



Monthly Newsletter

04/24

CONTACT: Main Office - 033 330 3036.

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Email custodians: custodian@freemewildlife.org

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Editorial

A Sticky Situation

Within the past two months we have admitted two vesper bat species which had been caught in sticky glue traps designed for flies. There has always been concern over the use of glue traps because they sometimes trap and kill species they were not designed for.

[The Dangers of Glue Traps](#)

Another concern, particularly with the fly strips, is that some manufacturers also use a pesticide in the glue on the strip. This again can cause issues for non-target species. Often species such as bats which get caught on the strips and try and bite themselves free, ingest clumps of the glue. Apart from the fact that the glue then sticks in the gastrointestinal tract, ingestion of the pesticide will cause death.

[Use Pest Strips as Directed](#)

So, what do you do when you find a bat stuck in a fly strip? Firstly, take the fly strip down and cut away as much of it as possible, leaving only the section with the bat stuck. Then, use a non-toxic vegetable oil such as olive oil to dissolve the glue stuck to the bat. This can be done by soaking an earbud in the oil and using that, oil the area between the stuck bat and the fly strip to slowly peel the bat loose. The oil and earbud technique can also be used to unstick parts of the bat (such as the wings) that have become glued together.

Once the glue is removed, the oil needs to be washed off the bat using a gentle detergent such as a mild solution of dishwashing liquid or baby shampoo, and then be rinsed thoroughly. This process can be exhausting for the bat, which then needs to be placed in something warm and absorbant (like a towel or dishcloth) to rest and dry off.

The bat then needs to be taken to a rehabilitation centre for further treatment.

[Removing glue off a bat](#)

Statistics for March:

ADMISSIONS			
BIRDS	RAPTORS	MAMMALS	REPTILES
54	5	7	2

RELEASES			
BIRDS	RAPTORS	MAMMALS	REPTILES
22	6	8	1





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New Admissions

While the admission of birds drops considerably over the winter months, we are still getting some unseasonably late admissions of baby birds. Many of the species (such as pigeons and doves) can now afford to breed all year round due to the continuous supply of food, particularly in urban areas where bird feeders proliferate. On the other hand, species that are dependent on insects (such as robins and chats) are largely absent from the winter bird admissions as their breeding seasons still coincide with the availability of natural food. Bird admissions for March included mousebirds, mannikins, doves, pigeons, bulbuls, sunbirds, white-eyes, Hadada Ibis, sparrows, swallows, egrets, and starlings.

Some of the less common admissions included a Black-headed Heron found with a plastic bag tangled around it, a Buff-spotted Flufftail found injured in a garden, and a Burchell's Coucal chick (1) which now rules the roost in the bird clinic.

The two Spotted Eagle Owl admissions for March (both victims of vehicle strikes) unfortunately did not survive their ordeals. However, a juvenile Black Sparrowhawk (2) rescued from where it was trapped in a building, and an adult Lanner Falcon picked up completely paralysed, both survived, with the Black Sparrowhawk being released a few days later, and the Lanner Falcon still improving every day in care.

In the mammal's department, there were 3 Grey Duikers admitted, a shrew, a Dusky Pipistrelle Bat, and a juvenile Vervet Monkey. One of the duikers (3) (a lamb) was rescued from a sugarcane fire and recovered quickly from some superficial burns and is still in care with us.

An unusual admission was that of a cat which came in briefly to have blood taken for DNA as it was suspected that it might be an African Wildcat. Once in hand though, there were some small discrepancies with its physical appearance which were explained when the DNA results proved that the cat was a hybrid between a domestic cat and an African Wildcat. The cat was sterilized to prevent further hybridization and returned to its owners.



1



2



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[African Wildcats and hybridization](#)

In the reptile's department, apart from the admission of a very sick Midlands Dwarf Chameleon which did not survive, a Nile Monitor (4) was admitted after it was rescued when kids tried to sell it to a pet shop. The owner immediately rescued the monitor, which was tied to a pole, and contacted the SPCA. By the time the monitor got to us, it was clear the reptile had sustained numerous injuries in the past, resulting in the loss of a forelimb and the end of its tail. This may explain why it had been easy to catch. Since the monitor had been surviving in the wild prior to being caught, we will find a suitable release site for it where it should be able to live the rest of its life in peace.

Releases - *the best part!*

Bird releases for March included common species such as Laughing Doves, Red-eyed Doves, Hadada Ibis, Grey Headed Sparrows, an Amethyst Sunbird, Cape Sparrow, Cattle Egret, and Fiscal Shrike.

Early March also saw the release of the White-faced Duckling and the Egyptian Gosling (5) which had become companions during their time at FreeMe Wildlife. Both were released on a little dam where the White-faced Duckling was originally found. A dainty little African Pygmy Kingfisher was also released back where it was found after it had recovered from a concussion.

Apart from the juvenile Black Sparrowhawk which was released, a total of 5 Spotted Eagle Owls (6) were released in March. Two of the owls had come from [Crocworld Conservation Centre](#) as part of their reintroduction and release of healthy, parent-raised offspring from some of their non-releasable captive birds. This pair was released in the Hilton area. Another 3 owls were released at [Umphafa Private Reserve](#) near Colenso.

The owls were not the only releases done at Umphafa, and they were joined by the two Large-spotted Genets (7) hand-raised at FreeMe Wildlife from kits. The genets were released in their sleeping log, which was secured into the fork of a large tree on site at Umphafa. Delilah, the Nyala lamb rescued by [Friends of Bisley Nature Reserve](#) was



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also ready for release and she was returned to the Bisley area but released onto a private game farm. The rest of the mammal releases included the shrew, a Dusky Pipistrelle Bat which had been caught in a sticky fly trap, and a juvenile Vervet Monkey which we are able to return to its troop.

The only reptile release to take place in March was that of a Leopard Tortoise (8) released at [The Mfuleni Conservancy](#) in Zululand. This tortoise, after having health clearance and DNA tests done proved to have originated from the Zululand area. Out of the 60 Leopard Tortoises we had genetics tests done on, this was the only tortoise to have originated in KZN. Our work continues through [The Tortoise Project](#) to try and return all the others to the areas they originally came from throughout South Africa.

Outreach and Engagement



The 12-month Biodiversity Program continues at the [Siyabonga Helping Hands for Africa](#) care centres in Pietermaritzburg. In March the topics covered were rainforests and birds. At the [Uvemvane Lwe-Africa](#) schools supported by the Kloof Conservancy the topic for March was arthropods.

March also saw the first of our Kids Bush Camps being held at [Fountainhill Estate](#) in Wartburg. The camp was fully booked, as is our next one coming up in May. The kids enjoy the comradery as well as their time spent in the bush learning about wildlife and habitats.

[Kwawula Game Estate](#) hosted a variation of our talk on Servals entitled 'Spots and Stripes in the Long Grass' which included aspects of working with African Wildcats. The talk was well attended and specific to Kwawula as the estate had been a site for the rescue of one of the African Wildcats which had come into our care.

Courses and talks are one of the ways FreeMe Wildlife raises funds for its work while adding value to the community. If you are interested in a talk or a course, drop us an email on admin@freemewildlife.org





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Projects and Research



Some exciting research projects are on the go at FreeMe Wildlife. Our team is presently involved in assisting with a study on the genetics of Barn Owls in Southern Africa, as well as the collection of bird of prey pellet remains as part of archaeological work being done on the Holley Shelter (a stone-age cave) at Fountainhill Estate.



Added to this is a very exciting project in collaboration with the [University of Kwazulu-Natal](http://www.ukzn.ac.za/), looking at the perceptions on owls in KZN. Another UKZN research project FreeMe Wildlife is assisting with is a study on Nile Monitors.



The busiest time of year for the Owl Box Project is approaching with owls getting geared up for their breeding season. Some of the occupied owl boxes at [Sani Valley Lodge](http://www.sanivalleylodge.co.za/) were inspected to check on the breeding status of the Barn Owls there. While some of the boxes were occupied with bees, another was occupied by Egyptian Geese and had to be cleaned out due to the remains of a dead goose in the box!

Fortunately, the last box checked was occupied by the Barn Owls with a single egg to show for the start of the season. Watch this space...



The silkworm shop now has a link to their online shop for anyone wanting to buy frozen rodents, mealworms, or crickets for all the critters we have in care: <https://silkwormshop.co.za/shop/sanctuary-donations/free-me-wildlife/>





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March Champions:

Stephen and his team from **Infotag** have been absolute champions in donating big boxes of lamb and calf teats to us. We were able to share the love by sharing some of these with the Zululand Rhino Orphanage, C.R.O.W and Josh Kleyn.

Andy and his team from **Cemcon** also deserve a big thank you for their kind donation of cement to help us complete the lockup garage where our ride-on lawnmower and brush cutters get safely stored.

Stewarts and Lloyds once again were a big help to us, and donated the steel for the lock up garage, while Terence from **Tungsten Earth Moving** did a wonderful job of putting the metal framework up.



GOLF DAY ALERT

Join us at Victoria Country Club on the 20th of September 2024 for the FreeMe Wildlife golf day fundraiser. Proudly brought to you by Leaf Technologies.

A 10:30 shotgun start to raise money for the beautiful animals needing our care and expertise. All proceeds will go towards helping rehabilitate wildlife.



There are 23 four-balls up for grabs, as well as tee boxes and greens available for sponsorship to advertise your businesses. These proceeds will all be donated to FreeMe Wildlife.

For any further information and bookings. Please contact Marketing@freemewildlife.org

