

ASAP News

Issue 5 - December 2009

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A MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR -

by Julia Brown

Dear Members,

Once again we have survived a busy summer season on Alonnisos and it is time for me to thank all those who have donated time, money and expertise to help the animals on Alonnisos.

Firstly, I would like to extend a big thank you to all our visitors over the course of the summer. It is you who give us the encouragement vital to the success of ASAP – the committee works hard all year, often without much in the way of support from the local authorities, and it is absolutely wonderful to receive comments from visitors to the island. These may be negative, but we often hear ‘the animals here look so much healthier than on other Greek islands we have visited’ – believe me, that makes all the hard work worthwhile. Of course, you also help us in more tangible ways: by your gifts of money; by becoming members and continuing to help us feed and care for the animals of Alonnisos; and by bringing to our attention those animals in need of our care.

So, to you all – THANK YOU from all of us.



Feeding time at Kitty City

In addition we raise money and get support from a number of sources. The Edna Smylie Memorial Fund and its trustees have been unfailing in their support of ASAP: they have been our greatest sponsors and have done an incalculable amount for the animals of Alonnisos, for which we will be forever in their debt. We have just received a donation of pharmaceuticals from the World Veterinary Service: they have given us a considerable amount of spot-on tick and flea treatment for cats and dogs, amounting to the sum of £1517.50. The Friends of the Cat sent us the most wonderful vet earlier in the year – if Anja ever wants to come back to Alonnisos she would be most welcome, but I’m afraid we might never let her leave again. Chris Browne raised 150 euros and Bert Dendy 370 euros through a sponsored swim from Peristera to Steni Vala. A local group organises various events such as bring-and-buy sales, quiz nights and parties and gives much of the proceeds to ASAP.



It's a hard life sometimes



Looking after the feeding stations

This summer we were fortunate enough to again be granted a licence from the Limenarchoio Tameio to run our stall on the harbour front. We are limited in what we can sell, but the stall is manned by a dedicated team of committee members and volunteers (more volunteers are always needed though!) with our Secretary, Annie Green, coordinating events. The PR value of the stall alone cannot be overestimated: it gives us a very visible presence and generates a huge amount of interest. It also gives members of the public a chance to speak to someone if they have any concerns about animals and some valuable suggestions have been made. We feed cats at a number of locations across the island all year round. At each of these sites there are one or more shelters: recently committee members cleaned out these shelters and put in fresh bedding to make comfortable 'homes' during the bad weather which will surely be just around the corner.

An absolutely beautiful, and very lucky, kitten has just been re-homed in Belgium, thanks to a very kind family. ASAP was able to chip and vaccinate the animal and arrange for the 'passport' to allow the animal to travel. Of course, as always there are many negatives. Kittens and puppies are still being dumped on a regular basis. I suppose the saving grace is that now these unfortunate animals are dumped at our feeding stations rather than in the rubbish bins, so at least we can find them easily and quickly and take care of them. We still lose animals, especially the very young ones which have been taken from their mothers much too early, mainly as a result of feline enteritis and influenza. There are still many call-outs for our animal first aid volunteers: although the number of calls varies, the recent tally has been around 30 per month, ie just about every day there is an emergency of some description. ASAP still has a love-hate relationship with the local council: they quite like us feeding the animals, and many council members have called us out to help their own animals, but only up to a point! As soon as it is felt that cats in a given area start to have too high a profile we are told to take them somewhere else – and as cats are so territorial this really doesn't work!



Thank you for the food!!



Cats on houses

I believe we need to enter into a 'cooperation' with the local authorities: we will continue to look after the animals and bring veterinary surgeons to the island but they also need to fulfil their obligations in instigating a micro-chipping programme for dogs, as stipulated by law, and cracking down on poisoning and those who put noxious substances down to indiscriminately kill animals. Our President is the island's doctor: on his surgery door there is a notice in Greek which, in translation, reads "about those who poison animals: we suggest that they see a psychiatrist, since their actions reveal they are mentally ill and therefore dangerous not only to animals but to people as well". That says it all really!

Anyway, that's where we are at the moment, continuing to do our very best for the animals on Alonnisos. It's hard work but by no means all one-way traffic: in the process of caring for the animals we have known great joy (tempered with despair, of course) and a huge sense of achievement when an animal is saved, made healthy or re-homed. And of course, we have met you all – our loyal members. We wish you a very happy festive season and the best of everything in 2010.

Jonathon Livingston Seagull -

by Jane Valentine



Jonathon showing who is boss

Four years ago when we arrived on Alonnisos we brought with us our small terrier, Nancy. For a few short weeks we were a one dog family. Then we took delivery of a job lot of five cats from the old village. Our friends and family in England thought we were a little crazy – six animals! What they think of us now is anyone's guess – two dogs, 14 cats, 20 hens, a couple of cockerels and two geese at the last count. Apart from the hens, all rescue animals. And now we have a new addition to the menagerie, a young herring gull. Jonathon was at a holiday complex here and had had all his wing feathers cut off so was unable to fly. Why this terrible thing happened to him we don't know, but unable to fly and with his food source about to disappear when the complex shut for the season his future was uncertain. We managed to get him into a cat basket, brought him back to our garden and introduced him to fresh fish which was obviously very welcome after a diet of pasta and pizza.

A charity in England, which cares for seagulls, has been very helpful and has given us lots of advice on how to care for him. His wing feathers should grow back in the spring and then, hopefully, he will fly off and start a new life. He has adapted to living here well and likes hanging out with the hens and geese. Feeding time can be a challenge as he is surrounded by various cats all keen on getting fish, but he's become very adept at getting to it first. Any cat who gets too near runs the risk of a sharp peck that discourages all but the brave or foolhardy. Jonathon is really smart and it's fascinating watching him play with bits and pieces that he finds, and hiding them if they are particularly interesting. He's also learnt how to get in through the cat flap! A seagull in the garden was never part of our plans but we are very fond of him and hope that he can overcome such a bad start in life and one day fly as well as his namesake.

ASAP stall - summer 2009 -

by Annie Green (Secretary)

After a rather late start the Stall opened at the excellent site in the Port at Patitiri. There were several new items which sold reasonably quickly and the old stock polo shirts, which were reduced, were very popular.

We had a resident cat called "Dribbler", for obvious reasons, who soon became known as the "ASAP Dribbler" as he spent his days in the shade of the stall and, being a friendly cat, had a lot of attention from anyone visiting the stall.



ASAP stall in Patitiri

This year we covered the stall in information regarding care and feeding of the animals of Alonnisos and this produced a lot of interest even when closed.

Generally the sale of goods was slow, but people were very generous in putting donations in the Donations Bucket which is always prominent when the stall is open. Also, quite a few people asked to become members of ASAP.

WE DESPERATELY NEED volunteers to help man the stall. This can be for one or two hours a day, at a time convenient to the volunteer, though between 11 a.m. and 2 p.m. and the early evenings are when most people are about.

We have to have a licence to sell goods on the stall and this year ASAP was lucky enough to have the support of an Independent Fund Raising Group who reimbursed ASAP the full Licence fee. They also have donated money towards the Veterinary bills and the purchase of one or two items needed by ASAP. In all the amount they have donated is in excess of €2500. The stall has also been manned by several members of that Group, which has helped a great deal towards my aim of having the stall open every day.

PLEASE let us know if you are in any way able to help with what has been the best Fundraiser run by ASAP.

VETERINARY VISIT OCTOBER 2009 -

by Julia Brown (Chairperson)

On the weekend of October 10th and 11th ASAP sponsored a visit by our almost resident vet George Michail. Once again Hellenic Seaways conspired against us: Flying Cat 6 broke down (yet again) earlier in the week and poor George had to come on the ferry. Bad news for him, because the trip took 5 hours instead of 3, and bad news for us as it meant that his time here was more limited than usual and even more important that we work really hard to get as much done as possible.

Scheduling consultations and surgery for pet owners is always difficult as emergencies crop up, some procedures take longer than usual and times are not always as strictly adhered to as one might wish.



Julia at Kitty city

House calls have to be factored in and there is always the odd 'surprise'. So, with only 24 hours on the island (and we graciously allowed George to use some of this to sleep) it was all systems go. I met George from the ferry and within 1 minute of being on Alonnisos his 'phone was ringing – a cat seen during a previous visit required another consultation (according to the cat's owner). We stopped off on the way to the surgery to collect the cat and, before getting to the village, fielded another 2 calls.

Bearing in mind that George didn't get his green pinny on until 14:30, he achieved a huge amount that afternoon. Before bad light stopped play (and there was still a house call to fit in after this) George had done 1 bitch spay and had neutered 8 female cats. In addition to the surgery he had extracted a whole load of grass seeds from the ears of a cocker spaniel, removed a growth from a dog's face, removed a growth from a cat's leg, checked out a poorly kitten, examined a dog suffering from convulsions and cleaned and stitched a horrific wound on a dog that had been attacked by a much larger animal.

We finally let him off for the evening with instructions for an early night and an 08:30 start the following day. On Sunday morning there were 4 more cats for sterilisation (more feral cats were lined up but time just did not allow), 4 more animal consults, a blood sample taken from a dog and a micro-chipping. There was just time for a final doggy-related house call before getting George back to the port for another 5 hour journey back to Volos.

A very full weekend, one which could not have been achieved without a great deal of time and effort on behalf of ASAP members. I would like to thank especially Lyn and Nik Ivison for providing surgery space and a bed for George for the night, Guy Routh for giving up his entire weekend to assist with the surgery and Dinah Sinclair for collecting cats and then delivering them back to their various homes. Hopefully George will come back to Alonnisos soon, but not until some time after the birth of his third child: our collective best wishes to George and his wife and a big thank-you for the invaluable work he does for ASAP.

Charity Pub day November 2009 -

by Mike Holmes

On 28th November, between 2pm in the afternoon and 8pm in the evening, a charity pub day was arranged at Annie and Les Green's villa in Votsi. For the entry fee of 5 Euros, food was supplied and many typical pub games were on offer. A fine table of food was available, supplied by Annie, and other committee members, that defied the best efforts to finish. Beer and wine was priced at 1 Euro per drink. Games included darts, shove halfpenny, hoop la and other fund raising games such as tossing Euro coins towards a bottle of Whisky, the closest winning. The weather played ball with a bright day for the event, and after a fun day for all, 310 Euros was raised for the charity. A big thank you to the organisers and all who attended to make it a successful day.



Merry Christmas
And a Happy 2010
From all the animals on
Alonissos