



Ottawa-Carleton Wildlife Centre

Newsletter Fall 2011

Times are Changing for Wildlife



You see, one of the most important things to managing wildlife has nothing to do with wildlife at all. It's managing people!

Neil A. Waer, Wildlife Biologist

This is a view that is increasingly recognized and supported in the discussion on sustainability. So while, in many ways, things have never been worse for wildlife, we believe that is about to change.

It is because of the paradigm shift in our realization that in nature, 'everything is connected to everything else'. We need to understand and respect wildlife a lot more and manage it a lot less.

Perhaps it is because our efforts in managing wildlife has been directed by politics rather than independent science, that it has been for the benefit of narrow special interest groups and not the public at large and, most important, has resulted in some horrific outcomes for wildlife and humans as well.

Take, for example, the province of Saskatchewan that placed a bounty on coyotes, resulting in 71,000 being shot. It was no surprise that this caused an explosion in the rodent population, leading the province to then prepare to poison millions of Richardson ground squirrels, compounding even further the potential long-term environmental damage.

The management of wildlife in Canada and in North America has been done primarily for the benefit of sport hunting interests. So, it focuses on game species. But the reliance by government agencies on revenue from these sources has also meant that over-hunting has occurred, leading to the decline in one species and a serious, cascading impact on the rest of the eco-system.

But, thanks to increasing public awareness and concern about the environment, old views are being challenged and people are lending their voices in strong support of the preservation of wildlife and wildlife habitat.

Coalitions are being formed and individuals are writing letters, talking to their elected representatives and attending discussions to learn more about issues and becoming actively involved in having a say.

Nothing demonstrates this more than the hundreds of people that wrote challenging the coyote killing contests in Ontario last winter. Just as many of these people lived in rural areas as in cities and they came from all across Ontario.

The majority stressed a desire to see biodiversity preserved and their right to enjoy nature protected. A number were farmers who said that they had long coexisted with wildlife and were much more concerned about coyote hunters than coyotes. The letters dispute the view that there is a rural/urban divide on wildlife issues.

Books and conferences are being devoted to the subject of wildlife and our relationship with nature. The academic world, not known for being at the front of many parades, is writing about the substantial eco-system benefits provided by wild species and is establishing, if just in the early stages, new fields such as "*reconciliation ecology*", an attempt to realign our relationship with other living things.

So, in spite of the challenges facing wildlife, we remain optimistic that times are a changing for the better.

Editorial

Natural Capital



If wild spaces are not valued, it goes without saying that wild species are not likely to be valued either.

Paul Renaud, a spokesperson for the coalition to preserve the South March Highlands in Ottawa, has written an exceptionally insightful and thought-provoking article "No Vacancy". It explores the major disconnects between traditional indigenous and colonial viewpoints with respect to land use.

Paul writes "that while the colonial mindset sees a natural area as "empty" and "undeveloped", the indigenous mindset sees a natural area as "full" and "rich" in life. Inherent is the sustainable assumption that all life is interconnected within a great cycle of interdependency."

The article examines the concept of natural capital and the fact that highly bio-diverse areas, like the South March Highlands, that are more inter-dependent and have a richer set of natural functions give rise to more natural capital.

"Natural capital refers to natural ecosystems as renewable economic assets that provide resources and ongoing value-added services of considerable value. These benefits include the storage of flood waters by lakes and wetlands, water capture and filtration by forested watersheds, carbon sequestering by trees, climate regulation from vegetation, oxygen production by plants, pollination services of insects, seed distribution by birds and other wildlife, et cetera", Paul states.

While we have thus far failed to recognize the value of natural lands, Paul shares a little of our guarded optimism for the future in his comment that "a modern sustainability mindset also understands that we are not separate from the environment and that we exist within it. We understand that our economic interests, as well as our social, cultural and spiritual interests, also all exist within a shared environmental context".

We have much to learn from our First Nations. For those interested in the full article, you can request a copy at paul@renaud.ca.

Donna DuBreuil
President, OCWC

Environmental Champions

We would like you to meet, from time to time, some of the people we work with that have contributed to a better understanding and appreciation of wildlife.



Barry Kent MacKay Artist, Author, Advocate

Barry Kent MacKay has spent a lifetime working to protect animals and the environment. He is also a passionate artist and since a young boy captured the beauty of hundreds of birds on canvases that decorate his home and homes of many others, and have illustrated numerous books, magazines and scientific journals.

In 1961, he and his mother began rehabilitating birds injured by building windows, the precursor to the Fatal Light Awareness Programme. For close to a decade, they saved thousands of lives.

For 25 years, Barry authored Nature Trail, a weekly column in the Toronto Star. As

a result of his columns, hunting is banned in national parks across the country.

Barry is the Canadian representative for Born Free USA. He is a Board Member of Animal Alliance of Canada and Zoo-check Canada and General Manager for the Animal Alliance Environment Voters Party of Canada.

Self-taught, Barry has invaluable encyclopaedic knowledge about animals and plants around the world. In this capacity, he works with many groups and individuals to prevent and non-lethally resolve human wildlife conflicts.

Barry's lifetime commitment to making a better world for animals should inspire the rest of us to do the same. Thank you Barry.



Ryan Kelson (and Lancelot) Graphic Designer, Artist, Animal Lover

Notice a more professional look for the OCWC's newsletter these last few years? That's thanks to Ryan Kelson, an Ottawa graphic designer who shares the Centre's passion for protecting wildlife habitat and promoting environmental sustainability.

The New Brunswick native has come a long way since his days working as a teenager at a 100-year-old fish plant processing thousands of sardines daily. At age 19, he headed for the big city of Toronto before later settling in Ottawa.

Now 33, Ryan has had a varied career—working as a telemarketer, a massage therapist and online retailer before

launching his own graphic design business. He is also an artist and is currently working with his business partner to create glass mosaics which they hope to begin showing at exhibitions soon.

When it comes to his business dealings, Ryan describes himself as "very picky" when deciding which clients to accept. "It has to fit with my ethical beliefs, which is why I am happy to work with the Wildlife Centre."

Ryan says he also doesn't hesitate to react when he sees an animal in distress. "A squirrel fell into our pool once and couldn't get out. I helped him out with a net. Needless to say, he was very grateful." And, so too are we grateful to Ryan.

Skunk Alley



By Kate MacNeil

This is a funny story, in that it was an animal rescue I was involved with while on vacation, much to my family's delight!

We were camping with friends around the Canada Day long weekend. We were driving to the fireworks when my father piped up, "oh, that little skunk I saw earlier is still there." My head snapped up, "what little skunk, stop the car!" I then started with a myriad of questions, when did they first see it? Was there a mother around? Why did no one tell me? My poor father must have felt like he was being interrogated.

Upon closer examination the skunk looked very small, not much longer than the flat of my hand. I had major concerns about this little guy, mom should really be close by. After some consideration we decided to head to the fireworks and come back and check on him afterwards. This would also give us time to try to find a box and some towels to catch the little guy.

Well, the fireworks were beautiful, but all I could think about was the little skunk. I was making wishes on the stars, I can tell you my wish since it did not come true. I wished mom would come back.

We returned to find the little skunk pretty much where we left him. He was foraging with his nose in the grass. It looked like he was trying to find an imaginary burrow to crawl into. So the late night rescue began.

He was pretty easy to catch and gave only a little squirt. We brought him to a friend's garage and set him up with some wet cat food, and fruit. It was the best we could do at 11:30 at night. We returned to our campsite, and even after a shower, I must admit I was making the tent smell a bit funky! Oh well, if my friends and family weren't use to me by now they never would be!

The next morning I was able to get some esbilac and do an examination of the little guy. He was in ok shape but clearly had been without mom. He was very thin and dehydrated.

Then it hit me, what was I going to do with a baby skunk on vacation? Then an even bigger worry hit me, he would have siblings, a litter of one would be unlikely! I got on the phone and started making some calls. I had a few leads, but ended up with a lot of maybes.

That night I went back with my boxes and towels to check for more orphans. About 200 feet from where I found the first skunk, there were two tiny bums looking back from a small hedge. They had their heads in the bushes, but their bums were sticking out. This is an image that will forever be in my mind.

We got them contained and combed the area, checking in shrubs and ditches for more. Then another appeared, so we contained him. Now out of boxes, we went back to my friend's garage. Luckily they had an old dog crate that made a great temporary cage. Over the next two days, we had rescued 5 skunks.

I was concerned that if I could not find a person to care for one skunk, then 5 would be out of the question. Luckily there are other animal people just as crazy as us, and someone could do the care. We brought the skunks along with food and a donation.

We still had a couple days before we headed home, and even though my family urged me not to go back to 'skunk alley' I was still worried there may be others. A quick drive by proved me right, there were three more in the grass, almost as if they were waiting for us. This made a grand total of 8 babies. Thankfully the care giver was able to care for all of them, so back we went with more food, more skunks and another donation.

At the end of the summer I was back visiting my friends and I stopped by to see the skunks. They were big and their fur was very shiny. My visit coincided with their last round of vaccinations so I was more than happy to help. By this stage the skunks are bigger and warier, so you really have to be quiet and careful or you may get sprayed. I am happy to report that not one of them sprayed us! Although I did not see their release, I was told it went well. And to this day when I am in the area I avoid 'skunk alley'.

Living with Wildlife Conference



Thanks to the initiative of Lesley Fox and her colleagues at the Association for the Protection of Fur-Bearing Animals from Burnaby, BC, Canada's first 'Living with Wildlife' Conference was held in Toronto this September.

The Ottawa-Carleton Wildlife Centre was pleased to have been asked to be one of the speakers.

The Conference brought together experts on wildlife issues from the United States and Canada as well as members of the public concerned about wildlife. Attendees included wildlife advocates, wildlife rehabilitators, municipalities and fur industry workers, although the latter were in the minority, as the

emphasis was on non-lethal conflict solutions.

It was a lively and engaging conference that covered a lot of different topics, with an over-arching theme of coexistence. Adrian Nelson, the director of communications for the association, set the tone in his comments on the out dated ways we deal with wildlife and the need for a new relationship with other species.

Liz White of Animal Alliance and Environment Voters Party gave a stirring account of the long and sorry history of wildlife concerns being directed in this country by politics not science and the course we have to take to change this.

Other speakers included Brad Gates who spoke on Community Organized Wildlife Management, a plan based on neighbours sharing observations and conflict prevention tips.

AnnaMaria Valastro, head of the Peaceful Parks Coalition, is dedicated to preserving Ontario's wild spaces. She talked about her organization's fight against

'politically motivated' culls of wildlife and gave a poignant personal account of the government's slaughter of thousands of cormorants.

Sherri Tippie, President of Wildlife 2000 in Colorado gave a well-informed and entertaining talk on beavers, their significant contribution to the aquatic challenges facing the arid west.

Michael Callaghan, owner of Beaver Solutions LLC, a Massachusetts-based company, demonstrated the innovative flow device technology that has allowed him to humanely solve over 750 beaver-related flooding problems. Working mainly with municipalities, he has developed a DVD which is also helping people as well as government agencies across North America coexist with beavers.

Christine Schadler is a Wild Canid Ecologist and the New England representative for Project Coyote, a national group promoting coexistence with coyotes.

A film on the American Coyote and an evening Strategy Session heard excellent suggestions for building on the foundation of this successful conference.

OCWC Shares its Expertise at National Conference



By Kate MacNeil

Regardless of the industry you work in, every few years it seems there are new and evolving concepts. The work we do at the Wildlife Centre is no different and terms like coexisting, living with wildlife and reconciliation ecology are becoming commonly used terms in our work.

Unfortunately, it seems sometimes these ideas are great on paper, but do not seem

to move beyond that into the implementation stage. I think this is one of the reasons we decided attending and presenting at the Living with Wildlife 2011 was so important. As a small organization anything that means more time and money is very carefully considered. But an opportunity to hear other organizations and individuals that were walking the walk as well as to share our experiences was simply too good to pass up.

Our presentation was entitled 'Mobilizing the Public and Involving Government'. It looked at what our Centre has found to be the key components in helping people view wildlife in a more positive light. Emphasis on working together, whether it is organizations or building constituencies among the public is key to having a stronger voice with government on wildlife issues. It is also important to

move beyond an only reactive state and look at the cause and effect and to plan strategies that are proactive. We also talked about the importance of putting energy and resources where they will have the greatest impact.

We shared lessons learned from pilot projects the Centre has undertaken that have been successful such as the Graham Creek Community Initiative as well as the Coyote Campaign. We also talked about the critical role our Centre has been playing as a connector or broker between groups such as government and business and individuals and communities to help move the agenda forward.

The conference did not disappoint, it was clear that we were among many people who were or wanted to implement positive change for wildlife.

Giving Wildlife a Voice



Children taking a break from snowshoeing around the trails at the Wildlife Centre

Our Education programs continue to be as diverse as ever. It can be summed up by never wanting to miss an opportunity to give wildlife a voice.

We were talking the other day about some of our earlier programs and how they have evolved into the work we are doing today. As an organization we are almost 25 years old and one of the first tools we had was the hotline service in which residents would call with their wildlife conflict. Each year we would deal with thousands of calls.

In 2003 we discontinued our hotline and replaced it with an extensive website, packed with detailed advice on how residents could co-exist with wildlife. We always believed that urban wildlife were a great opportunity to get people, particularly us city dwellers, engaged in wildlife and nature. We also felt that if we cannot help people appreciate animals they share their spaces with and may actually see, then it would be unlikely they would be concerned with issues they are removed from like biodiversity preservation and ecosystem health.

Although our programs have changed, this is still our underlying philosophy when delivering our programs. Here are some of the things we have been busy with this year:

- Presentations were given to 1100 students in 11 schools through 27 presentations.
- On-Site Nature Discovery workshops were held at the Wildlife Centre for 7 youth groups totaling 200 children.
- Developed and gave presentations on coexisting with wildlife to Fletcher Wildlife Garden volunteers, Macoun Field Club, Glens Community Association AGM, City of Ottawa – Stormwater Management group, City of Ottawa Wildlife Management Strategy and Living With Wildlife Conference.
- Participated in the South March Highland's Bioblitz.
- Worked as a member of the Greenbelt Coalition on a variety of projects.
- Wrote weekly columns on Getting to Know Wildlife in EMC regional newspaper.



Photo courtesy of Michael Davies

Coyotes 101

One of the toughest jobs the Centre faces is dispelling myths about animals that are often unfairly maligned by sensationalized media or special interests such as sport hunting.

Fortunately, there are individuals in the media and in the community that are assisting us in getting out a balanced and realistic view of wildlife.

Agnes Warda is the president of the Glens Community Association. She is a competent, fair and thorough individual who always does her homework on issues. When some homeowners expressed concern about the safety issues involved in a coyote that had been spotted in the neighbourhood, she called the Centre for information.

Agnes put us in touch with the individuals who had the concerns but went further when she decided that the larger Glens community, surrounded by natural habitat with an abundance of wildlife, could benefit from learning more about coyotes and practical ways to avoid conflicts.

The Centre was invited to give a presentation on 'Living with Coyotes' for the Association's AGM last June. Well attended by over 100 members, it was an excellent opportunity to tell people more about the Eastern Coyote and the contribution it makes as a keystone species to keeping other wild species in check and the steps people could take to easily co-exist with coyotes.

The objective was to allay irrational fears and have the community see the coyote as a positive contributor to a healthy eco-system. We knew we had achieved the objective when the first question from the audience after the talk was "if the coyote is so smart, how come he's always outwitted by the road runner?"

The role of the Media

A sensational story sells newspapers but it shouldn't be at the expense of encouraging the persecution of any animal.

When Michael Howie, a reporter with Oakville Today, a Metroland Media Group newspaper, contacted us during the controversial coyote killing contests in Ontario, we had concerns as to what angle he would take. But we were reassured by his good questions and his request for knowledgeable scientific sources to talk to about coyotes.

We were delighted when some weeks later Michael published an excellent article on coyotes. It was an intelligent, well-researched and insightful look at wildlife and our relationship with the natural world.

Michael and Agnes, in their respective roles, not only leave their community better informed but infinitely more comfortable with the world and our place in it.

Ontario Liberal Party Commits to Fixing Wildlife Rehabilitation Crisis



People's long-standing frustration over the loss of wildlife rehabilitation services in Ontario used the recent provin-

cial election to express their anger and a demand for change.

Letters from almost two thousand people urged Party Leaders to demonstrate moral leadership by making a commitment to change the policies of Ministry of Natural Resources bureaucrats who deem it acceptable for orphaned baby animals to suffer and die when they tell the public *"leave the animal there and let nature take its course"*.

Liz White, spokesperson for the Ontario Wildlife Coalition, said *"People across the province want to see humane help for wildlife. Many go to extraordinary lengths to find help for animals in distress. They expect the Ontario government to provide a legislative framework that supports compassionate and progressive community-based programs"*.

It is the 15-kilometer release restriction for orphaned wildlife that represents the most significant barrier to responsible wildlife rehabilitation in Ontario. Primarily, because it eliminates the transitional care that is essential for many species of mammals if the animal is to be given the best chance of survival.

The 15-kilometer release restriction has eliminated well over half the rehabilitators who formerly provided this service in Ontario. As one former wildlife rehabilitator wrote, *"I decided not to renew my Authorization. I refuse to compromise my integrity by placing myself in a position that would require me to lie in order to provide responsible care. And I refuse to provide substandard care. Manipulating the books minimizes the issue and sends out the message that everything is okay – it is not."*

Liberals Promise Change

In response to letters from people across the province to Party Leaders, along with a survey conducted by the Ontario Wildlife Coalition to all candidates, we are encouraged by the following commitments of the Liberal Party and the New Democratic Party. We are, however, baffled and discouraged by the Ontario Progressive Conservative Party's position which makes no mention of wildlife rehabilitation:

Ontario Liberal Party: Regarding the 15-kilometer release restriction – we will review this policy, and seek to resolve this issue directly with wildlife rehabilitators.

We will implement a centralized and transparent custodial authorization process to help ensure equitable treatment of wildlife rehabilitators and the consistent application of standards across the province. We will also ensure that wildlife rehabilitators' redress is commensurate with other license holders under the Fish and Wildlife Conservation Act.

In addition, we will enhance programs that encourage wildlife rehabilitators to seek authorization in Ontario, and promote wildlife rehabilitation as a valuable voluntary resource in the province.

Ontario New Democratic Party:

If elected, Ontario's NDP will revisit the counterproductive 15 km. animal release restriction, explore the establishment of a custodial authorization process that ensures equitable treatment of wildlife rehabilitators across the province, and work to ensure that Wildlife Custodial Authorization holders are granted the same rights as granted to license holders under the Fish and Wildlife Conservation Act and Regulations.

Progressive Conservative Party:

Hunting, fishing and trapping have been at the heart of our lives in this province since before Canada was founded. A Tim Hudak government will work to return the MNR to its core mandate of management, protection, and promotion of our natural heritage. We will ensure 100% of hunting and fishing licence revenue is dedicated to conservation and we'll give hunters and anglers a say in how those funds are spent.

Summary

After the loss of so many wildlife rehabilitators in Ontario, thousands of healthy baby animals having to be euthanized or left to die each year and an increasingly frustrated public with the lack of humane help, it is heartening that the new Liberal government is preparing to change this. The Ontario Wildlife Coalition will be working hard to ensure this happens before next spring's wildlife birthing season. We will be sure to keep you posted on results.

HIVA Helps Centre Make a Difference for Wildlife



The Centre is pleased to recognize the HIVA Environmental Fund for supporting our initiative to Change Attitudes and Implement Progressive Policies for Wildlife, with a \$3,000 grant this past spring.

The overall goal of the project is to change attitudes and approaches to be more sustainable and wildlife friendly. It takes a bottom-up approach by encouraging and directly assisting individuals and communities to implement on-the-ground actions as well as a top-down approach in working with the media, businesses, and governments.

The HIVA Environmental Fund was established in 2002 in memory of Hala and Ivan Fedun as a legacy to their love of nature. HIVA support registered environmental charities in Ontario whose action-oriented projects focus on habitat and species preservation.

Agriculture-Wildlife Conflict Strategy Bad for Wildlife and Taxpayers



There is grave concern about the Agriculture-Wildlife Conflict Strategy that was approved this past summer.

With substantially increased financial compensation to farmers for livestock loss, more wildlife species added to the list for which compensation will now be paid, a decision-making committee made up almost entirely of agriculture and hunting interests and no details on education or conflict prevention measures, the concern is understandable.

It is widely felt that compensation must be tied to conflict prevention as an incentive for farmers to protect their animals. Otherwise, ever-increasing compensation demands will become the norm with greater reliance on these payments by producers, more unwarranted vilification of wildlife to justify increased compensation, escalating costs to taxpayers and more criticism from the public who value wildlife.

There are very legitimate concerns about the direction of the Agriculture-Wildlife Conflict Strategy:

Lack of Prevention and Oversight

Not only is there little mention of conflict prevention in awarding compensation but farmers are no longer required to even submit an affidavit supporting a compensation claim.

Also, surprisingly, a recommendation was turned down that there be mandatory workshops on prevention methods for farmers

who were repeat compensation claimants. Just where is the accountability for the spending of public monies?

It had been strongly urged that guard dogs be added to the list of animals for which compensation be paid in the case of loss. That this was rejected shows how little emphasis is being placed on conflict prevention.

Many rural residents, from first-hand observation, report that the compensation system needs much better oversight. Their concerns range from the lack of an independent evaluation system, i.e. farmers are evaluating the losses of other farmers in the community, dead livestock is being left in fields as bait to attract coyotes and thus be eligible for a claim and photographs of dead livestock are no longer required to be submitted as part of a claim.

Some of these residents point to the fact that coyote predation is greatly exaggerated over that of dogs which they say are frequently the culprit. They state the bias is because the municipality, which manages the evaluation system, bears the cost if it happens to be a dog but if it's a coyote, compensation falls to the province.

All Wildlife Now Under Attack

One of the most concerning aspects of the new strategy is the significant expansion to the list of wildlife species for which predation compensation can now be claimed. Not only will it mean that almost all wildlife will be considered to be "pests" to be removed but the inclusion of many of the species listed makes absolutely no sense. Elk, for example, are herbivores and turkey vultures feed on carrion.

Public Ignored

It was amid the controversial coyote killing contests that many wildlife organizations first learned about the proposed Agriculture-Wildlife Conflict Strategy. While it had been posted, as required by law on the Environmental Bill of Rights Registry for public

comment, there had been no effort made to make the general public aware of it.

This is shown by the fact that the only submissions received were from agriculture interests until environmental groups found out about it, just a few weeks before the comment deadline period, and informed the wider public.

It provoked a significant public response. Over 70% of the 244 organizations and individuals that submitted comments were opposed to the strategy.

Their submissions urged that the government finally stand behind its commitment to protecting biodiversity, stop the ill-informed persecution of individual species and ensure that the Agriculture-Wildlife Conflict Working Group include wildlife and environmental representatives, not just agriculture and hunting interests. After all, all Ontario residents have an interest in wildlife.

Unfortunately, the government has chosen to ignore the views of the majority of Ontarians who responded. You can review the decision on the regulation changes as well as all the comments submitted at <http://www.ebr.gov.on.ca/ERS-WEB-External/searchNotice.do>.

The outcome of the strategy together with the views expressed by some in the agricultural community, "we view birds as rats with wings" in these comments provoke a deep sense of concern about the future for biodiversity protection in Ontario.

A war between agriculture and the public will not serve anyone's interests. Farmers' markets, community gardens and farm tourism put people in closer touch with their food sources. All of which is good as well as builds a critical economic and political support base for agriculture. But, as one individual put it, *"if the price of lamb is the mindless destruction of coyotes or any wild species, then the price is too high for me"*.

The government needs to step in to ensure that there is balanced representation on the Agriculture-Wildlife Conflict Working Group so that *"Grown in Ontario"* doesn't become the death knell for wildlife.

Getting to Know Wildlife – One Animal at a Time



Much of the work we currently do at the Ottawa-Carleton Wildlife Centre is aimed at getting people interested in wildlife. Last year, thanks to our weekly column, 'Living with Wildlife' in the EMC we showcased some interesting facts about local wild species and tips on how to better coexist. This year we changed the approach to focus on individual animals we had cared for during our rehabilitation days to help people develop an appreciation for their special qualities. This year's series is entitled 'Getting to Know Wildlife' and here is a sample article:



A 4 week old little female mink arrived at the Centre and like many other young animals she was weak and lethargic. She was very dehydrated and had a few fleas and ticks but otherwise seemed okay. We gave sub-Q fluids and within two days she was moving at lightning speed.

Mink are members of the weasel family, an adult weights around 1.5-3 lbs. Their diet consists of rodents, frogs, fish and birds. With a diet like that, it was not surprising that our new friend had sharp, tiny white teeth. She would happily bite and lick at the feeding syringe as if she had not eaten for days. Although she loved to eat her formula, she was not a fan of getting her face washed afterwards and she would make all kinds of squeaking noises. She sounded like a toy.

Soon it was time for her to move to a large cage in the library. We placed a variety of toys, sticks and plastic tubing in her cage to keep her busy, and boy did it work. She did not stop! One of her favourite moves was swinging like Tarzan on the stuffed toys hanging in her

cage. Her other favourite manoeuvre was the fireman roll. She would knock down a stick so it was on a 45 degree angle. She would then climb up the cage, jump onto the top of the stick, roll herself into a ring like a donut and slide down.

I had read years before that weasels moved like water flowing over rocks and that trying to catch one was like trying to catch mercury. I am old enough to remember breaking the glass thermometer and catching the mercury between two pieces of paper. Catching this little mink was indeed like trying to catch mercury! We would catch her to weigh her and give her cage a thorough cleaning and staff would emerge sweating and smelling from the squirt of musk they received.

For the rest of the summer we enjoyed her impressive acrobatic routines and when she was released back into the wild she bounded away with all the energy and curiosity she normally demonstrated.

Too often we extol the virtues of 'exotic' wildlife in other countries while taking for granted and sometimes even showing disdain for those animals that live in our own backyard. Maybe this is just part of our human tendency to not place value on what we have already.

But what we find is that often when people come to know more about local wildlife the more they appreciate them and find them every bit as fascinating as those found in a tropical rainforest. Plus, urban wildlife shows a resilience and adaptability that is needed to live with us.

When we did rehabilitation we found it was the individual animal that people were able to connect with. This makes sense when you think of it, a population of a species, or a concept about biodiversity does not sound very interesting to many people, but a story of a fox that overcame being hit by a car and needing to have a hind leg amputated is.

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For good...forever Le bien...toujours



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