



EAST SUSSEX  
**WRAS**  
WILDLIFE RESCUE

# The Rescuer

MARCH 2026 EDITION

REG CHARITY 1108880

Unusual Visitor  
at WRAS



WINTER DEER



FUNDRAISING



IMPING OWL



March 2026 Edition



Dear Friends, Supporters and Wildlife Enthusiasts,

Happy New Year, and welcome to our first newsletter of 2026! As we step into this exciting new year, I want to take a moment to express my heartfelt gratitude for your continued support and for all the support of our Christmas Veterinary Appeal - you helped us smash our target and we are eagerly awaiting the new equipment to arrive! 2025 saw us reach over 80,000 casualties in 40 years since Trevor started rescuing wildlife back in 1985. Such a huge achievement to celebrate alongside the 30 year anniversary of East Sussex WRAS being established as a charity! We would be unable to continue all that we do, as well as achieving all that we have in 2025, without our fabulous community of supporters, volunteers and dedicated staff. We are very much looking forward to another year working together to rescue, treat and release wildlife that are in great need of our help. Once again thank you so much for your continued support and I hope you enjoy reading our January newsletter!

Harriet Leppard - Operations Director

# A puffing puffin!



January's Storm Goretta brought a rather unexpected visitor to WRAS — a puffin. These charismatic seabirds are usually found far offshore during winter, favouring the colder waters around Scotland, Wales, Ireland and parts of the South West and East Anglia. Spotting one on a south coast beach is unusual, and rarely a good sign for the bird involved.

The initial report we received described a possible razorbill on the beach at Hove. Rescuer Shaz Hawthorn from Brighton & Hove Wildlife Advice & Rescue Service was quickly on scene and collected the bird, transporting him to our Casualty Centre at Whitesmith for assessment. To everyone's surprise, staff soon confirmed the mystery patient was a puffin.

The bird was weak, underweight and clearly exhausted, yet had no obvious injuries. He was given fluids, warmth and an incubator for vital rest. Seabirds are highly vulnerable when compromised, as even short periods on land can rapidly drain their energy reserves.

Once stabilised, arrangements were made to transfer the puffin to RSPCA Mallydams Wood near Hastings, where specialist seabird rehabilitation facilities give these birds the best chance of a full and swift recovery. With continued care, the hope is that this intrepid little traveller will soon be strong enough to return to the wild where he belongs.



2025 proved to be another extraordinary year, with almost 7,000 casualties passing through our doors. All but two months—November and December—set new record highs. Yet it was also an unusual and challenging year for wildlife. Early heat and drought meant many species raised fewer or no young at all, and we didn't see a single nestling Tawny or Barn Owl. Hedgehog numbers were also noticeably down compared to previous years, mirroring concerns reported by rescues across the UK.



# Review



Once again we saw an increase in the number of wildlife injured by cats, while road casualties thankfully dipped slightly compared to 2024. Cases involving sick or diseased wildlife rose sharply, with Avian Influenza being a major factor. This level of response is only possible because of the dedication of our staff and volunteers, who gave over 28,000 voluntary hours last year. We also had the help of 34 student placements too. It truly shows how much can be achieved when people unite to help our local wildlife.





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# Fundraising!

We know that in the lead up to Christmas, everyone starts reviewing their spending and tries to save. So we would like to say a huge THANK YOU to all our valued supporters for continuing to support our campaigns and wishlists!



Pet Remedy have generously donated heat mats, which provide essential warmth for our casualties whilst they are in recovery.



Yet another thank you to the staff at Asda Service Station at Polegate who donation a crate load of items from our Amazon Wish List!



Huge thank you to Brighton & Hove Buses for choosing WRAS as one of their chosen charities!



“Nothing is Real” a Beatles Tribute Band has raised an amazing £200 for WRAs through a recent gig - amazing!



We are honoured to be chosen as one of Cllr Dan Dunbar's charities of the year. His support has helped us engage with the local community at a range of brilliant events, including the Mayor's Tea Party, the Community Information Day, and an inspiring Evening at the Musicals with Polegate Drama Group. Cllr Dunbar also secured three fundraising evenings at Hilliers Garden Centre, complete with a raffle supported by donated prizes. WRAS's Trevor Weeks also joined the Mayor at Polegate School for student radio interviews, offering a fantastic chance to talk about wildlife rescue with young people. Thank you!



We have also been the chosen charity of Beechwood Grove Care Home in Eastbourne who have raised an amazing £897.11 for WRAS over the past 12 months. The year started by Trevor opening the home's Flower Festival and ended with a Christmas Fair. There has been an Eco Fair, Dog Show, and residents even wrapped Christmas Presents for a donation to WRAS!

WRAS's Trevor Weeks was really touched by the home's support saying "The staff and residents have been so welcoming and friendly and it's been great to be so involved with them. A huge thank you to everyone involved"



# Meal Deal Fox Success



A routine day turned unusual when our on-call rescuer Keith Ring was diverted to a supermarket in Seaford for an unexpected visitor — a fox loose among the meal deals. Customers had spotted the fox running through the store aisles, clearly panicked by the crowds and noise. By the time help arrived, the fox had leapt up onto the top of a tall chiller cabinet before disappearing down the narrow gap behind it.

The store had called in a Rentokil operative who, to his credit, was keen to remove the fox safely and without harm. Working together, they assessed the situation and realised just how difficult the rescue was going to be. The fox had squeezed underneath the chiller into a space barely 150mm high, full of pipework, wires and electrics. Nets proved useless in the confined space, and even a grasper couldn't get a proper hold — though the fox did manage a brief tug-of-war with the tool!

After removing the cabinet plinth, the fox could finally be seen but still couldn't be reached. The only option was for one rescuer to go behind the cabinet and gently encourage the fox out, while the Rentokil operative waited with a large net. It worked — the fox came out, paused in confusion, and was safely netted without causing distress to shoppers.

He was a well-conditioned and healthy male. Given the busy location, he was taken to our centre and released later that evening when the roads and pavements had quietened down. A special thanks to the Rentokil operative for his invaluable assistance and compassion throughout the rescue.

# Support Us!

## Gifts in Legacies and Wills

As a registered charity we rely on donations and gifts left in wills (legacies) to continue our work. To include our charity in your will, you need to include the charity name and number, which can be found on our website. Seeking professional advice when writing a will is recommended to ensure your wishes are met. You can find out more about leaving us a gift in your Will or making donation in memory of a loved one on our website at <https://wildlifeambulance.org/support-and-fundraise/>



**Give as you Live™**



We have partnered with Teemill. A business which provides us the opportunity to have a virtual shop-front with WRAS branded products. All items are sustainably produced and made to order, with WRAS receiving a cut of the fee. <https://east-sussex-wras.teemill.com/>

Give as you Live is a free online platform, which enables you to raise money for a charity of your choice by doing your regular online shopping through their portal. This comes at no extra cost to yourselves. <https://www.giveasyoulive.com/charity/eastsussexwras>

Without spending a penny you can support us as we have partnered with Recycle4Charity to enable us to send off used ink cartridges. With free postage included this is a win-win situation. <https://Wildlifeambulanc.e.short.gy/Recycle4Charity>



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# Winter Deer

2025 has seen WRAS deal with 33 deer rescues, mainly antler entanglements which have involved our specialist Deer Disentanglement Team attending. Winter has been busier than normal so far and included several rescues over Christmas and into New Year and even being called out by East Sussex Fire & Rescue and visiting West Sussex Fire & Rescue Service to talk to their Technical Rescue Team.



Fletching



Piltdown



Mark Cross



If you come across a live road casualty deer, remember to call Sussex Police on 999 to ensure the deer is helped as quickly as possible.

# News In Brief



An adult tawny owl was found tangled in discarded fishing line at a local lake and taken to a vet before transferring to us. The line had badly damaged several wing feathers, including two missing secondary flight feathers essential for silent, stable flight.

To help, we used a specialist technique called imping—an old falconry method of replacing damaged feathers with donor feathers from another tawny owl. Within a day the owl was flying again and stayed until the final feathers regrew naturally. After a final check, it was released back to where it was found.

This case shows how dangerous discarded fishing line can be and how specialist wildlife care can mean the difference between release and a life-changing disability.



WRAS has joined forces with Police Forces and animal welfare organisations to tackle an alarming rise in young people using catapults to injure or kill waterfowl, often encouraged on social media. January saw the first meeting of Operation Lakeshot, which aims to clamp down on this crime, raise awareness and encourage better reporting. One issue highlighted was the ease with which powerful catapults can currently be bought online without age checks. The initiative is chaired by Russ Middleton, Head of Intelligence at the League Against Cruel Sports and a former police officer. Participants include the National Wildlife Crime Unit, police forces, RSPCA, Swan Lifeline and East Sussex WRAS.



# Make an even bigger difference!

One of the best ways of supporting us is to set up a direct debit to pay a small amount on a monthly basis. This helps us plan and budget for the future.

To set up a Direct Debit scan this QR code or head to:

<https://cafdonate.cafonline.org/24454>

Alternatively visit our website, fill in one of our donation forms, or call 01825873003.



## Let their memory live on!

Scan this QR code if you want to make a donation in memory of a lost loved one. We will display a leaf on our memory tree in our reception for every person remembered.



### East Sussex Wildlife Rescue & Ambulance Service (WRAS)

**Casualty Centre:** Unit 2, The Shaw Barn, Whitesmith, BN8 6JD.

**Charity Shop:** 192 Terminus Road, Eastbourne, BN21 3BB.

**Registered Address:** 8 Stour Close, Stone, Cross, East Sussex. BN24 5QU.

**Rescue Line:** 0300 10 26 999 **Non-emergency Line:** 01825-873003

**E-mail:** admin@eastsussexwras.org.uk

**Fundraising:** fundraising@eastsussexwras.org.uk

**Volunteering & Work Experience:** volunteers@eastsussexwras.org.uk

**Website:** www.wildlifeambulance.org RCVS Premise # 6548370

**To make a donation please call:** 01825-873003.

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[www.youtube.com/user/eastsussexwras](http://www.youtube.com/user/eastsussexwras)

**Thank you to Aspen and International Animal Rescue for their continued support.**

EAST SUSSEX  
WILDLIFE RESCUE AMBULANCE SERVICE  
UNIT 2  
THE SHAW BARN  
WHITESMITH  
EAST SUSSEX  
BN8 6JD

Reg  
Charity:  
1108880



24 HOUR RESCUE LINE: 0300-10-26-999

GENERAL ENQUIRIES: 01825-873003

[HTTPS://WILDLIFEAMBULANCE.ORG](https://wildlifeambulance.org)

