

My Paper

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200 animals rescued, thanks to new NGO

By Sia Ling Xin

IN JUST four months, the first non-governmental wildlife-rescue centre here has saved more than 200 wild animals from illegal trade and harm. This is four times as many as the number saved in the same period in 2008, before the Wildlife Rescue Centre opened in August last year.

Ms Amy Corrigan, the director of education and cruelty-free living campaigns of Animal Concerns Research and Education Society (Acres), which runs the centre, said: "This is because the public know that if they find a wild animal in need of help, they can call us and we have the capacity to look after it."

After a three-month quarantine and with a microchip embedded for future identification, animals native to Singapore have been released into the wild with help from the National Parks Board.

Arrangements are being made to send those that do not originate here back to their native countries.

Acres is liaising with animal sanctuaries in India to send back star tortoises, one of the most common exotic animals rescued. Once nursed back to health, endangered species are also released.

The centre, which takes in only reptiles and amphibians, will take in mammals once it is fully ready.

Its completion has been delayed by shoddy construction work. After a foul stench necessitated soil tests two years ago, the centre found out in March 2008 that its animal enclosures were sitting on 1.5 ha of rotting wood chips, rendering them unstable.

Acres has since taken the contractor to court, and is hoping for compensation that will help fund the re-building of the enclosures.

Ms Corrigan said: "If someone gave us \$4 million tomorrow, we can get the whole centre up in about six months...but we're still waiting for the verdict."

Funding is also an ongoing challenge, she said. Acres depends on donations from the public for the centre's operation costs of \$30,000 a month.

A presentation on the centre will be featured in the Asia for Animals conference, the largest gathering of international animal-protection activists in an Asian country, which opens tomorrow.

In all, 390 delegates from 26 countries will attend the five-day conference, which will focus on developing and implementing concrete long-term solutions to animal-protection and cruelty problems.