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MESSAGE

FROM KARIN

At JWVH we have one goal in mind: To successfully release all rehabilitated species into their natural habitat. Our wildlife patients are often protected or endangered species, and among those we have treated are the:

-  **AFRICAN ROCK PYTHON**
-  **BLUE CRANE**
-  **BLUE DUIKER**
-  **BROWN HYENA**
-  **CAPE FOX**
-  **SERVAL**
-  **GIANT BULLFROG**
-  **GRASS OWL**
-  **HONEY BADGER**
-  **NILE CROCODILE**
-  **OTTER**
-  **PANGOLIN**
-  **PEREGRINE FALCON**
-  **SOUTHERN AFRICAN HEDGEHOG**
-  **WHITE STORK**

The release of any wild animal is meticulously planned and facilitated. This process starts during their initial treatment and rehabilitation, where we simulate the animal's natural habitat and offer natural food items, encouraging normal and natural behaviour. Pre-release considerations include the ability to feed, nest, hunt and breed as well as determining the optimum season for release. These are matched with a suitable habitat to facilitate a stress-free, soft release which enables a slow and successful transition into becoming a fully functioning member of their species.

In this edition, we introduce some of the animals we have helped along their long walk, swim or flight to freedom.

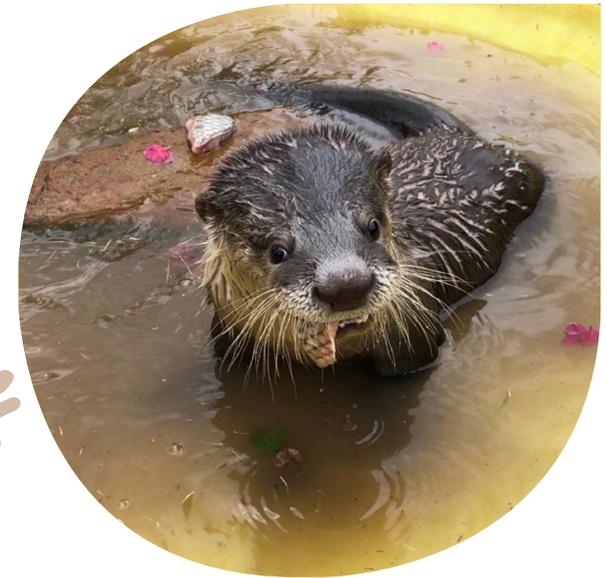


OTTIE GETS

A NEW (RE) LEASE ON LIFE

Our otter story is one of cuteness and success. Ottie is an African clawless otter who came to us as a three-month-old cub in a dire state. She was illegally kept as a pet on a harness in the Free State and was confiscated by the local SPCA. Our very own Nicci Wright, a member of the *International Union of Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Specialist Otter Group*, immediately knew how to get the ball rolling.

In the wild at this young age, the cub would still have been fed by her mother. We bottle-fed her a formula which Nicci has specially formulated for otters. Once she was older, we created a mini otter habitat in an enclosure at JWVH and introduced her to a natural diet of tilapia, carp and dead birds, as well as freshwater crabs and mussels. She did exceptionally well and her daily fish intake gradually increased to about 1 kg per day. This meant she needed hundreds of kilograms of fish over her seven-month stay with us.



FACT!

The African clawless otter (*Aonyx capensis*), also known as the Cape clawless otter or groot otter, is the second largest freshwater otter species. The word aonyx means “clawless”, derived from the prefix “a” (without) and “onyx” (claw/hoof). These otters are:

- found near permanent bodies of water in savannah and lowland forest areas
- range through most of sub-Saharan Africa, except for the Congo River basin and arid areas
- characterised by partly webbed hind feet and clawless front feet, from which their name is derived

Love and support for the otter came pouring in through generous donations towards her specialised diet.

At 10 months old, the otter was ready to transition to her release habitat. This is a game farm in Zululand which offers a riverine system and dams to offer her natural habitat and the food items she requires. She is in a safe pre-release enclosure built on the banks of a dam and is walked daily to the river and dam where she practices her swimming, foraging and hunting skills. Guided by Nicci, the farm owner, Collette Tracey, will facilitate and oversee the soft release, while support feeding the otter for as long as is needed. Once she is the right age and at a suitable developmental stage, the otter will stay in and around the riverine system while developing her own territory.

The rehabilitation and release process of hand-reared otters is long and time consuming, filled with fish, mud, the occasional bite and lots of rough play. To bond with these intelligent mammals while guiding them to becoming the apex predators they are is tremendously rewarding!

GOOD LUCK TO OUR OTTERLY ADORABLE OTTIE!



FOX

FINDS HER FREEDOM

JVWH had the privilege of rehabilitating a **tiny but fearless fox pup**. We were alerted by the Fourways Veterinary Hospital that a five-week old Cape fox pup had been bitten by a dog at a “rehabilitation” centre. This was quite alarming since reputable rehabilitation centres would typically forbid contact between wild and domesticated animals. This “rehabilitation” centre had also mis-identified her as a jackal.

The fox pup spent four months with us while undergoing treatment and rehabilitation. She made a full recovery and was placed into a habitat catering for her specific needs. She was habituated to a natural diet of rodents, insects, small reptiles and fruit. Our fox was released into the Tswalu Kalahari Reserve in the Northern Cape, which offers the perfect habitat requirements for this species.



FACT!

The Cape fox is the only fox native to southern Africa and mainly inhabits open country.

These foxes are:

- often mistaken for jackals due to their petite build, colour and behaviour
- 45 to 61 cm long (excluding their 30 to 40 cm tail), with either black or silver-grey coats, a black tipped tail, and yellow flanks and bellies
- nocturnal and are most active just before dawn or after dusk.

OUR FOX HAS FOUND HER FREEDOM, FEARLESSLY!





WILD HERO OF THE MONTH: FLYING A FALCON TO FREEDOM

The Lanner falcon (*Falco biarmicus*) is a powerful, medium sized bird of prey. This species usually hunts during the day, chasing and catching prey, such as pigeon and game birds, in the air or from the ground. They can be found in a variety of habitats but prefer open or lightly wooded to hunt in. These birds are designed for speed and have to be athletically fit to survive. Once a compromised falcon has been treated at our hospital it needs to regain its fitness levels before it is released. This is where falconry techniques can support and complete the rehabilitation of these Falconry is thousands of years old and has been practiced over centuries across many cultures.

This month's **Wild Hero**, is Gabriel Haw. He is the youngest son of our raptor advisor, Jonathan. A male Lanner falcon was successfully treated at our hospital for an injured wing and mild bumblefoot. Gabriel agreed to take the bird on and begin training him so that, over time, he will regain adequate fitness levels to survive in the wild. This is a long and gradual process which requires the patience and expertise needed to build a bond with the falcon. For the last two months, Gabriel has worked with the bird and has now reached the point where the bird is flying free and returning to the glove. Hours have been dedicated to this daily process and the bird is getting more and more fit. Gabriel, we are so impressed with your dedication and skill in bringing this bird on to the point of release, thank you.

TO INFINITY AND BEYOND!

WILD WISHLIST:

The JHB Wildlife Veterinary Hospital is in need of a dedicated vehicle which can be used as a wildlife ambulance. It will also be used on the many long distance trips we do to facilitate releases of wildlife, including endangered species. A double-cab **4x2** or **4x4** will provide a more reliable and safer ride for both the wildlife and ourselves.

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FNB Cheque account
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