



Ottawa-Carleton Wildlife Centre

SERVING THE COMMUNITY FOR OVER 35 YEARS

Providing a Voice For Wildlife – Coexistence The Goal



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.

The first of these Bear cubs to arrive at the Centre, many years ago, weighed just 23 pounds. He was found on a nearby golf course, living on cat food put out by concerned staff. The second, an unrelated cub, came in just a few days later, having been rescued from a tree at an apple orchard. He was a bit larger at 35 pounds but neither would have survived winter given that their metabolism requires a weight of at least 60 pounds to trigger a dormancy response.

The bears couldn't have been more different in personality. The smaller, whom we named Pokey, was very assertive and wary, quickly becoming the dominant cub, while the other fellow reminded us of Marty Feldman, the British comedian with prominent eyes and a goofy laid-back personality.

Already mid-November, volunteers worked frantically to reinforce an existing large outdoor cage and build an insulated 'den' big enough to shelter the two cubs. However,

Pokey claimed the den and let out fierce growls whenever 'Marty' tried to enter.

Well into December now, with the weather getting much colder, we were concerned that we'd have to build a separate den for Marty. Not that he wasn't trying. Each day, Marty delicately moved his backside a few inches further into the den, a silly expression on his face that said "maybe he won't notice". Pokey continued to growl his displeasure. Finally, one morning, after a bitterly cold night, we were relieved to find that Marty

had finally been accepted as a roommate, the two snoring peacefully inside the warm den.

They ate voraciously – large bowls filled with dog kibble, meat, fruits and nuts – until they had put on sufficient weight to go into dormancy in late January and did not come back out of their den until mid-March. Again, they were ravenous, consuming up to eight large bowls of food a day. Although bears are often depicted as large threatening carnivores, their food preferences were decidedly vegetarian – romaine lettuce being a favourite, followed by fruits and nuts with meat way down on the list.

Pokey loved to bluff by sitting on top of his nest box, waiting for someone to step into the cage with bowls of food when he would let out a loud 'woof' and watch with satisfaction as the person nearly fell over backwards getting out of the cage. Marty, on the other hand, would amble over to the side of the cage to enjoy a drink from the water hose.

By mid-June they had tripled in weight, had luxurious dark coats and were ready for their independence. It was a special day as they were transported, with the help of NCC conservation officers, deep into the wilderness. We watched as they cautiously left the cage and headed for some trees with the hope it would be a safe new home for them.

LEARNING FROM PAST MISTAKES

These Bear cubs were 'created' orphans when separated from their mothers by human actions that should not and need not have happened.

A particularly dry summer that year with few acorns and berries meant a severe food shortage for bears that have only a short summer to gain enough weight to see them through a long winter dormancy. Adults had to extend their range into semi-developed areas to take advantage of backyard crab apple trees and bird feeders.

Instead of providing helpful educational tips to homeowners, bears were trapped and relocated, leaving behind dozens of orphaned cubs that year. Female bears are cautious and protective of their cubs, sending them scrambling for the nearest tree when there is any threat. That is where the cubs stayed as their mothers were trapped and carted away.

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Release Day

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When the manpower resources of the wildlife agencies involved in relocating bears were depleted, they turned to more sensible and less harmful solutions. Calls from anxious residents were handled by calming fears and providing information on what people should and should not do. It was successful in that no further bears had to be relocated and there were no incidents that posed any threat to the public.

What this means for a more progressive Wildlife Strategy in 2023

The lessons learned, more than two decades ago, must be applied to the current Wildlife Strategy Review.

The overreaction, as happened in Kanata this past spring, resulted in a young bear being unnecessarily killed. Other bears were relocated. Moving bears that live on the Greenbelt to unfamiliar distant counties, where they will face competition for the same limited food supply, compromises their survival, particularly when they are relocated to counties holding spring and fall bear hunts.

Past and present experience means that we need an intelligent and transparent Large Mammal Response (see page 5 of the newsletter) for species such as bears that relies heavily on public education.

What was proven this past spring is that Ottawa residents want an informed and progressive approach. After the controversial killing and relocation of bears by the City this spring, people took matters into their own hands. They shared information on social media about bear sightings, urging their neighbours to put bird feeders away and garbage out only on the day of collection, saying *“Let’s get it right this time and give these bears a fighting chance.”* The City needs to put in place a sensible and proactive education program.

Editorial



The saying that ‘people lead, government follows’ seems more accurate each day and, actually, that’s how it should be in a democracy.

There has been a particularly strong shift when it comes to people’s concern about the environment and climate change, reinforced by the devastating natural disasters we are seeing first-hand in Canada.

It’s not surprising, therefore, that advocacy organizations are joining together to advance ‘common cause’ issues around sustainability and a growing number of individuals in the community are reaching out to our Centre. Many are unhappy about outdated environmental and wildlife practices that are having an impact in their neighbourhood and they want to see change.

We have heard from politicians that less than half the public show any interest in local government, many not bothering to vote. That may well be true but that still leaves a lot of people who are very engaged and expect elected officials and city staff to advance progressive environmental and biodiversity policies.

The newsletter highlights the positive environmental leadership of the federal government while outing the recent outrageous attack by the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry (MNRF) on wildlife and community volunteers – all to keep funding flowing to its wasteful rabies program, the least human risk disease in North America.

As for the City of Ottawa, several public Information Sessions and the recommendations outlined on pages 4 and 5 of this newsletter make it clear that Ottawa residents want to see a modern Wildlife Strategy, one that is based on coexistence and reflects their values.

Donna DuBreuil
President

New Federal Initiative Launched

Resilient, Connected Landscapes Will Counter Effects of Climate Change, Biodiversity Loss



Anita Vandenbeld, MP Ottawa West-Nepean, Steven Guilbeault, Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Catherine Grenier, President and CEO Nature Conservancy of Canada and Andrew Campbell, Senior Vice President of Operations, Parks Canada

"Conservation in Canada goes beyond simply protecting isolated pockets of nature. It also involves understanding the importance of ecological connectivity," said Minister Guilbeault.

The Program is a collaboration between Parks Canada (PC) and the Nature Conservancy of Canada (NCC) that will conserve 30,000 hectares of forests, wetlands, shoreline areas and grasslands near Canada's iconic National Parks.

A total of \$30 million (\$15 million from Parks Canada to be leveraged by the Nature Conservancy to raise an additional \$15 million) will be invested to strengthen landscape resiliency in these areas and create connected pathways for the movement and dispersal of wildlife.

"It is part of Canada's commitment to conserving 30 per cent its land and water by 2030 under the United Nations Convention on Biodiversity," said Minister Guilbeault.



Anita Vandenbeld, MP Ottawa West-Nepean, a champion of the successful wetland restoration carried out on the Carling Campus, spoke about the role played by the Centre in bringing multiple partners together as an *"excellent example of what can be accomplished when government works directly with the community to protect our natural world."*

The Ottawa-Carleton Wildlife Centre was the site of an outdoor press conference this Fall when federal Environment Minister, Steven Guilbeault, unveiled a new initiative, the Landscape Resiliency Program.

For the Love of Learning

We are excited to announce that our Children's Library, For the Love of Learning, is all set up and ready to go! This initiative was inspired by a long-time supporter who gifted us some wonderful treasures including many lovely books. Although some found a home in our main library, there were books about animals that she had kept since her childhood. Hearing about this early exposure to nature, very much influenced by her mother, through books and how it inspired her love of the natural world really resonated.

The donor's collection inspired the idea of a space at the Wildlife Centre dedicated to a Children's Library, with a lending component for some items to be signed out. This will allow us to showcase these special books as well as share some of the games, puzzles, and nature magazines we have acquired over the years.

Items are available at no cost, much like our Snowshoe Lending Library. It will be a nice

complement to our Education Programs when children visit the Centre, further enriching their experience.

At a time when acquiring more and more things seems to be the norm, we love the idea that children will have access without having to purchase or collect more stuff.

Items were donated with pleasure from the family in loving memory of a Mum who was curious about the world around her, inspired by the voices of the time like Rachel Carson and our wonderful Dr. David Suzuki, along with loving animals of all sizes from her own childhood. She was fortunate to be involved with other curious people who left no doubt that there were many



What was previously used as our 'Squirrel Nursery' is now filled with comfortable spaces, books, games, crafts, puzzles and nature magazines.

questions to ask along with many situations that needed to be resolved for the environment and all who live on our planet...and beyond.

We are excited to not only connect children to the wonders of nature but also to help foster a curiosity and love of learning, hopefully, creating a place to foster tomorrow's stewards. Thank you to two very special women!

AN UPDATE ON THE WILDLIFE STRA

Although the Wildlife Strategy Review was supposed to go to the Environment and Climate Change Committee for consideration this November, it has been postponed.

And, frankly, we believe a delay is a good thing as it is critical for Ottawa to get it right this time around. Particularly, as we were told the delay is so that staff can review and respond to the recommendations submitted by the Centre.

The recommendations made by community organizations for a progressive Wildlife Strategy a decade ago were ignored in a process that was derailed by hunting and trapping interests, political interference, and staff obstruction.

To avoid this happening again, we have been providing Position Papers on the basic elements required for what councillors have said they want to see: *“a revised Wildlife Strategy that reflects modern day practices to coexist with wildlife in our city.”*

Below is a summary of these Position Papers and their recommendations:

What Councillors Need to Know:

Avoiding the pitfalls that occurred in 2010-13. FOI documents show how the process was derailed by the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry and agriculture interests that are distinct from that of urban residents together with staff obstruction and an on-going concern about the City's lack of transparency.



Worth a Dam

Beavers Will Be the Test: Ottawa cannot state it is committed to coexistence and still trap and kill 150 beavers a year. Particularly, when the science is strongly opposed and there are examples of a growing number of other cities using proven and cost-effective alternatives. **Recommendation:** 1) The City must calculate the amount of time/cost that staff (including equipment) are currently spending doing repetitive maintenance 2) Hold a meeting for a flow device expert to discuss the advantages of this technology with city staff and the public.



Credit: Michael Davies

Living with Coyotes: The senseless killing of coyotes in Ottawa in 2022 resulted in the public demand for a more progressive approach. **Recommendation:** 1) Discontinue 'sighting reports' that promote unwarranted fear 2) Omit subjective terms such as 'habituation' 3) Adopt proven strate-

gies used in cities like Toronto, Oakville and Niagara Falls built around public education and detailed response guidelines.



Credit: S. Hansen

Eco-Passages are a Key Ingredient:

With extensive natural areas such as the Greenbelt, roads are resulting in increased wildlife mortality. **Recommendation:** 1) Adopt wildlife-sensitive planning measures to include eco-passages, turtle fencing and flow devices on March Valley Road, where massive stormwater infrastructure is being built in a wetland area that is home to Blanding's turtles 2) Consult the City of Edmonton on its Wildlife Engineering Design Guidelines and its Natural Conservation Strategy Plan where conservation is integrated into all the City's decision-making processes.

Public Education: It is essential for a Wildlife Strategy that is based on coexistence to have a comprehensive Public Education and Community Outreach Program. **Recommendation:** 1) Focus on the general public; provide conflict prevention tools and use consistent 'key messages' to build understanding and respect for wild species 2) Partner with established wildlife organizations to ensure widest, most helpful and most cost-effective dissemination of information.

CITY OF OTTAWA

WILDLIFE STRATEGY REVIEW



Large Mammal Response: The City's response has been long-criticized as 'secretive and unaccountable' and acknowledged, a decade ago, that this "ad hoc approach was not sustainable." **Recommendation:** 1) NCC must be the lead as its experienced conservation officers are trained and fully equipped to assess, treat and handle large mammals 2) Protocol must clearly outline the specific roles of the NCC, City By-law and Police 3) Relocation, only as a last resort, and then always back to the nearest natural area.



Forest destroyed during birthing season

Protocol for the Protection of Wildlife during Construction: The Protocol developed in 2015 was gutted when it was reduced to a guideline only after pressure from the development industry. **Recommendation:** 1) Protocol must revert to its original intent with required conditions 2) Living creatures, that feel pain and suffering,

must be given the same protection as trees as required under the City's Tree Conservation Report for all Plans of Subdivision and Site Plan Control 3) Clear-cutting a forest should not take place in winter as hibernating animals will be crushed by heavy equipment in underground dens or killed when trees are felled while others, losing their nests, dens and food caches, will freeze or starve to death.

Working with the Community: A progressive Wildlife Strategy will depend on the willingness of city staff to work with the community. The previous city administration was closed, defensive and inward looking. Mayor Sutcliffe has indicated that "increasing trust, transparency and accountability is an enormous priority for him."

Recommendation: 1) Staff chosen to implement a modern Wildlife Strategy need to have the right skill sets, an up-to-date understanding of current science and a desire to make a difference 2) Staff need to see residents and community organizations as an ally and potential partner, not an obstacle to be avoided 3) First step is to put the City's Employee Directory back up on line. Its removal hides and insulates the city from the public and sends a message that staff don't want to hear from residents.

Adopting 'Best Practices': The City of Ottawa has resisted working with stakeholder organizations and reaching out to other cities to consult and adopt 'best practices'. The Centre has worked with a number of cities that have developed 'best practices' in protecting wildlife and the environment, including with the federal government on the Campus where the Centre is

located. **Recommendation:** 1) Consult with those cities that have put in place proven, successful and cost-saving solutions to what are universal municipal challenges 2) collaborate with and engage residents in a committed and consistent manner, rather than solely in a reactive fashion after a controversy.



Carling Campus Stormwater Pond with Beaver Lodge

Finally, a Progressive Wildlife Strategy in Ottawa?

The jury is still out. We encourage everyone to review the detailed Position Papers and their key recommendations at www.wildlifeinfo.ca – see 'What's New'. They reflect what we have heard from you and others over the years.

We will need to continue to work together to ensure that these 9 very basic, essential elements are included this time around, if there is to finally be a modern Wildlife Strategy in Ottawa.

Nature Interns Bring a Fresh Perspective

Thanks to the Canada Summer Jobs Program and the support of Ottawa West-Nepean MP Anita Vandenberg, the Centre received funding for two Nature Intern Positions this summer. As a small non-profit organization, the impact of these positions made a significant contribution. They helped with a wide variety of tasks including updating the Centre's website, designing education materials as well as other various administrative tasks.



Avery Mack is a Biology student at Bishops' University and is also the captain of the women's golf team. Though she originally planned to pursue a focus in Health Science, she became very interested in Environmental Science in her second year and was very pleased to find the opportunity at the Ottawa Carleton Wildlife Centre.



Kathryn Wu recently graduated from the University of Waterloo with an Honours Co-op degree in Environment, Resources and Sustainability, and a diploma in Ecological Restoration and Rehabilitation. Having an interest in wildlife rehabilitation, the job at the OCWC immediately intrigued her. She was interested in the Centre's programs and how we transitioned into focusing on education.

"Every day at the center was different which I found really exciting! I was constantly learning new things through the work that I was doing researching species and habitats. This was my favorite aspect of the job. I came to really appreciate the importance of education and how difficult it can be to educate a broader audience."

I also really enjoyed being able to walk around the Campus, exploring the stormwater ponds, looking at the flow devices, and seeing the restored wetlands.

I am so grateful for this experience, having learned so much, and can truly say that I will be taking away a wealth of knowledge!"

"Each day I found I was learning new information—which I would share at home—and I loved the fact that I was still learning even after graduation. I also really enjoyed the variety of tasks, both inside and outside."

Having bused into work, I appreciated that I got to start each workday with an early morning hike on the trails around the Centre and seeing the high degree of biodiversity present on Campus.

I really appreciated the dynamic we all shared—while it was a small team, it was full of amazing people! With Covid having affected all of my co-op jobs, resulting in working remotely the majority of the time, I thoroughly enjoyed working in-person at the Centre. "

We are grateful to the Canada Summer Jobs and to Kathryn and Avery. Not only did they both make a valuable contribution to the work of the Centre and the environment, but we also appreciated their energy, enthusiasm and collaborating with them on projects!

Stillwater – Celebrating a Restored Wetland

Jon Stuart is a fine art photographer who we mentioned in our last issue. He received a certificate of appreciation for his amazing work in capturing the transformation of the Wetland Restoration on Campus.

Jon graduated from the School of the Photographic Arts. Jon uses photography to collect and process evidence, which he uses to reveal meaning and sublimity in the seemingly ordinary. Jon was formerly an accident investigator, and he employs these skills to inform and guide his practice.

We attended Jon's recent exhibition at the Shenkman Arts Centre entitled 'Stillwater', and although we had seen versions of the images before, walking into to the space was breathtaking.

The images, some measuring more than 6 feet X 8 feet, were so vivid and highly detailed, you felt you were walking in the wetland. This is the result of a large format

camera but also his skill, technique, and vision for the space.

The artist's talk was accompanied by congratulations from Ottawa West-Nepean MP Anita Vandenberg, who spoke of the wonderful partnerships between the community and government in making this Wetland Restoration Project such a success.

Jennifer Lamoureux, the Aquatic Biologist for the project also gave an engaging and informative talk about the importance of wetlands, the work done to restore this degraded space and how its function has vastly improved.

As one of the many partners on the project, we were very moved by Jon's interest in the project and the fact he applied his considerable talent in not only capturing the Stillwater Creek Wetland Restoration, but also in celebrating it.



More information about Jon's wonderful work can be found at jonstuartprints.com

Ottawa-Carleton Wildlife Centre and Animal Alliance of Canada call for an independent investigation of abuse of power at Ministry of Natural Resources

Unwarranted seizure of baby raccoons isn't first time ministry has targeted a wildlife sanctuary

On Sept. 26th, 40-50 Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry (MNRF) conservation officers and police, along with a canine unit, drones and a helicopter raided Mally's Third Chance Raccoon Rescue and Rehabilitation Centre. They seized nearly 100 juvenile raccoons, along with personal vehicles, cell phones and computers. What could possibly justify this extreme and costly use of force against a charity caring for baby animals? Despite the pleading of volunteers, animals were left in small cages without any water for the entire day, while the MNRF conservation officers enjoyed a catered lunch.

This reckless display of force has left many in Ottawa with a sickening sense of déjà vu.

"I can't believe this is happening again," said Donna DuBreuil, president of the Ottawa-Carleton Wildlife Centre (OCWC). "In 2002, ministry officials, escorted by police who later told us they were embarrassed to have been involved, descended on our centre and seized 34 baby raccoons. Sadly, we know first-hand the trauma that Mally's staff and volunteers are experiencing."

The pretence behind the seizure of the OCWC's animals was rabies. It followed an arbitrary decision by MNRF to extend the high-risk zone for rabies north into Ottawa and well beyond.

This unprecedented show of force against a wildlife sanctuary, staffed mostly by young female interns, fueled public outrage that kept the controversy in the media for months. It also prompted the OCWC, using Access to Information, to uncover what was really behind the raid.

Follow the money

"As they say, when something doesn't make sense, follow the money. We found that a significant \$815,000 grant from the federal Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council for the study of the spread of raccoon rabies and the supporting expansion of the high-risk zone in Ontario was at risk," said DuBreuil. "It would be hard to justify this grant given that, just before its approval, raccoon rabies had been all but eliminated in Ontario, with only a few cases remaining, none near Ottawa."

"The unwarranted expansion of the raccoon rabies high-risk zone and the seizure of baby raccoons from our centre in Ottawa became a convenient and well-timed crisis to bolster the case for the grant," she added.

MNRF was a major partner in the four-year project. The baby raccoons seized from the OCWC were taken to the Ministry's research facility in Codrington, Ontario. What happened to these animals can only be left to one's imagination.

"Two decades later, this same Ministry continues to abuse its power to terrorize community volunteers and threaten innocent animals. It wasn't supposed to be like this," said Liz White, Director, Animal Alliance of Canada. "Ontario's Environmental Bill of Rights [EBR]



was designed to ensure public consultation on government initiatives and programs, but MNRF found a workaround."

Citing a rabies "emergency" that never was in 2002, MNRF applied for and received an exemption from the EBR for its Wildlife Rabies Control Program. That exemption allowed them to expand the rabies high risk zone into Ottawa with zero public oversight.

MNRF would continue to seek and receive such exemptions for more than 20 years, with the current one in place until 2025. The exemption effectively shuts out any accountability for taxpayer funding of rabies control, and flies in the face of evidence showing that rabies is the least risk human health disease in North America, thanks to pet vaccination.

"Premier Doug Ford has a responsibility to rein in the rogue activities of the MNRF," said White. "In addition to the huge waste of taxpayer dollars, the organized attack on young healthy animals at Mally's raises the question of who exactly is in charge of this Ministry?"

As a first step, the OCWC and Animal Alliance call on Premier Ford to order a return of the animals to Mally's and issue an apology to the organization and, especially, the community. It was members of the community that sought help for these orphaned baby animals and who were, without doubt, very grateful that Mally's was there to help.

"The time for a full independent investigation of MNRF's ongoing abuse of power and intimidation of wildlife rehabilitation sanctuaries is long overdue," said DuBreuil. "The public deserves answers about where the animals are being held and what is being done to them. Along with an accounting for the unwarranted taxpayer dollars being spent on rabies research in Ontario that many believe is behind this Ministry's actions."

Celebrating Biodiversity with our National Defence Neighbours



We were excited to connect with our National Defence neighbours on the Carling Campus this Fall for a fun nature themed day to promote United Way Giving.

Participants enjoyed a Nature Treasure Hunt around the trails and Naturalized Storm-water Ponds on Campus. It was great to showcase the Campus' rich biodiversity and celebrate the remarkable stewardship projects that the Centre has helped to established.

Our Popular Education Programs Reach Many

The OCWC remains dedicated to helping people of all ages discover, enjoy, and protect our natural environment.

The summer meant we had more time to participate in events like summer camps, environmental fairs and even the first West Side Pride event, held in Stittsville, ON. This event was intended to celebrate Pride in the suburbs and brought in guests from Stittsville and Kanata as well as from outlying areas such as Kinburn, Arnprior, and Renfrew. It was a great day, and we are glad we could be a part of it.

With school back in session and youth groups starting up for the season, demand for our Education Programs is in full swing.

Consider exploring the trails around the Wildlife Centre on snowshoes this winter by taking advantage of our Nature Lending Library, where equipment can be signed out for no cost. Information can be found on our website: www.wildlifeinfo.ca

You Can Help Support the OCWC Through the United Way Giving Campaign

Designating a donation through the United Way Campaign is a great way to support the work of the Ottawa-Carleton Wildlife Centre.



As a small volunteer organization, we are feeling the pressure of increased Program demands and limited funding. We appreciate your consideration in supporting our Programs that work on behalf of biodiversity and habitat protection as well as connecting people of all ages to nature.

Please ensure that your canvasser notes our full name and charitable registration number on your donation form: Ottawa-Carleton Wildlife Centre # 13224-0284-RR0001

Thanks to Our Supporters

OCWC gratefully acknowledges:

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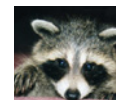
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OCWC Website www.wildlifeinfo.ca