

# PAWS Newsletter 2012

There is a lot to report from our 2011 activities, so the newsletter has expanded too. We hope you enjoy it!

PAWS' objectives for 2011 were to **increase veterinary care on Paxos**, continue to **support winter feeding of the island's cats** and **pursue our education programme**. We are delighted to report that all these aims were achieved, despite another financially testing year.

This newsletter covers:

- Vet visits
- Thanks and Recognition to our Volunteers and Supporters
- Rescue Operations
- Education
- Funding and Sponsorship
- Personal Note from Lindsay
- Plans for 2012

## Vet Visits

We again organised two visits, at the beginning and end of the season, according to the Mayor's wishes. Our stalwart volunteers Russell Lyon, with Zoë Tomkinson as veterinary nurse, and James Forbes willingly offered their services. Each spent three weeks working on the island, a 50% increase over 2010. They treated a total of 254 patients, substantially more than the previous year's 186. Of those, 136 cats – both male and female – were sterilised.

Russell and Zoë were the early visitors and, although based in Gaios, successfully organised numerous mobile days around the island. Their charm, hard work and flexibility were greatly appreciated by the locals, if not by all their patients! Alongside the staple diet of cats, both domesticated and feral, other clients included a cockerel lacking libido, two Shetland ponies and a biting wild hare.

The team needed to unravel the mysteries of the newly acquired reconditioned autoclave which, suffering from sea-sickness, refused to work. Zoë's partner James (not to be confused with the Australian vet) excelled himself by overhauling the machine and bringing it back to life. Also, by some unimaginable means, this monstrous piece of equipment was then carted all around the island on away-days and amazingly it and all concerned survived intact! This can only be described as dedication to duty. Linda travelled to Paxos to provide support and backup to the vet team. She also dealt with administrative duties, which included negotiating economical car hire for future visits.



Russell and Zoë on the road at Mongonissi



James and Lindsay's surgery at Loggos

The second visit began at the end of September with James Forbes at the helm. He bravely agreed to have Lindsay as his volunteer vet nurse. Lindsay prepared for this task during the summer by undergoing some training at Vets on the Park in her home town of Cheltenham. She would like to thank Alison Jones and her team for allowing her to do this and being so helpful and instructive.

When the moment of truth came, she was pleasantly surprised how much she enjoyed working with James and loved dealing with all the customers and their animals. They worked predominantly at the surgery in Gaios. Mobile days were also held in Loggos and Lakka, which proved very successful. Excellent working accommodation was kindly provided by Derek & Jenny Dobbs, who were exceptionally generous with their hospitality in Loggos, and by Costas & Emily in Lakka.

James's greatest challenge was a seagull with a broken wing. He made an exceptionally brave effort to repair the damaged wing, using surgical needles borrowed and adapted from the local hospital. Although the bird, by then christened Jake, recovered fully from the operation, his survival was short-lived: he died two days later. Although this was disappointing, PAWS sincerely commends James for attempting such an assignment. James has asked for some off-cut bone pins to be included in the next surgical order so he will be prepared for any further distressed feathered friends!



### **Thanks and Recognition to our Volunteers and Supporters**

Each year as we make more friends on Paxos and interest in PAWS continues to rise, the list of people to thank grows.

First and foremost, sincere thanks to the vets and nurse who continue to work for us – long may they continue to enjoy the Paxos experience!

Thanks to Katerina and Giorgis who provide us with excellent accommodation in Gaios at favourable prices and continue to allow us to use their garden flat as a surgery. They are always extremely welcoming and helpful, and carefully store our equipment safely through the winter.

We would like to thank Pano of Planos Holidays, a keen supporter of PAWS. He gave us a special price for car hire in September and set up our working accommodation in Lakka.

There is now a considerable number of locals motivated by Ray and Suzy who help with winter feeding and fund-raising. A gathering of 40 supporters assembled on Boxing Day 2011 for a sponsored swim at Loggos by eight brave souls, who generated €200 towards winter feeding. The weather was glorious and, as evident from the photo at the end of the newsletter, the day proved to be very enjoyable. We understand the consensus of opinion is that this will become an annual event.

We would like to thank Jim Toots who very kindly built us some new feeding stations during the winter of 2010-11. The ones in Loggos were decorated in the PAWS colours during our September visit and we hope to co-ordinate all of them in 2012.

PAWS received an unexpected proposal from local teacher Ionna Aravantinou. After bringing her pets to the clinic for treatment, Ionna kindly offered us Greek tuition. She was such an inspiring teacher that Lindsay has endeavoured to pursue her studies over the winter months with a view to continuing lessons on her next visit.

### **Rescue Operations**

Sadly this year and in particular during the September visit we had to put a considerable number of cats to sleep. Several of these were abandoned kittens that had been discovered by tourists and locals. We were delighted to find a home for one little female who was about five weeks old and quite robust. She was adopted by Christine and her family from Loggos and – as you can see from the photos – has matured into a real beauty, now called Dissy.



Dissy on entering PAWS' care and relaxing just seven weeks later

Whilst on this subject, PAWS would like to emphasise the importance of neutering in a controlled way so as to prevent kittens being continually dumped. We are respectful of the need to maintain a healthy population of cats on the island but still want to encourage more people to recognise the benefits of sterilisation.

There has been considerable reservation among Paxiots about castration of male cats under a year old because of a suspected link with bladder stone problems. After discussion with our vets and consulting several in the UK including Pete Wedderburn, who writes on veterinary matters in a British national newspaper, it appears there is no scientific evidence to suggest that sterilization of males aged at least four months should cause any such complications. We hope that this research will alleviate people's fears so that more male cats will be brought to the surgery and fewer kittens born to be abandoned.

## **Education**

Following our previous educational presentations at schools we were delighted to organise a learning package to be sent to Paxos from the Greek Animal Welfare Fund (GAWF). One of the local teachers, Sophia, very kindly presented the material to her large class and reported that it had been well received.

We believe it is important to continue instruction on animal welfare and intend to devise more interactive ways of involving Paxos' schoolchildren in our work.

## **Funding and Sponsorship**

Although economic conditions are still gloomy, we are pleased that our sponsors remain supportive of our efforts in Paxos, if not always able to contribute financially.

The Shuman Animal Welfare Trust generously gave us their second contribution of £1750. World Wide Veterinary Service (WWVS) donated £200 towards flight costs and £1000 worth of drugs and supplies.

PAWS needs to raise further funds to underpin its operations in future years. GAWF and the Marchig Animal Welfare Trust have agreed to accept our grant applications in 2012; we hope they will be received favourably. We have researched other organisations that might consider donating to us and will follow these up early in the year.

Lindsay had the unexpected pleasure in Paxos of meeting Hannah Lockett, Senior Director of CV Travel, who seemed delighted with our work and said that her company would carry on supporting us.

Warm thanks go to Ian and Elizabeth Bleasdale, who are donating money to PAWS from sales of the new 2012 edition of their splendid Paxos walking map. They have also organised various fund-raising events on both Paxos and the Isle of Man.

We must thank numerous friends and tourists who have given us individual donations – which are greatly appreciated. A special mention goes to Zoë Tomkinson who not only works for us as a volunteer but also raised £260 for PAWS through a sponsored cycle ride – extraordinary!

Although the cash received through the collection boxes on the island was less than in previous years, we are grateful that so many people still support us. Linda had the idea of thanking those on Paxos who display our boxes, so we designed a fund-raising certificate which proved to be popular.

## **Personal Note from Lindsay**

It is with much sadness that I have to report that Linda Parker has decided to withdraw from her involvement with PAWS in 2012. Linda and I met on holiday in Paxos in 2005 – when PAWS was conceived – and over the past six years have become close friends. There are many memories of bouncing ideas off each other and discussing problems, often over a nice glass of wine or Amaretto after a day's work. Linda is passionate about animals and it has been a privilege and immensely enjoyable experience working with her.

Linda is going to step up her work with Cats Protection in the UK and I wish her every success for the future. I proffer my sincerest thanks for all her hard work and hope that in the years to

come, I can persuade her to collaborate with me again to write the book! I shall continue with PAWS for as long as I am able to.

## Plans for 2012

Three vets' visits have been booked:

- James and Brian McErlean, another Australian vet, for two weeks: 27 April - 10 May
- Russell and Zoë for three weeks: 28 May - 18 June
- James will return for two weeks from 24 September, with Lindsay as vet nurse.

Everyone involved in these plans is greatly looking forward to revisiting Paxos and we trust that their services will be in great demand!

We are hoping that the Mayor will contribute towards the accommodation costs and that WWVS will again help pay for the necessary flights.

PAWS will continue to support winter feeding and expand the education programme.

We shall increase awareness of our work and seek new sponsors to keep us financially viable.

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Please do not hesitate to contact Lindsay if you would like any more information or have any suggestions that will help our cause.



Swimmers for PAWS: Jerome, Phil, Pam, Les, Jeff, Tracey, Sarah and Nigel on 26 December