 1 in 4 of our wild birds (over 70 species) are 'Red Listed' birds of 'highest conservation concern' nearly double the number since 1996 (36 species). In addition, there is also an 'Amber List' detailing 103 species 'indicating an increasing level of conservation concern'.



My attention was immediately drawn to the number of 'Red Listed' birds we had dealt with during the year. I found 37% of our intake was actually 'Red Listed' representing 19 different species (although a number of these birds were Herring Gulls that we had reared from eggs). This resulted in 236 releases, a 48% survival rate. It's also worth pointing out at this point that my figures do not include those who arrived badly injured and were PTS within 24 hours which would show a far higher % success rate.

I then turned my attention to the 'Amber List'. Here the numbers represented 31 different species many of which arrived in ones and twos with the notable exception of 31 Redwings, 5 Blackbirds and 2 Song Thrush which had to be euthanised immediately on arrival after suffering horrific injuries in an offshore 'flare' incident. Four hundred 'Amber Listed' birds arrived in total representing 30% of our annual bird intake. Sadly, including the 'offshore incident' birds the success rate was far lower with only 127 releases (32%). Again, this is not a clinical survival rate and includes all the birds arriving regardless of condition. Huge 'wash ups' of dead and dying seabirds, Guillemots, Razorbills and Puffins in the North East also contributed to a higher than normal, failure rate.

In conclusion, it might appear that the numbers involved are insignificant Conservation wise. In the 'big scheme' of things, however, The New Arc is but a cog in the wheel, we are still growing, still improving our facilities and knowledge. We are fortunate that throughout the country there are many rescues large and small, all making a contribution and I content myself with the thought that 'Together, we are all making a difference'.



I would be interested in gathering similar information from readers on their 'Red Lists' and their survival rates. The information provided would be confidential and only used to build a joined up nationwide picture.

TOP 10 MUST HAVE KIT

Written by Paul Reynolds, HART Wildlife

For wildlife rescues that specialise in a single species the equipment you need on a regular basis may differ from that of a generalist wildlife rehabilitation centre, however, for the purposes of this piece I am writing as the manager of a wildlife rehabilitation centre that deals with all wildlife except marine mammals.

Many of the tools of our trade are commandeered from other animal care industries such as zoos, veterinary practices, animal control etc with very little made specifically to care for wildlife. When it comes to the tools we can break them down into 2 main areas:

- 1) Equipment for carrying out the rescue, restraint, and transportation of wildlife
- 2) Equipment to house wildlife and carry out rehabilitation

Below I have put together a list of my top 10 most commonly used tools within wildlife rescue and rehabilitation:

Top 10 most commonly used items (in no particular order):

1

Grasper: Critical for safely controlling foxes, badger.



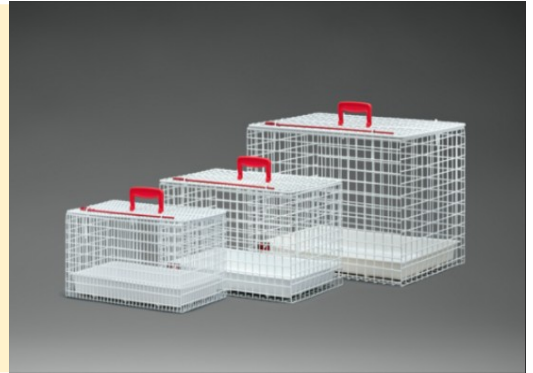
2

Catch net: For both wild capture and capture within aviaries



3

Animal carrier: There are a myriad of different types but essentially the carrier needs to be large enough for the animal to be comfortable, unable to escape or harm itself during transport.



4

Syringes: for the administering of medication/fluids (under veterinary supervision) as well as feeding



5

Crop tubes/needles: For feeding liquid mixtures to avian patients safely. Different lengths, thicknesses and materials are relevant to the species you are feeding



6

Hospital cages: As with carriers there are many options here, essentially the caging needs to be of a material and size that the animal is kept warm, calm, cannot harm itself, is easy to disinfect and of a suitable size for the animal's rehabilitation stage. For custom made cages my recommendation is from a company called Poltec



7

Incubator/Heat pad: We use these generally with two types of patients. Those who cannot regulate their own temperature because they are unwell, and those who cannot regulate their own temperature because they are too young. Brinsea is the main company making incubators. Their Vetario incubators have the useful additional options for adding oxygen (under veterinary supervision) and nebulising



8

PPE: Essential to protect both human and animal health. Gloves, masks and aprons are the basic PPE to deal with most wildlife casualties, however some patients may require the use of goggles, thick gloves, or higher rated masks such as FFP3.



9

Euthanasia tools: having access to euthanasia 24 hours a day is essential for any wildlife rehabilitator. For many species physical methods are humane and easily available for those with the necessary training and experience. For tools these can include firearms, captive bolt, aids to assist with cervical dislocation (if needed), blunt force instruments etc.



10

Microscope: being able to assess faecal samples and crop swabs (with veterinary supervision) is a useful diagnostic exercise for wildlife rehabilitators



WHAT IS BIRD FLU?

- Bird flu, better known as avian influenza, LPAI or HPAI, is a virus that mainly affects birds.
- in rare cases It can affect mammals including humans.
- It is a notifiable disease.

MOST COMMON SYMPTOMS:

- Sudden death
- Swollen head
- Closed and runny eyes
- Lack of coordination
- lethargy
- Head and body shaking
- Breathing difficulties
- Head and neck twisting
- Fever
- Watery droppings
- Dragging of wings or/and legs
- Unresponsive



1

Report

Contact Defra 0345933 55 77

- if you find one or more dead birds of prey
- 3 or more dead gulls or wild waterfowl
- 5 or more dead birds of any species

2

Do Not Touch

You can report sick or injured birds to:

- RSPCA 0300 1234 999
- SSPCA 0300 999 999
- Contact a wildlife rescue for advice through www.helpwildlife.co.uk
- Contact your local vet for advice
- Also further advice at www.bwrc.org.uk

3

Wear PPE

when handling all birds ensure adequate personal protection equipment is worn such as:

- Gloves
- Long sleeve apron
- Face mask
- visor or glasses

4

DO NOT TRANSPORT

Do not take any cases of suspected bird flu to a vet or rescue centre without contacting them first.



DEFRA: 03459 33 55 77

www.gov.uk/guidance/avian-influenza-bird-flu

KNOWN CONFIRMED CASES 21/22

- Fox
- Harbour seal
- Otter
- Cetaceans
- Common Buzzard
- Little gull
- Mute swan
- Kestrel
- Greylag goose
- Canada goose
- Red kite
- Whooper swan
- Goshawk
- Pinkfooted goose
- Gull herring
- Barnacle goose
- Gullimot
- Sparrowhawk
- Gull black headed
- Peregrine Falcon
- Mallard duck
- Magpie
- Pigeon wood
- Sea eagle
- Wagtail
- Moorhen
- Gadwall
- Eider
- Grebe
- Tawny owl
- Oyster catcher
- Gannet
- Skua
- Great black backed gull
- Artic tern
- Puffin
- Crow
- Razorbill
- Hen harrier
- Little egret
- Comorant
- Kittiwake
- Curlew
- Pheasant
- Golden eagle
- Fulmar
- Rock dove
- Osprey



A Swift Story

Written by: Morgane Ristic, Senior Wildlife Carer HART Wildlife Rescue

On the 17th of June the team at HART Wildlife Rescue admitted the youngest swift they had ever rescued. Found on the ground and in urgent need of care, the finder rushed what he thought was a sparrow down to HART for treatment and subsequent rehabilitation.

Upon arrival, the swift was found to be in good health and no more than a few days old, weighing in at just 7g. The chick was initially warmed up and given electrolytes prior to being fed a diet consisting of crickets and waxworms. Additional vitamins were added onto the first meal of the day including vitamin B12 and calcium. Taylor, as she was named, received small meals every hour for 12h a day. She initially required gentle force feeding as swifts are known not to gape readily in the way that most garden birds do when being reared in care. As Taylor was going to be in care for roughly 5 to 6 weeks, it was important for the team to handle her with care so that her beak would not get injured and so that her new feathers would not get damaged either.



Every day that followed, Taylor was weighed prior to her first feed of the day and notes were taken in regard to her development. It is crucial to carefully monitor young patients so that diet and feeding techniques can be adjusted to fit their needs and avoid complications that may arise in a captive setting.

Seven days into care and Taylor had gained her first feathers and weighed a comfortable 20g, and by just 2 weeks in care she reached 30g. Her meals became larger as she grew and soon enough, she started to take food from our gloved hands every 2 hours. It is always a relief for any rehabilitator to see animals adjust to taking food for themselves without requiring handling. She was soon accompanied by other swifts admitted following the worst heat wave the UK had ever seen.



Being reared in captivity from such a young age exposed Taylor to some potential complications such as developing brittle feathers. Thankfully this wasn't the case. Sadly, it isn't possible for us to match our rescued swift's wild diet fully to their wild counterparts, so we had to work hard to provide excellent quality live food as well as adequate vitamin and nutritional supplementation to make up for the lack of diversity.



Taylor reached 50g and we were finally able to confirm that her feathers were strong and sturdy. Our BTO ringer came to place a ring on her leg as well as the other 20 swifts we were caring for at that time. She finally entered the post fledgling phase where she lost interest in food and was left to lose a bit of weight prior to release. Her last feather casing came off and when she dropped to 46g we gave her the chance to go as she was getting visibly restless. She was softly placed onto my flat palm, overlooking a descending field and within seconds she took off effortlessly. After 5 weeks of care and 252 feeds, Taylor was finally back to the wild where she belongs.

Capture Myopathy

Written by: Chris Riddington, Trustee BWRC

The all too familiar deer entanglement call. A fallow deer has got his antlers tangled in some discarded stock fencing and somehow managed to hook itself to the nearest barbed wire fence. The clock is ticking, you arrive on the scene and like a well-oiled machine, with the help from your team, the deer is secured, covered and the cutting off the fencing begins. All removed, everyone jumps clear, and the slightly bewildered animal gets back to its feet and is once again free. Success, or is it?

These situations cause a large amount of fear and extreme stress to a prey species such as a deer. Being trapped in a position with close interaction with humans, a possible predator in their eyes, pinning them down and grabbing their limbs causing the deer to struggle. Add a hot day to the equation and it's a recipe for capture myopathy.

Whilst it can affect all wild animals, there are certain species that are more prone, such as deer, rabbits and some birds. It's a condition that can be easily forgotten during the adrenaline of a rescue and the true risk of capture myopathy is not well researched in wildlife rescue situations.



Capture myopathy is caused when any animal is placed under extreme stress, exertion or involved in a struggle. It can be the result of natural causes, such as being chased by a predator, but can be caused during rescue situations, in particular capture and transportation.

Also known as white muscle disease, capture myopathy can cause muscle metabolism to change from aerobic to anaerobic, where the muscles begin to use their stored energy sources instead of oxygen. This leads to a build-up of lactic acid to change the PH levels of the body via the blood stream. This affects the output of the heart. The heart in turn does not pump enough oxygen to the muscles causing the muscles to die. Over the preceding few days, the dying muscles also cause myoglobinuria which can cause acute kidney failure.

Although capture myopathy can happen instantly, this is not always the case. The disease can happen hours, weeks or even months later. Sadly, treatment for the condition is rarely successful and the key to success, is prevention.

Prevention

Planning is key when trying to reduce the risk of capture myopathy. Ensuring that any rescue is well co-ordinated, and time is kept to a minimum. Sedation can be used by a veterinary surgeon (care must be given as to what sedation is used as certain drugs may increase the risk) Equipment such as hoods or blindfolds can be used alongside appropriate handling techniques (important to bear in mind how a predator would grab the animal and not replicate it). It's important to keep noise to a minimum. Hyperthermia may increase the risk of capture myopathy, actively cooling the animal may be indicated (more research is needed).

Things to think about:

How long has the deer been entangled

Weather on the day – Hot days can raise the risk

Body condition – Is the animal already compromised? Is it emaciated? Old?

Injuries present – Are there severe injuries? Is there (flystrike) science

Euthanasia options – Ensure that there are dispatch options available when attending deer rescues

To really find out the extent of this condition in deer rescue, further study and post release monitoring is needed to understand the success rates of deer entanglements and the survival rates post capture.

Sources and further reference:

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6612673/>

<https://www.fourthcrossingwildlife.com/files/CaptureMyopathy-AnneFowler.pdf>

<https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/358786708.pdf>

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/260419776_Capture_myopathy_mystery

Clinical signs of CM (dependent on the species)

Sudden death

High resp rate

Heart rate

Body temp

Depression

Lack of response to stimuli

Loss of co-ordination

Weakness

Muscle stiffness

Tremors

Muscle paralysis

Recumbency

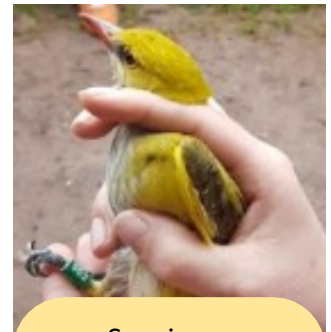
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The use of modern technology in the rehabilitation of UK Bird Species- A case study

Written by: Beth Ragan (BSc, SVN) & Tory Hayward (BA, MA, SoA)

In May 2021, a female Golden Oriole was found grounded in Melton Mowbray. She was taken to a well-respected RCVS recognised specialist in zoo and wildlife medicine whom we consult for complex avian cases, who deemed her uninjured, and was passed to Feline and Wildlife Rescue Nottingham (FAW), for rehabilitation. I, Beth, had knowledge of other Oriole species from previously work at Chester Zoo and therefore was entrusted with the task. On first presentation she was incredibly stressed, open-beak breathing, wings splayed, had a rapid respiratory rate and unable to perch. After being placed in a safe enclosure a WIFI CCTV camera was set up. As soon as my presence was lifted, the open beak breathing stopped, she was stood up and after several minutes perched up.



- Species: Golden Oriole (*Oriolus oriolus*)
- UK Birds of Conservation Concern: 4 (Red list)
- IUCN Redlist: Least concern

Cameras

Stress can be defined as a state of real or perceived threat to homeostasis that may challenge an organism's well-being (Joseph and Whirledge, 2017). The negative effects of human-presence stress are widely documented in many species (Davey, 2007; Dertien *et al.*, 2021). A study by Dertien *et al.*, (2021) discovered that birds change their behaviour when people are within 100 metres, and some birds of prey species 400 meters. Escape responses require acute activation of the hypothalamic–pituitary–adrenal (HPA) axis, which regulates the circulating concentrations of corticosteroid hormones which in turn regulates energy allocation for flight (Abolins-Abols *et al.*, 2016; Muvhali *et al.*, 2018). In a rehabilitation setting, carer proximity can have a huge effect of behaviour. As unable to escape as confined in an enclosure or restrained, physiological responses are noted. Chronic activation of the HPA leads to negative effects of immunity, reproduction, behaviour, development, metabolic activities and even death (Angelier *et al.*, 2017; Lin *et al.*, 2021). The symptoms displayed by the Golden Oriole in human presence included symptoms that can suggest respiratory distress, bacterial, viral, or fungal infections and/or parasite burdens (Hoppe, 2015; Sullivan, 2021). However, as these symptoms were not present with no human presence lead us to the belief it was due to stress.

The importance and implications of camera monitoring have been widely researched in zoological settings along with wildlife (Wearn and Glover-Kapfer, 2019; Fazio *et al.*, 2020). The presence of a camera allows around the clock observations in real time (the camera I used is linked to an app on my mobile phone), the ability to record observations and reduction in human presence to allow the carer to obtain a more rounded view of their behaviour (Muvhali *et al.*, 2018). In the following days the Oriole was seen on the camera eating, perching, flying and that faecal components were now being passed. However, if I stepped in the room to add fresh food the bird would quickly drop to the floor of the enclosure and repeat the previous signs.

Through the monitoring of her behaviour and initial lack of faecal components in her eliminations suggested that low energy reserves could explain its inability to escape human contact when first found (Jiang and Moller, 2017; Lin *et al.*, 2021). Golden Orioles migrate from Africa to breeding grounds in Britain, Spain, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Poland, Ukraine, Turkey and other European countries (BirdLife, 2021). Therefore, it is likely she had struggled to find food over her long journey and been unable to allocate energy to an escape response. In the UK, they are very rare (Schedule 1, Red Listed), and in our county specifically even rarer. There have only been 29 recorded sightings of this bird in Nottinghamshire over the past 160 years.

After being provided with the right diet with reduced human-contact the Golden Oriole was then released only three days after entering FAW's care. Without the camera she may have been subjected to more invasive tests to determine the nature of the symptoms she was displaying. This would have increased her stress levels and may have had detrimental effects on her health. Cameras have become increasingly affordable and accessible to the general public (Brown and Gehrt, 2009). They can be bought online for as little as £20 but range into the hundreds depending on what is required. At FAW we use cameras in all aspects of our rehabilitation. Alongside the advantages to reducing stress, it can also have a massive effect on the effect of human contact in hand-rearing wild species, such as decreased fear of humans which may lead to problems on release (Feenders and Bateson, 2011).



Tory, our Avian PA, was involved in all aspects of outreach. She contacted various associations and organisations to ensure we released the Golden Oriole in the best place and helped any conservation efforts.

It was a privilege to care for this species, and a very different experience to our normal work for lots of reasons - not least because of the public interest and scrutiny due to her rarity. This experience placed different and sometimes unexpected pressures on our rehabbers. High profile rehabilitations can generate interest and enthusiasm and an opportunity to engage the public in the work of a rescue, but can also generate a lot of stress, and undoubtedly would have the potential for negative publicity too.



FAW have been working hard to foster productive relationships with local veterinary practices after discovering that some practices were generally reluctant to work with wildlife rescues due to previous negative experiences, especially around differences in ethical approaches. We are therefore always clear about our high standards and approach to protocols, treatment and release plans etc. We use the medium of email to approach and discuss protocols and educational resources.

The vet contact who brought the bird into our care also had links to the British Trust for Ornithology in our country - and a ringer who was keen to record our rare visitor. The ringer who was also a seasoned ornithologist and able to advise us on the best release location. We had to be flexible on release location in order to reduce stress to the bird - the original plan was to take her out to the coast where Golden Orioles have previously bred in the UK, but it was decided that the length of the journey would be an unacceptable stressor to the bird who was very anxious in captivity so a more local location had to be found (Dickens *et al.*, 2009). In scouting potential release locations, we also wrote to the National Trust and Wildlife Trust, who were extremely helpful and although we ended up releasing elsewhere, we established helpful contacts within those organisations that we can draw on in the future.

Social Media/Media:

We frequently post on our social media channels about rehabilitation stories - to both raise awareness of our work, and for public outreach/education purposes. We posted about the Golden Oriole whilst she was in our care - and immediately had birdwatching groups getting in touch with us hoping to view the release. Unsurprisingly, this has never happened before with the dozens of pigeons, doves, swifts or even raptors we've cared for. There are rare bird sighting alert groups and twitter accounts reporting news of sightings, so news like this spread fast.



This public interest presented issues in terms of:

- 1) The welfare/stress levels of the bird
- 2) Potential health & safety implications of a large group (including the Covid meeting restrictions at the time).
- 3) Potential negative publicity from a crowded release, or conversely from keeping the release secret in the face of public interest.

We ultimately had a small release with key people there - including ringers and a representative from a local birding group who recorded the sighting. The location was kept secret, and we made no further pre-release posts about the oriole. Once she had been successfully released, we wrote a press release which we pitched to both national and local outlets, adapting the story to appeal to each. The story appeared on/in The BBC, The Mirror, The Metro, The local Arts Magazine and local television. The story was generally well received, but as with all social media discourse there was some criticism. In our case some people were upset that the young female oriole had not been taken to the only place in the UK the species had been known to breed in the past. People have been trying desperately to encourage them back to the UK so we understood the frustration, but we posted to openly explain that the release decision was made for the bird's welfare (rather a live oriole in the Midlands than an oriole who had died of transport stress in Norfolk!) and they understood. It was our first encounter with the birding community, and whilst we were a little worried about how their enthusiasm would manifest, we were very pleased to find that they were supportive and understanding about the decisions we had made.



Major lessons learned in the management of a high-profile rehabilitation:

- Think before you post online - the public interest may be overwhelming/challenging to manage.
- Do make the most of the media interest at the right time but be aware that you will need to pitch stories yourselves and be available for interview/comment.
- When pitching to media, do make their job as easy as possible - provide contact details, photographs, local angles as to why the story is interesting.
- Be clear about who is leading on which aspects of the release if you're working with multiple organisations.
- It can be a great opportunity to establish long-term relationships with other organisations - we now have contacts within the Wildlife Trust, National Trust and the British Trust for Ornithology as well as local and national media.
- Plans may need to change (as ours did for the release location) so you will have to be flexible and have someone coordinating with the different parties involved.



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