

*First Aid and Nursing for Wild Birds*

Doreen King (1994). Whittet Books Ltd: London. 96pp. Paperback. Obtainable from the publishers, 18 Anley Road, London W14 0BY, UK (ISBN 1 873580 15 0) Price £7.99.

This little handbook of ninety six pages has been written for the average person, particularly town dwellers, who have little or no knowledge of birds and may find an injured or abandoned baby wild bird and wish to help. The book is full of useful and basic information. It has obviously been written by an author with sound practical knowledge gained over many years of treating sick birds.

The book is divided into six chapters some of which are better than others. First is a very short chapter entitled 'First considerations' which gives good advice on when and when not to interfere with an apparently abandoned baby bird. Also there is information on the law in relation to wild birds.

Throughout the book the reader is told to make full use of advice from their local veterinary surgeon. However, the statement made on page eleven that the finder of an injured bird should never leave it at the vets surgery, presumably in case euthanasia is carried out, is unfortunate. Some veterinary surgeons and trained veterinary nurses are good with wild birds and have valuable hospitalization facilities.

Next comes a long chapter which occupies nearly one third of the book and which deals with treatment. Here the advice is generally sound. There is a useful short section on homeopathy. However, I cannot agree that creams and ointments are usually applied generously, they should be applied sparingly. Generous application only results in damage to plumage and heat loss, and this may be stressful to the bird. The advice given to bath wounds with an antiseptic is sensible providing the attendants, in their enthusiasm, do not get the bird too wet, again leading to heat loss.

I think the sentence on page 37, 'Give it antibiotics (obtained from your vet) and vitamins', is misleading. No veterinary surgeon should legally give out antibiotics without first making his/her own examination and diagnosis. In any case this sentence occurs in a section dealing with head injuries and many birds suffering injury to the head do not need antibiotics. 'Throwing' antibiotics at any such bird in the hope that it may do some good is bad clinical practice.

It is not true, as stated on page 30, that birds of prey which are left with one eye should not be released. On theoretical grounds one would suppose that fully effective binocular vision would be essential for the capture of a raptor's prey. However, there are a number of well-authenticated cases of one-eyed birds of prey surviving for several years in the wild.

I do agree with the recommendation that before release, all birds need to be carefully assessed as individuals. The author has devoted the last chapter to this subject and the advice given is generally very sound and practical. Unfortunately the chapter on diseases, poisons and parasites is not as good since this is obviously a subject upon which the author's knowledge is limited. Admittedly the writer does advise seeking veterinary advice as soon as possible if an infectious disease is suspected. An accurate diagnosis without expensive laboratory tests is very difficult to attain and perhaps the author should have made this point rather than discuss which particular antibiotics to use.

To suggest that roundworms can be diagnosed by looking for their eggs in the droppings without mentioning that a microscope is necessary, is unfortunate.

I find it surprising that sometimes lead (being non-ferrous) can be extracted via the throat using a powerful magnet! The warning about Lyme disease (page 53) is pertinent. However, it is strange that having warned the reader to avoid handling birds with external parasites, to then accompany this statement with a photograph of a gull heavily infected with parasites being handled by someone who is not wearing protective gloves.

The penultimate chapter is devoted to housing, wing clipping, transport and handling. Here the author is on familiar ground and the reader will find useful practical advice.

This is a very readable book, well illustrated with black and white photographs most of which are good and add to the text. A few, such as those on pages 24, 29 and 68 could have been omitted and replaced with line drawings. There is an excellent illustration on page 20 of the splinting of a bird's foot but that of the bird's skeleton on page 15 leaves much to be desired. Many of the bird's long bones in this diagram look as if they have healed fractures!

At the end of the book is a useful list of products and the names and addresses of organizations which may be able to give advice to the reader. Overall, in spite of some shortcomings, this is a useful publication which is obviously based on the quintessence of a lot of practical knowledge and experience.

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### ***There's a Pig in My Pasta***

Compassion in World Farming Trust (1993). Produced by Vanson Wardle Productions. Colour VHS video, 16min. Obtainable from Compassion in World Farming Trust, 5A Charles Street, Petersfield, Hants GU32 3EH, UK. Price £12.50 or to hire £3.50.

'There's a Pig in my Pasta' is a video film produced by Compassion in World Farming Trust, the educational charity arm of the campaigning organization Compassion in World Farming (CIWF).

This 16 minute 'sitcom with a message' is targeted at the 12-18 year old age group. The story is centred round Sam (Graham Aggey) who is taking his girlfriend Kate (Kate Wilson) on a birthday treat to their local Italian restaurant where Carlo (Michael Roberts) tries to entice them with a variety of apparently appetizing dishes. Kate, however, insists on food that is cruelty-free and takes us on a trip behind the closed doors of the factory farm.

This film contains some familiar footage of animal welfare abuse presented in a way which is intended to shock. I watched it with a 12 year-old who was disturbed by the cruelty he witnessed.

Unfortunately, some of the images are not well matched with the narrative which tends occasionally to dilute the effect of what is being said. The section on transport highlights the export of live lambs from the UK to other EC countries on the hoof rather than on the hook. However, the video footage shows adult sheep (ewes) as well as lambs and then goes on to show cattle and pigs. The infamous CIWF footage of a bull on board a ferry at a Southern