



Annual Report 2022

Charity Name: The Starlight Trust

Registration Number: EW16594

Charity Objectives & Activities

Charity Objectives

For the benefit of the public, to relieve the suffering and distress of animals in such ways as the trust shall decide including (but not exclusively) the following ways: -

- (a) to rescue, take in and provide care, shelter and sanctuary for stray, lost, neglected, abandoned, ill-treated and unwanted pets, primarily small pet rodents, and to rehome these animals wherever possible.
- (b) To promote humane behaviour towards animals by providing appropriate care, protection, treatment and security for animals which are in need of care and attention by reason of sickness, maltreatment, poor circumstances or ill usage.
- (c) to educate the public in matters pertaining to animal welfare in general and the prevention of cruelty and suffering among animals.

Activities Undertaken

Founded in 2008, the trust operates a rescue and sanctuary for small pets and feral pigeons from founders Sarah and Dave Argrave's home. Since 2020, due to the risk that COVID-19 poses to the health of the Managing Trustees, the trust's main focus has switched to online work, advising the public and supporting other animal rescues. These activities include

- Operating HelpWildlife.co.uk which provides advice to members of the public who find wildlife casualties and publishes a directory of UK wildlife rescue organisations
- Providing bespoke advice and support to wildlife casualty finders through the HelpWildlife.co.uk helpdesk
- Funding the transport of wildlife casualties to rescue where other options have been exhausted
- Making small grants to wildlife rescues to support their work
- Providing free faecal sampling for pigeons in other rescues

In Focus – Hands on Animal Rescue

Officially, we ceased admitting new animals in July of 2021. This was due to a combination of the aforementioned health status of the Managing Trustees and the fact that our pigeon aviaries were now full. Without aviary space we faced the risk of having to euthanise any pigeons which were not suitable for release if we could not find alternative sanctuary placements for them.

KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

86

ANIMALS CARED FOR

We still had a significant number of permanent residents to care for, however, and a small number of new animals were admitted, usually ones with particular needs which we were best placed to meet. Altogether we cared for or supported the care of 86 animals in 2022.

These were

- 45 permanent residents admitted in previous years (4 degus and 41 pigeons)
- 21 pigeons in need of ongoing support or sanctuary who are cared for at Linjoy Wildlife Rescue with our financial support
- 2 pigeons admitted in 2021 which were released in 2022
- 18 new admissions (all pigeons)
 - 4 died
 - 6 were released
 - 2 were passed to other rescues
 - 6 are still here



In Focus – Pigeon Poo Sampling & Rescue Support

KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

233

SAMPLES TESTED, FOR

145

BIRDS, SAVING RESCUES

£3495

Wild pigeons commonly suffer from intestinal parasites which can cause weight loss, anorexia, dehydration, intestinal bleeding and, eventually, death. Identification of parasites relies on faecal samples being observed with a microscope and is essential to ensure that the right medications are given to treat the issue successfully. Professional labs exist for this, charging an average of £15 per sample.

Since 2019, we have offered free testing to pigeon rescues, allowing them to provide targeted treatment and direct their limited funds elsewhere. In total, we have undertaken 718 tests for 508 birds, saving rescues around £10,770.

In 2022, we spent just £91.34 on poo checking supplies to help 145 birds and save rescues £3495 which we think represents excellent value for money.

We also provided support to rescues in other ways, for example

- a grant of £200 to a normally self-funded pigeon rescue whose owner was experiencing a loss of income due to the pandemic
- funding transport for 7 wildlife casualties to be delivered to rescue in an Uber or other taxi when other transport wasn't available
- funding the care of a group of baby squirrels we fostered for another rescue



In Focus – HelpWildlife Directory

When our wildlife rescue directory started in 2005, we had just a few dozen rescues listed. As word of our directory has spread, rescuers often submit their details to us and our volunteers also proactively look for details of new rescues to add. This year we added 107 new listings, taking the total number of live listings to 732.

Following last year's redesign of the site, which saw the directory element separated onto its own sub-directory, we can now see exactly how many people made use of the directory. More than 169,000 visitors ran a search of our directory in 2022!

In the redesign we also added a Quick Feedback facility, allowing visitors to quickly let us know the outcome of their contact with the rescue. 759 visitors told us that the rescue was able to help with their wildlife casualty so we know that we helped at least that number of animals find rescue help. In reality, less than 1% of visitors take the time to leave feedback. From that, we can extrapolate that the true number of animals helped via the site may actually more than 70,000!

We did some more redesigning in October this year, changing the format of the directory listings and adding additional fields and hopefully making the information clearer and easier to use.

We also added a small, discreet ad to each listing to help with raising funds. So far this has only raised about £35 but every little helps!

KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

107

LISTINGS ADDED, MAKING

732

LIVE DIRECTORY LISTINGS

169,035

DIRECTORY SEARCHES

759

ITEMS OF POSITIVE
FEEDBACK

In Focus: HelpWildlife Advice Articles & HelpDesk

KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

143,278

HITS ON OUR ADVICE
ARTICLES

1459

ADVICE TICKETS RECEIVED,
ABOUT

1778

ANIMALS

At the end of 2021/beginning of 2022 we added a new tool to manage the advice articles on HelpWildlife.co.uk. This greatly improved the look of the articles and also gave us access to tools like visitor feedback. We now have 60 advice articles on the site covering what to do to help in various scenarios affecting different species. During 2022, over 143,000 people viewed our advice articles.

Our hope is that, between the advice articles and directory, site visitors can find the information and help they need. But, if they need extra support, since 2020 we've offered bespoke email advice via our HelpDesk. This year we received 1,459 requests for support concerning a total of 1,778 animals. Our average response time was just 8 minutes and 27 seconds, with 97% of tickets being answered within our target timescales.

In the signature of our replies to HelpDesk tickets we include a link asking for a small donation to help keep the site and HelpDesk service running. Our goal for the year was £750 to covers the costs of hosting and the various tools we use to administer the website and HelpDesk. The total raised unfortunately fell considerably short at just £303.82.

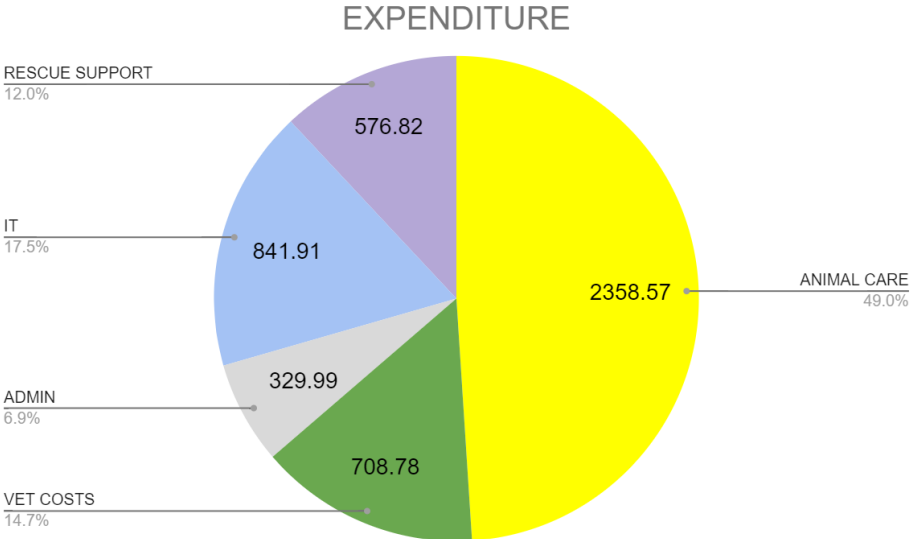
In previous years we had problems with people donating to HelpWildlife who apparently intended their donation to be for a wildlife rescue. As a result, we took steps to actually make it a bit harder for people to donate to us, to make sure that their donation really was intended for us. It looks like we perhaps went a bit too far with this so this will be something to revisit in 2023.

In Focus – Finances

Inevitably, the move away from 'hands-on' animal rescue work has taken its toll on our finances. Understandably, supporters like to be able to donate to a specific animal rather than a broader project.

We are very proud of what we achieve with so little expenditure. Between our remaining hands-on work, the faecal sampling, the wildlife rescue directory and the HelpDesk we know that we have helped at least 2,768 animals this year. This means it cost just £1.74 per animal we helped! In reality we know we helped tens of thousands of animals through the HelpWildlife directory so the true cost will be pennies per animal.

Seeing what we have achieved this year in black and white is heartening – there is an argument that we need to believe more in the value we offer and reflect this in our efforts to raise funds.



KEY FIGURES

INCOME

£2939.94

EXPENDITURE

£4816.07

END OF YEAR BALANCE

£5041.35

Plans for 2023

Hands on Rescue

Sadly, it's almost certain that hands-on animal rescue will remain largely suspended during 2023, perhaps even permanently. Pandemic aside, full time work, limited space and health issues do restrict how much we can realistically do here. The last few years have shown us just how much we can achieve focusing on other types of work. Of course, we will continue to house our permanent residents and no doubt the odd animal will find their way in, but new animals are unlikely to be a significant part of our work going forward.

Poo Sampling

It's been a long held ambition to enhance the testing we can do here to include yeasts, canker and bacteria. I'd also like to qualify as an SQP so that we could also advise on and supply the treatments needed. I'm not sure if 2023 is the year this will happen given other priorities but it is certainly the next step for this area of our work.

Rescue Support

We are conscious that HelpWildlife.co.uk helps finders locate a rescue but that this, in turn, puts increased pressure on rescue organisations. Sadly, we've removed about as many rescues from the directory as we've added this year with many closing due to ill health, burn out, or financial issues. We would dearly love to be able to provide more support to the rescues we list. We have a plan to increase funds raised via HelpWildlife which would hopefully then enable us to make monthly donations to rescues.

HelpWildlife Directory

We've done a lot of work on the directory in 2022 so there are unlikely to be any major changes here. We are just finalising a review of the 'tiers' of the directory which has brought more rescues on to the public tiers and will hopefully help ensure that the larger, better resourced rescues bear the brunt of the contacts which result from the site. We'd also like to encourage more rescues to claim and manage their listing to reduce our workload and increase the reliability of the information on the site.

Plans for 2023

HelpWildlife Advice Articles & HelpDesk

Around this time of year we like to review all the advice articles and make sure they are complete and accurate. A key priority will be revising the HelpDesk contact form. Given our limited resource we do need to encourage visitors to help themselves using the advice articles and directory as much as possible whilst still remaining accessible to anyone who needs some support. I'm not sure we have the balance quite right yet so this needs some work before the Spring rush.

Finances

In our first full year with our focus away from 'hands-on' rescue it's possible we let feelings of guilt about this change of direction affect how much we asked for support. This annual report has been a very valuable reminder of the good we do. If we continue to let expenditure exceed income so markedly then the charity will fail. We must go into 2023 with confidence in our contribution and seek help more readily. We will do this by

- Revisiting donation links for HelpWildlife and putting in place a process for passing extra monies on to rescues
- Increasing use of our Amazon Wishlist to enable supporters to contribute towards conducting poo tests and caring for permanent residents
- Relaunching a scheme for sponsorship of permanent residents

Other Projects

We have an idea to bring together our work in advocating for pigeons, including helping place lost domestic pigeons and the pigeon poo sampling, into one place. This is a key priority for 2023 so we hope to have some news on this soon.

The main starlighttrust.org.uk website needs a revamp to better reflect the work we now do. This will follow on from the pigeon work above so that work can be reflected there too.

In Summary

2022 was the third year in which our operations were affected by COVID-19. Whilst most of the world moved on, the health status of the Managing Trustees meant that it remained unsafe to have contact with the public. Consequently, we still had to limit the hands-on animal work we could do (as home checks, adoptions, surrenders and vet visits all pose significant risk) and continue to focus on web based work.

Initially, this was a source of great regret. However, this refocus has also provided opportunities to help in other ways, meaning that the numbers of animals we help, albeit less directly, has actually increased.

The risk, however, of this less 'obvious' work was that it may attract less financial support and that has been realised this year which expenditure nearly £2000 more than income. Correcting this balance will need to be a key priority for 2023.

Our sincere thanks go to the volunteers who have worked with us to deliver these aims this year, fostering animals, maintaining the HelpWildlife directory, and helping us give advice via the HelpDesk.

Our thanks, too, to all of those who have supported our work with donations – we literally could not have achieved any of what we have covered in this report without you.

Sarah & Dave Argrave
The Starlight Trust