



# Ottawa-Carleton Wildlife Centre

SERVING THE COMMUNITY FOR OVER 25 YEARS

## Getting to Change

*“The secret of change is to focus all of your energy, not on fighting the old, but on building the new.” Socrates*

Change is difficult. But, even more difficult is fighting the resistance to change.

However, for those of us who have spent decades pushing for more progressive practices with regards to wildlife, there is agreement there are some encouraging signs that things are changing for the better.

This might come as a surprise given the fact that coyotes are still hunted year-round, even during the birthing season when they have newborn pups. Or, that a spring bear hunt reintroduced by the Ontario government last year relies on food bait to attract and kill adult bears just coming out of hibernation, leaving small dependent cubs to starve to death. Or, that moose calves, born in May or June can be shot in September or October.

But these are provincial policies and, as we all know, this level of government is pretty removed from the public and more likely to be influenced by special interests in maintaining the status quo. Never mind that the public is increasingly critical of these archaic practices.

### Change is Happening at Local Levels

Where there is encouragement is at the municipal level of government

where we are beginning to see new wildlife policies that promote coexistence through education and awareness and where wildlife are finally being considered within the development planning process.

Oakville has implemented a wildlife strategy that is intended to reduce conflict situations, conserve biodiversity, and educate staff and the public on living with wildlife. It has introduced a wildlife education and outreach program, partnered with community organizations in improving corridors and habitat and taken the lead on a road ecology strategy.

London, Ontario is developing modern management practices for coexisting with species such as beavers and nearby communities are following this lead in considering more progressive strategies. The Hamilton Conservation Authority is also exploring up-to-date solutions for coexisting with wildlife.

The City of Ottawa, working with community organizations, has developed educational materials on wildlife for local schools, established a Wildlife Speaker Series and produced a draft Wildlife Construction Protocol (see page 2) to reduce the harm that comes to wildlife during the construction process.



*Photo courtesy of Vera Shaw. See story on page 7.*

Change is not obtained by government decree. It is happening because people are working together to make their communities more hospitable for wildlife. Using evidence-based facts, they are effectively presenting the case for environmentally-beneficial, cost-effective and humane solutions to coexisting with wildlife.

While we will continue to strongly urge the province to adopt more socially-acceptable policies that reflect the majority of Ontarians' view of wildlife, we are confident that the progressive changes we are seeing within local communities throughout Ontario and beyond will continue to be a *'product of the people'*.



Photo: Forest destroyed during birthing season

## Reducing Harm to Wildlife during Construction

The City of Ottawa's commitment to wildlife-sensitive planning took an important step forward this year in the release of a draft Protocol for Wildlife Protection during Construction.

Stakeholder groups consulted included developers, environmental consultants, regulatory agencies and wildlife experts. The latter consisted of the Ottawa-Carleton Wildlife Centre and Rideau Valley Wildlife Sanctuary.

### What's in the Protocol?

The key element from the Centre's perspective is to avoid times in carrying out the initial site clearing when wildlife is most vulnerable. This includes winter when hibernating animals would be physically unable to escape and overwintering species, forced to leave their dens and food caches, that would likely freeze or starve to death. And, during the birthing season when newborns would have no chance of survival when nests or dens are destroyed with them in them.

Large development projects involving natural areas are years in planning, so it's inconceivable that the initial phase, where we have seen a whole forest clear-cut in a week, could not be scheduled between mid-August and Mid-October. Once animals are given the chance to escape, construction could go ahead twelve months of the year if the developer chooses.

Other elements in the draft protocol include pre-stressing an area so that animals are encouraged to leave; site clearing that provides an escape route for wildlife; construction site management to reduce risks to wildlife by providing guidelines for construction personnel such as not feeding or harassing wildlife, contact information for regulatory agencies, wildlife rehabilitators and veterinarians for orphaned or injured wildlife.

Other recommendations would encourage developers to use materials on new homes to keep animals out, saving homeowners money spent on wildlife removal and repair. Likewise, owner awareness information would help homeowners avoid conflicts, leading to a better appreciation of adjacent natural areas and wildlife.

### Partnership Opportunities

It will require the leadership of the City, the cooperation of developers and the support and involvement of the community for the protocol to be successful.

We believe there is much to be gained by all three stakeholder groups in moving forward with a progressive model of wildlife-sensitive planning in Ottawa.

Developers marketing projects as *'being close to nature'* would demonstrate concern for wildlife while assisting homeowners with practical tips for *'living with wildlife'*. By incorporating a natural area or wildlife corridor/trail into their design plans, it would give the project a distinctive branding opportunity while encouraging stewardship on the part of residents.

### The Need to Do More

Even the best Wildlife Construction Protocol cannot take the place of doing more to save natural habitat. The extensive development taking place in Ottawa means the City needs to get ahead of the bulldozers. Completing an inventory of natural spaces, particularly at the edges of the city, protecting what is left of our wetlands, assigning more resources so that planners can properly oversee development and working with community groups and other stakeholders to preserve natural areas is critical. Time is, however, running out.

## Editorial

### The Power of One



*'Be the Change'*, the *'Power of One'*. These might be clichés but from what we've been seeing these past few years, a lot more people are taking the challenge. In fact, this issue of the newsletter

is all about individuals working together to bring about positive change.

Individuals in cities from Oakville to London and communities in between like Komoka and Denfield are getting involved. Many are demonstrating that very unlikely Canadian trait – passion. But passion and determination are what it takes to show that the common good for the community should prevail against short-term self-interest.

Here in Ottawa, groups such as Greenspace Alliance, South March Highlands – Carp River Conservation Inc. and the Friends of Huntley Highlands are made up of individuals who share concern about our rapidly-shrinking natural areas and the wildlife that are affected.

Environmental and animal protection groups are working more closely together these days because they recognize that what befalls other species will directly affect us in the not-too-distant future.

Everyone has a role as an *'agent of change'*. You don't have to join a group. You can influence your family, your friends and those who ask for your vote.

Donna DuBreuil  
President, OCWC

### Where to From Here?

In the short term, the long-awaited draft Wildlife Construction Protocol is a step in the right direction. While not perfect, it addresses many of the concerns we have heard from people in Ottawa over the years. It's expected that the final report, along with the results of the public consultation, will go to Council for approval later this spring. We know many of you will be watching closely.



## Living with Deer

We were reminded of this story given that so much development in Ottawa is happening at the 'edges' of our city. This is where natural habitat, home for species such as White-tailed deer, is being turned into housing developments and shopping malls, forcing these and many other wild species out of the only home they have ever known.

Just after Christmas one year, on what we had hoped would be a quiet morning, we received a call from a family that had pulled an adult deer from the Ottawa River.

Although not something we would ever recommend the average person attempt, this family managed a very effective rescue. They were well experienced with the water and ice conditions having lived there for many years and using a boat were able to safely get the deer to shore.

The deer was suffering from hypothermia and shock and although barely conscious, we instructed the family to bind its legs together. We were glad we did. On arrival at the Centre, while carrying her inside, she revived enough to let out a loud bellow while thrusting her long legs and sharp hooves in all directions.

The first order of business was to get the 50-kilogram doe warm. A tent was constructed around a large indoor cage, directing the warm air from a heater to where she lay. She continued to shake uncontrollably from fear and hours spent in the freezing water. We monitored her response for the next few hours and eventually the shaking subsided as her internal temperature rose.

After changing wet blankets, we left her overnight with deer feed and apples. Happily, the next day we found her standing, eyeing us with caution. We knew that we had to return her to the wild as soon as possible but that she would die of stress if we attempted to restrain and transport her anywhere.

The decision was made to create a channel, along with floor mats to give her secure footing, that would guide her from the cage to the outside compound leading to a gate and freedom. Finally, with a little prompting, she slowly left with just a short glance back as she

### *White-tailed Deer (Odocoileus virginianus) Facts*

- Prefer areas of open forest interspersed with meadows and clearings. The forests provide shelter and protection, the open areas provide the best forage.
- During spring and summer, their diet consists of leafy material from a variety of woody plants, fresh grasses, herbs and forbs. In winter, they depend on buds and twigs within their reach and congregate in deer yards to conserve energy.
- Breed in November/December. Most fawns born in late-May to mid-June. Single fawns are the rule for young does or where food is scarce.
- The doe leaves her fawn unattended for hours at a time. The natural camouflage of the fawn's spotted coat and its almost scentless condition conceal it from predators. The doe returns at intervals to suckle the fawn.
- People coming across a stashed fawn should leave it alone. Sometimes, fawns will move about, given a hot day or pesky black flies and may bleat as a call to its mother but unless it is continually walking about and bawling you should not assume it is orphaned. If the latter case applies, you should seek the advice of a wildlife rehabilitator before taking any action.
- Our encroachment into natural areas increases the potential for conflict with deer. However, a few simple rules will allow us to co-exist. Check out which plants deer eat, i.e. cedar is a favourite and so are hostas, so don't plant them. If you have an extensive garden, install deer fencing. It's relatively easy to erect and almost invisible so it doesn't spoil the view.
- Deer/vehicle collisions can be avoided by reducing your speed. Scan the roadway and its shoulders. If you see one deer crossing, expect others to be following. More information can be found on Ottawa's Speeding Costs You Deerly campaign at <http://ottawa.ca/en/residents/transportation-and-parking/road-safety/wildlife-vehicle-collision-prevention>.

headed for the gate. We figured the Centre's location on the Greenbelt with a connection to the Ottawa River corridor would get her back to familiar territory.

The next day, a doe and two bucks were spotted at our bird feeder. We think it was her as she appeared less nervous than the bucks, probably having decided the accommodation was up to snuff.



# Take a Moment to Celebrate

By Kate MacNeil

I often find myself focusing on what still has to be done as opposed to appreciating what has been accomplished. When I am on a road trip I am thinking about the miles I have left to go before I get to my destination as opposed to celebrating those miles I have driven. While I am sure this has something to do with my personality, I also think part of it is human nature. The mind naturally wants to move forward. Maybe this is a good thing, if we took too much satisfaction from the fact we cooked dinner, we may never clean up the kitchen. However, I do think it is important, from time to time to sit back and appreciate what we have accomplished.

For a brief moment I am not going to focus on all the children who don't go outside and play, who don't have the opportunity to connect to nature and who are missing out on this amazing chance to explore something bigger than themselves, a place to discover who they are. I am not going to think about municipalities that are resisting more progressive solutions to wildlife conflicts or about the homeowner that is likely at this moment setting a live trap

that will result in taking a mom away and leaving her now orphaned young to suffer a slow death.

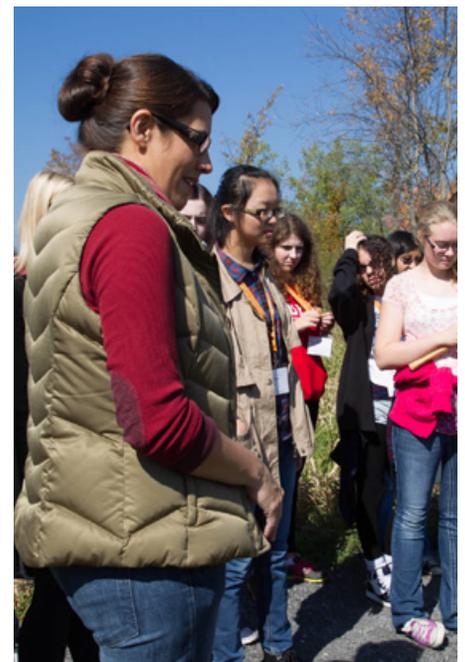
Instead, I am going to think about all we have accomplished. I am going to celebrate the work I feel so fortunate to have been a part of. This May will mark 17 years since I first started my job at the Ottawa-Carleton Wildlife Centre. We were of course still doing wildlife rehabilitation and I started as a Wildlife Intern. I became the Centre Coordinator and then almost 10 years ago, during the inception or perhaps metamorphosis of our Education and Outreach Programs, I became the Education Coordinator.

Some things are easily measured; a quick records search shows that I have handled close to 7,000 hotline calls. So I personally talked to and hopefully helped almost 7,000 people who were having a human wildlife conflict. I would have given them detailed information about the biology and behaviour of the animal, and reassured them that it is normal and beneficial that we have wildlife sharing our spaces. I then would have gone over what they could do to solve their problem, in a cost-effective and humane manner.

Another calculation tells me I have given close to 300 presentations to more than 10,000 students. They would learn about the amazing animals we share our spaces with and of some of the inspiring survival stories of some of the animals we cared for throughout the years. They would have the opportunity to hold deer antlers, and porcupine quills and hear what a river otter chortle sounds like and to get excited about the wildlife around us.

There are also many things to celebrate that are not so quantitative, such as the municipalities throughout Ontario that we have worked with, presented to, sent information to, that are beginning to recognize that we can coexist with wildlife quite successfully in urban and rural settings. Residents are not only embracing this coexistence model, but they are recognizing how fortunate we are to have such a diversity of species and how beneficial all species are in maintaining healthy ecosystems. An increasing number of residents are advocating on behalf of wildlife and organizing pilot projects in their own communities.

I know that it is easy to feel like we are working to move the unmovable but we all deserve to take a moment and celebrate all of our work and our successes, slowly but surely wildlife are getting a voice.



# An Unforgettable Visit

By Kate MacNeil

I consider myself very fortunate to have the job I have. I get to work with children and get them interested and excited about the wildlife they share their spaces with. It is difficult to put into words how rewarding it is to see their enthusiasm as I tell them the stories about the animals we have cared for. To see them laughing one minute at the video of the baby skunks and then instantly fall silent to hear what animal I am going to talk about next. I can honestly say, I feel great after every presentation. But this winter I got to have an extra memorable school visit thanks to Ms. Tiffany Lawless's Grade 1 class at St. Cecilia. I know this day will be one of my fondest memories.

Ms. Lawless and her class were kind enough to participate in the filming for a documentary and educational video currently being made about the Ottawa-Carleton Wildlife Centre. That meant a great deal of prep work and organization especially on the teacher's behalf. There were forms to fill out, students to prepare, a classroom turned upside down and filled with an amazing amount of video and camera equipment. All of the preparation certainly paid off, and the



Ms. Lawless and her students

day was a great success. Ms. Lawless and her students were very welcoming and patient with all of the set up. The students were all naturals on camera, not at all nervous and were impeccably well behaved, a tribute to what a wonderful teacher they have.

According to Ms. Lawless "The kids absolutely loved the presentation! The next day they started an animal workstation where they searched animals in books and wrote about them. You really inspired them. From a teacher perspective your presentation was fantastic. It

was engaging, informative and completely age appropriate. The pictures, puppets, animal artifacts and animal noises made the students more aware of their surroundings and the habitats in which the animals live. Thank you again for coming in and sharing your expertise."

It was a great day and we want to extend our sincere thanks to Ms. Lawless and Vice Principal Derek Rodgers and Principal Andrea Green for making it all happen, and a special thanks to the students for making the day such a success.

## City of Ottawa's Wildlife Speaker Series



The City Of Ottawa launched its Wildlife Speaker Series in February 2014 with an excellent presentation by Dr. Stan Gehrt, world renowned wildlife ecologist from Ohio State University. He talked about how adaptable coyotes are and how they are now found in most major cities in North America.

He also provided insight on how people in urban and rural developments can coexist with coyotes. To date there have been 5 Wildlife Speaker sessions, with the most recent one being held in March 2015. The intent of which was to look at 'Wildlife and a Liveable City'. The Speakers Series is intended to increase residents' knowledge and appreciation of wildlife, and promote coexistence through understanding and respect.

Each event also includes an open house-style environmental exposition

with various local agencies and groups to provide additional opportunities for residents to learn about Ottawa's wildlife and natural environment.

The Ottawa-Carleton Wildlife Centre has been pleased to have booths at these sessions. It is a great opportunity to engage the public as well as for various organizations to share their efforts with one another.

# London Ontario Steps Up with Progressive Wildlife Policies



The Centre has been increasingly called upon by people in Ottawa to help with specific wildlife issues over the years. More recently, other communities in Ontario are seeking the Centre's advice and tapping into the lessons we've learned here. Not only does it give us great satisfaction to see progressive wildlife solutions being applied elsewhere but establishing 'best practices' in some cities

will encourage others to follow, thereby helping even more wildlife.

So, when we were asked to give a presentation on wildlife by the City of London Ontario's Animal Welfare Advisory Committee (AWAC) this past December, we welcomed the opportunity.

Through the leadership and hard work of volunteers on AWAC and its Wildlife Sub-Committee and a collaborative and forward-looking Council and staff, a Humane Urban Wildlife Conflict Policy was approved by London City Council in November, 2014. It states: *"The City is committed to upholding high standards of animal welfare, including the humane treatment of wildlife. The City will strive to not interfere with wildlife and their natural processes where possible; and will strive to implement proactive and preventative measures in order to promote coexistence, and to prevent potential conflicts where possible"*.

The Centre's presentation 'Developing an Effective Wildlife Response' spoke

of the challenges and the opportunities while encouraging continued outreach through education and hands-on pilot projects in the community. The presentation included highlights of the Graham Creek project in Ottawa that brought together local residents, the City and the Centre in wrapping trees the community wished to protect and in planting other species that would serve as beaver food in the future.

Animal Alliance of Canada had sponsored a presentation the evening before by Mike Callahan of Beaver Solutions, an unsurpassed leader in successfully resolving human/beaver conflicts. His presentation on modern water flow devices that protect city infrastructure while allowing for the significant ecological benefits that beaver ponds and marshes provide was attended by City staff, the Upper Thames Conservation Authority and many interested residents.

London, known as the Forest City, is about to add Wildlife Friendly to that credential.

## Living with Wildlife Annual Conference



Photo courtesy of Mike McIntosh, Bear With Us

In the fall we were pleased to attend the 4th annual Living with Wildlife Conference in Toronto. This conference is organized by the Association for the Protection of Fur-Bearing Animals. The goal of the conference is to bring experts in their field, including scientists, government planners, politicians, wildlife rehabilitators, advocates, and concerned citizens together to discuss a wide variety of ways humans and wildlife can coexist.

Speakers included Donna Doyle, Senior Environmental Policy Analyst, from the Town of Oakville who talked about the importance of creating a Municipal Wildlife Strategy and Mike McIntosh

of Bear with Us, a rehabilitation facility who detailed the vital need to understand bears and how we can peacefully live among them. Other topics included wildlife proofing your home, understanding White-tailed deer and management, and how to successfully live with coyotes and beavers.

In addition to the informative presentations the conference also provides a great opportunity to network with a variety of stakeholders who work to move the wildlife agenda in a positive direction.

We are sure the next conference will be just as successful. The conference alternates between Toronto and Vancouver, where the 5th conference will be held on October 16, 2015.

# Valuing Life in All its Forms



The Centre limited the number of animals released at any one site in order to ensure that it was not overused and that it would give the particular species being released the best possible chance to thrive. Under Vera and Hal's watchful eye and the transitional care they provided, raccoons, woodchucks, porcupine and a mink were successfully released on the property over the years.

We caught up with Vera Shaw earlier this year, sharing memories of the remarkable contribution she and her late husband, Hal, made in protecting the environment and wildlife.

It was in the early nineties when Vera and Hal offered their property in the Lanark Highlands as a release site for orphaned wildlife rehabilitated by the Centre. The exceptional 742-acre property consisted of varied terrain, vegetation and water. It was home to a virtual "who's who" of indigenous wildlife to Eastern Ontario.

The Shaw's had purchased the property in 1984 and according to Vera, from the time she and Hal first set foot on it, she knew that she was meant to be there. Having loved animals all her life, she finally felt that she was in a position to help them. But, along with helping animals, Vera and Hal had a passion for sharing these natural surroundings with others. They were particularly interested in providing a setting for children to be exposed to wildlife "so they can come to know, respect and appreciate it", Vera said at the time.

They built a children's camp and a nature house, carefully planning structures to cause the least amount of disruption to the natural area. It was a lot of work, particularly for a couple at an age when most would be downsizing to a condominium. But they said that they were paid back tenfold by the wildlife on the property. From their deck they were able to watch a mother raccoon taking her young for a dip, a black bear foraging along the river bank, a red fox that regularly skirted their property, coming back on one occasion with a 'lady friend'.

It was a perfect setting for Vera's significant artistic abilities. She was able to photograph, paint and write stories about the wildlife they welcomed to the property.

Sadly, Hal passed away in 2002 and Vera had to eventually give up the property a few years later. Now living in a small community southeast of Ottawa, Vera remains a vibrant, joyful person, taking great delight in life. It is, however, her respect for the individual, be it a flower, an animal or a person that defines her.

The photograph on our cover that was taken by Vera of two young woodchucks perfectly captures the personality and beauty that she sees in all creatures or, as she would more likely put it, our 'fellow citizens'.

## The Woodchuck and the Teddy Bear

It was a mean-spirited article by Randall Denley in which he refers to "groundhogs as an annoying pest" that prompted us to feature a pair of woodchucks on the newsletter cover this issue and to tell the story of 'Teddy'.

Woodchucks are such maligned animals and yet for anyone who really comes to know them, they are truly charming characters. An article by someone with more heart than Mr. Denley, refers to them as little "Mennonites of the meadow". True pacifists whose only crime is digging.

'Teddy' arrived at the Centre as a small and badly frightened orphan whose family had been killed on the highway.

The staff gave her a stuffed teddy bear in that she appeared so sad and alone. It was love at first sight.

Even though she was soon paired up with other woodchucks, she remained loyal to her teddy, carrying it around everywhere and only putting it down to dig or to eat.

One of her other 'roommates' obviously decided she was getting too big for her 'security blanket' and we'd watch him wrestle it away from her and toss it with disdain in a corner but she'd soon retrieve it.



While we are often more comfortable concentrating on our differences, it reminds us that the needs of young animals, whether human or wild, are basically the same – warmth, food, and security.

'Teddy' moved away from home eventually but she left her bear behind – I guess she finally outgrew it.

## In Memoriam



Joy Maclaren died on November 19, 2014. Her obituary included a line that resonated with everyone who was fortunate enough to know Joy - "We thought she would live forever". This indomitable spirit was a presence for

all that is good and positive. While she was a quiet philanthropist, she was a determined social activist who contributed to the community, locally and nationally, throughout her life.

She was a founding member of the Glenbow Museum, the Canadian Guide Dogs for the Blind, the Community Foundation of Ottawa and the Hospice at Maycourt. She supported many other causes across the country including the McClure Centre for adults with mental and physical disabilities as well as creating numerous awards for financially disadvantaged students. Joy's compassion also extended to wildlife where she was a long-time supporter of the Ottawa-Carleton Wildlife Centre.

But, it was her commitment to minority rights and support of Aboriginal and Inuit culture and education that will remain her legacy. In 1995, she was presented with the great honour of being named "New Sun" by elders from the Blackfoot of Alberta, the Mohawk of Quebec and the Ojibway of Ontario in a stirring ceremony at Carleton University.

Joy never sought the limelight. In fact, she had to be persuaded that giving up preferred anonymity with respect to her support would encourage others.

Joy earned a BSc from Macdonald College/McGill University in 1944, received an Honorary Doctorate from McGill University in 2000 and an Honorary Doctorate from Carleton University in 2011. She received the Order of Canada in 2010 and the Queen's Diamond Jubilee Medallion in 2012.

We will miss her friendship, her wonderful sense of humour, her loyalty and her enjoyment of simple pleasures, including sharing stories of wildlife. Qualities that we know her son Charlie, his wife Ciddy, her grandchildren of whom she was very proud, and other relatives and many friends will miss as well.

## Giving Wild Things a Chance



Four tiny, newborn raccoons, with their eyes still closed were growing cold and hungry. They would not survive much longer without mom. Unfortunately, mom would not be coming back, she was in a

so called 'humane' trap, on her way to a forest miles away.

Sadly, this story will be repeated hundreds of times during the spring and summer birthing season. Leaving thousands of baby animals to die a painful death and still not offer a solution to homeowners.

If you see a wild animal around your property at this time of year, there is a good chance it is a female with babies nearby. So please do not barricade her access, or trap and relocate her. These situations are temporary. Once babies are weaned and a bit bigger, mom will move them to a more

natural area. At this time, the area can be properly secured to prevent this happening again.

The Ottawa-Carleton Wildlife Centre has a website with detailed information on resolving human wildlife conflict in a humane and cost-effective manner. The information and format is based on thousands of calls we have handled over the years. In addition to free advice there is also lots of information about the wildlife we share our spaces with. Check it out at [www.wildlifeinfo.ca](http://www.wildlifeinfo.ca) before taking any action.

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