

Cleveland Hedgehog Preservation Society Annual Report for 2013

Again I'm going to combine the hedgehog figures article with the end of year report. So here goes.

For only the third time since I've been keeping tally of the number of hedgehogs cared for, have our totals gone down. I put this fall down to the fact that one of our major carers has retired from the front line and sadly not been replaced. In all we took in 3354 hedgehogs in 2013 compared with 579 in 2012. Three people took in over 50 and 2 people took over 100 hedgehogs, this is a very impressive feat as the dedication required to look after so many hedgehogs can be very stressful and certainly time consuming. I received data from 12 people which is one more than last year - although they were different people last year, if you know what I mean. We seem to have recruited a few more carers over the year and I hope they stay with us and manage to take some of the pressure from our current front line.

We released 213 (64%) of hedgehogs back to the wild, which, although a smaller figure, was 2% up on last year. We overwintered 54 (17%), slightly more than last year, but hopefully the spring will come sooner this year and we won't have to keep them as long as we did in 2013.

This is one of the first years when we've had an exact 50/50 split between male and female hedgehogs, most years we've had more males than females.

Sadly the percentage of hedgehogs that we lost was slightly higher at 121 (36%) compared to 30% last year. Carers reported a mixture of reasons from young hoglets with digestive problems to very underweight hedgehogs at the start of the year, probably from an extra long hibernation due to the bad weather and very late spring. Quite a few people reported a total lack of hedgehog visitors during the last year compared to regulars the year before, although I would like to think they'd moved to pastures new, I think it is more likely that the long, harsh winter of 2012 / 2013 killed off more than usual.

We continue to spread the message of hedgehog care to the people of the North East. Last year we did a series of presentations at libraries in the area and already have enquiries for the coming year, although in the past we've done these presentations for free we are now thinking of charging a nominal fee in order to improve our funding situation.

Speaking of funding... Our financial situation continues to decline. Although not destitute yet, at the end of the last financial year (August 2013) we were down to just over £4000 in

the bank, and there will be less than that by now. Our lack of volunteers means that we don't go fund raising as much as we used to, but according to other charities that do go fund raising, there just isn't the money around anymore and the general public are less inclined to give it away. The membership money that we collect from you every March is now our main source of funding. I can't say enough just how much we appreciate your membership money and the donations that you send us, without this money we would NOT be able to continue with the work we do.

We have been approached by a small organisation offering us a sponsorship deal for the coming year. So far this is in the very early stages and will only be very small, but it got me thinking. Do you work for a firm that would offer a local charity a sponsorship? We are a registered charity and can offer advertising on our web site and in our newsletter as well as photo opportunities with the odd hedgehog. If you can find a supportive boss, manager or director then please get in touch for a chat. We can also use certain supplies if your firm can help us in that department such as kitchen roll, cat or dog food, envelopes and wood to build release boxes.

On a few small points, we now have 96 members compared to 102 this time last year; this has remained fairly constant for about the last 10 years. We have 105 Facebook members, if you're on Facebook then search for 'Cleveland Hedgehog Preservation Society' and say hello, and we now send out 37 newsletters by email which saves us around £74 per year in postage alone.

I would again like to sum up by thanking everyone for their kind donations, both with membership renewals and on their own; we could not manage without you. On the donation theme I would again like to congratulate Yvonne for being awarded a donation from the Hawsker Dog Club for the fifth year in a row, and of course a big thanks to the dog club for their continued generosity.

Chris Firth
Chairman
Cleveland Hedgehog Preservation Society.