

NEWSLETTER

Number 12



Gosh, what an awful lot has happened since the last Newsletter and that was only a few months back. Probably our most notable event was the UK Falconry Event, which happened last weekend, and having sworn I would not do another one right up until the start, apparently I have persuaded myself that this is not the case and we are going to run Number 2 next year! Oh well, you have to be prepared to change your mind at times.

As I look out of my office window, from which I have a lovely view, the Poplar tree at the end of the field is swaying around like mad, the sun is out, but we have the tail end of hurricane Irene so they say, brushing past us. Actually the weather this summer has not been bad at all, we have had an incredibly dry year and up until three Fridays ago, my pond was getting close to empty and dry. However at about 6.15 PM that Friday we had a singularly impressive thunderstorm, with rain and hail like I have not seen here, .7 of an inch of rain in half an hour!! The weighing room was a torrent of water, all the new drains could not cope and for the first time in two years, the paths were in the field again, my courtyard outside my back door was a lake, and my new horse who leaps sideways at the sight of anything scary out on a ride was happily standing out in the rain and thunder and lightning ignoring it all!! It took 22 man (and woman) hours to get the paths back and looking good - luckily we had a ton of people to help. And Mark built a concrete barrier/step that should save the weighing room in the future.

Autumn is coming early, because of the lack of rain the leaves are turning early and even starting to fall, the hedges are full of berries and we had a bumper crop of damsons - so I have made 4 litres of damson gin, 1 of blackberry gin - not sure that will work, but it should, and one of plum vodka - Christmas should be fun! I still have the sloes to do.

We are at the change over period for birds with some stopping, many new birds in training and some old friends coming out to work for the winter months and get ready for the Owl Evenings!





What have we done over the year, the problem is that it is always so much that I forget, I have to trawl through photos to see what we did! We moved the soil that we took out of the ponies, spread it in the bottom horse field, put on a whole compost bin on top, and then rotivated and re-seeded, the grass took for ever to grown because it was so dry. We put up three little aviaries for the tiny owls that work, Ruby, Sidewinder and Boomslang, so we don't have to walk right up to the top of the Hawk Walk to get them. Oh, we built the maze and the new adventure play area before that, and we put down paving stones outside the Weighing room, oh and we put up a step to stop the rain from running into the Weighing Room, Anabelle edged one of the flower beds, but that might have been last year! We put down tons and I mean tons of gravel thanks to Tarmac, so the paths look great, we put paving stones across the lawn leading to the flying ground, we extended the shelter in the field for rainy weather and then we got none for months!! And now we are in the throws of finishing off winterising the Hawk Walk, in case we get another winter like last year, we have lined the walls and roof and insulated them, built insulated doors and will put heaters in there as well, Good Lord we have been working hard, and its all due to my wonderful staff and volunteers that we keep moving forward!

Summer 2011

This summer has been interesting, my sister in Scotland has told me that they did not get a summer at all, it rained almost all the time. Someone emailed me to say what a shame the summer had been so cold, but actually I felt we had an OK



summer, we had no rain, literally almost not a drop from late February until late August and even now we still have had almost nothing. My pond is only still holding water because the one serious downpour we did have gave us .7 of an inch in half an hour, but otherwise it was fine, grey on occasion, very warm early on, but we have had much worse summers before.

Now we are on October 4th and its about 30 degrees C and feels like high summer, which is very odd with all the autumn colour as well! We are just

at the stage of grounding the older birds who have worked since January, and working with the new batch of young birds that have joined the team, and some older ones as well. I

It is great to see Dawn Run out again, particularly as she got Wing Tip Oedema in the late winter this year, regardless of the enormous care we were taking, however I am delighted to say that she and Shanny who also got it have recovered brilliantly. Thanks to the perseverance of the staff in their treatment and Neil Forbes' usual excellent advice.

We have two young Barbary Falcons one of which is flying really well and the other is not!! But I hope he will improve, we have three young Merlin's all male, who are very exciting to watch. The Savigny's Eagle Owl that we trained leaves rather a lot to be desired I have to say, but she is more important as a breeder anyway. Sidewinder, the new young Burrowing Owl is coming along nicely although a little manic at this point. All three baby Yellow-billed Kites, the two we bred and one from a different bloodline are all going well.

Adam has got Azor out and is retraining him (Steppe Eagle) Simon has got the adult female Barbary Falcon given to us by Bob Dalton, out and she is going loose again, hopefully we will not have to chase her around the countryside too often this year! Mark is getting Casper and Cleeve going and flying Jim French's Goshawk Spy, who is coming along nicely and seems happy here. Holly's Harris Hawk Domino caught a rabbit on the hunting day yesterday, in fact we caught four rabbits in 24 hours with three different birds - not bad going! The



Steller's Sea Eagle is struggling a little in this late heat wave, we are going to keep her going until Christmas and then rest her. The two baby Steller's are both male and are away from their parents now, which the parents are very happy about.

We have a new female Turkey Vulture on breeding loan, she seems to be getting on well with our male, and having bred before she will hopefully show him the ropes as it were. I would still love to get a potential breeding pair of American Black Vultures as we lost both of our babies in the US, which was a crying shame.

Cremorne, our Bald Eagle has just about finished moulting and will come out after Christmas when Pioneer goes in for her first rest. The only bird I did not train and wanted to but ran out of time was our one remaining Gymnogone, and we are not going to try during the winter as it is not fair on the bird.



For the Owl Evenings fast coming up upon us Cool Ground - Snowy Owl - is back on line, Hemp is



working after her usual egg laying and boredom from sitting! Bramley is getting going as is D'arcy Spice, with Airborne and Katana for the small owls and possibly Eager if we have the time.

Katana has to be ready to do a ring delivery at a



wedding this year as well, and Rhadamanthus, - Harris Hawk - just did some filming for a new British Film coming out soon called the Wedding Video. So we have been busy as usual!



Courses and Photo Days

The photography days have been coming along nicely, we try different birds and different settings to see what works best, and we are getting some lovely shots of birds in the right sort of habitats. The Wild About Photography day gets some stunning backdrops for the birds as well. I am thinking of doing a Season Day, so one day with Spring backgrounds, one summer one autumn and so on. I think these would work well and be fun to do.

Since starting the Half Day courses at the beginning of 2010 we have been fully booked every month, and interestingly we get far more people watching on the half days which is lovely to see, often whole families will come and watch the participating member and then of course they have the rest of the day at the Centre if they so wish.

We are also getting children on the half days, with their parents, and the length of time is just enough so they don't get too tired or lose focus. Our baby Yellow-billed Kites have been very useful on the courses and Greeves the Kestrel does sterling work every time!



Rehabilitation this year so far.

I have to say that I was surprised that in that brutal winter we did not get more injured sick or emaciated birds brought in, but it may have been that few people were out and about to find them before they died. We have had in the usual car hit buzzards, window hitting Sparrowhawks and six orphan Tawny Owls. These were reared by various pairs of owls in the Owl Court Yard and went off recently with Barbara Handley and Chris Sperrin for release, this is the message I had about them a few days ago -

"ICBP Tawny Owls were sitting about in the sunshine and flying around the aviary yesterday.....and looking out across the countryside from within.....Huge noise at night when visited by the locals!" So that is good to know and I am sure some of them will make it to breed in the wild in the future. Tawny Owls round here are certainly extremely vocal at the moment!

We had a lovely Hobby in as well, but it had the sadly commonly found problem. They will nest in old Crow's nests and the crows line their nest with 'stuff' sometimes it is binder twine, which these days is bloody plastic like everything else, it does not rot, but often a filament will get wound round a chick's leg as it is growing and you can imagine the result - eventually the leg is either badly injured as this one was, or it drops off. I am afraid I am very anti plastic in almost any form these days, most of the time we don't need it or want it and producing the same thing in natural fibres is often far better for the environment.

Right now we have in a Little Owl hit by a car who is recovering and unusually a juvenile Male Sparrowhawk rather than the more usual females. Sadly the latest bird to come in was a very nice adult female Kestrel, she was covered in oil and died two days later, although the feather cleaning was going well, I suspect she must have ingested oil. And all because someone has been careless in spilling oil.



Weddings as a New Venture!

Having sworn that I am not going to Weddings anymore, only to Funerals, so many people have said that the grounds of the Centre would make a lovely setting for a wedding, that we are going to try it. Personally I can't believe how much money a wedding costs, mine was only fifteen quid! Mind you my divorce was much more expensive! However I am told that people want to have a good day and are happy to pay to have one. So we are going to make sure that they have a perfectly wonderful day. A Marquee in the field (or a Yurt!) full access to the Centre, flying



demonstrations, even a personal private one in the evening if they prefer. Hopefully it will go well and the weather will always be stunning, as indeed it should be for a wedding. I did wonder about doing Funerals here, but I don't think that would work - interesting thought though!

Adam Bloch, Holly and the wonderful car all posed for wedding photo's to promote what we are hoping to do, and I think we are having a Wedding Fair next year!





The Falconry Event Sept 3rd and 4th

Well I have to say that before the Falconry Event happened I swore that we would never do another one, organising it was tricky because it was not being done from one point, and the whole thing was pretty stressful up until the day.



However the whole thing went really well. Charlie Heap came down and with sterling work from him and my volunteers and staff the marquees were up, the place looked great, the artists had backing to put their art up, the arena was ready, the bar was ready and stocked, the PA was increased the car park field over the road was ready and the new gate put in - interestingly we found the old path that we had made for the Princess Royal to use in 1987! Oh and the weather held.

We had about 25 stands, the whole thing was sponsored by Keizerbrink and GameHawker. We had two large marquees, one for the clubs and the other one was for Keizerbrink, We had three other people bring and fly birds, and that



all went brilliantly. Our birds a l l



behaved themselves really well and flew excellently. The two food stands were open as well as our cafe, and the dogs thought the whole thing had been organised for them and were in heaven. Next year - yes we are

going to do it again - I am going to weigh them before the event and take bets on how much weight they put on! Taking of dogs, none were allowed in because it was held at a bird of prey centre and most people were great about it. But we had a superb dog display on the Sunday by Howard Kirby who filled in at the last minute and was amazing. We are going to have him next year as well. The atmosphere was wonderful, the UKFC did a great BBQ in the evening and we had a reasonable number of visitors considering it was the first attempt. All the comments afterwards were very positive and I think it will be even better

WINTER OWL EVENINGS

at **The International Centre for Birds of Prey** - Newent

www.icbp.org



Experience a very special evening with owls at the ICBP

- A guided tour of the owls by torchlight
- Warm up with a hog roast and mulled wine or hot apple juice
- A flying demonstration of small owls indoors
- End the evening with owls free flying in their natural element - outside in the flying field with low level lighting

The Owl Evenings are ticketed only, and places are limited so phone for tickets, or book now! Your special evening starts at 7.00 p.m. and ends at around 9.00 p.m. Tickets are £22.00 for adults and £11.00 for children 12 and under.

The dates for this winter are Friday and Saturday of Halloween, then every Sat in November apart from Bonfire Night, and every Friday and Sat in December up to the 23rd.

Wear warm sensible clothes and bring a torch.

To Book Tickets Tel. 01531 820286 or 821581.
Credit Cards welcomed or book online