

RYEDALE WILDLIFE REHABILITATION

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Badgers.

The tb issue continues to rumble on with the ever-present threat of a badger cull. The time, worry, not to mention the enormous expense and still the argument continues unabated.

From a badger point of view the cull seems cruel, uncalled for and unnecessary. 9 years of research tells us that a cull would be counter productive and would not achieve its goal of eradicating tb in those hot spots in the south west.

From the farming viewpoint the emotional and financial strain of your cattle showing a reaction to tb must be very difficult. Bovine tb is not a health problem in humans as we drink pasteurised milk and our beef we cook. 80% of transmission of tb is from cattle to cattle. Thankfully we do not have the dreaded disease in badgers here in North Yorkshire its too damn cold for one thing. The bringing in of cattle from tb areas though is a worry. Perhaps if we introduced post testing of cattle as they do in Scotland, the problem could be resolved. Most farmers are happy to have badgers on their land and continue to care for and accommodate our wonderful array of British wildlife. We must understand and continue to strive to keep the common ground between us.



The Badger Trust continues to work for the conservation of badgers and has lots of information on tb and other issues affecting badger welfare.



This grand boar badger was found in a lay by near Leeds, he'd been hit by a car and suffered concussion. He was totally out of it and taken to the vets by a RSPCA animal collection officer. Mike at Battleflatts x-rayed him and found he had a fractured skull. All was in place though and he was given medication and brought here. He laid doggo for 3 days under a heat lamp, I tube fed him and on the 4th night he'd been up and about tasting some sloppy bread ,egg and milk I'd left out for him. He did well and progressed and was ready for release 3 weeks later. He was taken back at night by Alan who had picked him up. He rang the couple that found the badger and they met up for the release. All went well, my thanks to all who helped to make this a happy ending.



In early September a lady walking 2 terriers was passing the badger sett nearest to home. One of the dogs disappeared and could not be found anywhere. Various people were called out to try and find this terrier dog. I was asked for advice and informed the dog owners that a licence would be needed if the badger sett was to be disturbed. The dog had not been seen entering the sett and no sound could be heard from below. I spent hours at the sett with dog owner, her friends and a local terrier man. We called and shouted for the dog at midnight and various times over the next few days and weeks. The owner was very upset at the loss of her pet. Remarkably 5 weeks and 3 days later this lovely rough coated terrier walked in to her own home 3 fields away! The white dog was brown soiled, terribly thin but unmarked and in good condition considering her long wait below ground. An amazing story and shows you must not give up if a dog is lost and out of sight.

Birds of Prey.

I have just totted up numbers of birds of prey through my hands this past year for Raptor Rescue; they collate and log the data. 28 Tawny Owls, 17 Barn Owls, 11 Little Owls, 9 Sparrowhawks, 5 Kestrel, 1 Peregrine and 1 Marsh Harrier; 72 in total from 1.10.06 to 1.10.07.



Barn Owls have had a good year this year; the vole count must have been high. Breeding pairs have second brooded which caused a concern this Autumn. I had 9 fluffy juveniles brought in during September/October. These young birds were all found under nest sites, some on roads, others on the floor in buildings. All fledged just, but not flying well although able to flit about.

The BTO Barn Owl ringers told me there had been a 90% mortality at these 2nd brood nest sites. So these 9 were the lucky ones. They ate well and settled in a large indoor flight. What to do with them next was the worrying problem; they would be ready to go by late November. This is



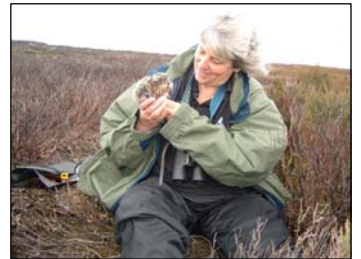
a cold wet month to be releasing young wildlife and expecting them to learn to hunt and survive the winter months. After much thought and conversations with others I decided to ask the local press for help. I had a marvellous response with offers of help and donations to feed them all over winter.

Well into December they were moved out to quiet locations in barn space, where they are being kindly fed by local volunteers. I have been heartened by the response to the appeal to help these lovely birds. They're looking good and I hope to see them quietly flying the dales where they will soon be released. A big THANK YOU to all who responded to the appeal and to those few who have helped with their care now they are out at soft release sites.

A young Barn Owl came in with badly skinned legs. He had left his nest box and got caught in a plastic tree guard. Nick from Battleflatts vets recommended salt-water bathing and aloe vera gel. The bird was very wild and objected to the treatment by not eating and hated being handled. It worked though and he learned to tolerate my handling. I stopped the handling as soon as I could which turned out to be too soon. He needed 2 lots of this treatment in the end. I got him right eventually and Craig Ralston of Natural England offered to soft release him from a nest box at Thorganby. He has been roosting in the barn and seen flying the area.

Merlins.

I was lucky enough to go Merlin ringing with the Marchant Bros this summer. I heard from Gary Marchant in October he tells me one of these stunning youngsters had been re caught and was well and thriving in Gibraltar Point in Lincolnshire. Here is the very bird in the hand, she was so beautiful, it is wonderful to know she survived these first few months.



Buzzard.

A dead Buzzard was handed in this December. This adult bird was fat and sleek and found dead in a wood. The bird was x-rayed at Battleflatts vets, it showed no signs of shot or breaks to the skeleton. The bird was collected by the Defra WIIS Scheme, it is being post mortem'd and samples sent for toxicology testing. So we wait to see if this bird has been illegally poisoned.

Tawny Owl.

I heard from Wilf Norman, one of the bird of prey ringers from Grosmont. He'd picked up a dead Tawny Owl wearing a ring. This ancient bird had been rung by him 19 years before and close to where it was found.

Lovely to hear of a wild bird of prey living a long and productive life.

Marsh Harrier.

I collected a Marsh Harrier from Sherburn in September. Some partridge shooters had found the bird, didn't know what it was but knew that it needed help. Sadly the young bird had a badly broken shoulder.

Every Marsh Harrier I have had, has had this same injury, it may be overhead wire damage. I perhaps get one or two a year and all have been totally disabled by the shoulder injury. The bird was quietly put to sleep. Unusually the bird was BTO rung. The bird was rung on 27.6.07 at a confidential site near Kings Lynn Norfolk. One of a brood of three, time since ringing 79 days, distance 174km, direction 339deg. Interesting stuff.

Water Birds.



A large brown seagull was brought in from near Gt Habton found huddled up in a hedge back on a very windy day. The bird was soon i.d.'d as a Great Skua a bird from the north of Scotland. The bird was fit and fiery, I tube fed him and decided he needed to be back in his element at the seaside. So I set off for the coast and arrived at Bempton just as the light was fading. He gave me a savaging as I lifted him from the box, just managed to take this photo, bird in one hand camera in the other. Then he was off with out a backward glance flying straight and true soaring about the thermals of Bempton Cliffs. A heart lifting sight.



A young Little Grebe was found downed in a stack yard at West Heslerton on a foggy Saturday morning. These petite fresh water diving birds do not fair well on the land. He was brought here for assessment. He was fat and feather perfect and in good nick. So I took off him to Norton Ings where he ducked and dived and soon away back in his element.



I've had swans in and out all year and I'm caring for one now over the Christmas/New Year. This bird was found stuck in a frozen pond, weak and thin. She's taken some getting going but is able to stand now and is eating wholemeal bread and starting to preen at last.

Hedgehogs.

There have been more hedgehogs about this time and I have 10 in at the moment over wintering under a heat lamp. These are small 2nd brood juveniles, they are all eating well and hopefully will be released in the spring.

THANK YOU TO ALL WHO HAVE SUPPORTED ME THIS YEAR.

Any donations to help wildlife in the Ryedale area can be sent to the above address.

