



Ottawa-Carleton Wildlife Centre

Newsletter

A Comprehensive Approach to Helping Wildlife



Wildlife are facing major difficulties in Canada. Urban sprawl is responsible for significant habitat loss and fragmentation, leaving animals cut-off from food sources, hunting and breeding grounds and left to face the deadly consequences of having to navigate an ever-expanding network of roads.

Urbanization also contributes to the 'disconnection' between people and the natural world, fuelling the lack of understanding about wildlife and prompting irrational fear. According to one columnist, "our view of nature has turned upside down. We are increasingly viewing our own native wildlife as interlopers".

Development leads to human-wildlife conflicts, with animals almost always on the losing end. Wildlife is further exploited by the unwarranted fear-mongering of commercial interests that promote wildlife

control, sport hunting or research into little-risk wildlife diseases.

The outdated approach of managing on the basis of 'single species' rather than an 'ecosystem' approach that recognizes that everything in nature is connected, will continue to result in bad decisions.

Addressing the Cause of the Problem

Because the challenges facing wildlife are so significant, the Ottawa-Carleton Wildlife Centre has decided on a multi-pronged response on a number of fronts. While the cornerstone of the Centre's work will continue to focus on education through its Wildlife Education School and Community Outreach Programs, it is increasingly involved in partnerships to tackle specific problems more directly.

This involves working with other environmental and animal welfare organizations to develop and promote progressive strategies for dealing with wildlife concerns. We have found that there is a need for a strong voice on behalf of wildlife as too often discussion on the environment focuses entirely on human needs and disregards other species.

The Centre's goal is to build coalitions among broad interests to challenge outdated, inhumane and ineffective policies. It is working to promote wildlife-sensitive planning, habitat protection and prevention and education strategies that respond humanely to wildlife conflicts rather than using lethal means.

As part of the Ontario Wildlife Coalition, the Centre has worked tirelessly these past number of years to see a progressive wildlife rehabilitation service reinstated in Ontario. It has had the exceptional support of many of you along with the voices of thousands of others across the province. We are pleased to say that the McGuinty government has listened and that the Minister of Natural Resources, Donna Cansfield, is providing the leadership to see these concerns addressed.

Minister Cansfield has devoted substantial time in listening to the concerns of many of us at a multi-stakeholder discussion she hosted in November on wildlife issues. It was a very successful meeting that has led to the recent announcement by the Minister that she will form a 'Minister's Multi-stakeholder Wildlife Rehabilitation Advisory Committee' to make recommendations on wildlife rehabilitation and related human-wildlife matters. We will continue to keep you posted on this very positive development.

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Editorial

Reaching Out - Forming Relationships



Our newsletter, which is double in size this issue, highlights an important milestone for the Centre. After three years of building new programs and new relationships, there is a lot of news to share with you. A Wildlife

Education School Program which continues to grow in popularity. A Community Outreach Program that attracts an increasingly varied number of community groups and organizations with people ranging in age from 6 to 80 who want to learn more about local wildlife.

There is an exciting new website to tell you about. One that will continue to offer sound advice on solving human-wildlife conflicts in an effective and humane way but that now also focuses on the wonderful benefits of having abundant wildlife and natural areas to enjoy in this region. The site provides some interesting facts about wildlife that you may not have known.

This issue gives us an opportunity to celebrate people like Ruth and Ray Wesenberg from British Columbia whose generosity and vision with respect to wildlife transcends provincial borders.

But, this issue is also about showing how important it is to reach out and form partnerships with environmental, animal protection and veterinary interests to give wildlife a voice. Whether working with the Ontario Wildlife Coalition, the Greenbelt Coalition of Canada's Capital Region, Animal Alliance and Environment Voters, the Ottawa Eco-Stewardship Fair Planning Committee or with members of the community who are concerned about a wildlife issue in their neighbourhood, joining together on behalf of common objectives to find solutions is the key.

In fact, it is essential if we are to encourage attitudes about wildlife and our natural world that are based on understanding and respect rather than indifference and irrational fear.

Donna DuBreuil
President, OCWC

Affecting Change Through Education

The Ottawa-Carleton Wildlife Centre's Education and Outreach Programs are working with people of all ages to help instill an appreciation and understanding about urban wildlife.

- Through our Wildlife Education School Program we have given close to one hundred in-class presentations to more than 3,000 students in grades JK-8. These students learn about the amazing animals they share their spaces with and are taught that all people have a responsibility to co-exist with nature.
- Our Outreach Programs are visiting summer camps, government agencies, community sustainability fairs, local libraries, seniors groups and university environmental clubs to talk about biodiversity issues, coexisting with wildlife and habitat conservation. The Centre believes everyone has the right to learn about nature and to enjoy its wonders.
- The Centre's newly developed In-Centre Nature Discovery Workshops will expose children first-hand to the wonders of nature. The Centre is ideally located within the Greenbelt and offers acres of diverse habitats to explore.



Members of the Almonte Home Support Hikers Program visited the Wildlife Centre this past fall. One of the participants said they "appreciated learning about wildlife and how critical the natural world is to our survival, it was a very rewarding experience."

TD Friends of the Environment Foundation supports Centre's Wildlife Education Efforts

A grant of close to \$5,000 from the TD Friends of the Environment Foundation will assist the Centre's Wildlife Education School and Community Outreach Programs. "These programs target students, homeowners and the broad community, providing an understanding of wildlife and the practical tools for living in harmony with nature", says Kate MacNeil, the Centre's Education Coordinator.



The TD Friends of the Environment Foundation, one of Canada's longest-serving environmental charities, has reached a major milestone in the Ottawa area by providing funding to over 500 local environmental and wildlife projects. Since 1990, the Ottawa Chapter of TD FEF has granted more than \$1.4 million in funding to 514 projects in the area.

"We're a national organization with a grassroots focus, and our goal is to work with people who want to preserve and protect the environment in their own backyard," says Matthew Fortier, Regional Manager, Ontario North and East Regions, TD Friends of the Environment Foundation.

The Ruth & Ray Wesenberg Wildlife Fund

When asked why someone living on the West Coast would support a wildlife centre in Ottawa, Ruth Wesenberg replied: *"I like the education work that the Ottawa-Carleton Wildlife Centre is doing. We have to teach the next generation to understand and respect wildlife and the natural world. If not for programs like this, how will it get done?"*

A Vancouver couple have made a major gift of close to \$70,000 to establish the Ruth and Ray Wesenberg Wildlife Fund at the Ottawa-Carleton Wildlife Centre.

"The gift, which has been endowed, will be of great assistance in helping us deliver the Centre's increasingly important and popular Wildlife Education Programs, particularly during these difficult economic times", says Donna DuBreuil, President.

Like many families, the Wesenberg's have different interests. Ray's lean towards helping people, particularly within the health field, with a recent major gift to the Vancouver General Hospital. Ruth's charitable inclinations favour animal organizations. Each year, they jointly support one of their favourite charities. This year, it was Ruth's turn and she chose to support the Centre.

A life long love for animals, both domestic and wild, prompted Ruth Wesenberg, almost 20 years ago, to forward a gift to the Ottawa-Carleton Wildlife Centre. The gift was made in memory of Donna's favourite aunt, also a great animal lover, who died in 1989. It came about because Ruth is a close friend of Donna's cousin, Sharon, who had suggested the Centre. Ruth has been a member and supporter ever since.

Ruth inherited her interest in animals quite naturally. Her father had a grocery store at the edge of town in Calgary. Although their house was small, stray animals were never turned away. They always had numerous dogs and cats and even chickens. The family moved

to Vancouver when Ruth was 10 years old, where they continued to rescue and care for unwanted animals.

Over the years, caring for a family and developing their businesses took up much of Ray and Ruth's time. They have two children, both adults now, a son in Vancouver and a daughter in Arizona with a family of her own. Not surprisingly, both share Ruth's love of animals.

Ray founded Western Inventory Service and built it into a large national company while Ruth headed up Tara Leasing, a subsidiary that offered vehicle rentals and leasing. The companies were sold several years ago but Ruth and Ray remain very active in retirement.

With a winter home in Scottsdale, Arizona, Ruth volunteers at the Liberty Wildlife Centre and Foothills Animal Rescue. She also supports wildlife organizations in British Columbia.

But, why would someone living on the West Coast want to support a wildlife centre so far away in Ottawa? It is a legitimate question and one that Ruth answers without hesitation: *"I like the education work that the Ottawa-Carleton Wildlife Centre is doing. We have to teach the next generation to understand and respect wildlife and the natural world. If not for programs like this how will it get done?"*

Ruth's interest in education, much like the Centre's, goes beyond the classroom. *"Many people today are terrified of wildlife, even though commonsense tells us this fear is unwarranted. We*



have abundant wild animals around our property in Arizona, coyotes, wild boars and snakes to name a few. It is easy to co-exist with them by using simple precautions such as protecting our pets", says Ruth.

"The Centre is very fortunate indeed to have the support of Ruth and Ray Wesenberg, whose leadership and generous philanthropy extends beyond provincial borders", says Donna DuBreuil.

OCWC INFO

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Animal Stories

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 a wide variety of species, all with special personalities, has reinforced our commitment to reconnecting people to nature.



Three-legged fox gets a second chance

The snowy, cold February day seems like only a couple months ago, when in fact it was in 2002. We got a call from an elderly lady in Lynwood Village, there was a fox curled up in the snow in her backyard. It had a serious injury to its hind leg and there was blood everywhere. She had no way to contain it. Because it was near the Centre, we made the decision to go and check it out. A few minutes later we were piled into the van with towels, nets, gloves and carrier in hand on our animal rescue adventure.

We located the house, and the four of us unloaded the supplies and were off in search of Mr. Fox. He was still in fact curled up, and the caller had not exaggerated the amount of blood. Things did not look good.

Our plan was to spread out and slowly surround the fox. As we approached he got wary and still had enough gusto to start to run. One of his hind legs looked to be holding on by a mere thread. He retreated to a woodpile and we were able to quickly get him into the car-

rier. We were so relieved that we got him and anxious to get him to the vet, we loaded him into the van but in our excitement we left our towels and gloves behind!

As always, Alta Vista Animal Hospital and their dedicated vets quickly squeezed us in for an appointment. We were very relieved to get some hopeful news. The hind leg was in fact severely injured, but they were confident they could amputate it and once recovered, the fox would be releasable. We had heard of dogs with three legs, but a fox? We decided to give it a try and see how the rehabilitation went.

Antibiotic treatment and wound flushing went well and before we knew it, it was time to get the fox moving on three legs. The vets were very confident the fox could compensate but he would need to sufficiently strengthen his remaining legs. We constructed a makeshift run that included part of a closed off hallway that led from the fox's cage. Within several weeks the fox was moving so fast we could not tell he was missing a leg. The day he jumped onto the top of his 4 ft high cage and curled up for a nap we knew he was ready to go. When he was released back into the wild he sniffed around a bit and then casually strolled away.

Lacking hair but not energy!

The caller described finding a baby grey squirrel while raking leaves, which we thought to be odd since it was so late in the fall. But we had given up being surprised by exceptions to rules where Mother Nature is concerned.

When the squirrel arrived at the Centre we were astonished to see a very small red squirrel, that was completely bald. She was not a newborn, in fact she was about 10 weeks old, but obviously had endured some serious hardships. Having had a few such experiences

with hairless squirrels in the past, the diagnosis was that it was likely a stress induced nutritional deficiency. The course of treatment was a good diet, including vitamin supplements and sufficient time to recuperate, which meant over-wintering her at the Centre.

Regardless of her problems, she was certainly full of energy. We were mesmerized at her ability to dart around her cage at top speeds. It was tiring just to watch her.

Each day we peered into her cage looking for signs of improvement and sure enough one day a small tuft of red fur appeared on the top of her head. From there it took no time at all for her to become fully furred. She teamed up with two other reds and would fill



her days pulling the filling from her stuffed toys to make nests in the evergreen tree that filled her cage. The following spring she was released back into the wild, in much better shape than when she arrived.



Victims of urban sprawl

In the spring of 2002 we got a call about a dead adult fisher on the side of the Thomas Dolan Parkway, near a bridge by the wetlands. The caller had seen it the night before on the way home, but this time as they passed by on the way to work they thought they saw two smaller ones near the body. They were unable to stop and would not be able to check it out until that night. Luckily two of our staff members had been in the area on the way back from a release site inspection and agreed to stop by to check it out.

After about an hour of searching through the tall reeds near the roadside the two young fishers were found and with a bit of skill and a lot of luck we got them into carriers.

This would be only the second time the Centre had baby fishers. In 2000 the Centre received its first orphaned pair. Although it was exciting to witness and learn up close about these amazing animals we knew it was a bad sign. These normally secretive animals inhabit more rural areas, but as the city's rapid growth continued to encroach on natural areas, particularly wetlands, they have been forced to live closer to people.

The pair of fishers settled in quickly, but their shy and wary nature always shone through. Although they loved their formula,

at each mealtime they still had to be coaxed out from under their blankets where they would hide.

Once out they would happily sit on your lap and eat their formula from a syringe. As soon as their tummies were full and their faces were washed they would scurry behind their large carrier for a little wrestle and play time. They grew like crazy and within a few weeks were ready for their large outdoor cage. Their climbing ability amazed us all as not only were they fast but their agility was unbelievable.

Of course when people heard we had fishers we got all kinds of gasps. More than one person called them vicious creatures. Let me clear some things up, fishers are amazing hunters, and their food sources include, small mammals, birds, occasionally porcupines, and sometimes pets. Fishers are about the size of a house cat, weighing around 10-18 lbs. They are very secretive.

Twice a day we would enter their cage to feed them, each time they would hide in their nesting box until we left, then they would take their food inside to eat. Even when we had to handle them to vaccinate them, they still wanted just to get away from us. So I can say first hand these animals are not vicious but rather very intelligent animals

that are just trying to survive in the face of rapid development and habitat loss.

As we continue to build our homes and roads in natural areas, we will continue to force these normally more secretive animals to move closer to humans in search of food and shelter. We must take responsibility and keep our pets safe, not blame wildlife for simply trying to survive.

A Comprehensive Approach to Helping Wildlife

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The Centre is also a member of the Greenbelt Coalition of Canada's Capital Region, a group of fifteen environmental and community organizations that have joined forces to support the preservation and enhancement of the Greenbelt as the National Capital Commission undertakes a review of its Greenbelt Master Plan. The Greenbelt is an important natural oasis that represents critical wildlife habitat, particular given the extensive urban development that surrounds it. The Centre is also working with the National Capital Commission to encourage a more collaborative partnership in developing progressive wildlife policies and practices within the Greenbelt.

We are pleased that the National Capital Commission has agreed to work with us on these issues. For many members of the Coalition, stewardship and biodiversity concerns are central. They include the protection of ecological diversity and biological integrity as well as allowing the evolution of natural processes. The Greenbelt is the Capital's most significant natural area and contributes substantially to the quality of life in this region.

Sol Shuster, Chair, Greenbelt Coalition of Canada's Capital Region.

www.greenbeltcoalition.ca

When Will The Senseless Killing End?

CBC-Radio interview last fall of a hunter who wants to expand urban bow hunting in the City of Ottawa stated bow hunters are “extremely responsible individuals”. These stories prove otherwise.

Raccoon shot with 28-inch arrow

A family in the Ottawa area was shocked to see this young raccoon coming to their bird feeder with 18 inches of arrow protruding out of its neck. It took the family more than a week to rescue the small raccoon. During the surgery that followed, it was determined that the little raccoon had been intentionally shot from an elevated tree blind by a bow hunter. The 28-inch arrow, intended to kill a deer, had entered the raccoon's neck, travelling down his shoulder all the way to his knee joint. Fortunately, after weeks of care treating the serious infection that had resulted from this callous bit of ‘target practice’, the family was able to release the raccoon but it will likely have some permanent impairment in that leg.



Cat found with arrow in head is euthanized

The Ottawa Citizen

Published: Wednesday, November 19, 2008

A stray cat had to be euthanized after it was found in a Gatineau yard Sunday with an arrow in its head. Residents of Hilltop Street found the cat and called the Outaouais SPCA. Staff captured the cat and determined it could not be saved. Anyone with information about the incident is asked to call Gatineau police.

Education Promotes Coexistence

At the same time the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources is saying that it wants to develop human-wildlife conflict prevention strategies, it is proposing to expand deer hunting in areas where the majority of people live in Ontario.

The proposals for new and extended hunting seasons are based on recommendations from hunting interests. These proposals have been put forward and promoted by a Ministry that sees its “clients”, not as the Ontario taxpayer, but as those who generate licence revenue to the Fish and Wildlife Branch, making it dependent on funds that come from increased hunting opportunities not from progressive conflict prevention strategies.

It is disingenuous for the Ministry to attempt to defend hunting on the basis of reducing human-wildlife conflicts. It is well recognized, through highly successful and proven programs such as Ottawa's ‘Speeding Costs You Deerly’ campaign and products like those sold by Deer Fence Canada, that prevention and education are the effective tools of today.

The proposal to expand hunting is about increasing sport hunting opportunities, pure and simple, and will not address resolving human-wildlife conflicts that result from development.

With the majority of human-wildlife conflicts occurring around residential development,

“most people would rather contend with deer eating a few of their hostas, particularly when there are obvious prevention solutions, than have bullets and arrows flying around their heads”, says Liz White of the Ontario Wildlife Coalition.

The Ottawa-Carleton Wildlife Centre will continue to work with and promote progressive practices and programs that preserve and enhance biodiversity, allowing people to live in harmony with nature. We will be highlighting some of these model programs in our upcoming newsletters.

Wildlife Centre Launches New Website

Discover, enjoy and protect nature, visit www.wildlifeinfo.ca

Did you know that while hibernating a woodchuck can breathe only once every six minutes or that small mammals like mice and squirrels eat antlers that deer shed? This is the type of interesting wildlife information that can be found on our new website. Not only is the site new but we also have a new website address www.wildlifeinfo.ca.

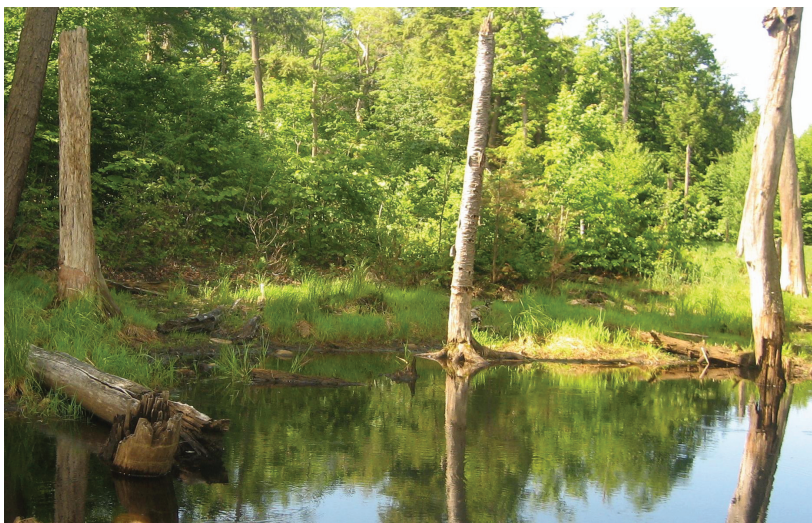
The story of our website is a bit unusual. During our many years of operation as a wildlife rehabilitation centre, to many people's surprise, we did not have a website. Although we had many offers to set up a site, our staff and volunteers were already overwhelmed with the over 1,000 animals and 5,000-7,000 hotline calls we dealt with annually. There was not an extra minute to develop or maintain a website or interact with a larger audience.

In 2003, when regulations changed and the OCWC discontinued its wildlife rehabilitation and hotline programs, we developed a website so the public could still access information about dealing with human-wildlife conflicts in a humane and cost effective way. Years of experience gained doing over 100,000 hotline calls was translated into a website with topics such as "I have an animal living in the attic" or "There is an animal eating my garden". The original site was called "wildlifeproblems.ncf.ca"

What we are finding is that many people take urban wildlife for granted or have negative attitudes towards them. We realized that in a way our old site name, wildlifeproblems, was perpetuating these negative attitudes. We strongly believe that it is not just a wildlife problem, but also a people problem. After all, it is humans who encroach into wild spaces and it is people who seem to have difficulty adapting in coexisting with wildlife. Wildlife has figured out how to live with us just fine!

With this in mind we wanted to expand the focus of the site to include positive information and some of the many fascinating facts about the wild mammals we share our city with. The website also includes information on our Education Programs as well as the original detailed information on how to coexist with wildlife and solve conflicts humanely.

Our goal is to instill and cultivate an appreciation of wildlife as they are an important entry point for understanding and appreciating our natural world. The new site name is www.wildlifeinfo.ca and we hope you check it out!



Spring has sprung

Here are a few reminders about wildlife and the birthing season. For detailed information check out www.wildlifeinfo.ca:

Wildlife Birthing Season

- The birthing season is at its peak between April and August
- Females seek shelter in attics, under steps and in chimneys for a safe spot to have their young
- This is a TEMPORARY situation, it is best to give them a grace period until babies are coming out with mom.
- Do not trap the animal or barricade the entry, this will cause bigger problems
- Do not try to smoke animals out of a chimney
- Removal companies cannot guarantee they will not create orphans

Around Your Yard

- Before pruning trees, check for leaf nests or cavities that could be home to babies
- If you find a nest in your shed, garage or garden, leave it alone
- Check your barbecue before using it as red squirrels or mice will sometimes make their nest under the grill
- Use chemical free lawn care practices.
- Deer eating your plants? Check out www.deerfencecanada.ca

IN MEMORIUM



Kathy Nihei – Wild birds lost one of their strongest advocates when Kathy died this past January. It was in 1981 and the rescue of a hummingbird that led Kathy to open up her home to care for injured and orphaned wild birds. After much hard work, she and volunteers opened the Wild Bird Care Centre in 1992. Over the years, the WBCC has filled an increasingly vital role in helping thousands

of birds impacted by human development, gaining the respect and appreciation of the community. Her long-time colleague, Deborah Hass, will take over the Wild Bird Care Centre as Director.



Randy Oaks – Another good friend of wildlife also died this January. Randy, at age 49, was a kind and gentle man who left us much too soon. He and his wife Debbie were first introduced to the Ottawa-Carleton Wildlife Centre when they rescued orphaned baby squirrels in their backyard. They went on to care for these young squirrels, providing a nesting box for them in a large tree on their property. That was the start of many rescues and nesting boxes over the years. Randy's love of animals – wild and domestic – was amply demonstrated by the bicycle carrier he rigged up for their dog Chelsea. Debbie shares this love and will, without any doubt, continue the legacy.

Nortel's Summer Camp Visits Centre

Children attending Nortel's Outdoor Discovery Camp spent the morning enjoying a workshop on wildlife and habitat at the Ottawa-Carleton Wildlife Centre last summer. Nortel Networks has provided environmental leadership, long before it became the thing to do, to the Centre since 1992. The Centre's programs have greatly relied upon and valued this support.



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OCWC Website

www.wildlifeinfo.ca