

# The Fox Project

Southern Wildlife Ambulance Network



Newsletter No.76 - Autumn 2023



## The not so sweet smell of success

Quite the most heavily scented rescue of the year involved ambulance driver Cat and care co-ordinator Kerry.

They were called to a sewage farm just a few miles from the hospital where two cubs were trapped in one of the pans. They were 30 feet deep and full of – well, let's not go there! Suffice to say, the cubs were in serious danger and, had they been heavier animals, they would have sunk and perished.

Cat and Kerry were ready to do whatever was necessary but were warned off going near the edge, and certainly not inside the pan, due to pockets of highly toxic methane gas.

The only alternative was to call the Fire Brigade, who arrived from two stations with chemical measuring equipment, oxygen tanks, full body outfits and a 'cherry picker'.

Surprised to hear the emergency services would bother to get involved with foxes? Don't be! They're no different to anyone else in their concern and compassion. Not only that, but the chance to test equipment and techniques is always welcome and, faced with such an unusual scenario, there's a training value that can't be ignored.



It was a careful and complex operation, but the cubs were duly fished out, rushed to the hospital and



handed over for a thorough wash – in fact, several! It is not recorded what staff thought about the task, but one suspects lengthy personal showers and heavy application of perfume took place that night!

Sadly, one of the cubs was overcome, either by the poisonous fumes or exhaustion, and didn't make it. But **Dee Dee** was a tough and determined little soul, recovered well and was re-released back to her family a couple of weeks later.

Congratulations to Cat and Kerry for co-ordinating an excellent rescue – although we suspect they weren't entirely averse to spending a few hours in company with a dozen muscular men in firemen's outfits!

# Homework

So far this year we've rescued in excess of **900 foxes**, one third of which were cubs.



We reported on the earliest of these in our spring newsletter, and the first to arrive were the first to be rehabbed back to the wild in mid-July.

Some of the later arrivals included **Mr Porter**, found abandoned in a railway station car park and **Bunker**, lost, cold and alone on a golf course. **Clancy** had an abscessed shoulder, **Venus**, **Serena** and **Lineker** had all run into trouble with tennis or football netting, **Mycroft** had a massive, life threatening tick population he was lucky to survive, and **Geoffrey** took a very long time to get over concussion.

We've dealt with mange, flystrike, flea burdens, ear mites, jaundice, uremia, fractures, dog bites, cat attacks and all sorts of misadventure, and everyone that made it through has now gone out to make their way in the world.

As always, it's been a privilege to have given a second chance to so many compromised youngsters. Every member of our dedicated team feels the same, regardless of whether they are staff or volunteers, unit partners, ambulance drivers, local rescuers, fosterers or rehabbers, most of those in the latter categories doing their bit from their own homes.

Let's hear from just a few of them.

**JANE (fosterer)** - Hand rearing infants is a wonderful experience. Watching how these tiny babies react to feeding time and develop; a sleeping bundle of fur suddenly turning into a lively, excited bunch, eager to be fed, learning to play and taking an interest in their surroundings.

Daily weights reassure me that they are growing well and getting the best start in life, despite the fact that,

as fosterers, we can only ever be second best to the rightful mother.

Of course, we will suffer loss, as I did this year when little **Shaw** didn't survive. That's something we all have to deal with and accept, but it's balanced by more positive outcomes, as with two of my late-comers, **Maddie** and **Fayrae**.

Initially, both were very underweight and liable to fade – as some inevitably will - but watching these two grow, gain confidence and interact was particularly fascinating and rewarding. **Fayrae**, especially - the smallest but by far the bossiest - was determined to achieve the best spot on the shelf at whatever cost and everyone else finally just had to fall in line!

**LARA (rehabber)** - I was nursing my grandmother when I applied to help out with The Fox Project and, even at 95, she was very excited about the idea of having the foxes with us and talked a lot about their imminent arrival.

Sadly, the day before the foxes were due to arrive my grandmother passed away after a sudden downturn in health, but we knew she would have wanted us to continue with the plan and so, that day, we welcomed a group of cubs to the newly built enclosure in our garden.

Feeding them twice daily and making sure all was clean within their enclosure was a welcome distraction and their different characters and personalities brought lots of joy to our family as we watched them from a distance.

Four weeks later it was time to open the enclosure and release them. It was fascinating to see the bolder cubs walk out without any hesitation, whilst

a couple of the more timid ones hung back, one of them for many hours, before finding the courage to take his first steps out of the enclosure door. They immediately leaped and bounded through the long grass and tore around the land in awe of the vast expanse of space they could now enjoy. Such a privilege to see those moments.

As we observed them over the following weeks it was clear some were venturing further afield, only showing their faces occasionally, whereas we still have one little girl who loves the place so much she is never far away. She, and some of the others, are often spotted standing proudly on a stack of logs at the very bottom of the garden, surveying their domain!

**RUSS (Unit Partner)** - We all like happy endings, but that's not exactly what I want to talk about.

Many of our foxes have struck lucky over the past year. Others have drawn the short straw. The two foxes I distinctly remember fall into this latter category. I was asked to attend a fox that had almost certainly been involved in a traffic accident. Both of its back legs were broken, and it had hauled itself by its front legs under a parked car. It was in a lot of pain, extracting it was difficult and it must have been excruciating for the fox.



The person who had called us out waved me off with a "I hope he's going to be alright". I brought the fox in, and he was euthanised straight away. This was without doubt the best outcome for him. No more pain. No slow death from thirst and hunger. He hadn't been long enough in our care to be given a name, but he mattered.

And then there was **Chicken**, a cub that had been rescued crossing the road. I guess you see how that works! She was a little sweetheart, very happy, and all was going well until it wasn't. Bizarrely, she broke a rear leg in the foster pen, normally regarded as a safe place, and we initially hoped it could be managed – a 'greenstick' break in a cub can often heal satisfactorily.

But she seemed to be struggling with movement in general and she went into the vet for a scan, which revealed both front legs had major deformities. It explained why the break had occurred and it was decided not to bring her around from sedation. Cub Unit staff were shocked. They'd seen it all before but, nonetheless, tears flowed.

Chicken's life was short, but it was a sharp reminder that whilst not every life is long, every life is valuable and we're here to do the right thing. That's why I come back for more. Not in the expectation of Disney endings, but in the sure knowledge that whatever happens, we are making a difference.

**MANDY (fosterer and local rescuer)** – My first foster group this year included **Ash**, who I'd actually rescued a month earlier, cold, dehydrated, skinny, confused and seemingly abandoned. Despite initial care at the Cub Unit, he wasn't doing well and there were doubts about his prospects of survival.

It quickly became apparent he wouldn't – or couldn't – compete with the others in terms of food and, under pressure, he would give up and go back to sleep. Did his mother know something we didn't, and that was why she abandoned him? Perhaps he wasn't designed for life. A vixen will know.

I began isolating him with his own bowl and started hand feeding him. At first, he would only take a mouthful, but a week passed and he began to eat for himself and visibly gained strength, even beginning to play. And then it all went downhill again!

Suddenly, everything Ash ate was going straight through him. Armed with drugs and pro-biotics from the Cub Unit, I had him on a last-ditch programme, against the odds.

Every morning I would hold my breath until I saw him breathing in his bed. Finally, one morning - my birthday! – he was up and about, scratching at the door for his breakfast. He then showed me he no longer had diarrhoea and left me the best present ever!

After that, Ash went from strength to strength. I had a lump in my throat when he and his littermates left for their release site, but I was so proud of this little cub and happy in the knowledge I'd been part of giving him another chance.



# Pipework



“I've got a fox cub in my garden with something stuck on its head!”

**Piper** was reported to us by a concerned member of the public and we quickly sited a cage trap. Apparently, her head wasn't enclosed so she could see where she was going and was able to eat. At that rate, we might be able to tempt her with food.

It worked, and then we realised what a predicament she was in. She had a black plastic drainpipe connector over her head, and it was stuck fast. Without rescue, she would have died, and it would have been slow and distressing.

We cut the pipe off - no easy task as it was rammed tight onto her head - and assessed her wounds. At first glance, we weren't entirely sure if we could save her. Her head and ears were bright pink and slimy where the skin had been rubbed and chafed, most of the fur was missing, and she had a deep gouge under her chin where the pipe had cut in. The risk of infection was high with skin breaking down and dying off. But she was bright in herself, her eyes had not been caught by the pipe and if it was possible to save her, we would try. After fluids and medication, she ate a tasty meal, and we left her to sleep in a cosy bed.

The following day, the skin around her head and ears had dried. There

were crusty sores where her ears had been forced to fold forward inside the pipe, and the underside of her neck was swollen and sore. But she'd eaten and remained bright. She was in with a chance.

It was an absolute joy to us the day Piper's ears began to pop back up again as the blood supply returned. At first her ears went straight up, and she looked like a kangaroo. The wound under her chin was deep but the tissue was healthy, and we were confident she would heal. It might take time but, if necessary, she could spend the next few months with us and go through the rehabilitation programme along with the rest of our cubs.

But Piper had other ideas! Her healing was incredibly fast, she didn't want to be friends with us or with anyone else, and we decided there was no need for her to go through the rehab process. Instead, she could return to the garden that she came from, back to the householder who'd been so concerned about her and who really wanted her back with her foxy family.

Piper went home 11 days later, which has to be some sort of record, or just testament to the fact that she was fed up with us and just wanted to go home.

# Saving the Bea

We really have no idea what happened to **Bea**. And we'll never know.



We were called out to rescue this lovely vixen, who had been spotted crawling awkwardly on her belly.

Examination showed she had no broken bones. She was bright, alert and able to use all her legs but only in a crouched position. Had she suffered some sort of spinal trauma? Perhaps receiving a glancing blow from a vehicle? Could we ever hope to get her up on her feet again?

There was mixed opinion on how far we should go. We've seen many cases of paralysis and a high proportion never resolve themselves positively. However, Bea was a calm and easy patient and, in the absence of conclusive evidence, the decision was made to treat her as a spinal concussion case, allow her to rest and monitor her closely over the following days.

Each day brought small improvements and after a little over a week, Bea was properly back up on her feet. A little stiff, a little tentative - we were still not sure if she would make a full recovery.

There's a limit to what medication can do on its own. Time is a great healer and it was time to move her



from the hospital unit to an outdoor rehabilitation pen with one of our home fosterers. Sometimes, having that extra space for movement; to test your strength and agility away from prying eyes and the distraction of constant human activity is the best therapy a wild animal can have.

Just a week later, Bea was jumping onto the shelf in the pen and moving freely, with no sign she'd ever had a problem. A complete and full recovery, for which we have to thank time and nature although, of course, it was vital she was safe from harm and heavy weather whilst she recovered.

Sometimes, we never know what we've been dealing with. Doesn't matter at all! Just so long as we get the right result, and Bea, to everyone's joy, is now back on her home territory.

## This newsletter is dedicated to the memory of Angie Horne



The years drift by and it's hard to recall whether Angie first came to us eight, ten or fifteen years ago.

We sort of knew who she was, although her garden rescue centre at Capel le Ferne, near Folkestone, seemed to be mostly about hedgehogs and birds, and we didn't overlap until a fox cub

came into her possession and she asked us to take it in.

We re-paid the favour many times, getting her, over subsequent spring cub seasons, to bottle feed and raise a full litter of five cubs, and then two litters of five – and then three! Well, it served her right for offering!

This went on until three seasons ago when Angie said she wasn't too well, and could she take a break? Sadly, we now know this was the start of what would prove to be a terminal illness.

Angie's commitment, care and knowledge was immediately missed, and will always be missed. She was more than a fosterer to us; she also brought us new benefits. Things we didn't know about medication and treatment. At the time, we

didn't directly employ any medical professionals and neither did she. But she spotted a problem we hadn't, alerted us to it, and we saved the lives of a number of cubs we might otherwise have lost.

It taught us a bit of a lesson. Her enquiring mind kicked us up a gear and led to us becoming considerably more professional and effective than we'd imagined we were. That process continues, and Angie was one of the catalysts for that.

Today, we're a reasonably large charity. Angie had no such ambitions but that didn't make her any less effective. The ripples that spread from Angie dropping a pebble in the water will continue to spread.

**Angie made a difference.**

# HAS SANTA GOT SOMETHING FOR YOU?

For reasons of space, we are only able to show you a small part of our range of sales items here, but you'll find plenty more if you go to our website <https://foxproject.org.uk/shop/>

Our annual highlights include our latest Christmas card – “**Blind Date**” – designed, as usual, by artist Thea Olrog and coming to you as a pack of five cards, with envelopes, for **£3.50**.

And then there's our **2024 Calendar**, designed by Dani Clark and including many of her own photographs of this year's rescued cubs. The calendar uniquely doubles as a collection of postcards, each month including a tear-off card, with background information on the cubs depicted. The calendar comes with postal envelope and costs **£7.95**.

**We are also re-launching two items of clothing.**

Thea Olrog's longstanding “**Running Fox**” design has been away for too long, so it's back! This time it's on a soft white 100% organic cotton **T-Shirt**, available in five sizes and costing **£20.00**.

Folk have asked if we could produce our previous navy blue **zip-up hoodie** in a lighter colour, and so, by popular demand, here it comes again in a grey marl, in five sizes, at a price of **£43.00** and bearing Lynn Cordell-Frisby's embroidered Fox Project design.

A popular gift, that will keep on coming from Christmas until autumn 2024, is to sign a friend or family member up to our **Cub Adoption Scheme**. Just complete the form on the attached donation page, and they will receive a package in good time for Christmas with a personalised Adoption Certificate and a letter telling them this is a gift from you and what they can expect as an Adopter. **And what's that?**

It's a series of three further Certificates, mailed between spring and autumn, providing photographs and details of three rescued cubs, and following their development through the year until they are released back to the wild.

Of course, this can just as easily be a gift to yourself, and hundreds of folk come back every year to treat themselves. After all, you can't rely on Santa for everything.

**And here's another gift for you or for a friend that, for obvious reasons, we had to suspend during the Covid years...**

**Day Out with The Fox Project** is an opportunity to spend a day on one of our ambulances, accompanying our Duty Ambulance Driver throughout an eight hour shift.

It's a day that commences at our Hospital Unit at Paddock Wood, Kent at 9.00am, and that may include rescues, vet runs, transferring convalescent animals to fosterers, visits to our Cub Unit and even releasing recovered animals back on their home territories.

These events, which run from 1 April until 30 June, are for just one person (minimum age 16 due to insurance limitations) because there is only one passenger seat in our ambulances. The price of the seat is **£150** and the value to The Fox Project – apart from your charming company! – is that it pays our average ambulance costs for the day.

Christmas Card “Blind Date” **£3.50**



2024 Calendar **£7.95**



“Running Fox” T-Shirt **£20**



Zip-up Hoodie, grey marl **£43**



# SALES, ADOPTIONS AND DONATIONS

## Please send Adoption Certificate to:

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Postcode: \_\_\_\_\_

Email address if digital copy preferred (essential for Non-UK adopters) \_\_\_\_\_

Please say it came from me

(enter name you wish to be known by if you are giving this adoption as a gift.)

\_\_\_\_\_

## Standing Order Authority

Name of your Bank: \_\_\_\_\_ Branch Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Address of your Bank: \_\_\_\_\_

Your Account Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Account No: \_\_\_\_\_ Sort Code: \_\_\_\_\_

"Please pay the sum of £\_\_\_\_\_ from the above account on the \_\_\_\_\_ day of each month/year commencing \_\_\_\_\_ to Natwest PLC, 130 High Street, Tonbridge, Kent TN9 1DE for the credit of:

**Southern Wildlife Ambulance Network/The Fox Project, Account No: 81996950 Sort Code: 60-21-28"**

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Dated: \_\_\_\_\_

## Gift Aid Declaration

I wish to Gift Aid any donation shown here and any donations I make in the future or have made in the past 12 months to Southern Wildlife Ambulance Network / The Fox Project (charity no: 1190070)"

Title: \_\_\_\_\_ Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Dated: \_\_\_\_\_

| Price   | Item   | Quantity | Size                 | Total |
|---------|--|----------|----------------------|-------|
| £3.50   | Christmas Card "Blind Date" – five pack with envelopes |          |                      |       |
| £7.95   | 2024 Calendar with envelope                            |          |                      |       |
| £20.00  | T-Shirt "Running Fox" (XS, S, M, L, XL)                |          |                      |       |
| £43.00  | Zip-up Hoodie, grey marl (S, M, L, XL, XXL)            |          |                      |       |
| £35.00  | Cub Adoption   |          |                      |       |
| £150.00 | Day out with The Fox Project                           |          |                      |       |
|         |  |          | Total                |       |
|         |  |          | UK Postage           | £3.50 |
|         |  |          | Donation             |       |
|         |  |          | <b>Overall Total</b> |       |

Title: \_\_\_\_\_ Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Post Code: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone number: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Please send all future communications by email

I enclose a cheque to value £ \_\_\_\_\_ or my Credit/Debit card details are as follows

No:

Expiry Date: /

Security No:    (last three digits on reverse of card)

Please fill in the above form and return by post to: **The Fox Project, The Lodge, Kings Toll Road, Pembury, Kent TN2 4BE**  
01892 824111 • fox@foxproject.org.uk • www.foxproject.org.uk

## Privacy Statement

Further to recent changes to Data Protection laws, we would like to make it clear that we do not share your data with any other company or charity. Neither do we store credit and debit card details. These are destroyed immediately following any transaction and are never shared – even within the organisation – by email or other form of written communication. In this and other regards we are obliged to comply with annual security assessments stipulated by Worldpay. Our full Privacy Statement may be viewed on our website or mailed to you on request.