



Christmas

Newsletter

2012



In our Autumn Newsletter we talked about the limits we had had to place on the numbers of animals we could take in over the last couple of years and that we were hoping to be able to increase this again. What has followed has been a busy and challenging few months. We've taken in a further 20 animals since our last newsletter, which means we now have 40 animals here. It's not huge numbers in the grand scheme of things but it's a lot for just the two of us to manage alongside our jobs.

Our new additions include three chinchilla girls who were rescued from a rather sad situation where they were living in bare cages with no hay. Vega, Electra and Gemini arrived here very nervous with half bald tails after frustration had led to them over grooming each other. They are now in a large, interesting cage, eating enormous quantities of hay and are sat waiting at the cage door for me each morning for their breakfast!

CAN YOU HELP?

If you're local to us and would be interested in fostering, please get in touch.



Electra

Gemini

Vega



We also, quite unexpectedly, ended up with 9 Dwarf hamsters, appropriately enough for the season they are Winter Whites. I saw an advert on a free ad site offering two cohabiting unsexed hamsters free to a good home. Alarm bells rang and I immediately had visions of them being pregnant and ending up in an inexperienced home or, worse still, with someone who might breed them for snake food. So I replied to the ad and went along to pick up our two hamsters.

On arrival, however, we found that there were 11 hamsters in the flat altogether, one having had a litter already. The people meant well but could not sex the hamsters and had actually been incorrectly advised on how to do so by a vet! It was clear that if we left them there, more babies would follow, so we offered to take the three adult females and the litter of babies, leaving them with just two males. We feared we were too late for the three girls and they were probably



pregnant already but, so far, so good. The babies are now grown up and all the hamsters are friendly and really quite gorgeous. Dwarf hamsters are never easy to home, partly because they have a reputation for being nippy. But these guys have wonderful natures and are very easy to handle.



But even more unexpected was the arrival of two pigeons, Nutella and Hope, within a week.

We told you, in our last newsletter, about our wildlife advice site, www.helpwildlife.co.uk. We were contacted via the site by someone who had found a sick pigeon in his garden but had not been able to find a wildlife rescue that could collect it. We appealed for help on [Facebook](#) and fellow pigeon lover Lou brought Nutella to us, who was suffering from a virus. Happily, she is now recovering well.



But weirdly, it was Nutella who led us to our second pigeon a few days later. I ordered some parrot hand rearing food from a pet shop as this is great for syringe feeding pigeons who aren't able to feed themselves. Walking back from the shop, I saw a pigeon perched on a low wall, right in the middle of a busy pedestrian area and totally exposed to the cold wind. It was as though she was making herself as visible as possible, waiting for someone to come along and help her. So I scooped her up, endured the usual odd looks one gets when walking along with a pigeon tucked under

your arm, and took her home. She was suffering from the same virus as Nutella and was horribly thin. I suspected, at first, that she wouldn't make it, that we would simply be providing her with somewhere warm to spend her last few hours. But, as we drove home, she lifted her head up and looked out the windows in fascination. It's something I've seen with birds before, especially pigeons. It's as though they are wondering how come they seem to be flying without flapping their wings! Then, as soon as a bowl of food was placed in front of her, she tucked straight in and I was almost sure she would be ok. Now, she has gained lots of weight and rears up aggressively when I feed or clean her so I know she is feeling much better!



Helpwildlife.co.uk has had its busiest year to date – the visitor numbers just keep on increasing year by year. Close to 100,000 people used the site during 2012 which is double the 2011 numbers! Each visit could potentially be a wild bird or animal helped which is an amazing thought. This month also marks the 2nd anniversary of our [Facebook page](#) and we now have more than 1,000 likes. This year we were also contacted by the RSPB's wildlife enquiries team who, it transpires, use our website to help them advise people who contact them after finding wild birds in need!

Semolina Pudding

This last month or so has definitely been the most challenging of the year. We have taken in 43 animals this year and 15 of them have arrived in the last six weeks. There were the six baby hamsters who needed daily handling to ensure that they grew up comfortable with human contact, the two pigeons who needed special handling because they were infectious and had to have their weight checked daily in case they needed supplementary feeding. And then there's Semi the degu, the reason for the odd title! My nickname for him is Semolina Pudding or Puds for short! Semi and his two brothers came to us when their owner died. Tragically, she wasn't found for a few weeks and most of the animals in her house perished. The boys were very lucky to be alive. They have done very well since they came to us, blossoming into very friendly, cheeky chaps. But suddenly, Semi's weight plummeted. We rushed him to our specialist vets and they found that his back teeth were severely overgrown – not something which can be seen without an anaesthetic. So Semi had a procedure to file down his teeth and was recovering quite well until, a week later, I found his penis had prolapsed. I won't spoil your Christmas dinner with the gory details but suffice to say this was not something which could wait. At 23:15 at night, Dave set out on the 45 minute drive to the specialist vets. Semi stayed overnight and they rectified his predicament under anaesthetic. He was rather sore and swollen for a few days but now, thankfully, seems to be on the mend. But, in just over a week, we have spent, on this one little animal, around £400. An appeal on Facebook raised a fabulous £240.50 which is a big help. But Semi is likely to need ongoing dental care. Homes for degus are pretty hard to find at the best of times but homes for degus who are likely to cost a couple of hundred pounds a year in vet bills? Pretty much gold dust! So I think it's likely that Semi will remain here as a permanent resident and, of course, that means his brothers will stay here too as we wouldn't separate them. If we cannot find them their own home, a foster home would be great, so that they get that one to one attention. Please get in touch if you could help with a permanent or foster home. If you can spare anything towards Semi's vet bill, every penny will be very gratefully received. You can donate via paypal using donate@starlighttrust.org.uk or please contact us for other ways to donate. I'm also pondering making Semi our first sponsor animal, inviting supporters to contribute a monthly amount in return for regular photos and updates on his progress. He and his brothers are huge characters so they're sure to have plenty of shenanigans to report!



DID YOU KNOW?

You can raise funds for us for FREE simply by doing your online shopping through easy fundraising. This website has raised more than £200 for us to date. Just register at easyfundraising.org.uk to get involved at NO COST to you!

The future



Looking to the future, these are our main areas of focus

1. Get registered with the HMRC to help with fundraising
2. Get our next online project underway (I really hope to start this during the Christmas break and be able to reveal some details in the spring)

3. Raise enough funds to not only secure the future of our current operations, but to be able to refurbish (or, preferably replace) the aviary at the end of the garden so that we can use this to take in rabbits.

How you can help

As usual your help plays a vital role in our work. Here are just some of the ways in which you can help us.

- Perhaps you have room for another friend or two? If so, please have a look at the [rehoming pages](#) on the website and get in touch if you can help.
- We could really use some help with our online projects. Tasks are likely to include some internet, email and telephone work to check and gather information.
- We now have a Wish List on Amazon! If you would like to treat the animals here then please visit www.amazon.co.uk/registry/wishlist/17SKIUOVWABZ1
- Become a fan on Facebook! Doing so helps to spread the word about our work and recruit more supporters and potential adopters. Both Starlight Trust and HelpWildlife.co.uk have a page on Facebook which you can find at www.facebook.com/starlighttrust and www.facebook.com/HelpWildlife
- We desperately need to raise funds but we simply don't have time to do that AND care for the animals too. So we're seeking one or more volunteers who could do some fundraising for us. If you think you could help, please get in touch.
- And of course we always need donations. Any help you can give would be greatly appreciated whether a one off donation or maybe you can spare a small amount each month? You can use these buttons to donate via our paypal account (donate@starlighttrust.org.uk) or please contact us for other ways to donate

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Many thanks for your continued support

Much Love and



Sarah & Dave
Starlight Trust