



Ottawa-Carleton Wildlife Centre Newsletter



Biodiversity - What's the Big Deal?

Biological diversity, often referred to as 'bio-diversity', means "the diversity of all life on Earth including genetic diversity, species, ecosystems, and the natural systems, cycles and processes that are essential to life on Earth such as air and water purification and as oxygen and soil production".

Biodiversity loss is caused largely by human activities, including habitat destruction, expanding cities or urban sprawl, over-consumption of resources, population growth, pollution, the introduction of invasive alien species, and nutrient loading. Greenhouse gas emissions contributing to global climate change are also causing serious biodiversity losses.

National, provincial and regional governments as well as individual cities and counties worldwide have recognized that our future utterly depends on our taking immediate steps to halt biodiversity loss and take much better care of the natural world that supports us.

Why is halting biodiversity loss important to us?

Without biodiversity and the services it provides, we would not survive. We entirely depend upon diversity for our own lives and livelihoods. Some of the natural services provided are obvious such as water, food, medicine, building materials, bio-chemicals, genetic resources, and fibres for clothes. Others are largely unseen – the maintenance of water quality and availability, erosion control, nutrient recycling, flood control, pollination and seed dispersal, climate regulation, purification of water and air, and soil formation – but without these regulating systems, life on Earth would soon collapse.

There are also the non-material values of biodiversity such as spiritual and religious, cultural heritage, recreation and eco-tourism, aesthetic and inspirational.

Speaking at the Cities and Biodiversity conference in Brazil in 2007 Montreal Mayor, Gerald Tremblay, said "Biodiversity is the future of humanity. The rapid loss of biodiversity poses

an environmental challenge of a global nature as serious as climate change. All citizens of the world must be empowered to translate this responsibility and obligation in their daily life as the priority of priorities."

Wildlife and biodiversity

Biodiversity, of course, includes much more than wildlife but wild animals and birds are a powerful and tangible connection for us to the natural world. Children's literature, movies and toys introduce us at the earliest age to wildlife. Advertising directed at us as adults relies on wildlife to sell everything from electronic gadgets to tires, highlighting the importance of wildlife to the human psyche.

However, urbanization has increased the lack of understanding about wildlife, too often prompting irrational fear that is used for commercial gain and sensationalized media. The tendency for humans to choose "good" animals over "bad" is both naive and harmful in that it fails to acknowledge that each species has a critical role to play in maintaining a healthy ecosystem. In nature everything is connected.

OCWC CONTACT INFORMATION

Make sure you use our latest contact information:

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OCWC gratefully acknowledges:



Editorial **Respecting Wildlife - Protecting Biodiversity**

The senseless killing of coyotes in Ottawa this winter has prompted many letters to city councillors and the media urging more progressive wildlife policies. As one letter asked 'why is this City employing an 18th century response to a problem we have caused by encroaching on natural habitat?'



Urban sprawl is not only threatening people's quality of life in this region but it is taking a very high toll on natural habitat and the species that depend on that habitat. Short-sighted development policies put at risk agricultural lands, wetlands and floodplains – lands that will play an increasingly vital role in our ability to respond to the demands of a changing global landscape. Development that sees a forest only as something to be levelled is eliminating the natural spaces that help to shape our sense of community as well as secure the biological diversity upon which we all depend.

Successful cities across North America have developed policies to protect habitat and wildlife. Portland Oregon, considered a model with respect to its development, provides education to help people live in harmony with wildlife such as coyotes and beaver. But, in spite of the fact that Portland's virtues were extolled at Ottawa's 20/20 consultation and the fact that Ottawa has adopted the goal of managing its growth as A Green and Environmentally Sensitive City, Ottawa has done nothing to put the protection of natural habitat and wildlife into effect.

We need to continue to urge this City to 'walk the walk' by adopting wildlife-sensitive planning measures that emphasize coexistence, are based on prevention and education and avoid lethal control measures, measures that do not work in the long run anyway.

Donna DuBreuil
President, OCWC

Giving Biodiversity a leg up

What you can do to help

- 1. Protect urban natural areas.** Natural areas throughout cities and urban areas may be small but they are mighty. These areas are often home to a diversity of species and are vital to the survival of urban wildlife. Help preserve this habitat whether it is by cleaning up litter or opposing the development of these areas.
- 2. Enhance your backyard habitat.** Leaving dead plants and flowers over the winter will not only provide food and cover for wildlife but will also help prevent soil erosion. Small rock piles and old logs can create visual interest around a garden as well as provide a wonderful habitat.
- 3. Give native plants a try.** These plants are low-maintenance, requiring little to no water, fertilizer or pest control as they have adapted to the local conditions and insects. They also are a great source of food and shelter for wildlife.
- 4. Learn about wildlife.** Take the time to learn more about wildlife so you can challenge misinformation and ignorance while adopting and promoting humane practices to deal with human-wildlife conflicts.
- 5. Plug in to Nature.** Spending time enjoying nature is a great antidote to stress and coming to terms with what is important in life. Try to encourage your children to engage in spontaneous outdoor activity and develop a respect and understanding of the natural world.

Ottawa's Biodiversity Task Force will be holding consultations to hear the public's views on these issues. Let us know if you are interested in participating at ocwc@ncf.ca

IT'S EASY TO CO-EXIST WITH WILDLIFE

Find out how by visiting our website at:

www.wildlifeproblems.ncf.ca



Spring is when wildlife seek out safe spots to have their babies. Don't create orphans by trapping and relocating a nursing mother or blocking her access to a soffit, attic or under a step.

It is a **temporary** situation and there are humane and inexpensive solutions for all wildlife problems. An ounce of prevention is truly worth a pound of cure, so check out the website **before** taking an action. You will be glad you did.

Coyote teaches us great respect for his species

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

The call came in from a Richmond resident. Their dogs had chased down a coyote. They felt awful, the animal seemed exhausted and looked ill. Luckily the coyote sought refuge in an old pen and the homeowner managed to close the door. With the help of the Humane Society the coyote was picked up and brought to the Centre.

It only took a quick glance to know he had a severe case of mange. From his shoulders to the tip of his tail were almost bare, scabbed and irritated. Not only would this have been extremely painful but it also would have made keeping warm difficult.

The good news was that mange was easily treatable with four injections, a week apart. The bad news was would this animal tolerate the stress of being confined for four weeks? We set him up in one of the large outdoor cages, in a quiet corner of the compound. To our surprise the coyote seemed almost relaxed. He would sit almost knowingly in the corner, as if to say he understood why he was here. Just as we breathed a sigh of relief, a new worry occurred, it was time for his second injection. His first injection was given by the vet during his examination (while he was sedated!!) He was tolerating being confined but how was he going to feel about a poke in the bum – likely not great!

Most of the animals we dealt with were babies or small enough to handle with thick gloves.



Watchful and patient coyote on the mend at OCWC

This would not work for the coyote and after much discussion the dreaded “C word” came up- catchpole.

As we approached him he just looked at us with big sad eyes. We got closer and closer and still no movement or attempt to get away. As we gently and very loosely placed the end of the pole around his neck, we realized we did not have to tighten it, he just laid there. I like to think it was because he knew we were helping him.

The next two doses went just as smoothly. His hair was starting to grow back and we

were discussing when to release him, he answered that question by almost chewing the cage apart in one night, as if he knew it was time to go.

We got the van ready and drove him back to a wooded area close to where he was found. We did not want to release him on the road so we walked through brush and woods. When we opened the cage, off he ran, like a duck after a June bug. The path that had taken us ten minutes to walk took him only seconds to cross. We barely got to say good luck. He looked magnificent running through the woods, across the road and into a field.

Coyote facts:

- Coyotes are extremely intelligent animals that can be found in most areas, natural as well as developed, throughout North America. With increased development coyote sightings will become more common, which in itself is not a cause for concern.
- Coyotes’ diets typically consists of small mammals such as mice, rats and rabbits, they also eat insects and berries.
- Coyotes appear to be monogamous and females produce an average of 5-7 pups per year.
- Pups are born and raised in dens. Dens can be found under tree stumps, in rock piles or in an enlarged skunk or woodchuck burrow.
- Coyote populations show great resiliency to people’s control attempts due to their high reproduction rate as well as their amazing adaptability.
- As we continue to encroach on natural habitat we need to adopt common sense practices such as not leaving small pets unattended or leaving garbage or other food sources outside that will attract wildlife. Taking these small steps will allow us to live in harmony with nature and enjoy wildlife.

TD Friends of the Environment Foundation Grant Advances Wildlife Education

The TD Friends of the Environment Foundation has been an important force in furthering progressive wildlife education programs in eastern Ontario.



A grant of \$4,956 from the Foundation will assist the Ottawa-Carleton Wildlife Centre in expanding the program within area schools and the community to meet increased interest.

The program that is directed to school children in grades 1-8, provides a "dedicated" resource that teachers indicate they have neither the time nor expertise to provide. The outreach programs taken into the community reach young and old alike, whether it is a youth group, gardening club, library or environmental fair in giving people the tools to live in greater harmony with nature.

"The TD Friends of the Environment Foundation's grant will allow us to match up our special community resource with a growing public need", says Kate MacNeil, the Centre's Education Coordinator. The Centre has over 20 years of hands-on experience in responding to a wide range of wildlife concerns, including resolving human-wildlife conflicts, caring for orphaned and injured wild mammals and working with other environmental groups to develop progressive environmental strategies on behalf of wildlife.



Student at Crystal Bay Centre for Special Education learns about wildlife with the help of a skunk puppet.

OCWC Website

www.wildlifeproblems.ncf.ca

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Visit the Ottawa-Carleton Wildlife Centre's
new Exhibit
at the Ottawa Eco-Stewardship Fair

Saturday, April 19, 2008
10 am – 4 pm, RA Centre
2452 Riverside Drive

Come for Lunch and Stay for the Fair

A "100 Mile" lunch will introduce the wonderful produce available in this region. Healthy for our families and our environment.

Green Living has never been Easier

Lots to take in from healthy food choices, energy savings, fuel-efficient cars, beauty and fashion, home and garden products, protection of our natural world and wildlife along with great speakers and children's activities.

Free Admission!

Check out

www.OttawaEcoFair.ca

Donation Coupon

Yes I want to help wildlife:

\$35 \$50 \$100 Other \$ _____

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ Province: _____ 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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