



Christmas Newsletter 2013

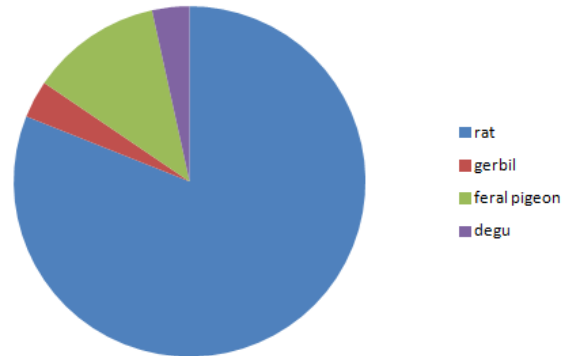


Well, what happened to 2013? It seems to have flown by and my plan to send you a newsletter each quarter just didn't happen. I do apologise and hopefully you'll have been able to keep up with our news on either our [facebook page](#) or on [twitter](#).

2013 saw us taking in 58 animals. I do like a graph so here's a visual representation of their species.

Two pregnant rats we took in who both produced large litters made up nearly half of our intake! More on them later.

This year we found new homes for 44 animals and also rehabilitated 6 pigeons.



It's comforting to me to see that our numbers 'out' were not far off our numbers in because the number of long termers we have makes it feel like homing has been awfully slow. In last year's Christmas newsletter I introduced you to some new arrivals – some female chinchillas and a family of dwarf hamsters. It's a real shame that the chinchillas and most of the hamsters are still here looking for their homes. Along with Cabo and Lleno, our two degu boys, that's 9 animals who have been waiting for their new home for over a year! Could you offer them a home? Please get in touch if so.

Success Stories



We've had some real successes in 2013 though. In January, as mentioned above, we took in two female rats. They were advertised as free to good home on a free ads site along with a male. When our enquiries revealed the male had been living with the two females we knew we had to step in to make sure the girls and their babies stayed safe. A couple of weeks later they presented us with a whopping 26 babies between them! It took until August but eventually we found great homes for the whole lot.

In April we took in a severely injured feral pigeon. It was likely that he was attacked by a cat and his wounds were already several days old when he arrived with us. I won't add a picture of his wounds because, frankly, they'd spoil your Christmas, but I have no doubt that the vast majority of rescues would have thought that letting him go would be the kindest thing. Yet here was this beautiful bird, clearly a good few years old and with an air of wisdom and dignity

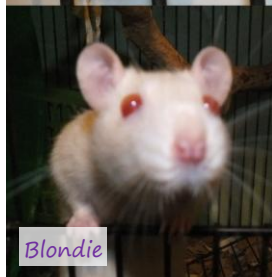
about him. He wasn't distressed by his wounds or by being tended to by us, so I decided to listen to him. It took six months, the first four of which required daily wound care, but I am delighted to say that Galega is now completely healed. He lost a small piece of bone from one wing which means he won't fly well enough to be released but he is very content to enjoy a comfortable retirement in captivity. All he needed was some company...

In October, we received a call about a racing pigeon who had been hanging around a garden for a month. We could tell from the ring that this bird was 7 years old so the best outcome would also be a retirement home – the finders had already tried to contact the bird's owners without luck. A DNA test showed our new addition was female and so our little pigeon family was complete.

In the spring we hope to move the two of them outside into what used to be our chicken aviary. It's going to need some work first though and we'll need to find an alternative home for our spare cages which will be challenging.

Meanwhile, we're appealing for a dog crate big enough for them to share over the winter. If you have a spare 36" crate or can spare £28.95 to buy one from our [wishlist](#) I'm certain they would be very grateful. They are living side by side at the moment so they are not bereft of company but it's not the same as being able to preen each other and snuggle up.

Last Christmas we reported that our wildlife advice website (www.helpwildlife.co.uk) had received a remarkable 100,000 visits during 2012. In 2013 this figure has increased further to over 140,000. Even if just one in a hundred of those visits resulted in a wildlife casualty getting the help it needs that would be 1400 animals helped. Well worth the hours we've spent making sure as many wildlife rescuers as we can find are correctly represented on the site.



Goodbyes

Of course, there will always be sadness when looking after animals. In the last few months of the year we had to say goodbye to three of our resident rats. Blondie and Enya had been purchased from pets at home but found to be totally unhandleable. We were able to reduce their fear to some extent but they remained very difficult to handle and very prone to stress. Enya was taken from us by a tumour in her chest and Blondie by a severe respiratory and inner ear infection which did not respond to treatment. Mohawk was advertised free to a good home on the internet when her cagemate died. She arrived scared, angry, overweight and losing her fur. She moved in with the other residents quickly and spent two months to the day happily snuggled up with them before she suffered a stroke and slipped away.

These were sad goodbyes but we are pleased we could be here to give these special girls the lives they deserved. And 2013 is ending on a really happy note...

Thank you!

In late November I had an idea to let each of our then 23 animals hijack our facebook page for a day to let all our supporters know what they wanted for Christmas. I'll be honest, I had a wobble after a few days of posting and thought maybe it wasn't a good idea after all. Then the donations started to arrive and they've hardly stopped since. As I write we have received 21 items. I cannot begin to tell you how much this means to us. Rescuing animals like rats and hamsters can be a pretty lonely, thankless task because most people just don't see the value in these animals. To know we're not alone in our mission to improve their lot is truly inspiring. Thank you all SO much.



Small Pets Matter!

Speaking of our mission, I have been hinting for a while about a new project we had planned. It has been a long time coming (I first registered the domain in April 2011 and had been pondering the idea for some time before that) but finally we are ready to go live. The project was to be, in simplest terms, a small pet version of our wildlife site. It would have a directory of rescues who could help with pet rodents, care sheets for each of the commonly kept species and articles about common care issues like taming, rehoming, finding a good vet etc. The site would aim to increase understanding of small pet welfare and campaign for their better treatment. It will always be a work in progress with new articles being added and the list of rescues being updated constantly but today it goes live. Do take a peek at www.smallpetsmatter.co.uk and let us know what you think. We genuinely welcome your feedback and input. There is also a facebook page which is also being launched today and which you'll find at www.facebook.com/smallpetsmatter.



The future

So what's next for the Starlight Trust?

- Our first priority has to be getting the outside accommodation ready for the pigeons so they can take up residence as soon as the weather improves.
- We will continue to work on our websites – helpwildlife.co.uk is in need of some attention as we've not been through the listings proactively for a few months while we focused on the new site. I'm also conscious of the numbers of people visiting the site from a mobile device now so we really need to optimise the site for phones and tablets.
- Still high on the list is registering with HMRC so that we can claim gift aid and make use of fundraising resources available to charities. It's so vital that we do this but so hard to find the time when there are so many cages to clean and more immediately helpful things to do.



How you can help

Your help and support is so important to us – we really, genuinely couldn't do this without you. You can help us by

- If you haven't already, please, please register with www.easyfundraising.co.uk as one of our supporters. Doing your online shopping through the site means we get a percentage of what you spend at no cost to you. Our supporters have raised nearly £450 for us through the scheme so far which, to us, is an enormous amount of money!

- 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.
- Our amazon wishlist has been incredibly helpful this year with supporters sending us everything from bags of food to toys and hammocks. 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. As well as the main Starlight Trust page, there are also separate pages for HelpWildlife.co.uk and SmallPetsMatter.co.uk. You can find them at www.facebook.com/starlighttrust, www.facebook.com/HelpWildlife and www.facebook.com/smallpetsmatter. If you're already a fan, please encourage your friends to 'like' us too.



- Follow us on twitter! You can now see tweets from all three of our projects at www.twitter.com/StarlightTrust
- 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 donate via our paypal account (donate@starlighttrust.org.uk) or please contact us for other ways to donate.
- Most importantly, we need new homes for our animals, especially for our long stayers. Please get in touch if you can offer a new home, otherwise please spread the word about them – you'll find all their details on the website or on facebook.

Many thanks for your continued support

Much Love and



Sarah & Dave
Starlight Trust