

FOLLY

# Wildlife



RESCUE NEWS  
WINTER 2018

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Report!

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Scenes - Part 3

Deer update

It's All About  
Education!

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The Folly Wildlife Rescue Trust is a registered charity dedicated to the rescue, care and rehabilitation of injured, orphaned, sick and distressed wildlife.

The Trust operates primarily in Kent and Sussex, and every year, some 3,500 casualties pass through its door.

Its education programme looks to highlight the many man-made hazards wildlife faces, as well as dispelling the myths and misconceptions that can so easily lead to persecution.

Front cover: Long-eared bat. All Photos: Sarah Nunn and Folly Wildlife Rescue Trust

FROM THE EDITOR

Welcome...

TO THE WINTER EDITION OF  
THE FOLLY WILDLIFE RESCUE  
NEWSLETTER.

## 2018 HAS BEEN SOMETHING OF A PIVOTAL YEAR FOR FOLLY WILDLIFE RESCUE...

**...all the major work at the hospital is now finished, most of the glitches have been rectified (or simply papered over!), and we've survived what was probably our most difficult year to date.**

But there are still many things that need addressing, and realistically, it's likely to be several years before we'll be able to say, 'job done'.

And at the top of the list is the now pressing need to separate ICU from reception – a part of the hospital that hasn't really worked from day one, as what should be one of the quietest areas must share its space with one of the busiest. If we can overcome that problem, we can then start to think about the proposed visitor and education area, as well as options for the nursery and training room, neither of which are currently being utilised to the best effect. But as usual, before we leap, it's going to need some careful thought.

Another project waiting in the wings is the development of what we call 'the lower site', a piece of ground we own, just to the north of B4 that extends to about 1.5 acres. Part of it is a nice flat area (formally the site of some polytunnels), and it's here that we hope to put in a large test-flight aviary and a deer fawn rearing unit, while the remainder is largely woodland.



The woodland part is quite lovely – overgrown and very wild – but the flat section is rather scruffy and needs a fair bit of work.

To kick things off, we've recently installed a very impressive set of steps that connect it to the main site; but now that winter is almost upon us, I doubt we'll be doing much work before the spring.

Another very exciting development is that we've taken on a new member of staff – Julie Roman (who's been volunteering with us) now comes on board as a Trainee Wildlife Care Assistant and is raring to go – a big step forward for Folly, and we wish Julie every success in her new job!

So, as usual, a busy time, and once again, I'd like to say thank you to everyone who helps make it possible – our incredible staff and volunteers, receptionists, education assistants, fundraisers, drivers and rescuers – and of course you, our wonderful supporters – we'd be lost without you!



*Stairway to  
where?*



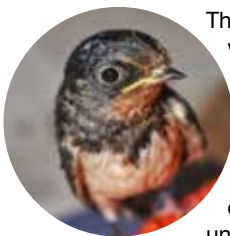


# The Manager's Report

ALL THE LATEST NEWS

**It hasn't been one of our easiest years, but I think it's fair to say that we did come through with our sanity (more or less) intact!**

And 2018 was all about the weather really – month after month of relentless heat that not only made working conditions at the hospital very difficult but meant too that many of the casualties admitted were badly dehydrated. As dehydration can drastically reduce the chance of recovery, it's vital it's dealt with quickly; Hartmann's solution (a mix of salts and electrolytes in water) is very effective and if administered in time (orally or through sub-cutaneous injection) will very often pull an animal back from the brink.



The drought affected wild foods too, with many of the caterpillars and grubs, which adult birds so rely on to feed to their young, appearing to be in short supply; earthworms, a staple of many wild animals (which, for instance, make up 80% of a badger's diet), were forced far underground to seek moisture and were therefore out of reach; as a result, many of the cubs and baby hedgehogs admitted this year were found to be badly emaciated.

Because of these problematic admissions, the workload was relentless, and at times almost overwhelming – assessments, medications, observations, record keeping, followed by endless cleaning, making up diets, gavaging baby pigeons and collecting faecal samples; and they were just some of the jobs we faced – week after week after week.

Talking of faecal sampling, this is actually one of the most important diagnostic tools we have, as it allows us to identify the parasite burdens many casualties are carrying; ectoparasites, such as ticks and fleas, aren't too much of a problem, as they're easily controlled, but the endoparasites (flukes, nematode worms, tapeworms and protozoa), which live within the body, are much more problematic – in the wild they're not too much of a problem for the host animal, but the stress of being in care enables them to take a hold, which in turn can severely compromise the chances of recovery.

Three separate samples, taken one day apart, are prepared for examination, and then examined under a microscope. What they reveal is fascinating – nematode worms, coccidia (a single-celled protozoa), adult intestinal flukes, thorny-headed worms (yes, they're as bad as they sound), and bits of tapeworms too; and very occasionally, something new will turn up, so everyone gets very excited!

Once we know what the problem is, Andrew, our vet, decides on a course of treatment, and more often than not, the problem is resolved, but just to be on the safe side, we run each test again, to ensure the animal in question is completely clear.

Another complex (and time consuming) procedure is gavaging the baby pigeons and doves; unlike most birds, which are fed by the parents on some form of solid food, pigeons and doves feed their young with a substance they regurgitate directly into the crop. This 'pigeon milk' as it's known, is made up of pre-digested plant matter, mixed with important enzymes, antioxidants and proteins essential for the young bird's development.

We don't, of course, have access to pigeon milk, so instead use a substitute, made by mixing ground poultry grower pellets and a parrot hand-rearing mix, with vitamins, minerals, pro-biotics and water.

A good couple of litres of this stuff is made up fresh every day, and administered through a plastic tube attached to a syringe; it all sounds straightforward, but you really do have to know what you're doing, to ensure none of the mix gets into the bird's

airways (which would be fatal); and the scale of this operation has to be seen to be believed, as it's not unusual for us to be feeding 50–60 hungry babies a day!

So, there you have it, an insight into the wonderful world of ICU – pretty full on, but at the same time, immensely rewarding for everyone who's involved!



**Header:** *A sparrow hawk*

**Left inset:** *A young swallow*

**Lower left inset:** *Cute, a baby field vole*

**Above:** *Under the microscope.*

## SAD NEWS

We recently had the very sad news that Paul Mange, one of our animal collection drivers had unexpectedly passed away.

Paul first became involved with Folly when he brought an injured hedgehog to us when we ran the operation from home and was so taken by what he saw that he immediately offered his services as a volunteer driver.

And he'd been with us ever since, a friendly face at reception, always smiling, totally committed to wildlife, and always willing to go that extra mile – he'll be greatly missed by everyone at Folly where he had so many friends.

Our thoughts and condolences to his wife Jeanette at this very sad time.





## AND WE'RE OFF!

The day January 10th, 2011 dawned very damp, and very drizzly, but if you'd been near the Broadwater Forest Nursery that morning, you may well have observed something momentous happening, as after seven years of fundraising, design and planning, work was about to start on Folly Wildlife Rescue's new hospital!

But in fact, there wasn't any ceremony, and once there was enough light, the machines roared into life and we were off!

In the last three issues I've been explaining just how this adventure began, and how a very modest rescue centre (then run from the garden of our home) had transformed into a purpose-designed wildlife hospital – it hadn't come easy and we'd endured years of angst,

frustration and uncertainty, but that was all behind us now and it was time to move forward.

In the weeks that followed we certainly made good progress; the drive and car park were laid out, the bases for the buildings excavated and even our sewage treatment plant was in – what could possibly go wrong?



*And B1 goes up!*

But go wrong it certainly did, when at the end of the month, after having enjoyed several weeks of fine weather, the heavens suddenly opened – trenches fell in, manholes disappeared, and even one of the diggers blew its hydraulic system out after it got stuck in the mud; but in the end, even this set-back was relatively short-lived, and by the end of March we were once again back on track; the first two buildings had been delivered and erected and we were just waiting for the third.

And you can probably see what's coming – that's right, the company supplying the buildings, quite out of the blue, went bust! Fortunately, we didn't lose any money, but we were one building short, and it took a lot of time and effort to sort out the mess.

This might be a good time to explain about these buildings. We'd known from the start of the project that anything other than agricultural or sectional wooden buildings would have been problematic in terms of planning permission, as the site was part of an AONB, so we had decided to go for the equestrian look; and it turned out a good choice, as the buildings were not only very durable, but nice to look at too.

A major boost had come about when the Jean Sainsbury Animal Welfare Trust agreed to fund all three – the 'American Barn' (that eventually became B1), and the two conventional stable blocks that became B2 and B3.

A fourth building (yes, you guessed it, B4) had always been on the drawing board, but at that point in time, it just wasn't going to happen, so until our fortunes



*Pete Shiers of Broadbeech Builders and Folly's Dave Risley*

improved, it went on the back burner.

By mid-August, having now found another supplier, B3 was up too, and it was time to take stock of the situation.

It's absolutely no exaggeration to say that without the Jean Sainsbury funding, we would never had got as far as we did that year – but with so much still to be done, we needed to prioritise our remaining funds – windows and doors were pretty much at the top of that list, but were also going to be expensive to fit; so when Miles Ludlow, of Bullet Glazing (great name!), offered to do the work for free, we jumped at it.

As for the interiors, Care for the Wild International had very kindly come forward and sponsored ICU, but that was basically it – the funds had run out, and we were now faced with the prospect of a very long haul.

But then (and in the very nick of time!), a benefactor came forward!



*The B1 base goes in*

**NEXT TIME:  
THE END IS IN SIGHT!**



PART  
3

# Behind the scenes!

After your recent and exclusive ‘virtual tour’ of B1, the main hospital building, I imagine you must be champing at the bit for the next exciting leg of the journey – you aren’t... well, too bad, because you’re going to get it anyway.

Now, logic would surely dictate that, after B1, the B2 tour would be next on the list, but as well as being too predictable, I haven’t got much to say about B2, so let’s jump straight to B4!

For those of you familiar with our layout, you’ll know that B4 forms the fourth side of the hospital quadrangle and is the most recent addition.

In the original plan (there was a plan? I hear you say), we’d intended right from the start to have a veterinary unit, but two things at the time stood in our way – the first being the small matter of having absolutely no money, while the second

was having no vet. So, working on the principle that there was no point in having one without the other, we put the whole thing on hold.

And on hold, for almost two years, it remained, but it did give us time to ponder our options, so that when the situation changed, we’d at least be able to hit the ground running.

Change it did, as by late 2013, we finally had the funds to at least make a start; planning permission (with the help of our planning consultant Anthony Keen) had been gained, and on November 18th, we were ready for the off!

As well as B4, this plan included new aviaries, new drainage, and a large concrete apron to the side of B1 for mammal enclosures; and a hefty undertaking it was too, involving, if my memory serves, some 400 square metres of concrete; but we’d been there, done all that before, and in the end it all went like clockwork.



Although the structures were up, they were still just shells, and it took another two years to finish, with water, power, windows, doors, ventilation, heating and air-conditioning being just some of the services we needed to consider.

But then we'd had amazing support, including a wonderful legacy from the estate of the late Sheena Anne Forth, grants from the Morgan Family, Jean Sainsbury Animal Welfare Trust, Sevenoaks branch RSPCA, and Linda and Gordon Bonnyman Charitable Trust, as well as several major pieces of equipment, sponsored by members of our supporters' group – our grateful thanks to all of them.

So, entering the building from the left, the first area is the veterinary consulting room, followed by diagnostics (complete with haematology analyser, digital microscope and digital X-ray processor), and then the lead-lined X-ray chamber itself, complete with its anaesthetic machine and X-ray generator.

Next door to X-ray is the nursery (complete with its own ventilation and air-conditioning system) where we keep all the necessary equipment (including heated hospital cages) for rearing a wide range of babies. Next to the nursery is the supervisor's office; that, in turn, is followed by the training room – which doesn't actually see much training these days but has proven very useful for presentations and fundraising events like The Christmas Gift Shop!

To the rear of the building are six large, undercover aviaries, complete with their own service passage, hygiene cladding interiors, and sliding double-glazed doors – not only very state-of-the-art, but the envy of many a zoo and wildlife rescue centre too!

So that's about it – a few misses (but nothing that can't in time be rectified), but a lot of hits too, including a very fine vet unit, which has now, I'm pleased to say, completely transformed the way we work!



*The base goes in*



*And then the building itself!*

## THE CHRISTMAS GIFT SHOP

Talking of The Christmas Gift Shop, this will be running every Saturday and Wednesday, 10.00 to 16.00 from 10 November until 22 December, and as usual there'll be a wonderful range of gifts and Christmas cards, as well as information and refreshments. We desperately rely on the revenues we raise in the shop over Christmas, so please do come and support us!

**NEXT TIME – THE MAMMAL YARD AND B3!**

# Deer Update



You may remember that in the last issue, I was outlining some of the new facilities we had planned for the Deer Unit.

Working with deer at any level is a serious business, and because it's growing by the year, we're now looking closely at how to go forward. Every aspect needs to be considered – the rescue work itself (together with all the specialist equipment needed), the rescue truck, deer holding facilities (which we haven't got), the law pertaining to deer, the veterinary side, staff safety, and last but by no means least, having the experienced rescuers to do what is often a very dangerous job; and it's this last point that's likely to prove the most problematic, as deer rescuers don't grow on trees, and it can take years to gain the necessary experience.

This year alone, our rescuers, Chris and Sylvia, have already attended well over 200 call-outs, and being on-call seven days a week, their workload is unsustainable - so we really do need to get something in place to help them, as the problem seems to be growing by the year; literally every day of the week, deer are being hit by cars, entangled in netting, caught up in fencing and attacked by dogs – and the suffering they endure doesn't bear thinking about.

Acquiring the L200 rescue truck last year, and then the tranquiliser guns, has really transformed the way we work, as prior to this, we didn't really have a reliable vehicle, and it could take 3 people just to physically

restrain the casualty (in itself, a fairly risky business). Now though, using the tranquiliser gun, Chris is able to do the job on his own, and the recent purchase of the livestock trailer (courtesy of the Edna Smylie Memorial Fund) now makes it much easier to transport them.

Next on our list is the emergency deer holding unit (more a glorified shed!) where soon, we'll be able to safely contain deer casualties until they can be seen by the vet – in the last year or so, we've had a lot of injured deer brought to us in the backs of cars, and getting them out, and into somewhere secure, has sometimes been a challenge).

In the last issue, I reported that we'd just received a very welcome grant of £4,000 from the Edna Smylie Memorial Fund, and in a further development, we've now received £8,000 from the Lush Charity Pot (the charitable arm of Lush Cosmetics), that will allow us to start work on these facilities.

So, some very good progress on the deer front, but in the meantime, all the really hard work of rescuing, treating, hand-rearing and releasing goes on – and our thanks once again to Chris and Sylvia for all their hard work – we just couldn't do it without you.

**Header:** A fallow fawn

**Top right:** A fallow buck entangled in electric tape

**Right:** The new trailer



**CAN YOU HELP?**

If anyone would like to get involved with deer rescue, it'd be good to hear from you. It's specialised work, but full training is given. And, as well as the hands-on stuff, we also need people to help with the educational and fundraising side of things, so if you think you've got what it takes, please email me at [info@follywildliferescue.org.uk](mailto:info@follywildliferescue.org.uk) for further details.

# Rescue Roundup!

**IN THIS FEATURE, WE'LL BE LOOKING AT SOME OF THE ANIMALS THAT HAVE BEEN GIVEN A SECOND CHANCE THIS YEAR!**

## CONSEQUENCES

Sadly, this first story doesn't have a happy ending, but it does demonstrate the terrible consequences some human activities are having on wildlife.

A stable, fed up with the hordes of flies plaguing their horses, decided to address the problem by putting up sticky fly papers – but in the meantime, a family of swallows, as well as some pipistrelle bats, were taking advantage of this bounty, so it wasn't long before a swallow and one of the bats had become caught on them.

The more they struggled, the worse it became – we did eventually free them, but sadly, the stress of cleaning up the sticky mess proved too much for them in the end.



## FAWNS

This year's fawns have all been released now, but here's a nice shot of some of them back in the summer at Chris and Sylvia's.



## OUR DEER UNIT

I often talk about the work of our deer unit, but I think this photo brings it home!



This fallow buck probably weighs around 80kg (and just look at those antlers), so a very powerful animal, but he was no match for fifty feet of discarded rope, becoming completely entangled.

If the unit hadn't arrived to free him, he'd most certainly have died. But using the dart gun, Chris was quickly able to sedate the animal and cut him free.

If you look closely, you'll see that while under sedation, he was fitted with an ear tag that reads 'DO NOT EAT' – the reason being that we need to ensure there's no risk of meat from a darted animal entering the food chain.

## HEDGEHOGS

We're used to seeing hedgehogs entangled in netting, but this hedgehog went one stage further when he became trapped around his middle in rusty chain-link fencing.

Fortunately, we were quickly able to free him, and there was no permanent damage, but his recovery was slow, and it was several months before he was fit enough to go back to the wild.





## BABY TAWNY OWLS

Every year we see lots of baby tawny owls, the majority of which have either fallen or been blown from the nest.

These two nestlings fell to the ground during a storm but were lucky to be seen by a passer-by.

They were both soaked to the skin and freezing cold, but we soon had them feeding, and like most baby tawnies, they made rapid progress – so rapid, in fact, that just a few weeks later, you can barely tell they're the same birds!



## OUR VERY FIRST SWIFT OF THE SEASON!

Having flown non-stop all the way from sub-Saharan Africa, swifts make their first appearance in the UK at the beginning of May – and they're not called swifts for nothing, as they have the fastest flight of any bird, easily exceeding 100km/h!

But although perfectly adapted for flight, they're not so good when it comes to solid earth, and if a swift does end up on the ground, it's almost helpless.

We don't know why this individual ended up grounded, but fortunately he was spotted and brought in.

A quick examination showed the bird was uninjured and had a good weight, so after being rehydrated and given some waxworms to help him on his way, he was launched back in the air to carry on where he'd left off!



## BABY MOORHENS

Baby moorhens are wonderful little birds and, like ducklings, pheasants and partridges, are precocial – meaning they hatch

in an advanced stage of development and are quickly able to fend for themselves. But it's also not uncommon for them to become separated from their parents – perhaps having hatched a little later than their siblings, or after an attack by predators?

But single moorhen chicks are notoriously difficult to rear – and when kept alone, often refuse all the food you offer them.

But thankfully, there's a simple solution – just put a mirror in, and before you know it, little Billy No Mates will be as happy as Larry!



## BABY HOBBY

Finally, you don't see many of these – a baby hobby, in fact (a smaller relative of the peregrine falcon), and a species that's not only extremely fast, but incredibly aerobic too. Unusually for a bird of prey, the hobby will also catch and eat insects such as dragonflies, but it does have conventional tastes including bats, swallows, martins and swifts!

This one was found after having been blown from its nest in a storm, but after a week, it was fit enough to be transferred to the care of our colleagues at RSPCA Mallydams Wood near Hastings.



# It's Q&A time!



## PEOPLE OFTEN ASK IF THEY CAN 'HAVE A HEDGEHOG FOR THE GARDEN', SO HERE'S OUR TAKE ON IT!

The hedgehog is probably the UK's most iconic small mammal, and everybody seems to love them; after all, they never run off with the kids' toys, dig up your lawn, or poo on the washing – and when combined with their almost legendary appetite for slugs and snails, you begin to see the appeal!

But for all their popularity, hedgehogs are now in serious trouble (and have even disappeared completely in some areas) with increased traffic, pesticide use, loss of habitat, dog attacks, entanglement in netting, and loss of hedgerows being just some of the reasons put forward for their decline – but what's more troubling is that no one seems to have an answer to the problem.

Making our gardens wildlife friendly, being aware of, and removing or repairing potential hazards such as garden netting and uncovered drains, as well as ensuring that garden fence

panels have a 5" square hole cut in the base, all help, but much more needs to be done, particularly when it comes to protecting them from habitat loss. For example, although hedgehogs are protected from acts of cruelty, they enjoy no legal protection whatsoever when it comes

to habitat – so a housing developer, for instance, can clear a building site without having any obligation to conduct an ecological survey to see if hedgehogs are present – as would be the case for dormice and great-crested

newts; this is hopeless, but a problem that can only be rectified at government level. Time is running out, and if the hedgehog is to be saved, action must be taken now.

Here at Folly, we admit around 400–500 hedgehogs a year, mainly the victims of accidents, and the survivors, after treatment, are always returned to where they came from. With populations now so depleted, that's the very least we can do.

It doesn't take much to push a population over the edge – a new housing development, one or two drownings in a pond or uncovered swimming pool, an entanglement in games netting or garden netting, is all it takes to bring a local population to the brink of extinction.

It would be nice to try to reintroduce hedgehogs to places from which they've disappeared (or introduce them to new locations in the hope they'd eventually become established), but it isn't practical, as we just don't have the numbers anymore, and short of starting a breeding programme, I don't see now that we ever will.

So, the answer to the question I'm afraid, has to be no – but that doesn't mean we can't help hedgehogs; just keeping up your membership of Friends of Folly (or adopting one of our non-releasable animals) helps us to protect them, and you never know, if a bit more time can be bought, someone may eventually come up with a solution.

But if you want to be even more pro-active, why not write to your MP (and encourage your family and friends to do the same) to tell them how concerned you are by the lack of protection for hedgehogs, and that you'd like the government to act now – not in ten or twenty years' time when it's too late.



# How to help!

## WHAT'S IN THE PIPELINE?

We don't often ask our supporters for money, but you may remember that earlier this summer we were looking to fund a new wildlife ambulance to assist with casualty collections and rescues.

The target for the project was £10,000, but, in the end, the campaign was so successful that we were able to double it, allowing us to not only purchase the vehicle, but keep it insured, fuelled and out on the road for at least the next two years!

We don't as yet have the funds to employ a full-time driver/rescuer (so that needs to be addressed) so for now we'll just have to utilise staff and volunteers until the situation improves.

So, a very big thank you to everyone who donated – we had some wonderful gifts – and it's very much appreciated!

Special thanks must go to Headline Filters (whose very generous donation and sponsorship of the sign writing, really brought the project together) and grateful thanks to WildCrowd, the not-for-profit group whose inspirational approach to fundraising really got the whole thing off the ground.

In the next newsletter, we hope to have more news of how the ambulance is making a difference, and more importantly, helping to save lives.

But no sooner is one project completed than we're on to the next – and you may remember that 18 months ago, we managed to purchase an additional piece of land, just to the north of our present boundary; extending to a further 1 ½ acres, it was originally part of the old nursery, and will be ideal for hedgehog enclosures, release pens, a flight aviary (for

test flying buzzards), the deer fawn unit, and even some storage sheds and composters for our waste. But before we can proceed, there's a lot of clearing up to do, as much of the area is derelict.

So that's the state of play – and hopefully where you and the Christmas Appeal come in, because if we can raise the rest of the funds (and we already have the Lush funds to kick things off), there's a good chance we can have much of the development up and running by next summer.

In the meantime, we'll be organising fundraisers and applying to grant-making trusts for further support, so please do look at the enclosed appeal leaflet, and if possible, make a Christmas donation towards what will be a very worthy project! Thank you.

**ONCE AGAIN, WE'D LIKE TO THANK OUR FRIENDS AT KENNEDY BROTHERS ROTHERFIELD FOR THEIR CONTINUED SUPPORT – THEY NOT ONLY SOURCED THE AMBULANCE BUT DID ALL THE RUNNING AROUND TOO – MODIFICATIONS, TAX AND SIGNWRITING - IT'S VERY MUCH APPRECIATED!**



*Ambulance*



*The new bit!*

# It's All About Education!

**WE RECENTLY RECEIVED THE FOLLOWING LETTER FROM THE LEADER OF A LOCAL RAINBOW GROUP THAT I THINK REALLY SUMS UP THE IMPORTANCE OF ENGAGING CHILDREN WITH WILDLIFE ISSUES.**



Rainbows are a group of girls aged 5–7 and our Unit, 2nd Pembury Rainbows, have spent this last term on an adventure into nature. Our aim was to earn some challenge badges, but most importantly to discover and learn about our local natural environments and wildlife.

We approached Folly Wildlife Rescue to organise a visit and a meeting was arranged for 17th September 2018. Adrian kindly came out to meet the girls and the weather was so lovely, we sat outside and listened to all the very interesting facts he had to share about hedgehogs. And he brought a visitor too – a little female hog, who we warmly named Ruby. Adrian explained to the girls how ‘Ruby’ had come into the care of Folly Wildlife Hospital and what her future held.

Both girls and leaders were fascinated and transfixed by this extraordinary little creature. As a parent of one of the Rainbows, as well as a lover of nature, I was devastated to hear that by the time my daughter is a teenager, she may never see a hedgehog in the wild again. Spurred into action by this awful news, the Rainbows have made 8 hedgehog houses, which are now hidden in secret locations all over Pembury.

We can't thank Adrian and Folly enough for the time they spent with us.

Toto xx

How nice is that – and of course we've been doing this sort of thing for over 20 years now; Aimee Taylor was our first education assistant – a working mum, who somehow over the year's managed to squeeze into her busy schedule, literally hundreds of talks to schools and community groups. Aimee has now stood back a bit, but her baton has passed on to Joan Taylor, who, with her team of assistants, continues the talks and flying the Folly flag (except we don't have a flag – yet!).

This year alone, they've given nearly 40 presentations, so schools, Woman's Institutes, 'Young at Heart' groups, brownies, home educators, and conservation and environmental organisations have all heard about the dangers wild animals are facing in our homes, workplaces and gardens – and by raising awareness and, more importantly, demonstrating how everyone can do their bit to help, we hope to reduce the accidents that are taking such a toll on wildlife numbers.

And while on the subject of awareness, it was uplifting to see just how many people took part recently in The People's Walk for Wildlife, a march on Westminster that was led by Chris Packham; as is so often the case, it enjoyed very little coverage in the media, but it did show that huge numbers of people still cared; billed as a celebration of life, it was also a call to arms to halt the shocking decline of many of our native species – including the hedgehog (now considered an endangered species).

**NEXT TIME: A CLOSER LOOK AT SCHOOL TALKS – BUILDING HOPE FOR THE FUTURE?**