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DECEMBER 2010

NEWSLETTER





DIRECTORS NOTE

The newsletters are going to be taken over by Neil Davies, whom I have known for a hundred years!! He is an artist and graphic designer and so is going to put one together once a month so you are all kept up to date a little more often than at the moment.

This one however will be a catch up on what has happened over the summer months. For weekly happenings and the occasional moan and rant, try the weblog, which I try to do once a week or more if things are interesting, or I have a minute when I am not exhausted!

I bought a horse in the summer - well OK I apparently bought two, OK OK, well actually three, all I need to do now is find the time to ride them. I don't go on holiday, so being able to get away for an hour or so is wonderful, and will be more so once I get more sorted out and less on my plate (*will that ever happen I wonder!*).

I am determined to get down to some writing this winter, particularly as my sister Anna bought me a wood burning stove so my office is toasty warm and the dogs love it.

Jemima Parry-Jones MBE

The Breeding Season and the Incubation Workshop

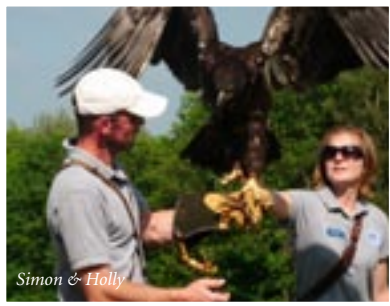


Breeding birds of prey or any other species is very hard, and can be very depressing. Some things will go well and others not, this last breeding season was good for owls, not so good for other species, except for the baby Steller's and the Griffon Vulture. All the babies are now full grown, most are staying here, a very few have gone to new homes, with the last ones going at the end of this month. We now look forward to the coming breeding season.

To help us and others in the UK and also our projects in India we thought it would be a good idea to run an Incubation Workshop in November. It is being taught by Susie Kasielke and Pat Whitman, from the LA Zoo and the San Diego Zoo, they have huge expertise and it is a great workshop. This has been interesting to organise and very disappointing in terms of those who are coming. I am actually disgusted at the zoos response. We have two people coming from ZSL although I had to chase for the fee I don't know how many times, which I consider to be very poor, one from Chester, whom again I had to chase - if I had their accounts department they would get a severe talking to from me. Cotswold Wildlife Park are sending one, which is nice and they were easier to deal with!! Bristol Zoo refused to fund one of their staff who was very interested - nice one Bristol, and non of the others have sent anyone. The Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust is within driving distance from us, so there is little excuse, and should several of the others large zoos should have been interested enough to send staff, it confirms my opinion that zoos breed most birds by accident rather than design, which if they are serious about conservation projects they should be a great deal more proactive. Shame on you, I have far more debts and far less funding and basically it all comes out of my pocket but I sent my curator to the same course last year in Spain.

This is a one off chance, and I am certainly not going to do it again. Jersey Zoo is running the same course and at my last ask they had no zoos coming!!!!!!!!!!

Staff



Simon & Holly

All staff are doing very well and I hope enjoying being here. They certainly work hard enough, Holly got asked to do a screen test after the filming for the One Show, who knows what it might lead to, Simon said don't do it, filming is very seriously tedious!



Adam

Adam has been a great hit in all his external lectures, so much so that every school has asked to have him back again, well done Adam. Simon went to India again in October, he set up the incubation room, sorted out some problems, worked on the protocol with Dr Prakash and came home brown.

Mark Parker joined the team in October, he has come back as it were and it is lovely to have him here, it was very hectic when he arrived and I think he has only just caught his breath now. But it great to be able to hand over most of the course stuff to him, although I am always around to help and do some teaching on the five day courses.



Mark Parker

The Volunteers and Work Experience People



John with helpers!

These has been great this year, every one of them has worked hard and all have had some time working with the birds, I think we had a great bunch of work experience people in the summer and they got a lot of work done. Of course the old stagers!! the regular volunteers are as good as ever, they clean, tidy, paint, and more paint, burn things, garden and help with projects as well as the birds.

John did a ton of work on Cremorne in the way of manning, and he is now flying some of the birds as well, only because I hasten to add that he has put in a great deal of time and effort and so is now ready to move to that side of things. Tom has kept us smart and is now building the all important food drawers. Steve is great with the visitors and is happy to take the photographic birds for the days. Richard has done huge amounts of work on the electrics in the weighing room, and the flying ground as well as fixing things, designing new and safer power here and tearing his hair out - if he had any, at some of the electrics that he is sorting out!

Annabel has joined as a volunteer and was Richard's right hand, or maybe left one, she also edged the flowerbed on the way down to the flying ground. Many others help, and I am not going to name them all, but let all of them know that they are very special to us.

Of course, I should never forget Linda who manfully, or more correctly womanfully does the website and comes and takes superb photos that she unfailingly and generously shares with us all. She also takes a few of the photo days and gives the guests a superb time often without taking a photograph herself, which is more than I see with a lot of other teachers who come here and then spend half their time doing their own photography, rather than teaching!!

Adam B also rescues me regularly when I screw up on the computer, which is rather more often than I think he would like!

Charlie has been down and done stuff as well, although he is still rude about my footwear! There are many more, all of whom are important to us and some that have had to stop because of other commitments, and we miss those.



The Gardens

The gardens are having another face lift, after all the pruning last year, Peter Dowle and his team came in again recently and moved a lot of the existing plants around (at the moment it does not look as good as it did!) and we had three hundred and fifty five new plants arrive which they dotted around and they and we planted, it looks much better now, with many of the beds looking fuller, I wish I could have afforded three times as many, but I excited as to how it is going to look next year. Of course the hardest worker in the garden this year was Joan's mother Iloana, who tirelessly weeded, cleared, pruned and moved things as well as watering which we really needed as it was a dry summer too.

So thanks Iloana, I hope we can keep it as good until you come again. JPJ



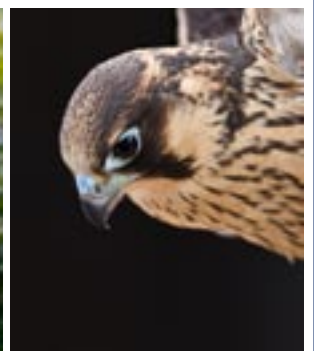
The Flying Teams



We have rested a fair few of the birds that flew all through the spring and summer, Karis (saker) is in a moulting enclosure, he had a great summer of incredibly high flying, all the young falcons from last year are in as are all the kites and the two Tawny Eagles, we had hoped to get the Steppe Eagle out again but he has not done a decent moult which is a damn nuisance. We rest all the flying birds for about four months, sometimes longer, it gives them the chance to moult, gives them a rest and stops them from becoming stale, and sometimes gives them the chance to pair up as well.

Bob Dalton gave us two beautiful Barbary Falcons, who flew superbly, I very sadly lost the male, the transmitter fell off and we never got a sign of him, I suspect he started hunting as he was starting to chase stuff with me. The female is dynamite and on a windy day quite staggering. Mark Parker gave us a lovely Harris Hawk who is a hunting fiend and rarely goes out without catching something. I have a goshawk who has a very smart Harris Hawk tail which makes him look a little odd, he is just flying free now and Simon has one as well, his is larger, but I love mine regardless of its not great feather condition and its smaller size!

All the new owls are going really well, we have stopped all the Burrowing Owls, but all the rest are going well and flying brilliantly in the new lighting on the Owl Evenings.



Our achievement in the past year

Well that is a great deal, the PA is up and running thanks to Mike building the new boxes and Richard sorting it out, we had to get new mike transmitters as the old ones died a death sadly. All the owls are happy in their new homes in the Mozart Block, including Mozart.



The weighing room is an absolute joy, it makes it so much easier in every respect, it gives us space, it is a nice place to work in, the birds are settled and like the greater space, although I wish that D'Arcy Spice would stop murdering the toy rat and mouse blackboard rubbers! It also makes it much better for the courses.

The drainage in all the paths has meant that not once have we had to pull the paths out of the field, which was a weekly occurrence in wet weather.

The huge Golden Eagle statue is now proudly on its plinth opposite the Eagle Barn and looks so much better, although I could wish that some of the more brainless visitors would not climb all over it because if they fall off and injure themselves I am not going to pay them anything for crass stupidity. The lights are all done in the flying ground and look stunning at night, with more to come, including lighting up the Golden Eagle - I can't wait to see that if and when it snows, what a sight that would be.



The ponds have been cleared and the lower one is much larger, which has annoyed the moorhens and two mallard ducks, but will be much better for them once it settles again.

The compost/muck heaps have been enclosed much to the extreme annoyance of the dogs who now can't get in and eat disgusting things. The stables have also been re-roofed and now do not leak like a sieve.

So add that little lot, to the normal daily work and you can see we have done quite a lot. I suspect I have forgotten something, but its hard to remember it all. Most of the major work was done by Mike Turner and the digger loaned to us by Julie's Dad, and without which we would not have got it all done!

Oh I remember, we also levelled the old play area and removed most of the stuff, because we have plans for that!

What we hope to achieve over the winter period

Two projects and otherwise cleaning, clearing and painting and tidying and getting ready for the next season.

One project is the wood, which needs thinning and clearing badly and I want to make a part of it more fun for children, the other project is the new play area, which I hope I can make work much better and still be less invasive for the flying demonstrations.

I am going to get to ride the damn horses too!

Plus write books I hope!

The Dogs

As usual the dogs have been an integral part of the visitor experience here.

We get the occasional person scared of dogs, but there is a notice with their photo outside warning that they live here, so I have little sympathy with them.

Almost all the visitors love the dogs around, and the children frequently play with them.

Sedge will play with kids for hours. Rush and Indigo wait for them to arrive, the only one not really enjoying children is Nettle and she sticks to the adults.

Rush scared us badly earlier in the year by going quadriplegic on us over a period of 12 hours, it turned out he had Steroid Responsive Meningitis, and thank goodness, Eden Tanner our dog

vet was on the case in hours and had him almost back to normal again in two days, it was a tough two days though.

The others are all well, Sorrel has no morals, Acer is a consummate hunter, Sedge can squeal higher than any living creature I have heard other than a bat, and does it when he is excited.

Rush, Indigo and Nettle all bring their wonderful natures to enrich both the customers and the staff and volunteers lives.



WINTER OWL EVENINGS

EVERY FRIDAY & SATURDAY



BOOKINGS NOW BEING TAKEN FOR FEBRUARY 2011

Experience a very special evening with owls at the ICBP. A guided tour of the owls by torchlight, where they look very different from during the day.

Warm up with a hog roast and mulled wine or hot apple juice.

A flying demonstration of small owls follows indoors.

Finally, we 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 please call for tickets or book now!

The experience starts at 7.00pm and ends at about 9.00pm.

Tickets are £20.00 for adults and £10.00 for children.

The new dates for February 2011 for the Owl Evenings are Friday and Saturday - 11th/12th, 18th/19th and 25th/26th.

Please wear warm sensible clothes and don't forget to bring a torch.

TO BOOK TICKETS
TEL: 01531 820286 OR 01531 821581

CREDIT CARDS WELCOME

Rehabilitation

Kestrels and Little Owls

Note from Chris Sperrin (Hawk and Owl Trust) Good news re the three Kestrels (Sent to them for release by us) which are now released on Mendip farm. Within three days release of 2 of them have been seen hunting successfully for Voles. They are still taking provided food at hack, but are staying within 4 large fields and obvious eye sight of one another whilst hunting. The farmer is very pleased as Kestrels have not been on this farm for some time. They have boxes provided within an old Dutch style barn which 2 of them have been seen sheltering in already. I will be going to photograph them on Thursday for our records. I don't think they will be in any hurry to distribute away from this location.



The Symonds Yat Peregrine went off very well, as did several Tawny Owls, a Goshawk and a Red Kite. Buzzards have been our toughest ones, 13 in so far and the majority either do not make it, or have to be euthanised because of severe injuries. Someone asked me why the buzzards numbers are so high the other day. It is a huge indication of how a species is doing in the wild, if they are doing well we see many more casualties, if not, the numbers are low, we see far less Little Owls now for example. Interestingly 99% of the buzzards are male, most of the Sparrowhawks are female, don't

know why. Buzzards being scavengers are mostly hit by cars when trying to eat run over rabbits, or at this time of the year pheasants. So I always try to pick up and throw run over stuff into the fields, if it is safe to do so, and sometimes it is not.

We are worried at the moment because six of the birds that have come in have had trichomoniasis which we suspect they can only have got from eating infected birds, and although pigeons are the main carriers, small birds has it as well, SO whatever you do this winter, if you are feeding your garden birds, CLEAN the feeders. Pour two kettles of boiling water over your bird table once a week and drop the plastic feeders into a 10% solution of Bleach in water for 10 minutes and then rinse and dry before refilling - again once a week. It would be a great shame to kill your garden birds with infection rather than helping them and trichomoniasis is not a pleasant way to die. All six of the raptors with it did not survive.

However it does point out to us how desperately we need to do something about a hospital though, it was not great when I left and what I came back to was the usual nightmare, so we have to fund raise to build a new Incubator and Brooder room and Hospital. We use the hospital occasionally for our own birds, but the bulk of the time for the injured wild ones.

The Centre has been involved in a number of small research projects for conservation this year one on data logging for Andean Condors in their home ranges, one on bird profiles in studies on locusts, one on ears in owls and one on nematodes in captive raptors. These projects all assist birds of prey in one way or another, either through learning, monitoring or other ways that may assist them both in the wild and in captivity. Its an important part of the work that we do here with the collection. As long as the research is non invasive, and harmless to the birds, and has a conservation value we are delighted to be involved.

Conservation

Lead Poisoning

Let no one think that lead poisoning is not affecting birds of prey and many other species of wildlife, because there is undisputable proof of it happening, even in Red Kites in the UK, and it is particularly well documented in California Condors in the US. We have even had our own birds die here when they have picked up lead in a rabbit that to all intents and purposes should have been safe because it was not killed by shooting, but it had lead from a previous incident.

The website www.EndToxicLead.org has some compelling video and photos for use in educating the public about the toxic effects of lead from spent ammunition and fishing tackle. I do understand how difficult it is at this time for the shooting fraternity, particularly those using shotguns, to change to a non lead ammunition, I know that the alternatives may not be as good as lead, and I also know that they are very expensive at the moment at least in the UK, but if and when the manufacturers see the writing on the wall that it will be banned, and I am pretty confident that the writing is there to see, then the price will drop as more companies make it and the quality will improve as research gets more intense.

The South East Asian Vulture Crisis

The vulture project in India continues and doing well, the breeding season for 2010/2011 has already started and there are three eggs laid already, Nikita Prakash has braved the British winter to come on the incubation course we are running and her husband Dr Vibhu Prakash has had the foresight and nerve to send her at what is the start of their breeding season. Simon has been over already we are proud to be a part of it and looking forward to its increasing success.

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As this will be the last newsletter before Christmas, I, my staff, the dogs and birds would like to wish you all the Merriest of Christmas' and the Happiest of New Years and we will look forward to seeing you in February if not before.

Jemima Parry-Jones MBE