JOHANNESBURG WILDLIFE VET

WILD TIMES

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MESSAGE FROM Karin

"The beginning of Spring marks the start of our busy period as it is breeding season for most mammals and birds. We often need to take young animals home as they require regular feeding over a 24-hour period."

Winter is a tough time for small and medium wildlife. Food is scarce and while our indigenous animals are naturally equipped for these conditions, the inclemental weather is not always kind to them. This winter, some of our more notable patients included serval, a badger cub who is now in his pre-release enclosure, and a number of pangolins.

We have admitted several raptor species such as shikra, a secretary bird, black-winged kites, black sparrowhawks, little sparrowhawks and a number of owl species. Most common reasons for rescue include broken wings from being hit by vehicles and powerlines, poisoning and window strikes. There is a healthy urban population of raptors in Johannesburg, and while some of our patients are local, others come in from farther afield.

The beginning of Spring marks the start of our busy period as it is breeding season for most mammals and birds. We often need to take young animals home as they require regular feeding over a 24-hour period. In Spring, most of the patients we see are due to the involvement of people with good intentions who are trying to help an animal, but who inadvertently harm them. We recommend that you phone us for advice if you find a bird or animal before touching or trying to help it – even if they are not visibly injured. More often than not, the young animal may be placed back in its habitat and its parents will be nearby and will return to raise it.

In terms of public engagement and education, I was recently given the opportunity to present on wildlife emergencies at the *2018 South African Veterinary Nurses Association Conference*. I gave advice on how to handle wildlife before they are brought to our hospital. For example, how to stabilise and transport them. Penelope Morkel, Nicci Wright and I gave presentations at the *Limpopo Pangolin Stakeholders Workshop* which was facilitated in Hoedspruit, Limpopo by our collaborators, the African Pangolin Working Group and HSI-Africa. This inaugural event was attended by over 60 people, including provincial conservation department officials, SAPS law enforcement officers, anti-poaching personnel, prosecutors, wildlife vets and veterinary nurses. It was encouraging to see the support this workshop received and what that means is – the preservation of an endangered and precious species.

In addition to these opportunities, Fourways Veterinary Hospital invited me to hold a workshop on basic wildlife stabilisation for members of the public. It's a passion to share wildlife knowledge and engage with various communities, both public and professional.

Dr Karin Lourens

SUCCESS STORY

Leave a message at the Sassy Secretary

OUR HAPPIEST REHABILITATION CASE THIS PAST WINTER WAS OF A SECRETARY BIRD FOUND ON THE O.R. TAMBO INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT PROPERTY. THIS MASSIVE PROPERTY IS MADE UP OF MARSH AND GRASSLAND, MAKING IT HOME TO A VARIETY OF ANIMALS. THE AIRPORT USES TRAINED DOGS TO DETER BIRDS FROM APPROACHING THE RUNWAY AND THE BUILDINGS.

Despite the measures in place, the young, stubborn Secretary bird kept coming closer to the runways and buildings. Once the airport's wildlife unit found him, Penny Morkel and Craig Natrass, were called to catch him. Seeing one of these majestic birds in action is a magnificent sight and does not happen often in our suburban and industrial areas. Therefore, you can imagine what a thrilling, heroic feat it was to capture him.

Did you know?

The long-lashed Secretary bird is famous for the way it catches and kills snakes. The force of its "stomp" used in catching its prey was measured at 195 newtons. To learn some quick facts about this incredible bird **CLICK HERE**

> ***Secretary birds use their feet and talons to catch and kill their prey. They may travel over 30 kilometres a day in search of snakes such as Adders and Cobras, insects and lizards, amphibians, rodents and bird eggs.***

He was brought in with a swollen foot that had been injured in some way. Secretary birds use their feet and talons to catch and kill their prey. They may travel over 30 kilometres a day in search of snakes such as Adders and Cobras, insects and lizards, amphibians, rodents and bird eggs. This type of injury would have affected his ability to hunt and probably would have led to his death.

We took a sample of the fluid from his foot and sent it for culture and antibiogram determination. We discovered he had septic arthritis from an injury that he had suffered. After a string of tests and treatments, the infection was successfully cleared. The Airports Company South Africa (ACSA) has sponsored a telemetry backpack for the feisty bird, costing in the region of R25,000. Once he has been ringed with a SAFRING and been fitted with the advanced GPS telemetry device, we will be able track him through the data downloaded on our cell phones. This information is critical for monitoring his post-release dispersal and behavior which provides us with valuable data and insight for future cases.

SUCCESS STORY

Monkeying around

VERVET MONKEY

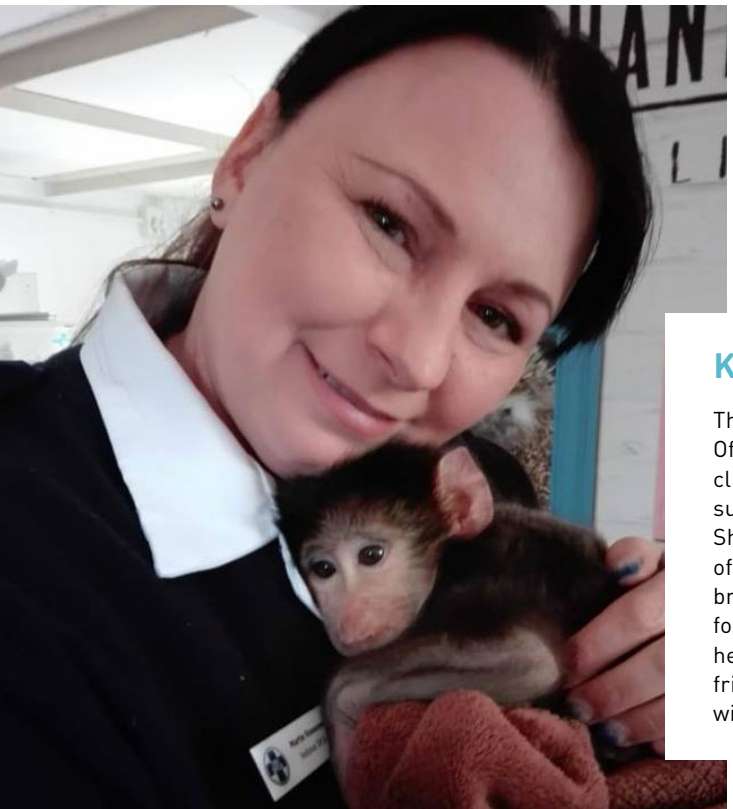
Keeping highly social animals such as primates as pets often results in psychological issues manifesting in the animal. This is because their natural and instinctual needs cannot be met when they are being kept, on their own, without any grooming, vocalising and normal primate activity with other primates.

Vervet Monkeys are "trending" now and being kept as pets. However, they are wild animals and it is illegal to keep them as pets. Recently, Inspector Eric at the Roodepoort SPCA brought us a Vervet monkey after confiscating him from his ex-owners. We assessed his condition and found that he was healthy, despite his ex-owners not feeding him the correct food. We introduced him to a more natural diet, and he was transferred to Riverside Wildlife Rehabilitation Centre. Here he will be integrated into a troop and released with his kind into the wild to live as he should.

> *Health and behaviour problems arise as they grow older and this is often due to the quality of the care and treatment animals receive, in this case, the vervet monkey.*

Wild animals have diets that are specific to their species. It is necessary for their growth and development. They also have behaviours that are not conducive to, or always "acceptable" in, a domesticated environment. For example; vervets have a primarily herbivorous diet, living mostly on wild fruits, flowers, leaves, seeds, and seed pods. In agricultural areas, they will raid bean crops, peas, young tobacco plants, vegetables, fruit, and various grain crops. If they are not provided with these food items, their growth would likely be impaired and they would not be in optimal health.

Health and behaviour problems arise as they grow older and this is often due to the quality of the care and treatment animals receive, in this case, the vervet monkey.



KIRA

This young, Chacma baboon was found by a farmer in the Western Cape. Often, adult baboons are shot by farmers and their babies are found clinging to their dead mothers. Kira was physically healthy but was suffering from the emotional trauma of being separated from her mother. She was taken to the Karoo SPCA, where unsurprisingly, the staff grew fond of her. BidAir Cargo transported her to Gauteng free of charge, and she was brought to us for treatment and observation. We checked her health and found that she was slightly malnourished and dehydrated, but her overall health was good. The affectionate, young Kira has found herself a little boy friend the same age at Riverside Wildlife Rehabilitation Centre, where she will learn how to behave naturally among her kind.

FEATURE STORY

What Spring holds

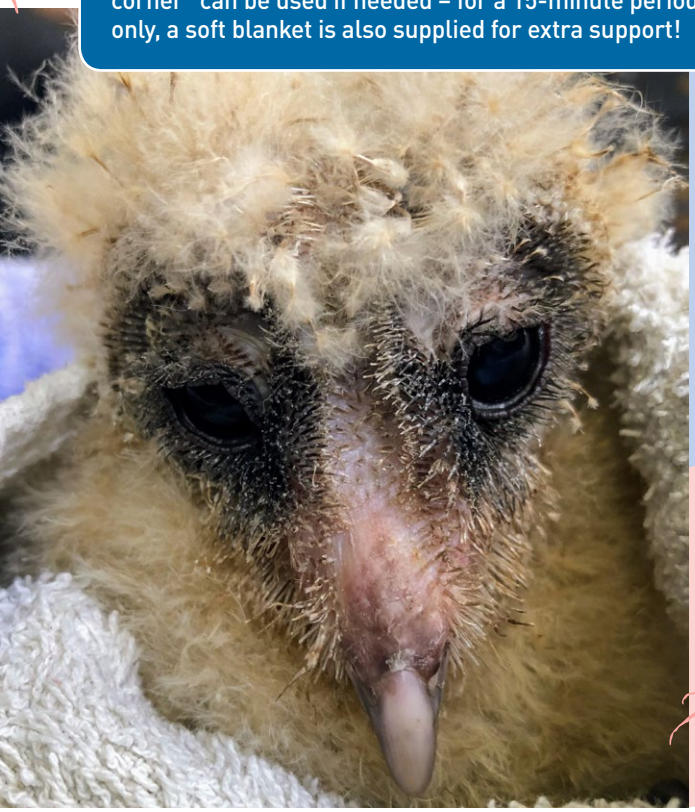
WE RECEIVE MORE MAMMALS SUCH AS GENETS, CARACALS, HEDGEHOGS, CAPEFOXES, SERVAL, JACKALS, SNAKES AND BUSH BABIES FOR TREATMENT DURING SPRING – ALMOST ENOUGH TO RIVAL NOAH.

You can expect to find nestlings that have been blown out of their nests, and many young mammals such as genets, scrub hares, bushbabies and other suburban wildlife. If you find an animal that you are concerned about, give us a call and we can give you advice on the best for the wellbeing of the animal. As the season progresses, you may find fledglings on the ground. This is completely normal, and they should be left alone unless under immediate threat by any pets. More often than not, they are learning to fly, and their parents are aware of their location.

> ***You can expect to find nestlings that have been blown out of their nests, and many young mammals such as genets, who love climbing big palm trees.***

Did you know?

The hospital prepares itself for this busy period by taking a deep, collective breath, drinking extra cups of coffee, and a daily dose of vitamins to toughen up. The "calm corner" can be used if needed – for a 15-minute period only, a soft blanket is also supplied for extra support!



Do's:

- If you need to fell trees, make sure there are no nests in the tree. Look for any excavated cavity nests (holes or nooks) where birds (barbet, green woodhoopoe) or mammals (bushbabies, tree squirrels, genets) may be living, especially in dead trees.
- Plant indigenous flowering plants and any edible berry or fruit producing trees to support the wildlife species that specialise on these food items.
- Contact EcoSolutions to put up nesting boxes, bat boxes and owl boxes: ecosolutions.co.za
- Taper off support-feeding birds to prevent dependence. By summer, we should not feed birds at all, as they are self-sufficient and the weather conditions are generally more favourable than Winter in the provision of food sources.

... and Don'ts:

- Chop down trees if at all possible.
- Move or burn any woodpiles or leaf piles. Be careful with your gardening fork. Animals such as hedgehogs like to live in leaf/wood piles, so check these carefully before prodding around.
- Jump into leaf piles. As tempting as it may be, creatures could be living in them and you could injure them.

How you can help

FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE IS CRITICAL FOR OUR SURVIVAL, BUT YOU CAN DONATE IN OTHER WAYS TOO. BECAUSE SPRING IS OUR BUSIEST PERIOD, WE NEED MORE SUPPLIES. YOU CAN HELP US BY:

- Donating all kinds of soft fruit and vegetables such as paw paw, bananas, leafy greens and fruity Purity helps – please avoid citrus fruits.
- Feeding our ever-hungry tortoises. While doing your Sunday gardening, save some indigenous succulents for them. They also enjoy leafy greens and mulberry leaves.
- Giving us mulberry tree leaves and branches. Birds love mulberries, so if you have a mulberry tree, please think of us.
- Donating Royal Canin Babycat Milk for our Neonates, available at your local vet.
- Contacting JoziBugs to deliver some meal worms and crickets to us for our birds and animals (we are linked to their website): www.jozibugs.co.za
- Donating towels, dishwashing liquid, washing powder and any F10 products (available at your local vet or online) for the day-to-day running of the hospital.
- Coffee to keep our team up and running through our busiest season!

Contact us on 071 248 1514 or jhbsmallwildlife@gmail.com to arrange a drop off or delivery.

Corporate sponsorship

If you are looking to boost your Corporate Social Investment, we need sponsors. We are a registered public benefit organisation (PBO) and can provide Section 18A certificates for tax purposes.

Our gratitude

THANK YOU TO ALL OUR CONTRIBUTORS. WITHOUT YOU WE WOULD NOT BE ABLE TO DO WHAT WE DO – AND THAT IS TO TREAT, REHABILITATE AND RELEASE OUR PRECIOUS WILDLIFE. WE KNOW THAT AS AN AVID SUPPORTER, YOU ALL HAVE THAT SAME PASSION AND LOVE FOR ANIMALS AND THAT IS WHY WE EXIST. WE COULD NOT DO THE WORK WE DO WITHOUT YOUR SUPPORT.

Once again, thank you to our friends in Switzerland and Australia, who continually contribute extremely generously.

Thank you for all the contributions via MySchool; we look forward to your ongoing support. Our goal is to cover our monthly running expenses from MySchool, so please support us and get your friends and family signed up!

Fourways Veterinary Hospital allow us to use their X-Ray facilities free of charge and they also take in animals for us after hours at no extra charge. We are grateful for the hours of free service they provide us.

A big thank you goes to Humane Society International-Africa and the African Pangolin Working Group for their continuous support. Thank you to F10 for donating their products to help our clinic. A special thank you to Dr Dorianne Elliott and Sr Sone from the Bird and Exotic Animal Hospital at Onderstepoort Veterinary Hospital for always assisting us at no charge at any time of the day or night.

Our volunteers and team stick with us through all the highs and lows. We appreciate your generosity and passion. Special gratitude to volunteers we didn't thank last time: Peggy and Murray as well as Ashleigh Pienaar.

JoziBugs added us as a beneficiary on their website, without us asking. A big thank you to them for their generous discount on their products. If you need bugs, their service is excellent! You can visit them at www.jozibugs.co.za.

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
- 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

Updates and releases

Our two adult serval are due to go into their pre-release enclosures as are our two young serval, once their permits arrive. Our sub-adult striped polecat, who was found on the side of the road in the Northern Cape and hand raised as a pet, will soon go into a soft-release process. This means he will be monitored and support fed, post-release, at his release site. Thembi, an adult female Temminck's Ground Pangolin, was released into a protected environment and being monitored using a telemetry unit which is attached to one of her scales.

Check out our Facebook page for the full stories on these releases and patient updates!

General information

Most species of wildlife are territorial which means that they defend their sociographical area against other animals of the same species. As such, we strive to release our cases as close to their own territory as possible so that they are in a familiar area and to prevent them being involved in territorial disputes. This is why it is important to provide us with as much information as possible when bringing in an injured animal. The more we know about the situation, the easier it is for us to treat and release the animal.

For example, if an animal is found on the side of the road and is badly injured, we can assume that it was hit by a car. Without this information, an animal may have to remain in captivity for longer than necessary and the correct treatment delayed.

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AND THE WINNER IS...

We are thrilled to congratulate Charlene Howard on winning the getaway competition to Mjejane Bush Lodge.