



WILD TIMES

IN THIS ISSUE

Message from Karin / Hoot if you love owls / We're going batty / Corporate sponsorship / Our gratitude

EDITION 04

November 2018

MESSAGE FROM

Karin

AS MENTIONED IN PREVIOUS NEWSLETTERS, WE HAVE EXPERIENCED A NUMBER OF HIGHS AND LOWS DURING THIS SECOND YEAR OF THE HOSPITAL'S EXISTENCE.

One of the highlights this year was performing a successful plasma transfusion – from one pangolin to another. This procedure is a world first in pangolins. Handling Pangolin is always exciting for us and this case was particularly special.

Aura had quite a journey ahead of her. She was rescued from poachers by Hemmersbach Rhino Force, an anti-poaching organisation close to Hoedspruit. She was sent to Provet Wildlife services where she was stabilised as she was “knocking on death’s door”. From there, she went to Rhino Revolution for rehabilitation. We have mixed emotions when we receive a pangolin. They usually come to us from the illegal trade – severely compromised and close to death. Aura had low blood albumin. This was no surprise as this is common in pangolin rescue cases. Plasma transfusion is an easy procedure in dogs and cats as we have blood banks for them, unfortunately not the case with this extremely rare animal. However, as Pangolin are rare and endangered there are no stores of blood and plasma or even access to animals that we can use as donors.

Remember China, from our [second newsletter](#)? He helped us to perform something phenomenal. I had taken a blood sample from China while he was under our care and we kept that sample. We sent his blood to Hoedspruit to be used in Aura’s blood transfusion. Her journey is not over yet, but since the transfusion she has improved by leaps and bounds. We hope for Aura’s longevity.

We are honoured to have been part of this world-first procedure. We hope that Aura’s success story will not be the last of its kind.

On other topics, with the good also comes the bad. Our most challenging case this past month involved a Secretary Bird, who was critical when he arrived at our door. The bird had been confiscated by the Bloemfontein SPCA from a private individual. He was severely malnourished and dehydrated; his flight feathers had been hacked off; and he was suffering from kidney failure. He weighed half of what he should have weighed at this age and we prepared ourselves for his death. Birds in such condition are often unable to recover sufficiently to live and more so, not live and be released.

“
This procedure is a world first in pangolins.
”



Flight feathers take up to six months to grow back. The primary function of flight feathers is to aid in the generation of thrust and lift, thereby enabling flight. More often than not, birds who cannot fly will die. In nature, flight and other feathers need to be replaced once they have finished growing. This is because over time, they become worn. This replacement process is known as moulting. The loss of wing and tail feathers affect a bird's ability to fly and can hamper their ability to eat from eating and perform courtship displays.

Remarkably, we were able to rehabilitate him – he was on intravenous fluids for 2 days before he even made an attempt to stand up and we also had to tube feed him. He is now eating by himself and was recently transferred to a pre-release enclosure. His flight feathers will grow out and he can fly free again when he is ready.



ProNutro's absorbent properties make it one of the worst foods for any animal. If animals are not fed their natural diet, they are unable to digest food. Although you may be feeding an animal according to the micronutrients it needs (such as a high-fibre diet), you could be damaging their internal organs. Phone us if you come across a small animal before taking any kind of action if it is not in any immediate danger from predators

Newsletter theme

Owls are a valuable asset to the natural ecological system.

Ancient Greeks considered the owl magical and the Goddess of Wisdom. They were protected and revered. They believed that if an owl flew over an army before battle, victory was assured. However, the Romans believed that the owl was from the underworld and a messenger of doom or death. They would nail a dead owl to their front door to ward off evil forces.

With the spread of the Roman Empire, this "dark" view of the owl spread. This is how the owl (and the bat) became part of the Halloween tradition.

Dr Karin Lourens



Hoot IF YOU LOVE owls

WE'RE Owl EARS

Their hearing is excellent and the **shape of their face** allows them to channel sound to their ears



Their ears are **positioned unevenly** in their skulls allowing them to get a 3D "image" of their surroundings



The tufts on some owls' heads are not ears, they are there to make them look bigger and more **threatening to predators** and also to blend in with their surroundings



Their ears are **not visible to the human eye** – they are hidden behind protective feathers, which you must move out the way before you see the opening

Myths AND FACTS

Marsh Owls are under threat of habitat loss and **barbed wire** fencing.

Owls are **not omens of death** – they actually help us control the rodent population

Owls are **silent fliers** because of the special feathers in their wings – not because they are “evil”



Grass Owls are uncommon to rare residents – They prefer specific, moist grassland, at a certain height where they find their favourite prey, vlei rats



Barn Owls have up to 9 chicks per year, and they hatch a day or two apart to assist the parent birds with feeding

Spotted Eagle Owls' **hoots differ according to their gender** – the female gives 3 hoots and the male gives 2

Grass Owls have lost most of their habitat, and are **near extinction** due to human development and encroachment on their habitat

One Barn Owl catches about **3 000 rodents** per year



WE'RE GOING

batty

OCTOBER IS BAT SEASON!

THE good

THE bad

“
Bats are cute, cuddly flying puppies... They just have a bad reputation
”

– Michelle and Dr K



Some eat mosquitoes and other flying insects – they make for a **great natural alternative to pesticide**

56 species in SA



There are no **“vampire”** bats in South Africa

They all have their own personalities and are described by Michelle as **“charismatic”**



Bats' most common predator in suburbia are **cats**

Their **facial shape** depends on what they eat



THE ugly

Some bats look ugly... but that's about it



Myths AND FACTS

Bats are not blind although they have **poor eyesight**

Most bats use **echolocation** to catch their prey



A colony of about **40 Fruit Bats** recently moved to Joburg – and they are one of the few species that does not use echolocation. Unlike most bats – they hunt during dawn and dusk, and are not completely nocturnal

Bats **will not fly into your hair**, onto your head or towards you – contrary to common belief



WHAT TO DO IF YOU ENCOUNTER A BAT

South African bats carry few diseases. If you are concerned – approach it the same way you would a dog bite. Go for a tetanus shot and a rabies prophylaxis shot.

If you find a bat in your house, it is probably because it is attracted to the insects following your lights. Turn off your lights and open doors and windows to enable an escape route and the bat will probably fly off.

Bats cannot take flight from the ground. If you have a bat in your house flopping around on the floor, lift it with a tea towel or similar and put it on a raised surface, such as a counter or balcony and it will be able to fly away.

Corporate Sponsorship

WE ARE ON A SEARCH TO FIND OUR FIRST CORPORATE SPONSOR TO HELP US ACHIEVE OUR FUTURE PLANS

Our relationship with a corporate sponsor will be a mutually beneficial relationship. We advertise that we are sponsored by you and you gain the benefit of being a good corporate citizen. People are drawn to organisations that reach out to those in need. We want to help you as much as we need you to help us.

FUTURE PLANS

Our dream is to become a teaching hospital, as specialists in our field are hard to come by. To do this, we need bigger facilities – which will also allow us to have separate sections for specific species. We want to have separate mammal and bird wards as well as a ward for neonates and fledglings. Currently, we have one small ward which we use to treat all species. One of our first goals is to build a bigger flight enclosure for our birds to aid rehabilitation. Our other goal is to acquire specialised orthopaedic equipment for the hospital as we are in dire need of this.



CORPORATE SPONSORSHIP FACTS

- Johannesburg Wildlife Veterinary Hospital has been a registered public benefit organisation for about 1.5 years
- We can provide you Section 18A certificates for tax benefit purposes
- We are looking to partner with a company that believes in the ethical treatment of all animals
- Our basic monthly expenses total approximately R70 000 – including salaries. This includes: food for our animals; rent; consumables; lab tests; and medical equipment.



Having a corporate sponsor will help us cover our basic and extra costs. We are not only looking for financial sponsorship. We frequently transport animals, we always need medical supplies, and we can always do with a helping hand in these and many other areas.

Our Gratitude

Thanks to our core team: Michelle Watson, Sarah Kempen, Alexis Kriel, Georgina Lackinger, Lauren Beckley, and our non-core team members, Marina Davis and Cassie Macdonald.

To the organisations and companies that have included us in campaigns to generate donations, or who have generously donated items to our clinic, including but not limited to:

- Augustine Medical South Africa
- Our regular private internationally based donors
- IDEXX
- Fruits and Roots
- Midlands Veterinary Wholesalers
- Hill's Pet Nutrition
- Greymatter & Finch
- Andrew Duff Attorneys
- Serala Financial Services
- Reid Morris Incorporated
- YuppiePet
- [JoziBugs](#)
- EJ Watson for his generous donations of free range eggs
- Dr Zoe Glyphis for donating quail and quail eggs
- Johannesburg Animal Eye Hospital
- MySchool – support us and get your friends and family signed up
- Fourways Veterinary Hospital
- Humane Society International – Africa and the African Pangolin Working Group
- F10 for donating their products to help our clinic
- The Bird and Exotic Animal Hospital at Onderstepoort Veterinary Hospital
- Our volunteers and team
- Cristina Flamini – who donates many weekends of time and expertise
- Hemmersbach Rhino Force
- Provet

