



Ottawa-Carleton Wildlife Centre

SERVING THE COMMUNITY FOR OVER 30 YEARS

Valuing Natural Assets



A property manager told me recently that his department had put in place new measures to get more benefit and longevity out of its “assets”. Meaning, of course, “built assets” where retrofitting or utilizing new technology can result in cost savings as well as a contribution to the environment.

He asked whether we had examples of where this approach could be applied to “land”. Apart from restoring a wetland that had been illegally drained, I responded that “*we need to protect natural assets by leaving them alone, letting natural systems prevail*”. Even the wetlands that need to be restored require only a low-tech solution, i.e. excavating a few deeper ponds and creating some channels to them.

That I couldn’t suggest more technologically-advanced solutions requiring a consultant and something more demonstrable, I think confounded him which doesn’t really come as a surprise.

We tend not to value that which we haven’t constructed and generally paid a lot of money for.

For example, hundreds of mature trees are clear cut for subdivisions, without any regard for the cost of replacing the essential services that these trees provide.

Among many services trees contribute is the retention of stormwater runoff. When trees are combined with other natural landscaping, studies have shown as much as 65 per cent of storm runoff can be reduced in residential developments.

The TD Bank has calculated the value of urban forests in cities across Canada showing that, in Toronto, the value of its urban forest was worth \$7 billion for stormwater retention, air quality, energy savings and carbon sequestration. And, this doesn’t include the significant value of natural assets from a recreational perspective for our physical, mental and spiritual well being.

Yet, we continue to cut down trees and do little to protect wetlands, instead building stormwater infrastructure to take their place. These structures cost hundreds of thousands of dollars to build and maintain, with the additional cost of having to rehabilitate them every 15 years or so.

A Better Way

The town of Gibsons, British Columbia, best known as the location for the longtime TV show, *The Beachcomers*, was named “*Most Liveable Community under 20,000*” in a world-wide competition in 2009, in part, for its commitment to healthy living and environmental sustainability.

It continues to demonstrate why it was worthy. Gibsons was one of the first of several local governments in BC to engage in a Municipal Natural Assets Initiative, a project bringing together asset management, financial planning and ecological protection.

“*Nature is under valued, under priced and over used,*” said Gibsons Chief Administrative Officer, Emanuel Machado. “*It is reliable, cost effective, and energy efficient over the long-term asset cycle.*”

Gibsons has demonstrated that effectively managing municipal natural assets can pay huge dividends, not only for the health and well being of its citizens but in decreasing fees charged to developers for stormwater services at lower costs than engineered alternatives. Oakville, Ontario is another community leading the way in recognizing the value of natural assets.

It is hoped that Ottawa, with its considerable natural assets, will join these initiatives.

Editorial

ByWard Market Bear



When police got a report at 3 a.m. about a Black Bear in the ByWard Market, they would have been forgiven for thinking that the caller was a customer from one of the area bars.

It turned out to be a real Black Bear but how it was handled is the real story. We are very fortunate to have a professionally trained wildlife response in the Conservation Team at the National Capital Commission. In this case, they worked closely with Ottawa City Police – even Ottawa Fire Services provided a ladder truck – to ensure a humane rescue. The bear was successfully tranquilized and relocated to a natural area.

The well-coordinated effort received a round of applause from the public that had gathered to watch.

However, it's an article by Randy Boswell, a former Citizen reporter and a journalism professor at Carleton University, that best demonstrates our growing desire for a more harmonious relationship with other species. The article is well worth reading <https://ottawacitizen.com/opinion/columnists/boswell-ten-things-we-can-learn-from-the-byward-bear> but here are a couple of its teachable lessons:

- Kudos all-round in the case of the ByWard Market bear, but our animal response agencies need to keep reviewing best practices for handling these situations to ensure public safety while maximizing the chances of each animal's survival.
- The fascination and delight expressed by almost everyone in response to the ByWard Market Bear is a clear signal that humans (animals ourselves, after all) crave a connection to the natural world and our fellow creatures.

The newsletter shows how instinctively children connect to wildlife as well as how those like Randy Boswell, Ben Goldfarb and Michael Callahan are influencing positive change.

Donna DuBreuil
President, OCWC

OCWC Establishes a Natural Environment Stewardship Committee

Can there be a successful marriage between a defence headquarters site that will eventually employ 10,000 people and a highly-valued natural area within the Greenbelt? We believe so but because it won't happen automatically, the Ottawa-Carleton Wildlife Centre took the initiative in 2018 to establish a Natural Environment Stewardship Committee to bring stakeholders together.

While the built portion of the campus houses the Department of National Defence, the natural area, which is where the Centre is located, is designated as Core Natural Area (CNA), a priority for protection within the Greenbelt.

Campus habitat consists of wetlands, forests and meadows that is home to exceptional biodiversity. There are 19 species of mammals; 130 bird species including the Eastern Meadowlark; 14 reptile and amphibian species including the Western Chorus Frog and close to 300 insect species, the latter serving as pollinators and an important food source for other species.

So, how best to protect this natural area, recognizing a large employment hub is bound to have impact. And, how to ensure that the local community having used the nature trails on campus for more than three decades together with naturalists from across the region, all of whom feel a sense of ownership of the Greenbelt, can still contribute?

There is also a shared watershed with local communities along with wildlife corridors that do not observe arbitrary boundaries, making a collaborative undertaking key to sustainability as well as positive community relations.

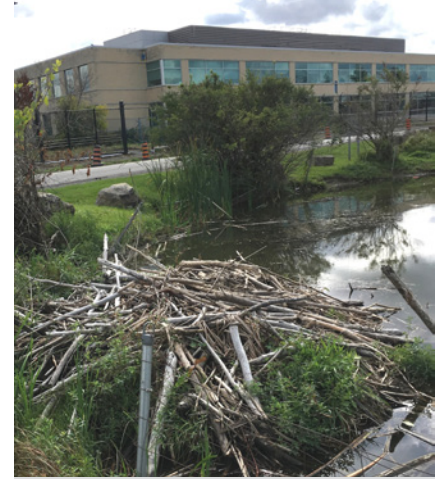
Public Services and Procurement Canada, the landlord, and the Department of National Defence, the client-department, readily welcomed the formation of a committee and appointed enthusiastic members in Pierre Lacroix from PSPC, Isabelle Chatillon from DND and Lisa Lejeune from Brookfield Global Integrated Solutions, the campus property management company.

Of equal encouragement are the members of the community who agreed to join the committee. Ian McConnachie, representing the Crystal Beach Lakeview Community Association and Leah Travis, representing the Belltown Neighbours Association.

The first meeting of the Natural Environment Stewardship Committee was held at the Centre on May 22nd where topics such as wildlife-sensitive planning, protection of wildlife corridors, restoration of campus wetlands, and education and outreach were discussed. One of the initiatives that has already been put in place – the 'Lids off for Wildlife' campaign – is noted in this newsletter.

The natural areas on campus represent a wonderful asset for employees and community members, for it is widely understood that having access to nature is important for everyone's physical and mental health. The Centre, as an important educational resource, serves as a unique environmental anchor on campus.

We look forward to telling you more about the Committee's work in future issues.



Beaver lodge in stormwater pond on Campus.

Lids off For Wildlife



After hearing the Centre's presentation about the wildlife they share their spaces with, Kindergarten students from Forest Valley Elementary School in Orléans wanted to know what more they could do to help wildlife. The students, along with their teacher, Ms. Taylor, walked to the Mac's Convenience near their school and asked the manager for permission to hang up posters warning of the dangers these cups pose and what people can do to help. It is very inspiring to see such a concern for wildlife at such a young age!

In the Spring of 2017, we had a feature article in our Newsletter that talked about some of the dangers human waste can cause wildlife. We have been working hard on this issue, specifically to raise awareness about the hazards that dome lids on cups can pose for wildlife.

The lids are common on drinks such as iced coffees from Tim Hortons and frozen treats from McDonalds. We are not the only ones who find these treats tasty. Skunks and raccoons, in particular, are attracted by the smells and will put their heads in a discarded cup with a dome lid. Unfortunately, this can prove deadly for the animal as they can often become entrapped. Even if well meaning people are able to remove the cup, the dome lid often will remain around the neck, causing injury and making foraging impossible. The result is often a slow and painful death for the animal.



The good news is that this can easily be prevented with some education. Always remove the lids from these cups and crush them, even if you are recycling them. It is also important to spread the word.

The Centre has written to companies like Tim Hortons and McDonalds about the risks and the vital role education can play, asking them to include posters in their stores to help customers properly dispose of cups. Unfortunately, we have not had any response, but we are determined to continue to let these companies know they have a responsible role to play in keeping wildlife safe from hazards of their products.

We are pleased to acknowledge some great community partners that have been helping spread this important message.

The Ottawa-Carleton Wildlife Centre would like to acknowledge Public Services and Procurement Canada's positive environmental initiatives with respect to this campaign. Posters have been placed around their 60 Moodie Drive Campus to educate employees as well as members of the public who use the walking trails, about this important effort to help wildlife. They also facilitated the hanging of posters in the Tim Horton's on Campus.

There is still more to be done. Visit our website and print off a poster or two. Please take a minute to ask your local restaurant, coffee shop or community centre if you can hang up the poster near the recycle or waste receptacles. Your action can make a big difference in helping wildlife.

A Big Thanks to Canada Summer Jobs

The OCWC was very excited to receive support thanks to Ottawa-West Nepean MP, Anita Vandenberg, from the Canada Summer Jobs Program that allowed us to hire two University Students to help with the Centre's work. The students, Shelby and Grace, researched and developed education kits and presentations that will be used to help reconnect children as well as adults to nature.



Member of Parliament Visits Wildlife Centre

This Fall we were pleased to have Anita Vandenberg, Member of Parliament for Ottawa-West Nepean, visit the Ottawa-Carleton Wildlife Centre and see first-hand the projects the students she supported worked on. Anita's approach to the Summer Jobs Program was focused on two priorities, first, to ensure that projects provided a skill for students and secondly, that they gave the students the opportunity to give back to the community.

The Centre is pleased to be working with Anita and the community to make sure that valuable greenspace, wetlands and wildlife in her riding are protected.

Shelby had completed her second year of Environmental Science at Carleton University and will be heading back to start her third year in the fall. Her favorite part of her job at the Wildlife Centre was creating the education kits for children because she got to be creative with her ideas, while learning a lot about urban wildlife and their habitat. Shelby also enjoyed getting the opportunity to see how a small, non-profit organization runs.

When Shelby isn't in class or working, she enjoys competing on the Carleton Varsity Nordic ski team, snowboarding, running, hiking, and biking.

Upon completing her undergraduate degree, Shelby plans on moving onto a master's program in ecology, conservation, or a subject in that area of study. In terms of her future career goals, Shelby has a passion for field work, research and travel and hopes to find a job that can incorporate all three.



Ottawa-Carleton Wildlife Centre's Wildlife Education Interns, Shelby Howard and Grace Moran

Grace is a second-year Environmental Science student at Carleton University. She chose to study environmental science because of how prevalent and serious the challenges are that the Earth is facing today. She wants to do everything that she can to protect it.

Grace liked working at the Centre because there were a lot of different projects to work on and always something new and exciting going on. Her favourite project was an education kit on bees. During her research she gained a much better understanding of the seriousness of the problem caused by the declining bee population and was glad for the opportunity to help educate others.

Grace enjoys doing anything outdoors such as hiking, running, downhill skiing, and walking her dog. Grace's love for animals and their welfare has led her to aspire to become a veterinarian and to work with a large variety of animals.

The Ottawa-Carleton Wildlife Centre is grateful for the opportunity to participate in the Canada Summer Jobs Program, not only did our Centre receive much needed help with our programs but it also gave the students valuable work experience.

Former Teachers Give Wildlife A Voice

The Deavitt sisters have played a pivotal role in the success of the Ottawa-Carleton Wildlife Centre Education Program.

It was a generous bequest from the Estate of Joan Deavitt that helped the Centre launch the education initiative in 2005. It represented a challenging transition from providing care for individual animals to attempting to change the circumstances that put these animals in jeopardy in the first place.

All three of the Deavitt sisters, Joan, Ruth and Patricia, taught school in Pembroke

Ontario and knew first-hand the power of education to effect positive change.

Joan and Patricia taught elementary school while Ruth taught high school. They inherited their love of wildlife from their father and enjoyed the many creatures that shared their property.

When Joan died in 2001, Ruth and Patricia carried on her legacy in supporting the Centre's programs. And, when Ruth died last January, her philanthropy included the Centre with a generous bequest of corporate shares.

The vision and commitment of these three sisters has contributed to the evolution of our education mission at the Centre to one that is broad-based, reaching a variety of audiences of all ages, while working with an ever-expanding number of community partners.

"The Centre has certainly benefitted from the generosity of the Deavitt's over the years – not only by their tangible financial help but by their encouragement that living in harmony with the natural world matters", said Donna DuBreuil.

OCWC Education Programs - Connecting People of All Ages to Nature



Students also got to test their skills as a dam builder, to see if they were any match for a Beaver. They did very well but all left with a new respect for what amazing engineers beavers are.

The Ottawa-Carleton Wildlife Centre's Education Programs are directed at helping people of all ages better understand and appreciate wildlife and to protect wildlife and their habitat. We always pride ourselves in reaching a wide range of audiences with our Programs and the past few months have been no exception.

We have given presentations to Community Associations from Riverside South to Beaverbrook. It is always great to meet residents and have the opportunity to talk to them about the amazing diversity of species we share our spaces with. Without fail, there are always lots of topics for discussion after our presentations, from ways they can better coexist to ways they can help protect wildlife and habitat.

Our School Program gives us a chance to visit schools across the region, from Metcalfe to Stittsville, giving dozens of workshops to students in Grades JK- 8. We feel it is important to keep group sizes small to maximize engagement. It is so inspiring to see first hand children getting excited about wildlife, the oohing and aahing of little voices when they watch a video of the beaver slapping its tail in the pond near the Centre or when they see pictures of a week-old fawn or the enthusiasm of getting to touch a deer antler.

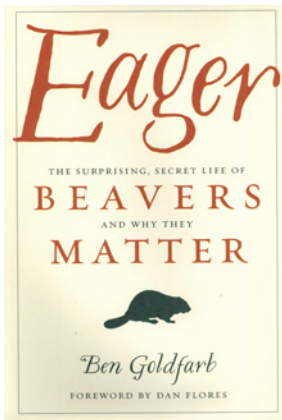
Our Nature Discovery Workshops, held at the Wildlife Centre, offer excellent opportunities to expose people to the wonders of nature. Sessions include pre-

sentations and a range of activities that include nature walks. Our programs give participants a unique perspective that we are part of nature, with that comes not only an appreciation but also the responsibility of the role we must play in keeping our natural systems healthy. We cannot continually take from the well if we do nothing to replenish it!



High School Students do a great job designing communities 'With Nature in Mind'. It is refreshing to hear them talk about the need for wildlife over-passes and community gardens and that instead of cutting down trees and planting grass in school yards, it makes more sense to leave it natural so children can connect to nature.

Eager: The Surprising, Secret Life of Beavers and Why They Matter



Review: By Donna DuBreuil

If the best education is entertaining, then Ben Goldfarb should be up for a Pulitzer and an Oscar.

For wildlife aficionados who have laboured through some pretty dry academic tomes, mining for a fact or two with one eye propped open, this book is a wonderful antidote. Highly readable, filled with humour and fascinating people it presents undeniable facts that beavers really

are the solution to some of our most pressing environmental challenges.

I thought I knew a fair bit about beavers but, after reading *Eager*, I realized that I didn't even know what I didn't know. Goldfarb has meticulously researched his subject, travelling across North America and the United Kingdom with his partner, Elise, to explore vastly different landscapes and interview the most interesting cast of characters you'll ever meet.

In *Eager*, environmental journalist Ben Goldfarb reveals that our modern idea of what a healthy landscape looks like and how it functions is wrong, distorted by the fur trade that once trapped out millions of beavers from North America's lakes and rivers. The consequences of losing beavers were profound: streams eroded, wetlands dried up, and species from salmon to swans lost vital habitat. Today, a growing coalition of "Beaver Believers" - including scientists, ranchers and passionate citizens - recognizes that ecosystems with beavers are far healthier, for humans and non-humans alike, than those without them. From the Nevada deserts to the Scottish highlands, Believers are now hard at work restoring these industrious rodents to their former haunts.

Eager is a powerful story about one of the world's most influential species, how North America was colonized, how our landscapes have changed over the centuries, and how beavers can help us fight drought, flooding, wildlife extinction, and the ravages of climate change. Ultimately, it's about how we can learn to coexist with our fellow travelers on this planet.

Eager combines the best in investigative journalism and skilled storytelling, a lesson in history and geography through the engaging stories of those that know the land best. It's as much an engrossing page-turner as a Stephen King novel.

From Utah and California to Massachusetts and Across the Pond

Colourful characters in the book include a pair of Utah State University beaver experts, one a geomorphologist, the other an ecologist, whose solutions have kept beavers on the landscape in unlikely places as a small stream next to a Walmart parking lot in Logan, Utah.

In Martinez, California when the city was proposing to kill beavers residing in a local creek, Heidi Perryman, a child psychologist by profession, leaped into action, saving the beavers and converting the city into one that celebrates beavers with a festival each year. Heidi has gone on to become an influential advocate across North America and beyond through her non-profit organization 'Worth a Dam'.

Mike Callahan, and his wife Ruth, former health care professionals, became involved as volunteers in a community in Massachusetts that was divided over how to live with beavers. They became intrigued by the potential of flow devices that prevent flooding, going on to build a successful business in this regard. Last year, Mike also established the 'Beaver Institute', a non-profit organization that is helping to share why scientists consider beavers the ultimate keystone species and how we can manage to coexist with them. More about the Institute follows on the opposite page.

In his extensive exploration of what beavers mean to a healthy environment, Goldfarb next takes us 'across the Pond' to Scotland and England.

continued on page 7



Ben Goldfarb is an award-winning environmental journalist who covers wildlife management and conservation biology. His work has been featured in *Science*, *Mother Jones*, *The Guardian*, *High Country News*, *VICE*, *Audubon Magazine*, *Modern Farmer*, *Orion*,

World Wildlife Magazine, *Scientific American*, *Yale Environment 360*, and many other publications. He holds a master of environmental management degree from the Yale School of Forestry and Environmental Studies.

continued from page 6 – 'Eager' by Ben Goldfarb

What wildfires are to the United States and increasing parts of Canada, floods are to the United Kingdom.

In South West England, you'll meet Alan Puttock, a University of Exeter hydrologist, "a scientist straight out of Big Bang Theory casting: brilliant, sweet-tempered, and endearingly awkward". His recent work in 'Science of the Total Environment' proves that

"A marvellously humor-laced page-turner about the science of semi-aquatic rodents.... Goldfarb has built a masterpiece of a treatise on the natural world, how that world stands now and how it could be in the future if we protect beaver populations."

-Washington Post

beaver impoundments have an exceptional ability to store water and filter out nitrogen, phosphorus, and sediment. It documents how beavers can abate, absorb and attenuate floods at a vast scale.

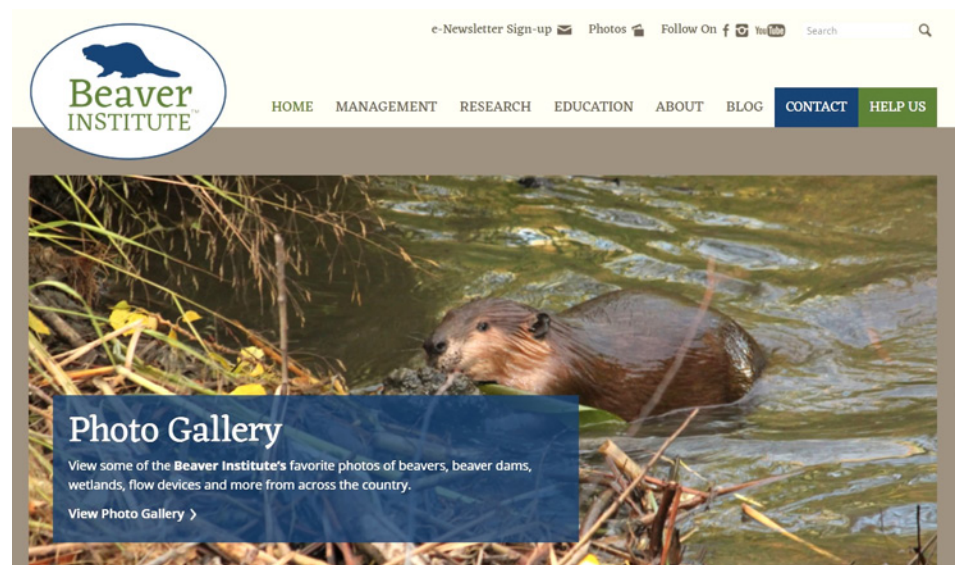
Eager is a must read for all nature lovers or, for that matter, anyone who wants to be an informed advocate for a better future for us all. A great Christmas gift for those on your list but one that you'll also want for yourself. Available in hard-cover at Amazon for \$21.20.

Beaver Institute – A Great New Initiative

We are delighted to talk about the Beaver Institute, a non-profit organization which was created last year. Its mission is to be a catalyst for advancing beaver management and watershed restoration by providing technical and financial assistance to public and private land-owners experiencing beaver conflicts, supporting scientific research, training mitigation professionals, and increasing public appreciation of the beaver's critical role in creating wetland ecosystems.

The Ottawa-Carleton Wildlife Centre, like many others, has been working to change attitudes about beavers and the vital role they play in maintaining healthy ecosystems. There is growing research and evidence demonstrating the part beavers play in creating habitat for numerous species, filter toxins and excess nutrients to keep water clean and mitigate the impact of drought and flooding.

Unfortunately, all too often, beaver issues such as flooding or tree loss are still handled with the outdated practice of trapping and killing them. This short-sighted approach not only means a loss of the valuable ecosystem services that beavers provide, but does not solve the problem, as other beavers will quickly move in. There is also the expense of repeating something over and over when a preventative approach such as installing modern flow devices is much more cost effective.



The Institute's President, Mike Callahan's motivation for creating the Institute was to establish a North American focused organization to promote better beaver management. He was frustrated that we have these great techniques for successfully resolving beaver conflicts that very few people know how to properly implement. He wanted to share his knowledge of 20 years solving over 1500 human-beaver conflicts and to teach others across the United States and Canada how to do this valuable work.

The Beaver Institute has a volunteer Board of Directors that govern the organization as well as a National Advisory Board of beaver experts. The Advisory Board includes ecologists, wildlife biologists, hydrologists and wetland scientists as well as a wide range of government

and non-government specialists that voluntarily provide their expertise to the Board of Directors. They share the vision of resolving all human-beaver conflicts in a science-based manner in order to maximize the many benefits that beavers contribute to the environment.

The Institute recently created an online training course and are hoping to get 5 to 10 students this year. In the first month they had interest from 27 people from various states and provinces. The course will include an online component as well as hands-on training.

The Institute responds to the growing international interest in moving away from outdated practices of trapping beavers to instead deal with conflicts in a much more effective way, both financially and environmentally.

OCWC's Website Gets a Fresh Look



Photo: S. Hansen

As a small organization with many demands on its time, our website had not been updated for many years. We are pleased to announce that the site has a fresh new look and is more easily navigated, especially on mobile devices. You can find information about our history and evolution, programs, board of directors and our current education campaigns.

The site also has detailed information about how to resolve a range of human-wildlife conflicts, from animals eating your garden to squirrels in your attic. The detailed, step-by-step, information is based on the first-hand knowledge that the Ottawa-Carleton Wildlife Centre has gained in responding to and finding solutions for the more than 100,000 calls over the years. The site provides cost-effective solutions that are a win for residents as well as for wildlife.

In handling these calls, we saw first-hand the stress these situations can cause a resident, if you have never seen a skunk before, and now it's living under your step, you will understandably have some concerns. We also saw how important education is, information is power. Providing detailed information to people and giving them the tools to resolve the conflicts in a cost-effective, humane manner is very rewarding.

We hope you take a moment to check out our new site, www.wildlifeinfo.ca, and we would love to hear feedback of ways we can improve it.

OUR THANKS

OCWC gratefully acknowledges:

*Ruth and Ray Wesenberg
Wildlife Fund*

**The William Muir Hawes
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OCWC Website www.wildlifeinfo.ca