



Winter's tails

BY STUART WINTER  Follow him on twitter: @birderman or email stuart.winter@express.co.uk

Can you give a home to an unwanted pet?

VIOLET the mastiff cross is a bit of a pin-up girl. Her story of finding happiness after adversity is being used to champion one of our leading animal welfare charity's new awareness campaigns.

Today marks the beginning of National Unwanted Pet Week, the second year Wood Green has spotlighted the issue of abandoned and unwanted pets.

Violet's story underlines the plight of the 250,000 animals society does not want. And the crisis is worsening. In the last six months Wood Green has seen a six per cent rise in strays such as Violet. She came into Wood Green with signs of being used to breed multiple litters, a cruelty that only increases the number of discarded animals.

During three months at Wood Green a number of health issues were highlighted before she met her new loving family at a London PupAid event.

They are now lavishing her with the care she missed in her earlier life and have created a bucket list for Violet because her health problems make it difficult to know how long she will live.

While Violet is getting the home life she deserves, research released by Wood Green at the start of National Unwanted Pet Week reveals that almost half of all owners admit they did not seek advice before choosing a pet, illustrating the naivety that helps fuel the scandal of unwanted animals. Wood Green's survey discovered 44.1 per cent took no advice before getting a pet and by not



PIN-UP: Violet the mastiff cross was cruelly abandoned after being used for multiple breeding

doing this, thousands of deserving animals are left without a "for ever home".

Sally Stevens, director of communications for Wood Green, says: "What I would urge anyone interested in pet ownership to do is to please, please do your research first.

"You wouldn't purchase something like a smart phone without taking advice or seeking recommendations, so it seems incredible to me (and to the thousands of us who work in the animal charity sector) that potential pet owners would rely on blind faith alone and then be left surprised by the way their new animal fits into their home and lifestyle.

"Our research shows that people in Britain still identify us

as a nation of animal lovers, so it is depressing to see the stark reality behind the number of dogs, cats and smaller animals that are awaiting a loving home at any one time."

Wood Green was founded in 1924 and cares and re-homes thousands of dogs, cats, horses, goats, sheep, hens, ferrets and other small animals every year.

One of its key messages is that potential pet owners should ask themselves a number of questions before taking on the responsibility of an animal.

- Among these are:
- How much exercise will my new pet need?
 - Am I confident I can afford it?
 - Can I give this pet enough time and attention?
 - How much might it grow?

One of the most reassuring things to come from Wood Green's survey is the undoubted benefits that are derived from caring for an animal.

More than two thirds say they gained loyalty and affection from having a pet while a third found they were taking more exercise and also enjoying reduced stress.

Wood Green receives no Government or lottery funding for its important work and promotes responsible ownership by providing non-judgmental advice, support and guidance to pet owners within their local communities and in homes.

To find out how you can help them during National Unwanted Pet Week visit: nupw.org or call Wood Green on 0844 248 8181.

The Birdman

As we prepare to put up our feet and watch Springwatch, Stuart Winter recalls some of his best bird walks

LIGHTS, camera, action... The most enthralling television drama of the year is about to hit our screens. There cannot be a more gripping soap opera than the nightly diet of sex, murder, mystery and mayhem about to be revealed by Springwatch. Equally, there is no better location for such grand theatre than the RSPB's Minsmere reserve on the Suffolk shore. Will the avocet chicks survive the marauding crows? How many bitterns will make cameo appearances? Can the marsh harriers find enough food for their chicks?

Springwatch is a nature series that throws up more questions than a quiz show, with answers from its expert team led by Chris Packham, pictured, my choice as the nation's most influential naturalist. He should be in his element at Minsmere but I bet he has not visited this vast wetland reserve as often as me. Last weekend I made my annual May pilgrimage to celebrate more than four decades of trapping along its trails and peering out of strategically placed hides. On my first visit, back in the early 1970s, Minsmere still had breeding red-backed shrikes (the British subspecies is now extinct) and little egrets were postcard birds.

On our bird club walk we must have clocked up at least a dozen of these southern European herons feeding across the reserve, visual proof that climatic factors have pushed them far to the north to establish new territories. Marsh harriers have also increased. There was hardly a moment when the reedbeds were not darkened by the shadow of one of these impressive hunters. Bitterns and bearded tits, again supreme rarities once, were both highly conspicuous during our tour.

We saw 93 bird species: little gulls, Greenland wheatear and curlew sandpiper unexpected bonuses, along with common lizard, female adder and a gaudy male stickleback guarding his fry.

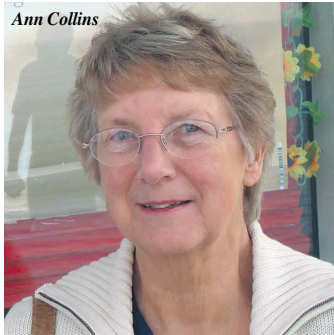
If Springwatch comes up with as many treats then prepare to be enthralled.



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● For details of how to care for wild birds visit the CJ WildBird Foods website at birdfood.co.uk/SE or you can call 0800 731 2820 for a free Catalogue Of Garden Wildlife.

Growing demand for new piles treatment brings new clinics



If you suffer from piles, like many others, you may decide not to seek treatment out of embarrassment or fear of treatments which are painful or don't work. However there is a solution. More and more people are discovering Ultroid—a safe and effective treatment recently introduced to the UK that gets rid of piles using a very low voltage current.

Based on the 120,000 treatments carried out in the US and elsewhere, it usually does not cause the patient any serious discomfort and has the best safety record of all available treatments. In just one hour, people who have suffered for years can be examined and treated. Ultroid treatments do not require any preparation or anaesthesia and, following a short outpatient treatment,

patients carry on their normal activities immediately.

Ultroid patients agree—says Ann Collins from Yorkshire: "After doing a bit of research, I reluctantly opted for the most invasive operation (for piles) because it had the highest success rate but the recovery time after the operation could be far longer than I expected and could also be very painful. I knew I had to have something done; the condition was starting to rule my life. Then my brother drew my attention to an article he had found about the Ultroid treatment, so I researched reviews from the US and knew immediately that I had nothing to lose. My GP supported my decision so I rang Ultroid."

"I knew I had to have something done; the condition was starting to rule my life."

"The treatment itself took no time at all. I was out of the clinic within about an hour. The treatment was pain-free, and I actually walked out of the clinic in less discomfort than when I walked in and went sightseeing and shopping. There was no recovery time at all. I honestly feel like a new woman! I am able to do things that I have not been able to do for years, and my social life

"It is absolutely, totally worth it and has given me back my life."

has never been so active. I have recommended this treatment to my family and friends, and my GP is delighted with the outcome. It is absolutely, totally worth it and has given me back my life."

Because of the growing demand for Ultroid treatments throughout the UK, new clinics are being opened. Previously available only in London's Harley Street, Canterbury, Cardiff and Taunton, Ultroid is now available in Birmingham (Solihull), Glasgow, Rhyl (Abergele), Wakefield and Whitstable, and will soon be available in Liverpool and Edinburgh.

PILES?

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CHAS'S ALLOTMENT

ROCK'N' ROLL

ALLOTMENT is looking good. Nice lot of rain yesterday. Sun is out today. Lovely. No matter how much you water, a good shower of rain is magical. Everything just seems to grow before your very eyes.

Dave came down to the allotment today and brought me a nice trailer full of horse manure. He's got four horses. He doesn't ride but he drives them.

I have decided that half of my half plot I am going to devote to a large compost heap, which I am continuing to pile up. The black compost bin idea I mentioned a few weeks ago has gone out the window. Never got around to buying them but it is just as well because what with all the grass sod edging and digging up of old spinach bushes etc they would have been filled in no time.

So one big open heap I am planning at the moment and it is piling up already.

Bit worried about my overwintered shallots. Quite a few of them have sprouted seed pods. Which I don't want. Those little "arrow heads" that appear will turn into a big "dandelion" head of onion or shallot seeds if you let them go. Nice if you want onion or shallot seeds but I don't. I want shallots, so I've gone along the rows and snapped the little "arrow heads" off at the base. I'll let you know how they get on.

Done some pickled red cabbage a couple of days ago. It is so easy to do and once again it is streets ahead of what you buy in the shops. No, I didn't grow the red cabbage, I bought it.

Get some pickling spice from the supermarket (don't let the young lad tell you that they don't do it 'cos they do) and put a heaped tablespoon of it in a pan of a pint of malt vinegar and bring it to the

boil. Then leave it to cool. Chop up the red cabbage as fine or as coarse as you want it and put it in a saucepan of water to rinse it.

It ain't gonna be dirty but it gets rid of any slight mustiness it might have. Drain it off in a colander and don't leave it covered in salt for 24 hours or any of that rubbish unless you want to be drinking water for a fortnight, just pack it as it is, straight into two reasonably sized jars.

Strain off the cooled vinegar and pour equal amounts into the two jars. Top 'em both up with vinegar and it is done.

Now all the books say leave it for a fortnight, or a month, or six months. Cobblers. Give it about two days and start getting it down ya.

It is particularly lovely with egg and bacon.

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