

Turtle Times

Your Donations At Work

www.kawarthaturtle.org

KAWARTHA TURTLE TRAUMA CENTRE

Fall 2015

KTTC Takes Education Outdoors

This year we made some big strides with our education program with the completion of our new outdoor learning space, which was a goal for 2015. Sponsored by the Gordon & Patricia Gray Animal Welfare Foundation and TD Friends of the Environment Foundation, this interpretive nature trail provides an opportunity for visitors to see some of Ontario's native flora and fauna and learn about the connection between turtles and

wetlands. Volunteers worked hard all summer in construction, pond building, and gardening to get the area ready for an Open House in early September, when the public finally had a chance to explore the new trails and meet our turtles.

The summer was also quite busy with outreach events nearly every week. Our dedicated education volunteers traveled across Southern Ontario to present information on turtle conservation to day camps, cottage associations, literacy groups, fairs, and more. We also had the opportunity to be a special guest of the Royal Ontario Museum's "Partners in Protection" program. In addition, we hosted young leaders from the Me to We camp at our Centre, who spent the entire day planting dozens of native flora species while learning about stewardship.

Moving forward, we would like to extend our programming to host more school groups on site in 2016. We are working to strengthen our current messaging by incorporating turtle and wetland stewardship activities, while maximizing use of both our indoor and outdoor space. With a new group of volunteers being trained this month, we are looking forward to expanding our educational reach both at the Centre and beyond.



top left: Guests were welcomed to our new outdoor space during our open house in September. *top right:* Many visitors spotted the resident frogs that recently moved into our new ponds. *bottom left, middle, and right:* Visitors had a chance to meet Paddy, one of our education turtles. A "living dinosaur" with a curious disposition, Paddy is helping to dispel myths about snapping turtles. They also learned about the different species and met out newest additions: baby turtles hatched this year.



Hatched for the first time at KTTC, this little one is only the size of a penny.

Can you guess which species?

(answer on page 3)

More Turtles Helped Than Ever Before- Thanks To You!

Admissions to the turtle hospital increased again this year. We want to say thank you to the incredible team of volunteers who helped us achieve another successful season. Our volunteers assist with every aspect of turtle care that makes KTTC

the one-of-a-kind organization that it is, but it is the folks behind the scenes to whom we also owe a huge thank you.

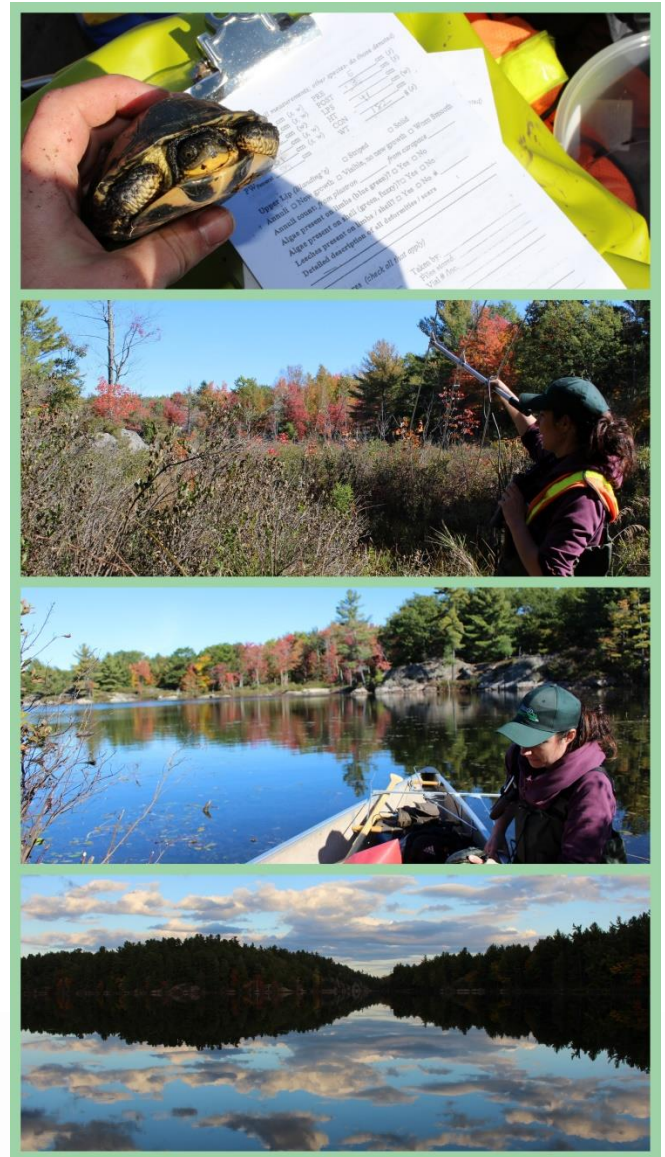
Our quiet “turtle taxi” team and partner clinics have helped us get these individuals from point A to point B, a distance that sometimes spans the whole province. Notably, we have admitted more northern map turtles than ever before, thanks to a great volunteer base in the Parry Sound/Muskoka area. The hospital was very busy, from spring right until fall. Sometimes, over 20 surgeries were performed per day. Surgeries included removing hooks, fixing fractured shells, suturing wounds, and repairing abscesses. Additionally, turtles needed to be x-rayed, have blood samples taken, have bandages changed, and have medicine administered. Treatments to keep the turtles comfortable and healing took all day, seven days a week. But it is all worthwhile; we have admitted 423 injured turtles this season and have hatched over 600 eggs to date. These are great numbers for turtle conservation!



Conservation in the Field

We had another busy field season working with threatened Blanding's turtles, made possible by the generous support of Wildlife Preservation Canada. The project involves monitoring the movements and survival of 'headstarted' juvenile Blanding's turtles (hatched from eggs laid by injured females admitted to the hospital and raised at KTTC) in the wetlands using radio telemetry and comparing their information to wild counterparts. Trips to the field involved many turtle sightings, lots of sunshine, paddling in the canoe, and camping. Sounds like a pretty easy job, right? Along with these great experiences, there were also quite a few bugs (so, so, many bugs), rain, mud, and changing water levels. Despite the challenges, our field team pressed on and had a successful season. Olivia Vandersanden, one of our wonderful volunteers, recounts the end of the season:

"This was our last time out in the field before winter set in. The turtles had slowed their movements significantly and many were preparing for hibernation. We camped out and spent a day tracking and replacing old transmitters in preparation for next spring. All turtles were measured and weighed before they were returned to where we found them. It has been amazing to see how far many of the turtles traveled this season. Some have migrated to totally new wetlands and have overcome massive physical hurdles. We are encouraged by this because it means that they are actively foraging and seeking out new habitats."



During tracking, we stumbled upon a dug up nest site at the top of a granite rock face. We had been hiking along this steep ridge adjacent to a channel of beaver dams in an attempt to pinpoint a particularly mobile turtle. It was amazing because the turtle would have had to climb up an almost sheer rock face to get to this site; now that's determination! The area was a perfect nesting site, and it struck me how incredible these animals are.



Photo credit: Scott Gillingwater

Ontario's endangered spotted turtle (*Clemmys guttata*) is a small black turtle with distinct yellow spots on its carapace and orange-yellow markings on its head, neck, and limbs. It is one of Ontario's smallest turtle species, with a maximum carapace length of only about 12 centimetres.

This species is listed as endangered both in Ontario and on the IUCN Red List. While once found across southern Ontario, their populations have since been drastically reduced by habitat loss and poaching for the pet trade. This recent sighting is a fantastic discovery, since it is a previously unidentified population and there are only a handful of populations left throughout the province. Finding a population allows us to identify critical habitat to be protected under the Species At Risk Act, this is great news for all inhabitants of the wetland!

Events

We would like to say thank you to all who came out to make our events such great successes. We had a lovely evening at the Royal Ontario Museum fundraiser; it was a pleasure to get to meet and chat with our many great supporters from the Toronto area. A special thank you to Emily Giles for organizing, and Monte Hummel for being our emcee. KTTC's second annual charity golf tournament was also a big hit. The weather was great, and we had lots of fun! Thank you to Braden Naughten, Megan Miller, and Sarah Logan for organizing another fantastic day, in which raised over \$3,000 for the turtles. We also had wonderful attendance at both our winter and summer open houses. We hope to see you all again soon!



Our Volunteers

We are so lucky to get to work with so many individuals from different fields, areas of expertise, ages, and even different countries! It provides a wealth of knowledge and helps create our robust turtle saving team! At KTTC, we strive to create an interesting, welcoming, and innovative experience. From teaching international veterinarians (like our team from Slovakia!) reptile medicine, to providing an opportunity for our youth to make a meaningful contribution to society, each experience at KTTC can be very different. We wanted to share the experience of one of our volunteers that came to us for a placement through Animal Experience International.

Page 1 Answer: Eastern musk turtle
Also known as a "stinkpot" turtle, this tiny native turtle is an elusive inhabitant of Ontario's waterways. It gets its name for its ability to release a skunk-like odor when disturbed.

Emily Valois writes: *"I have always had a peculiar fascination with turtles. I just love them! Not only do I think they're absolutely adorable, but I find their mannerisms, way of life, and physiology all extremely interesting. I believe many different people could volunteer at Kawartha Turtle Trauma Centre (even without any previous interest in turtles or any animal) and still come out of it with a very positive experience.*

The other volunteers, volunteer coordinator, and veterinarian at the Centre were all so kind and welcoming. I consistently felt as if I was doing efficient and worthwhile work. I received positive reinforcements and always felt confident in what I was doing. That is a lot for me to say, as I am normally quite anxious, but working at the Centre was so calming. I think animal care is therapeutic and so rewarding at the same time. I really put in all my effort everyday no matter what task I was doing. I loved keeping busy and the days flew by. Feeding the turtles was always interesting, especially observing the large snappers as they are very big and consume their portions of fish quickly and with much vigor.

I really enjoyed helping the hard working and very compassionate veterinarian Sue Carstairs as well. Being at the Centre strengthened my love for animals, particularly turtles of course, and influenced me to further contemplate a career as a veterinarian. I came out of my volunteer trip at Kawartha Turtle Trauma Centre with only positive memories and good things to say. I thank each and every one at the Centre for everything they do!"

For more information about these stories, to [make a donation](#), or to [become a member](#), please visit www.kawarthaturtle.org.

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Vote for Turtles!

It's that time of year again, and we need your help! We are hoping to secure \$100,000 in the [Aviva Community Fund](#) campaign to help save turtles and support wetland conservation! How it works: Your daily vote will help us make it to the finals; the project with the most votes will have a chance at the grand prize!

Voting runs until October 23rd 4:00pm EST, and each supporter gets one vote per day. What do you need to do? It's easy!

Step 1: [Register to vote](#) using an email address or Facebook account.

Step 2: Once confirmation of registration is received – Sign in!

Step 3: Visit [our idea page](#) and start voting!

Once signed in, make sure to vote every day! For daily reminders and updates, please check our [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#) pages, or respond to this email for daily email reminders! Just a few clicks will go a really long way! Thank you for helping us help turtles!

Yes! I want to help save the next turtle that needs help!

I would like to make a donation in the amount of:

☐ \$250 ☐ \$200 ☐ \$150 ☐ \$100 ☐ Other \$: _____

I would like to make this donation ☐ This One Time or ☐ Monthly

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ Province: _____ Postal Code: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

☐ Please find enclosed my cheque (made out to Kawartha Turtle Trauma Centre)

☐ Please charge my ☐ Visa ^{or} ☐ MasterCard

Card Number: _____ Expiry Date: _____

Name on card: _____ Signature: _____



Kawartha
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