



Ottawa-Carleton Wildlife Centre

CELEBRATING OUR 35TH ANNIVERSARY!

SERVING THE COMMUNITY

Our Changing Relationship with Wildlife



Photo: S. Hansen

We've had the privilege at the OCWC of caring for dozens of species and thousands of wild mammals over the years.

We saw, firsthand, these animals' intelligence along with emotions, similar to ours, of fear, playfulness, trust and loyalty to one another. There was never a doubt that these animals were sentient creatures.

Having advocated for decades for a better understanding and appreciation for all wild species, we are encouraged to see the very positive shift in society's view of wildlife.

In This City

Ottawa residents are challenging environmentally-damaging and inhumane practices, becoming more vocal, as well as educating others. One individual, who spent time during Covid observing a beaver in a local stream, was angry when the City killed the beaver for no justifiable reason. He used the media to call attention to the City's outdated practices and set up an on-line petition that garnered over 19,000 signatures.

Increasingly, neighbourhood groups across the City are joining together and working with our Centre to protect natural features like trees, wetlands and beavers.

Also, more people are turning to the Centre for help on behalf of animals in distress. For foxes with a treatable disease like mange or, skunks, victim to the

thoughtless disposal of plastic cups (story-pg. 7).

Candidates in the recent Municipal Election responded to the Centre's Survey (story-pg. 6) in a much more environmentally knowledgeable and supportive fashion than just four years before.

On the Broader Front

Education and community outreach programs, like the Centre's, are giving people the tools needed to coexist and enjoy wildlife.

Our Centre realized early that 'biodiversity' was too abstract a concept and that animals were the entry point to fueling people's imagination and interest.

This is shown in the remarkable film 'Great Lakes Untamed' <https://www.tvoo.org/programs/great-lakes-untamed>. The film stresses the critical importance of the Great Lakes watershed, holding nearly a quarter of the world's freshwater, and the threats facing it from development and climate change. It is, however, the visual impact and stories of the amazing wildlife, contributed by

Ted Oakes, an Ottawa-born zoologist who's spent more than two decades in England making natural history and wildlife films for the BBC, that captures the viewer.

There is also Richard Louv's newest book 'Our Wild Calling' (story-pg. 8). Louv's landmark book 'Last Child in the Woods' exposed 'nature-deficit disorder', inspiring an international movement to connect children and nature.

Now, Louv redefines the future of human-wildlife coexistence, exploring how strengthening the bonds we share with all creatures will help to transform our lives and save theirs.

Ottawa's Challenge and the Opportunity Presented

The Greenbelt, referred to as an 'Emerald Necklace', along with the large suburban/rural land mass that is part of Ottawa, is home to exceptional wildlife.

Extensive development is having a significant impact on these natural areas. It is, therefore, critical that the City finally implement the long-overdue Wildlife Strategy approved by Council in 2013 to "*facilitate and foster a more harmonious relationship with all wildlife*".

Wildlife like coyotes and black bears will continue to be seen more often. A comprehensive plan (story-pg. 6) that is based on coexistence, as in progressive regions across North America, will give Ottawa residents the ability to enjoy nature rather than live with unwarranted and crippling fear.

Canada Summer Jobs Programs Makes Important Contribution



The Ottawa-Carleton Wildlife Centre would like to sincerely thank Ottawa West-Nepean MP Anita Vandenberg for supporting our organization's application with the Canada Summer Jobs Program in 2022.

The Centre received funding for a Nature Interpreter position. Suzanne Tewnton has

an honours bachelor's degree from Dalhousie University in Environmental Science and Environment Sustainability and worked at the Centre throughout the spring and summer. She really appreciated the opportunity to expand her work experience in the environmental non-profit sector.

Suzanne's excellent work included updating the Centre's website; producing video segments for the Centre's education programs; developing educational activities and helping with the set up of our new Outdoor Centre.

Suzanne felt "working at the Ottawa-Carleton Wildlife Centre was an amazing experience. Not only did she have a lot of fun but also feels that the skills she gained will be helpful in securing future employment."

The Canada Summer Jobs Program is a program that truly makes a difference. Participants receive important work experience while making a valuable contribution to their community and the environment. As a non-profit organization, the impact the position made to the work of the Ottawa-Carleton Wildlife Centre was significant.

Great to Be Back In Person

The Ottawa-Carleton Wildlife Centre has been working for over 35 years on behalf of wildlife and are committed to educating people about wildlife and helping to foster an appreciation for the natural world and the important role all species play in a healthy ecosystem.

Through our Education and Outreach Programs we help people of all ages develop a connection with nature. This connection has many health and social benefits for people of all ages but is critical for youth.

During the stressful times of the pandemic, nature provided a safe reprieve and its positive impact on mental wellness was much needed.

While we are thankful for the online meeting options, as they provided a critical tool for all of us to stay connected, and allowed us to deliver our programs during COVID, we are very excited to be back to in-person programming. We certainly missed engaging with people face-to-face.

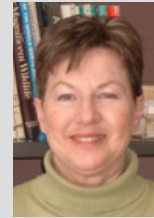
We have been busy visiting schools, youth groups, summer camps as well as hosting groups at the Wildlife Centre. The energy and excitement from the participants is wonderful.



Children always love checking out our hands-on materials such as this beaver puppet.

Editorial

Our Need for Nature



This issue of the newsletter is all about our connection to wildlife. The positive gains that are being made on behalf of wild species around the world

but the considerable distance that the City of Ottawa still has to go in catching up to progressive cities elsewhere. However, with the strong interest by residents in the environment and a new City Council, there is renewed optimism for change in Ottawa.

There is so much that is positive to be gained. We humans are hard-wired to seek out a relationship with other life forms. Edward O. Wilson, Professor Emeritus at Harvard University uses the term 'biophilia' to describe *"the connections that human beings subconsciously seek with the rest of life – that the deep affiliations we have with nature are rooted in our biology"*.

So, it's not surprising that animals are central in our lives – in children's literature and film, often conveying a moral message. Animals are used to educate and entertain us in movies and nature documentaries as well as to engage and sell everything from electronic devices to cars.

All of which gives us a distinct advantage in responding to the urgency around the Climate Crisis and the rapidly-growing awareness that Nature is our most critical ally in this fight.

Donna DuBreuil
President, OCWC

PORKY'S LONG ROAD BACK TO THE WILD

Having had the privilege of caring for so many wild animals, all with special personalities, has reinforced our commitment to giving people a better appreciation of them.

By Donna DuBreuil

Our lack of imagination meant that all baby porcupines we cared for were called “Porky”. Most, however, left lasting memories. This one’s journey back to the wild was long. It began one spring when a dog arrived home with the baby porcupine in its mouth, umbilical cord still attached. Having no idea where to return it, it was brought to the Centre. Solitary (twins are very rare) and defensive, they have an attitude best described as ‘prickly’.

As with all young animals, it is critical to provide for their basic needs of warmth, food and security. For Porky, this meant he had to be cupped in my gloved hand and held firmly against my stomach while a nursing bottle was forced upon him. Normally, the fight lessens after a few feedings but this little fellow was particularly grumpy.

In desperation, by day three I lay down beside him making soft murmuring sounds to mimic the female. His angry little cries and belligerent attacks with his tail finally abated after several hours. When he returned my soft vocalizations, I knew he had accepted me as a poor but necessary substitute mother.

Porky developed well over the summer on his formula and on a diet supplemented with fruit, vegetables, fresh leaves and branches. Even though they are solitary as adults, they are playful and sociable as youngsters. With a burst of uncharacteristic speed, he would throw himself into a spin like a whirling top, instinctively practicing the defensive moves he would use as an adult.

Released on our wooded property in the Fall, we continued to see him over the winter. With spring, his spells away lasted longer and after a period without seeing him, we were sure he had made the final



Porky on arrival, only a few days old

break. However, one day I spotted him and realized he was in trouble. He had a six-inch gash along his back with many broken quills but it was his mouth that required immediate attention.

His upper and lower incisors were broken and infection had taken hold. A regime of flushing the infected area twice daily, along with a course of antibiotics, did little to improve his humour. We nervously waited to see if his teeth would grow back or whether the nerves and roots were permanently damaged.

Our speculation as to what had caused the accident ended when we saw another porcupine swaying precariously, trying to reach the tender new shoots at the end of a high branch. Although capable climbers, porcupines do fall, sustaining serious injuries.

To our great relief, Porky’s teeth did grow back but now the real challenge was to return an animal to the wild that had been in contact with people for over a year.

Gary and I found excellent habitat with his favourite basswood trees, far removed from people. The first attempt at releasing him did not go well as he followed us back along the trail. We persisted but our concern prompted us to make the long drive back each evening to check on him. We increased the time between visits and finally, one night he was no longer there.

Almost two months later, with little expectation of ever seeing him again, we decided to hike in the area. After several hours, we came across a porcupine that wasted no time in climbing a cedar tree when he heard us on the trail. We stopped to watch and after listening to our voices for a few minutes, he cocked his head in our direction. It encouraged me to call “Porky” a few times and to our amazement he responded with his low familiar murmurs.

What followed over the next hour was every rehabilitator’s dream – knowing that all the effort in caring for an animal was to good avail. Porky came down the tree and climbed my leg, munched on his favourite treat of almonds, then stretched out on my shoulder, closed his eyes, and dozed as the setting sun filtered through the woods, with Gary wishing he had brought a camera.



Release day for Porky, ready for the wild

Celebrating the Life of Gary David DuBreuil

Co-Founder Ottawa-Carleton Wildlife Centre

By Donna DuBreuil

On September 8, 2022, a group of family members and close friends got together to celebrate Gary's life, share stories and launch the new Outdoor Centre, named in his honour.

When Gary passed away a year ago, there was an outpouring of affection and fond remembrance.

More than 100 cards, letters and emails were received – one from someone he went to public school with 70 years ago and from the many friends he made in the years since. Some were from people who didn't know Gary personally but admired the contribution he made to helping wildlife and establishing the Centre.

The common thread in all of these touching tributes talked about Gary's genuine warmth, kindness, sense of humour and generosity.

This last year has given us the opportunity to think about how we could best recognize and permanently remember Gary's connection and contribution to the Centre.

We think we found the ideal one in setting up the Outdoor Centre. Because, when the Centre was first built 30 years ago, Gary took on the large task of organizing a small team of volunteers to build the Outdoor Compound and all of the animal caging and several sheds required for the wildlife rehabilitation program.

Transforming this area to serve our current focus on education is so appropriate. And, it is something that would be dear to Gary's heart as he always took the time to talk to and educate people about wildlife.

Kate MacNeil, the Centre's Executive Director, organized Gary's Celebration of Life, creating a great video of Gary and friends, beautifully decorating the Centre along with lots of flowers and an inviting reception. Old friends got to see one another as well as meet others while



enjoying happy memories and some very funny stories.

Liz White, Director of Animal Alliance of Canada and Leader of the Animal Protection Party of Canada came from Toronto as a special guest. Her organization remembered Gary with a generous \$5,000 gift towards the new Outdoor Centre.

Liz cut the ribbon to the new Centre and everyone gathered outside, in what was a lovely early Fall day, to admire the attractive space and talk about the excellent and welcome addition it would provide the Centre's education programs.

Altogether, it was a send off that would have delighted Gary.



Liz White, Director of Animal Alliance cutting ribbon to the Outdoor Centre.

The Launch of the Gary DuBreuil Outdoor Centre



The Outdoor Centre is well equipped with a shade pavilion for all weather challenges.



After a snowshoe trek an inviting place to gather for hot chocolate.

We are very excited to introduce our new Outdoor Centre in memory of Gary and his exceptional contribution to the Ottawa-Carleton Wildlife Centre and his dedication to building a greater understanding and respect for wildlife.

The Outdoor Centre was made possible by the contribution of Public Services and Procurement Canada, Animal Alliance of Canada, and Friends of the Ottawa-Carleton Wildlife Centre.

This Centre will be a great addition for the delivery of our Nature Discovery Workshops, which help people of all ages better understand and appreciate the wildlife they share their spaces with and to promote a connection with nature. The benefits of this connection

are far reaching and have been shown to improve concentration, enhance our mood, lower stress, and promote creativity.

The space will be used year-round for presentations, for introducing children to the importance of protecting our pollinators through planting native seeds and for a place to gather after winter snowshoeing events.

We are fortunate that the Centre's 'backyard' is within the NCC's Greenbelt, with walking trails and a variety of habitats to explore.

Workshops are diverse and are designed to expose people of all ages to the wonders of nature. Some of the topics we

cover include the Importance of Beavers and Wetlands, where younger participants get to try their hand at dam-building using sticks, rocks, and plasticine before heading out to see the beaver lodge on Campus. To witness their joy and excitement at this exposure to nature is a gift as well as an important step in creating future stewards.

For more advanced participants, such as university students, the sessions focus on the important role beavers play and the effectiveness, cost savings and environmental benefits of modern flow devices. It is rewarding to make an impact with students who will soon be working at jobs where they can implement progressive environmental practices.



Get Outside and Play!

We want to help you enjoy Nature near you. Get connected with your family, exercise in a fun way and learn about local species. Through our Lending Library individuals and families can borrow snowshoes, binoculars, and trail maps for free.

The Ottawa-Carleton Wildlife Centre is located in a Core Natural Area in the Greenbelt. These areas are critical to protect the natural environment and the biodiversity living there. Our Campus has

more than 20 mammal species, 130 bird species, and 14 reptile and amphibian species, including some at-risk. For more information visit www.wildlifeinfo.ca

Funding for the Ottawa-Carleton Wildlife Centre's Lending Library was generously provided by the TD Friends of the Environment Foundation.



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YOU MADE YOUR VOTE COUNT!



The 2022 Municipal Election presented a critical opportunity for Ottawa residents to reset the direction of City Council.

Along with people's frustration around failed transportation infrastructure, planning that disregarded

the identity of neighbourhoods and the inertia caused by a divided Council, residents across the City registered unhappiness with outdated and inhumane wildlife practices and the lack of action on the environment and climate crisis.

In response, our Centre chose four actions for our members to seek candidates' position on. We likewise surveyed the candidates on these issues and shared the response with our members:

- A commitment to protect all wetlands, an essential ally in fighting the Climate Crisis.
- Implement policies that finally fulfill the City's Wildlife Strategy to "*facilitate and foster a more harmonious relationship with all wildlife*", approved by Council in 2013. Specifically: A) Stop the trapping and killing of beavers and instead utilize modern flow devices. B) Work with community organizations to develop 'best practices' for living with wildlife.
- Commit to protecting and enhancing Greenspace in recognition of its personal and community health benefit.
- Support the protection of the Greenbelt as a National Urban Park.

We were very pleased with the positive responses received from candidates who have been elected to sit on City Council.

We will be keeping you informed in seeing the City of Ottawa adopt these more progressive policies. Rest assured, we will not allow another decade to elapse with empty promises when there is so much good to be achieved for residents and wildlife.

LIVING WITH COYOTES

As someone who has lost a much-loved pet to a wild animal, I know how heartbreaking it is. But, I hope we don't blame the wild animal as, like my case, it was my responsibility for letting my cat out unattended.

By Donna DuBreuil

The recent announcement that the city is trapping coyotes brought back alarming memories. It was not that many years ago that the city hired a trapper to kill coyotes that inhabited a hydro corridor in Ottawa. The public anger that followed prompted our Centre to join residents in pressuring the city to develop a Wildlife Strategy.

That was a decade ago but the Wildlife Strategy has failed to deliver on the specific actions in the City's commitment to "*living in greater harmony with all wildlife*".

Coyotes have successfully adapted to living in major cities throughout North America. We need to adopt measures to coexist with them, as they are not going away. The City has given presentations to a number of communities about coyote behaviour along with tips to avoid conflicts. Missing, however, is a Comprehensive Plan.

Coyotes have lived in natural areas throughout the City for many years. It is the impact of extensive development in our suburban communities that is causing them to be more visible. When we eliminate a wooded area, alter a hydro corridor, build a municipal drain, or extreme weather destroys natural habitat, coyotes and other wildlife are forced to alter their denning and foraging habits to survive. They won't just disappear.

We need to be proactive by factoring wildlife in when development changes are **planned**, rather than purely reactive when the inevitable wildlife conflict happens. Wildlife-sensitive planning is one of the four recommendations, noted in the story on the Municipal Election, that we will be pressing City Council to address in the new term.

Having a Comprehensive Plan will help to inform residents, in advance, so that they can anticipate potential conflicts. Targeted education around times of the



Courtesy Michael Davies

year and times of the day when risk of conflict is greater, including why, should be part of the Plan.

Given the use of security cameras by people, images of a coyote on or around their property at night, should **not** be cause for concern. It's important not to confuse such sightings with bolder, regular appearances during the day. In the case of the latter, a plan of hazing should be carried out by the city early and consistently.

With 35 years of experience and more than 100,000 wildlife conflict calls, our Centre knows Ottawa residents feel empowered by having the right information, tools and support to living with and enjoying wildlife.

Skunk Rescue 101



By Kate MacNeil

The Centre gets an increasing number of calls each year from residents seeking help for wild animals in distress. In cases where an animal has mange, we provide the medication and work with them to set up a feeding regime so they can dose the animal through food.

This spring, two neighbours reached out for help to treat a family of foxes, including the pups. We know from hard experience having treated a family of foxes that live near the Centre, that this takes a great deal of time, patience, and luck.

These homeowners went above and beyond, monitoring the foxes and their foraging times to target each animal with their dose. After many weeks, and much work they were successful in treating the family.

Unfortunately, the celebration was short lived. Soon after they noticed a skunk coming to the backyard with a plastic dome lid from Iced Capp or McFlurry cups, around its neck. We have been working on this issue for some time, as it is lethal for wildlife and is easily prevented by removing and crushing the lid.

These dedicated wildlife heroes were up for another challenge. We dropped off a live trap and it was wired open to get the

skunk comfortable entering to eat. This was a success, and they even had the time narrowed down to just before dawn.

The decision was made in mid September to set the trap and capture the skunk, they would text me if they were successful. I woke at 5 a.m. in anticipation. I got my 'skunk outfit' ready, scrubs, yellow rubber gloves, safety glasses and rubber boots.

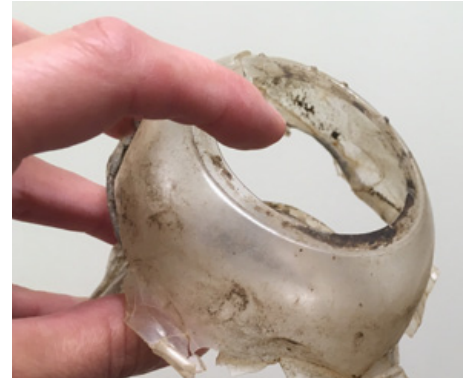
Of course, the skunk did not come. Worry started to set in for everyone, but we would keep trying.

The second time was a charm. The next morning I got my outfit and tools. I had given this a lot of thought and decided it would be less stressful for the skunk if I could get the collar off while it was in the trap without taking it to the Centre. Plus, less likely that my car would get sprayed!

I had very long needle-nosed pliers and long-handled scissors to reach into the trap. The trap was covered in towels. Sometimes skunks will fall asleep in the trap, especially after a long night, but no luck, our patient was bright-eyed and bushy-tailed.

I sat next to the skunk and talked quietly and put in the tools for it to smell them. The pliers were not quite long enough to reach the plastic collar, so I had to push the scissors in one side so the skunk moved to the other. After several attempts, I was able to grab the collar with the pliers. I then used the scissors and started cutting. I was feeling pretty good until I realized there was not one but two collars around the skunk.

The homeowners were anxiously watching and when I pulled the collar out they were so excited, I gave them the thumbs down and held up 2 fingers, indicating a second collar. After some time for the skunk to relax, I tried again. As I was cutting the second one away, the poor thing was pulling and turning trying to get out of the collar. It was such a relief to get the



Lids that are found on dome cups from restaurants like Tim Hortons and McDonald's can be lethal to wildlife.

second one off and to see no damage to the skunk's neck. If left on it can become infected from the plastic ring making it hard to forage and eat.

I wired the cage open and had a quick peak in and saw a raised tail and prominent backside. This was the closest sign it gave to spraying. The skunk had been more than tolerant of the situation, almost as if it knew I was helping it. But now it was time to get moving. It ran out of the trap and into the hedge. Everyone gave a cheer that the skunk rescue was a success.

Thanks to Our Supporters

OCWC gratefully acknowledges:

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Newsletter Layout and Design, Ryan Kelson

Celebrating the Greenbelt

The Ottawa-Carleton Wildlife Centre works hard to protect our valuable Greenbelt and we thought it would be nice to engage the community in celebrating it. Our Centre is located on the Greenbelt, and we deliver much of our programming here. We are amazed at the diversity of species that call this area home.

We work closely with the nearby communities of Crystal Beach and Lakeview, which are adjacent to the Greenbelt, and get many exciting reports from residents of wildlife in their backyards, including White-tailed Deer, Great-Blue Herons, Red Fox and Ermine.

This summer we held a Photo Contest, asking participants to share their nature moments in the Greenbelt. We received many entries and were impressed with the variety of photos.

We are pleased to announce our winner, Paula Brown, and share one of her amazing submissions. Here is what she had to say:



"Photographing nature is a remarkable experience for me each and every time! There are so many words to describe the event such as meditative, harmonious, calming, tranquil, relaxing, and restorative. I have been photographing the natural world for many years and Mother Nature is exquisite in every season. In nature, nothing is perfect but everything is perfect. Enjoy!"

'Our Wild Calling'

By Donna DuBreuil

'Our Wild Calling' is a wonderful blend of reportage, personal stories and cutting-edge science.

It is the personal stories that resonate. Stories about the remarkable abilities of so many wild species; scientists who have moved on from their earlier fear of being judged anthropomorphic; indigenous culture's spiritual connection to wildlife and the lessons it teaches us; the creation of nature-friendly cities around the world that are being designed for species coexistence.

The book has lots of delightful stories. One, where farmers in India wore face masks on the backs of their heads to deter tiger attacks from the rear. Louv says, *"it's difficult to imagine pro-*

Richard Louv's newest book, *Our Wild Calling*, is heralded as a "Powerful Summons – reconnecting with animals is a remedy for much of what ails modern life, including loneliness and boredom"

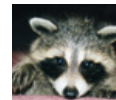
TECTIVE backward facing masks catching on in most parts of the urban world (except, perhaps, at corporate meetings). In any case, tigers soon caught on to the ruse."

'Our Wild Calling' explores the powerful and mysterious bonds we share with all living creatures, and how strengthening them can transform our mental, physical and spiritual lives and help us tap into the empathy required to preserve life on Earth.



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