



# Ottawa-Carleton Wildlife Centre

SERVING THE COMMUNITY FOR OVER 25 YEARS

## Extending Justice and Compassion

*"When a man wantonly destroys one of the works of man we call him a vandal. When he destroys one of the works of God, we call him a sportsman." Joseph Wood Krutch (1893-1970) American essayist*

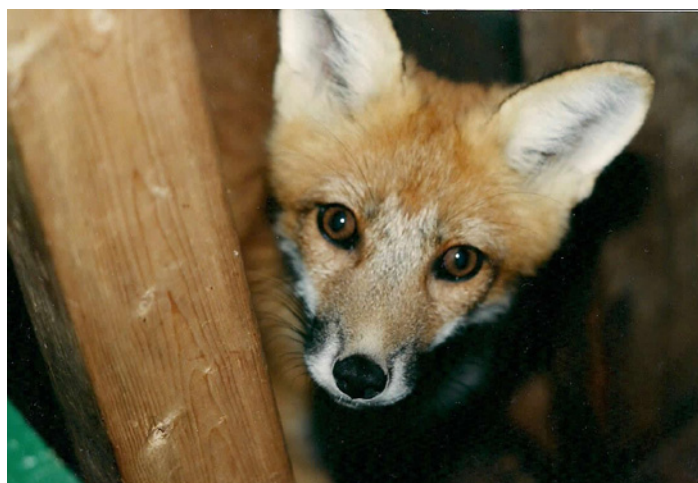
The Ark, Journal of Catholic Concern for Animals, Essex, England, Summer 2014. Excerpt: "Archbishop Emeritus of Cape town, Desmond Tutu, who fought for justice for humans in South Africa, now turns to the fight for justice for animals. Tutu won the Nobel Peace Prize for his anti-apartheid work and was described by Nelson Mandela as '*Sometimes strident, often tender, never afraid and seldom without humour, Desmond Tutu's voice will always be the voice of the voiceless*'."

### By Archbishop Desmond Tutu

I have spent my life fighting discrimination and injustice, whether the victims are blacks, women, or gays and lesbians. No human being should be the target of prejudice or the object of vilification or be denied his or her basic rights. But there are other issues of justice – not only for human beings but also for the world's other sentient creatures. The matter of abuse and cruelty we inflict on other animals has to fight for our attention in what sometimes seems an already overfull moral agenda. It is vital, however, that these instances of injustice should not be overlooked.

I have seen first hand how injustice gets overlooked when the victims are powerless or vulnerable, when they have no one to speak up for them and no means of representing themselves to a higher authority. Animals are in precisely that position. Unless we are mindful of their interests and speak out loudly on their behalf, abuse and cruelty go unchallenged.

Religious traditions do not, by and large, have a good track record on animals. ...In many ways, it is odd that my fellow Christians have failed to see the issue of how we treat animals as a Gospel issue. After all, animals



are also God's creatures. ....We do not honour God by abusing other sentient creatures. ...So much of our maltreatment of animals stems from a kind of hubris, in which we foolishly suppose that our own welfare is God's sole concern. In fact, God's creation is entrusted to our care and under our protection.

Even when faced with urgent human problems, we should not overlook the issue of justice to animals. In fact, an increasing amount of evidence shows that there is a link between cruelty to animals and cruelty to weaker human beings. ....Churches should lead the way by making clear that all cruelty – to other animals as well as human beings – is an affront to civilized living and a sin before God.

(This article was taken with permission from the foreword to the Global Guide to Animal Protection, edited by Revd Professor Andrew Linzey and published by the University of Illinois on 30 December 2013)

## Editorial

### Our Need for Nature

There are a growing number of studies that identify benefits for people of all ages from a connection to nature and other life forms. The term 'biophilia' literally means "*love of life or living systems*". It was first used by Erich Fromm to describe a psychological orientation of being attracted to all that is alive and vital.



Edward O. Wilson, Professor Emeritus at Harvard University, uses the term in the same sense when he suggests that biophilia describes "*the connections that human beings subconsciously seek with the rest of life*." He proposed the possibility that the deep affiliations humans have with nature are rooted in our biology.

Unlike phobias, which are the aversions and fears that people have of things in the natural world, philias are the attractions and positive feeling that we have toward certain habitats, activities, and objects in our natural surroundings.

Most fears of the natural world are irrational. Sadly, they are too often used to generate profit via sensationalized stories in the media, for entertainment, to justify a sport or to attract attention and funds for little-risk wildlife diseases. However, as we all know, fear is a limiting and paralyzing force.

The Centre's experience through its education programs certainly gives support to Fromm's and Wilson's hypotheses. Even when a child expresses fear and/or negative feelings about a wild animal, it is evident that the view has come from a parent and is not deeply held by the child. Kate, our Education Coordinator, regularly sees the awe and utter pleasure of children during her presentations. Now, Kate is an exceptional educator but she still feels that much of the children's reaction is instinctive.

At a recent presentation to grade six students she found them extremely engaged and enthusiastic about wildlife, particularly given that preteens are generally more withdrawn or at least don't find it 'cool' to show such keenness. The teacher reported that one student said he enjoyed the session more than gym, a very rare occurrence apparently.

Several workshops with older students, ages 14-17, confirm the connection. After a busy morning, students are given free time over their lunch hour to go outside, chat or do whatever they like. A film on the work of Lynn Rogers, a biologist who is considered the Jane Goodall of black bears, is put up on the screen. Soon, the substantial noise in the room and the activity with iphones and other gadgets subsides. Within a few minutes, you can hear a pin drop.

You will also see from the article on page 5 that the youth who participated in the community design planning process at the Centre put heavy emphasis on greenspace in the kind of community they wish to live in. Saving natural areas must become more of a priority for municipalities. At the end of day, it will be in the best long-term interests of the entire community.

Donna DuBreuil  
President, OCWC

## Community Foundation of Ottawa Supports a Unique Environmental Project

The Community Foundation of Ottawa provides key support for many worthwhile projects in Ottawa, strengthening the resilience and fabric of the community in fields such as health, social services, education, arts and culture and the environment.

A recent grant of \$7,700 from the Community Foundation of Ottawa will allow the Ottawa-Carleton Wildlife Centre to launch a unique project 'Developing Wildlife Stewards' in our community.

The project addresses the growing need to respond to and directly assist residents on specific issues and opportunities within their neighbourhood to protect wildlife and natural areas. The Centre's education programs, which focus on the benefits of nature and human-wildlife coexistence, have resulted in a strong presence for the OCWC in the community. This had led to an increasing number of individuals and community groups seeking the Centre's expertise and guidance on a wide range of specialized wildlife and habitat concerns.

The most important outcome expected from the project is to multiply the capacity and effectiveness of the Centre by increasing the number of ambassadors for wildlife in the community.

The Foundation's support, over the years, has enabled the Centre to build a program that is not only responsive to community needs but also takes a proactive approach to seeking out new opportunities and engaging partners to work on behalf of positive change for wildlife and the environment.

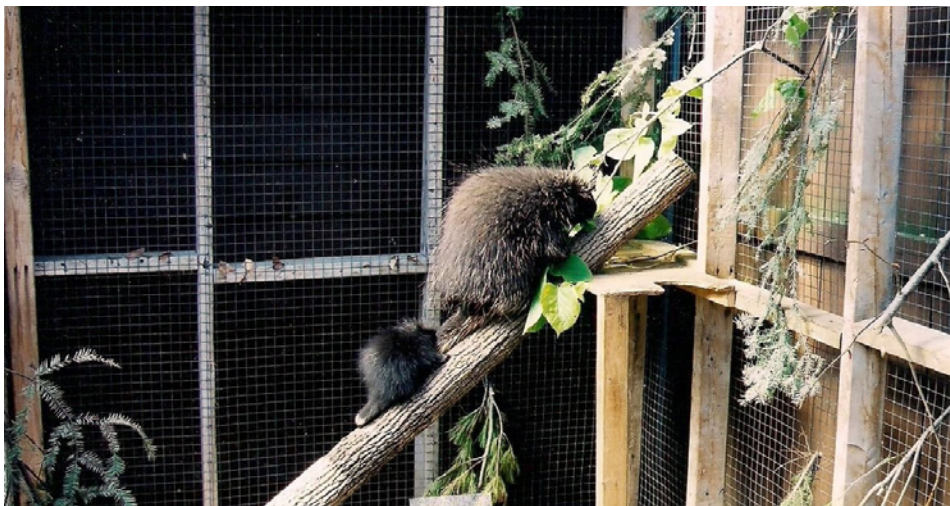
*"The Community Foundation of Ottawa's support is a superb example of the best kind of 'investment' – one that expands the capacity of grassroots organizations and their volunteers to make an important difference to the quality of life in the community",* said Donna DuBreuil of the Centre.



## Animal Stories

# Porcupine's Survival Nothing Short of a Miracle

Even though we no longer do wildlife rehabilitation, the animals we have helped over the years are never far from our minds. In fact, having had the privilege of caring for these special animals has reinforced our commitment to giving people a better understanding of them.



This is the tale of a special porcupine that arrived at the Centre one Christmas Eve.

A concerned homeowner had observed the porcupine in an open field where it had barely moved for nearly a week. He knew something was very wrong so he brought it to the Centre. Our initial assessment indicated the porcupine was experiencing weakness in its hind end but there were no clues as to what was causing the problem.

So, it was off to the vet where x-rays showed, to our relief, that there were no breaks or fractures to be found. Feeling puzzled as to why the porcupine was unwilling to climb, yet forever optimistic in the possibility of second chances, we continued to care for the porcupine in a large indoor cage for the duration of the winter.

Still determined to give the porcupine more time, once spring came, we set her up in an even larger outdoor cage with several trees and fresh branches thinking this might inspire her to rise to the occasion and begin to climb.

To our dismay, she still wouldn't climb. So after months of getting to know this wondrous creature, it was with heavy hearts that we had to make the difficult decision to have her euthanized. A porcupine unable to climb a tree clearly could not be released.

On the eve of April 23rd, the night before her scheduled vet appointment to be euthanized, fate took an unexpected twist when the porcupine gave birth to a beautiful 595 gram baby. To witness such an extraordinary event and see mom caring for and nursing her little one was very moving.

But, even more of a miracle was the fact that one morning weeks later, both the mother and baby had climbed one of the trees and were perched together with the baby softly murmuring as the mother cleaned its face.

We waited for several months to make sure that the mother's climbing ability remained strong before releasing them together on the large wooded property of one of our foster volunteers.

Months later, we heard a possible explanation for the adult porcupine's inability to climb. Sciatic nerve pain during pregnancy due to the pressure placed on it by the growing uterus can lead to pain, numbness and weakness in the legs, explaining the porcupine's unwillingness to climb. The baby's timely entry into the world not only saved its life but the mother's life as well.

## North American Porcupine (*Erethizon dorsatum*)

- Porcupines have an exceptionally long gestation period – around 210 days – with a single pup born annually in April, May or June
- Pups begin eating solid food about one week after birth but continue to nurse for approximately three to four months
- As pups are unable up to about six weeks to climb large trees, they are stashed on the ground, often hidden in the hollow base of a tree or against a stump while the mother rests or feeds up a nearby tree. She will travel down to the pup to nurse it. One should never assume, therefore, that a baby found by itself has been abandoned
- The range of sounds made by the adult porcupine is quite amazing. They include grunts and moans, snorts, whines, child-like cries, and even screams and shrieks. It can be quite disconcerting to hear, late at night, these blood curdling cries which are related to mating or territorial battles
- Porcupines cannot shoot their close to 30,000 quills but they are a very effective weapon as there is a barb at the tip of quill that holds firmly once contact is made. Any quills lost to an encounter with a predator start to regrow within a few weeks.



# Working on Behalf of Wildlife

## Let's Talk Science and City of Ottawa Produce Educational Kit on Wildlife



Photo courtesy of Amy MacPherson

We have to admit that we were apprehensive when the City announced it would partner with Let's Talk Science to produce educational materials on urban wildlife. While Let's Talk Science is a well-respected national organization, its focus is on science and engineering. We wondered 'what would they know about urban wildlife'?

So, we were pleasantly surprised when Barbara Vanderhyden, the director of Let's Talk Science in Ottawa invited us, along with other wildlife experts, to discuss the design of materials. In addition to Donna and Kate from the Centre, Michael Runtz from Carleton University, Mike Leveille, a teacher at St. Laurent

Academy, Paul Goulet from Little Ray's Reptile Zoo and Amy MacPherson, a biologist at the City brought a wide range of expertise and experience to the table.

There was lots of collaboration by project coordinator, Sue McKee of Let's Talk Science, as she designed and developed a booklet, resulting in an excellent resource that will be widely used and supported. *"The City hopes that the Backyard Wildlife education kit and take-home booklet will help children and their families to learn more about local wildlife, biodiversity, and ways to co-exist with wildlife. Co-existence through better understanding is a key component of the City's Wildlife Strategy,"* said Amy MacPherson of the City of Ottawa.

*"We are particularly pleased that the booklet not only provides detailed information about species like raccoons and skunks along with ways to prevent conflicts but it includes 'cool facts' about these amazing animals, setting a very positive tone about urban wildlife,"* said Donna DuBreuil of the Centre. As the booklet is intended to be taken home, parents and other family members will also benefit from its helpful information.

Now that the handbook has been finalized, Let's Talk Science is using graduate students from the University of Ottawa to deliver the project to primary school children. It will be done through a series of workshops having different themes and activities that are aligned with the school curriculum.

We were invited by Sue to attend the volunteer training session for the workshops and were extremely impressed by her resourcefulness and enthusiasm in designing activities that will be sure to engage and inform young people about local wildlife.

While the basic messages are similar to those delivered by the Centre in its education programs, the approach taken by Let's Talk Science will offer a science view while the Centre's will continue to be more oriented toward the humanities. Definitely complementary though.

Kudos to the City of Ottawa for undertaking this project and to Let's Talk Science for producing such a positive result and direction with respect to urban wildlife issues.



## Designing With Nature in Mind

Quite often we talk about program delivery and which groups visited the Centre or who we gave presentations to. Although the delivery side of things and interacting with people is a favourite part of the job, developing and designing activities can be just as rewarding.

Given the wide age range of students participating in our programs, 4-18 years old, activities need to be designed accordingly. For example a puppet show is not likely going to keep teenagers too engaged!

One of the activities we recently developed for older students was inspired by the Kanata North Development and the Community Design Plan Process. These students came from across Canada from urban as well rural communities. The activity gave the students the opportunity

to create their own Community Design Plans, keeping nature in mind. Each group was given a heavy piece of bristol board which represented their community. The communities were blank slates, with one road and some natural areas. Each group received a kit complete with plastic trees and different colour components representing parks, libraries, schools, homes, stormwater ponds, businesses etc. They had to incorporate all the pieces into their community and they could add more if they choose. After they designed their communities they had

to present on what they did and why, including their community name.

It was very interesting to watch as each group tried to figure out how to layout their community. They discussed the benefits of putting the houses close to greenspace so people could connect to nature, and backing schools onto greenspace so students could use nature for their playground.

Most groups requested more passive greenspace, i.e. natural areas that are not playgrounds or soccer fields. Some

of the other interesting things students came up with were community gardens and wildlife corridors for wildlife to safely cross roads. The students worked very hard to reach a balance between development and preservation of natural spaces. Many of them commented that it was harder than they first thought as there were many factors that had to be considered.

I think it is safe to say that we would be lucky if any of these students became city planners when they grow up.



## Petrie Islands

### Coexistence Takes Planning

A project at Petrie Islands that uses 'best practices' for coexisting with beavers involves a number of partners. A long-standing group of volunteers known as the Friends of Petrie Island (FOPI), the City of Ottawa and, more recently, the Ottawa-Carleton Wildlife Centre.

Petrie Islands, a 291 hectare site, in the east end of Ottawa, is comprised of islands, wetlands and forests. Located along the Ottawa River, it offers a rare example of a largely natural island and wetland complex that is recognized as a Provincially Significant Wetland.

The majority of Petrie Islands is conservation area with a popular summer recreation area featured at the site entrance. Management of the site places protection of the natural environment first while allowing recreational activities that respect the existing significant natural features.

#### The Vision of Community Volunteers

It is, however, the efforts of volunteers that has developed this natural treasure into one so many people today get to enjoy. The Friends of Petrie Island, led by long-time volunteer Al Tweddle, manage the site for the City, creating and grooming trails, repairing look outs and other structures, running the Nature

Interpretation Centre and a popular Junior Naturalist program for children as well as promoting its natural features to the many visitors. Al and the rest of the board put in countless hours administering these tasks, including recruiting and organizing volunteers.

The organization has also received a two-year grant from Trillium to run a Native Flora program to provide outdoor walks and events on Petrie Island for the public and to expand the Native Wildflower Garden and protect native flora species.

#### Living with Beavers at Petrie Island

Not surprisingly, beavers have also come to enjoy Petrie Islands' wetlands. Recognizing that beavers, as a keystone species, contribute substantially to the ecological health and abundance of biodiversity at the site, volunteers have undertaken to protect vulnerable trees against beaver damage.

Given the significant number of trees involved, it has been a challenge to protect them but a new plan is underway.

The Ottawa-Carleton Wildlife Centre toured the area last winter and again in



*Katherine Forster, Al Tweddle, Donna DuBreuil, Joanne Gauthier and Kate MacNeil wrapping trees at Petrie Islands*

early summer, discussing options for tree protection, planting other fast-growing trees that would serve as alternative beaver food and giving a presentation to volunteers and board members on the benefits of beavers and practical solutions for coexistence.

Jason Pollard, a forester with the City of Ottawa, has provided professional advice as well as coordinating the supply of wire to protect a large number of trees. The City's assistance has been key.

And, so have the Friends of Petrie Island who've supplied the sweat equity in wrapping dozens of trees with many more planned in the future.



# There's a Mouse in the House!

## Humane, Sensible and Cost-Effective Solutions



Photo courtesy of Michael Runtz

You will be relieved to know that we don't have to let a mouse that weighs less than an ounce outwit us humans. There are solutions that cost next to nothing which permanently solve mice problems without having to resort to killing.

Whether we live in the country or the city, most of us have non-paying tenants in the form of mice each winter. Every Fall, field mice seek out attics and other interior spaces as a warm spot to spend the winter. Just as predictably, they go back to a more natural setting outside every Spring.

### How do they get in?

Mice can enter through any small opening, the size of a dime, generally around services such as dryer vents, utility pipes, cable wires and holes in common walls between the garage and the house. As skilled climbers, they can enter through gaps in your soffit or roof and gable vents that are not properly screened with 1/2 inch welded wire mesh.

### How can I prevent them from getting in?

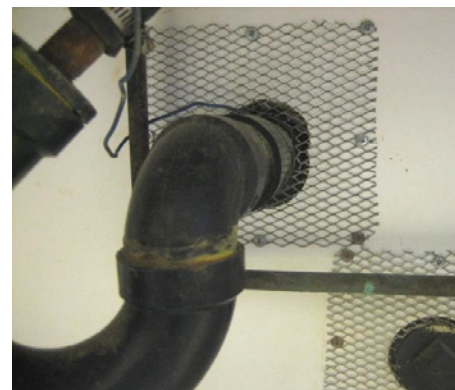
While it is a good idea to check and repair obvious access spots each Fall, it is virtually impossible to prevent mice, because of their size, from accessing your attic. However, the good news is that you can prevent

them from getting into your living quarters by taking these easy steps:

- Check under kitchen and bathroom sink cabinets around plumbing fixture openings and use metal lath (sometimes known as diamond wire) that is available in building supply stores to seal up any holes. Metal lath is ideal because it is easily bent and can be forced into holes around pipes as well as nailed to a flat surface, as shown in the photo.
- For spaces under sink counters that are too small for metal lath, use pieces of **waterproof** stainless steel or copper scouring pads to stuff into holes. **Never use steel wool** as it rusts and disintegrates with the moisture in the air around plumbing fixtures in a very short time. While an injectable foam can also be used for small holes, given a mouse's ability to chew through a variety of things, we recommend using metal and wire repair materials.
- While doing the above repairs will eliminate 90% of the proven access points for mice, you should also check out other spots inside where services enter through an exterior or interior wall, as mice travel through wall spaces. Check baseboards including closets and pay particular attention to the common wall between the garage and the house from floor to ceiling.
- If mice are getting into your unfinished basement via the walls from the attic, you can either use welded wire mesh or metal lath to animal-proof the area where walls join the basement ceiling, known as the header. Or you can use a heavy-duty weather strip on the door leading from your basement to prevent access. Ensure the weather strip extends the full width under the door, leaving no gaps.
- Mice are attracted to living quarters such as a kitchen in search of food. Make sure all food is put away and that boxed food is stored in inaccessible animal-proofed

cupboards or use metal or glass canisters to store food.

- Given that mice are attracted to homes over the winter because of a denning site and food source, some people have applied a novel approach to solving the problem. They place a box of old towels and keep a small dish of sunflower seeds topped up in their garage or shed as an alternate nesting site and food source. Based on the theory that if you give them what they need, it will keep them out of your house.



### Why not just kill them?

It is strongly recommended to stay away from the use of lethal control methods such as poisons, kill-traps or glue boards for obvious humane reasons. Chemical and toxic substances are not safe to use in our homes. Poisons are particularly dangerous in an environment where there are pets and children. Besides, they can make the problem much worse by having adult mice or young die in walls, causing foul and long-lasting smells. Neither is humane trapping the answer as mice breed all year and so if a nursing female is removed, there could well be a nest of babies left behind to die in a wall.

Finally, killing mice will not solve the problem. Unless the animal-proofing is done, the problem will continue.

For more information on mice and other wildlife concerns check out the Centre's website at <http://www.wildlifeinfo.ca/mice.html>

# Setting the Record Straight

## Why the OCWC No Longer does Wildlife Rehab



After well over a decade of our Board's decision to no longer do wildlife rehabilitation, we were surprised to hear the comment recently that *"the Centre was among those that had lost their licenses"*.

Because this implies we did something wrong, we felt it was time to set the record straight. The Centre never lost its licence. Rather, it refused to renew its licence in 2002 because the release restrictions imposed by the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources for rehabbed orphaned wildlife were unworkable and inhumane.

From its inception in 1987, the Centre had put into practice the strong belief that as much care should be taken in the release of wildlife as in their rehabilitation.

The animals we cared for came in as babies, most came in alone from busy areas of the city. Once stabilized, animals were put together with several other members of their species so they could socialize properly. They would then go to a foster volunteer who would feed and care for them until they were ready for a slow, transitional release on that volunteer's property, at least several and often 100 or more treed acres having suitable conditions for that species.

The Ministry of Natural Resources' arbitrary and unworkable regulation of having to return an animal to within 15 km. of where it was found meant that you would have to put these animals back into busy developed areas, break up groups of orphans that had been

raised together as well as make it next to impossible to find foster volunteers with suitable property for release that were willing to provide transitional care and who just happened to live within 15 kilometers of where each of these animals had been found.

It presents a logistical nightmare that has prompted many wildlife rehabilitators to be forced to discontinue doing wildlife rehabilitation. In defending the Centre's decision to do so, long-time wildlife advocate and former rehabilitator, Barry Kent MacKay, said *"Donna DuBreuil took the moral high road. Instead of doing what other rehabbers did (and I am not at all blaming them...they are under an oppressive and anti-animal system) and (a) go underground; (b) agree to odious terms and then do what the rehab community (always fractious) generally agrees is best practice anyway, on the Q.T. and under the radar or (c) dutifully salute and obey rules even if it means putting animals second, Donna challenged the system"*.

While the Centre no longer does wildlife rehabilitation, it strongly supports the need for it and, along with a small

group of individuals and organizations, has worked tirelessly to see progressive rehab regulations reinstated in Ontario.

### Current Mission is Vital

We believe, however, that the work the Centre is now doing is of even greater importance. Because the majority of animals that overwhelm the small number of rehabilitation centres are "created" orphans resulting from human actions, we must change the hearts and minds of the public.

The Centre works to educate youth through its school programs, helps the public to humanely resolve wildlife conflicts, assists groups in protecting habitat and wildlife in their neighbourhoods, and works with environmental and animal protection organizations to promote individual, municipal and provincial wildlife stewardship. *"It is allowing us to focus on the bigger picture, getting at the cause of the problems facing wildlife rather than just treating the symptoms. And, although there are significant challenges, we are encouraged by the slow but steady progress we see"*, said Donna DuBreuil of the Centre.





## Getting to Know the Ottawa-Carleton Wildlife Centre

*"In all things of nature there is something of the marvellous" - Aristotle*



We are pleased to announce a short video about the Ottawa-Carleton Wildlife Centre. You can visit [www.wildlifeinfo.ca](http://www.wildlifeinfo.ca) to check it out. The video follows the evolution of the Ottawa-Carleton Wildlife Centre. It begins with great pictures of some of the many wild animals we cared for during our wildlife rehabilitation days. When we were doing

rehab we would help between 1,000 -1,300 animals each year. Annually we would see over 25 different species, from river otters to flying squirrels, an indication of the rich diversity of species we are lucky to have in the Ottawa area.

As many of you know, we stopped doing rehabilitation in 2002. At that point we were not sure what direction, if any, the Ottawa-Carleton Wildlife Centre would take. After much discussion, it was decided we still could offer a voice for wildlife. We look at our new program direction in Education and Outreach as an opportunity, as opposed to a consolation prize.

Our programs now focus on the root of the problem, educating and giving people the

tools to coexist with wildlife, meaning fewer orphans are created. The video has some highlights of our projects in which we work to implement more progressive solutions to beaver problems.

We are also celebrating the 10th anniversary of our work to reconnect children to the wonders of nature! Thousands of children have been reached through a wide range of activities including in-school presentations, hikes to beaver ponds, planting native wildflowers to creating habitat for wildlife. I think of nature as a gift, and there is nothing more satisfying than to witness children exploring the gift of nature. I hope you check out the video to see some of these wonderful moments.

## Supporting the OCWC Through the United Way Campaign

Did you know that you can help the Ottawa-Carleton Wildlife Centre through the annual United Way Campaign?

Many people do so but it has been frustrating up until now that charities such as the Centre were not given the names of donors, so we were unable to acknowledge their generosity.

Thankfully, that has changed. If you request the United Way to release your name and/or donation information to the charity that you have allocated your support to, they will do so. However, they do not include contact information, so unless we have it on file, we still can't thank you personally.

We hope you will consider a donation through the United Way Campaign. If you

would like the Centre to be informed of your gift, we suggest you contact the United Way campaign office and specifically ask that your contact information also be provided to us.

### OUR THANKS

OCWC gratefully acknowledges:

*Ruth and Ray Wesenberg  
Wildlife Fund*



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



Special thanks to:

Ryan Kelson, Design - [RyanKelson.com](http://RyanKelson.com)  
and Debbie Lawes, Editor

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