



OTTAWA-CARLETON WILDLIFE CENTRE NEWSLETTER

Fall, 2007

OCWC Celebrates 20th Anniversary



The Centre is actually celebrating several anniversaries this year. It is our 20th anniversary as the program commenced in 1987. Then, after years of temporary locations – one being next to a motorcycle shop where our baby raccoons' full-throttle purring almost outdid the Harley Davidsons next door - coupled with determined planning and fundraising, we moved into our permanent Centre on Nortel's campus.

That was in 1992, so we are celebrating our 15th anniversary in partnership with Nortel Networks.

While the program has evolved considerably over that time, one thing remains constant – that is our dedication to assisting both wildlife and people who want to live in greater harmony with nature.

Whether doing wildlife rehabilitation, training veterinary students to care for wildlife, operating a telephone hotline service and now a website to give people the tools to resolve wildlife problems humanely, taking wildlife

education programs into schools and the community or working with environmental and animal welfare organizations on behalf of progressive strategies, the Centre is ensuring a continuing and positive voice for wildlife in this region and beyond.

Thanks to strong support

The success of these programs has been based on a remarkable array of dedicated community volunteers and student interns, partners like Nortel Networks, The Ontario Trillium Foundation, The Harold Crabtree Foundation, the Community Foundation of Ottawa, TD Friends of the Environment Foundation, Barbara Riley Levin, Judy Ney and the Fund for Animals in the United States and, of course, many loyal individual donors.

This strong support will allow the Centre's programs to continue to evolve to best serve wildlife and the community for the next 20 years.

Think of OCWC this United Way Campaign

Please, won't you consider designating a donation through your United Way Campaign this Fall to the Ottawa-Carleton Wildlife Centre?

As a small volunteer organization whose work on behalf of wildlife continues to increase because of development, we rely on support from individuals through the United Way Campaign. It recognizes that helping animals as well as people is important to building a healthy and caring community.

Just ensure that your canvasser notes on the donation form our full name and charitable registration number, which is 13224-0284-RR0001.

OCWC Contact Information

Don't lose touch. Update your records:

Mail: OCWC, P.O. Box 11051, Station H, Ottawa, Ontario, K2H 7T8; **Email:** ocwc@ncf.ca; **Web:** www.wildlifeproblems.ncf.ca

OCWC gratefully acknowledges:



For Good. Forever. Le bien... toujours.



Editorial

Biodiversity: Creating Understanding and Respect

In addition to caring for up to 1,200 mammals each year, the Centre also placed a strong emphasis on preventing the need. It was why, in our first year of operation, we launched the conflict resolution service. We responded to over 8,000 callers a year, helping people solve wildlife problems in a way that didn't "create" orphans.



We also took as much care in returning animals to the wild as we did in rehabilitating them. It meant a lot of work in obtaining and assessing release sites, and in choosing volunteers with suitable property for species requiring a "soft" release, so transitional care could be given. Unfortunately, the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources' new regulations prohibit such responsible rehabilitation.

It is no surprise, therefore, that our evolution has brought us full circle to education programs that teach people to live in greater harmony with nature, providing them with practical tools to resolve wildlife problems in effective and humane ways. And, in protecting wildlife habitat.

Our work with other organizations encourages progressive practices in and outside government on behalf of environmental and biodiversity concerns. Biodiversity is our life support system. There can be no economic, environmental or social sustainability without the conservation, protection and restoration of biodiversity.

While the concept of biodiversity may appear abstract, wildlife represent a very tangible cultural and spiritual element. Our experience within the schools shows that young people have a particular fascination for wildlife and a growing sense of urgency about the pact we must make with the planet.

Donna DuBreuil
President, OCWC

Helping Ottawa Students Know Their Backyard Wildlife Neighbours

By Kate MacNeil

About 1,960 Ottawa students now know their backyard wild neighbours a bit better, thanks to visits from our Wildlife School Education Program.

Without fail as I am getting ready to present one of the students will ask "Do you have real animals for us to see?" Although I get this question often, one student from the end of June really sticks out in my mind. He was literally dancing around me with excitement. He probably sticks out because I would have been the same way when I was in grade 5. I mean hey who does not want the rare opportunity to see a wild animal up close?

When I say no we do not use animals for education purposes there are usually a few 'ohs', but this boy seemed almost devastated! I always explain why...

- Being outside of their natural environment is stressful to the animals
- They do not act as they normally would, so it is not a true representation
- The animals steal the show. All everyone can think about is when they can see or touch the animal, so any educational message usually gets lost.
- It sends the message that wildlife is here for our pleasure and entertainment. It does little to instill a sense of appreciating an animal's right to be unless it is for human enjoyment.



The OCWC uses photos to show Ottawa students the orphans that result when humans take uninformed actions.

The presentation includes dozens of great photos taken at the Centre over the years and many first hand accounts of animal stories. We also have great hands-on materials like puppets, antlers and porcupine quills, so there is a tactile component.

After giving over 70 presentations I am now pretty confident that by the end of the presentation the kids will be more than fine about the fact they did not get to pet a skunk. However I was a bit worried about this boy. I watched him throughout the presentation and he did seem fascinated by the material so I felt good but what followed made my day and perhaps my week. At the end of the presentation he jumped out of his seat and clapped, sparking a standing ovation. I took this to be the greatest compliment to the presentation and the overall message that the Ottawa-Carleton Wildlife Centre feels so strongly about passing on.

TD Friends of the Environment Support Wildlife Education

The TD Friends of the Environment Foundation is at the forefront in encouraging environmental initiatives in the community. It was an early supporter of the Ottawa-Carleton Wildlife Centre. Its most recent grant of \$3,000 will be used to help respond to the growing demand within the Centre's Education and Community Outreach Programs.

These programs recognize that while there is significant pressure on wildlife due to development there is a great deal of interest in protecting wildlife.



While this interest is particularly strong among school children, people of all ages enjoy interfacing with wildlife and want to have the tools to be able to live in greater harmony with nature. The grant from the TD Friends of the Environment Foundation will assist in bridging this need and opportunity.

OCWC Staff Get a Crash Course in Caring for Otters - and there was a lot to learn!

By Kate MacNeil

Even though we no longer do wildlife rehabilitation, the animals we have helped over the years are never far from our minds.

It has been nine years since I met my first river otter up close and in person. From the moment the Centre's first pair of otters passed through the door things were never quite the same.

We had a lot to learn and fast! What do they eat? How long do we keep them? When should we introduce them to



Otters spend hours exploring their new outdoor cage.

water? The answers only seemed to lead to more questions. Where do we find an endless amount of free live fish? What do you mean they cannot be released back into the wild? What can we do to make sure they do not get pneumonia from getting a chill while swimming?

While we were busy finding out answers to these questions the pair of river otters chortled their way into the hearts of everyone they met. Talk about having personality to spare! We used to say they had two speeds, **on** and **off**, there was no half way. Whether they were performing perfectly timed, synchronized swimming manoeuvres in their tiny pool, or happily grunting "what, what, what" to each other they were spectacular to watch and captivated all who saw them.

They were so much fun that even when they caused mischief you could not help but laugh. One evening they broke out of their cage and had the party of the decade. The staff that saw the room the next



Hiding behind this innocent face is a mischievous, yet lovable character.

morning thought the Centre had been vandalized. Stuffing ripped out of chairs, hoses on the floor full of holes, every last thing knocked off shelves. When they were discovered hiding in a pile of rubber boots they let out a low growl, as if they were mad to be sent back to their room! Needless to say they were in the **off** position for the rest of the day, sleeping soundly. I am sure they were dreaming of their adventure.

The longer they were at the Centre the more determined we all became that we had to give them a chance to live in the wild, even though the advice we kept getting was to find the best captive situation we could. Luckily this was a case when hard work and determination paid off. We found the needle in a haystack! Volunteers with a great property where we were able to construct a terrific cage. The perfect release site allowed the otters to slowly and safely make the transition back to the wild. The female joined another family and would occasionally come for a visit. The male stayed around for a bit longer but eventually moved on.

I think we can all take a lesson from river otters, in fact I tell students that if I could come back as anything else it would be an otter – they seem to have fun and enjoy everything, life is good when you are an otter.

Otter Facts:

- River Otters are members of the Mustelidae family, which also includes weasels and minks.
- River Otters use a wide variety of vocalizations to communicate, including chortles, growls, grunts, squeaks and chirps.
- River Otters often slide on their stomach in the snow, ice or mud. They can slide nearly 20 feet at a time.
- River Otters spend a lot of time grooming their fur. This grooming spreads oils from glands in the skin throughout the fur to give it its waterproof quality. This is something vital for this aquatic mammal's survival.
- River Otters close their nostrils and ears while diving underwater.
- River Otters' whiskers help them to find food, such as fish and clams and to explore and assess their surroundings. For example they detect changes in water flow caused by obstructions or movements.

OCWC at the Ottawa Eco-Stewardship Fair

The OCWC is proud to be a founding sponsor and member of the planning committee of this community initiative. Although it represents a substantial undertaking for a small group of volunteers, it has grown into a successful environmental initiative, attracting more exhibitors and visitors each year.

The 4th Annual Fair was held last April. It introduced many new exhibitors under a Rural Meets Urban theme that focused on local food and sustainable agriculture and regional tourism.

The Centre had an exhibit along with a children's activities area that proved to be the hit of the show. Children participated in wildlife detective games and showed their creative skills, making an array of greeting cards that promoted the Centre's website.

Planning is already underway for the 2008 Eco-Stewardship Fair to be held next April, so mark your calendars.



Children visiting the Eco-Stewardship Fair enjoyed making wildlife greeting cards with Centre staff and volunteers.

OCWC Website

www.wildlifeproblems.ncf.ca



Advice on the Centre's website saves thousands of homeowners money, frustration and heartache each year. Last year, over 10,000 people sought help from the website for problems with wildlife seeking shelter during the birthing season, getting into their gardens or, as in the case of mice, moving in for the winter.

There are effective and cost-efficient solutions for all wildlife problems. An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure, so check out the website **before** taking action. You will be glad you did.

Raising Local Awareness of Wildlife Issues

The Eco-Stewardship Fair is one of many community events the OCWC participates in. Other 2007 events the Centre participated in include the Great Canadian Bio-Blitz at McCoun Marsh, Citizenship and Immigration Canada's Environment Week Fair and the Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Ottawa Sustainability Fair.

The Centre also visited the Carleton University's Keen For Green Summer Camps, gardening clubs as well as the Ottawa Public Library to talk about our wildlife neighbours and coexisting with nature.

Donation Coupon

Yes, I want to help wildlife:

\$35 \$50 \$100 Other _____

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ Prov.: _____ Postal Code: _____

Email: _____ Telephone: _____

Please make cheques payable to: Ottawa-Carleton Wildlife Centre, P.O. Box 11051, Station H, Ottawa, Ontario, K2H 7T8. Contributions are tax deductible.

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