

TURTLE TIMES



Ontario Turtle Conservation Centre*



Fall, 2019

Message from the Executive and Medical Director

By Dr. Sue Carstairs

We are finally winding down our busiest season yet – with over 1400 turtles admitted from across Ontario, the numbers continue to increase from previous years; an increase of 500 from 2018! In addition, over 6,000 eggs are still in the process of hatching! This increase is due to a tremendous increase in public awareness – and people across the province have shown that they care! Thank you!

We are just finishing up the last of our releases for the season, and we will be overwintering close to 1,000 turtles. These all need ongoing care over the winter since a lot of turtles came in too late to be healed in time for release, so we are still busy all winter caring for them!



Pssst....have you heard?

As you probably already know, we have been planning to expand our space, as the current numbers are too large for the current facility to house.

The OTCC has been generously offered the use of land and existing buildings near our current Centre, by Mary and Gerry Young. Their 100 acre farm is only minutes from the OTCC and these existing buildings provide an ideal location to expand into. The buildings on this site will function as a means to enable a greater capacity. As we become more widely known across the province, we expect to receive even more injured turtles, and we never want to have to turn one away because of a limitation in capacity. We also act as a teaching and referral hospital for all other wildlife centres, and want to be able to continue to provide this service to them.

We have had many wonderful offers of help to get this project started. We have begun to start renovations, and with heartfelt thanks to Adam Chapman, we have had architectural drawings completed (Adam donated his skills to this!). A huge Thank You also, to Herb Lang Well Drilling Ltd., whose love for turtles inspired them to donate their services to dig a new well. In addition, we have heard from many other skilled people, and we will be taking them up on their kind offers of help. We are in particular need of qualified plumbers, electricians, HVAC specialists, and general contractors to help out and lend their expertise!

Thank you so much to all of you who donated funds towards this, to help get this off the ground. Although our budget for this project is kept lower due to the wonderful support of so many, there are still of course large costs involved, and your donations have helped to move this project towards reality.

Of course, this would not be possible without the generosity of Mary and Gerry Young. Words don't adequately express how grateful we are, for their generosity. *Thank you, Mary and Gerry Young!*

REPORT YOUR CONSERVATION ACTIONS!

Have you helped a turtle in some way? We'd love to hear how! Click here to tell us all about it!

<https://ontarioturtle.ca/get-involved/conservation-actions/>



*"Ontario Turtle Conservation Centre" is the legal operating name of the Kawartha Turtle Trauma Centre
4-1434 Chemong Rd., Selwyn, ON K9J 6X2 www.ontarioturtle.ca info@ontarioturtle.ca
Registered Charity # 85752 4409RR0001

Good News...

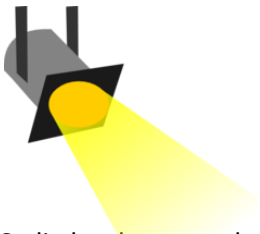


Our Executive and Medical Director, Dr. Sue Carstairs, has been invited to join the Tortoise and Freshwater Turtle Specialty Group (TFTSG) after presenting a plenary session on OTCC's work, at the Turtle Survival Alliance Conference in Tucson Arizona, in August of this year.

The Tortoise and Freshwater Turtle Specialty Group (TFTSG) is one of a large number of Specialist Groups and Task Forces that constitute the working network of the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Species Survival Commission (SSC). Membership is by invitation, and there are 322 members currently, across 54 nations. IUCN is the global authority on the status of the natural world and the measures needed to safeguard it. It is organized into 6 commissions; one of which is the species survival commission.

The TFTSG provides expertise and science-based recommendations with conservation relevance covering all species of freshwater and terrestrial turtles and tortoises. It is the recognized global authority and official IUCN Red List authority for the determination of global threat levels for these species.

Also of note, our paper entitled "Revisiting the hypothesis of sex-biased turtle road mortality" (Carstairs, Dupuis-Desormeaux, Davy, 2019 Canadian Field Naturalist) was selected as runner-up for this year's James Fletcher award for best article in CFN – another honour!



Volunteer Spotlight!

Sadie Thomas

By Diana Morrison, Administrator

Sadie has been a volunteer with the OTCC for 4 years. She is a very familiar face to many! You will see her in the snapping turtle room, lifting and moving turtles that seem to be almost as big as she is, while cleaning their habitats. She has filled pretty much every role at the centre over the years, from feeding to cleaning babies, but has worked with the large snapping turtles now for a few years.

Sadie has a great love of animals, evident in the work she does – she works in a kennel where she takes care of lots of dogs and cats. She spends her spare time doing crafts and taking care of her pets!

We can always count on her when we need an extra helping hand – thank you Sadie, for all you do for the OTCC!



Thank you Sadie!



Throw your child a fun filled birthday party; it'll be a turtle themed "shellabration" at the Ontario Turtle Conservation Centre!!

Parties can be booked during Monday to Saturday from 10-12 or 2-4 pm. Contact Wendy at education@ontarioturtle.ca or 705-741-5000, for more information!

News from our Education Coordinator

By Wendy Baggs, Education Coordinator

The Ontario Turtle Conservation Centre offers seniors the perfect opportunity to learn all about Ontario's native turtle species, the important roles they play within the aquatic and terrestrial ecosystem, and why Ontario's turtles are now listed as a **species-at-risk**. With the help of the OTCC turtle ambassadors, attendees are able to see up close the unique physiological characteristics of different species. Our interactive education program can be tailored and adapted for various ages! We offer private tours for seniors at the OTCC where we bring the tour to you! Comfortable seating is provided and arranged in such a way to ensure that all may enjoy. The OTCC will also travel to your residence with our complete display along with of course our amazing live turtle ambassadors!

Our seniors program continues to be very popular. Please contact Wendy via email education@ontarioturtle.ca or by calling 705-741-5000 for booking availability.



Testimonial from Island Park Retirement Residence, Campbellford:

I have been the Lifestyle consultant in this home for over 10 years and have continuously offered education opportunities to our residents. I have a strong belief in Life Long Learning. I have been told by many that this is the by far the best presentation that we have ever had. The residents are still buzzing about the presentation and sharing what they learned with others. On a personal note I was eagerly looking along the roads/on the roads for a turtle to save on my way home. I truly have a better understanding and appreciation for these quiet sometime unseen creatures. I am looking for my opportunity to save "One turtle at a time."

With thanks, Krista Hazlewood

Welcome Isa Knor – Volunteer Coordinator!

I feel extremely privileged to be the Volunteer Coordinator here at the OTCC. Donnell was an amazing mentor to me while she was working at the OTCC and I'm lucky to get to continue her work on the volunteer programs we have. I've been a volunteer and a summer employee in the past so I have an understanding of the joys as well the challenges of working alongside Ontario's turtles. I have a background in Early Childhood Education, my Bachelor of Science in Biology and I have always had a love for the outdoors and Ontario's wildlife. My hobbies include gardening, hiking, kayaking, and camping. This position is the perfect fusion of all of my passions! I'm very eager to get to know our volunteers better and interact with them on a daily basis. I also get the privilege of spending time in the office which allows me to meet all of our wonderful supporters who come in to visit us during our open hours 9am-5pm, Monday to Friday! I would love to answer any questions you have about turtles, the centre, or myself so feel free to come in and talk with me.



Notes From the Field

By Joanna Hopkins, RVT

(Joanna is currently on a 6 month “Career launcher” Colleges and Institutes Canada (CiCAN) placement, and has the opportunity to work with our staff in all our programs. This note describes her experiences in our Field Work program where we are radio tracking a group of released headstarted juvenile Blanding’s turtles, alongside a group of wild-hatched juveniles of the same size ...see <https://ontarioturtle.ca/fieldwork-blog/> for details of this program)



I’ve had the chance to experience many different jobs associated with the Ontario Turtle Conservation Centre from Vet Tech to Hotline and to being a part of the Field Tech Team doing field work. Each job brings its own challenges, learning opportunities and experiences. The field work has been a great experience with many physical challenges from carrying heavy equipment through forests, to canoeing across lakes, portaging, and walking through chest deep water. But through these physical challenges lies amazing discoveries; beautiful Blanding’s turtles. Through the technology of radio telemetry, we are able to track, find and record information about Blanding’s turtles to help understand more about them.

The theme of every aspect of the Ontario Turtle Conservation Centre is educating people about turtles and their importance in ecosystems. It’s very empowering to see the turtles we are tracking in their natural ecosystems, knowing they are having an impact on our world. Blanding’s turtles travel over large areas of land and water each year, usually living many different habitats. By protecting and conserving these areas, we not only protect the turtles, but we also protect many different species as well, such as birds, insects, amphibians, fish, and plants.

The chance to work outside all day and work with some very intelligent and experienced Field Techs has been a great experience all around. I’ve had the chance to see animals I’ve never seen before (such as ribbon snakes and musk turtles) and travel across beautiful wilderness landscapes. It’s truly allowed me to see the need to learn more about turtles so we can better protect and help them in order to better help the Earth.



Hatchling Mania

We have a multi-pronged approach to conservation. Because many of the turtles admitted to our hospital are females on their way to lay eggs, we ensure that these eggs are not lost. When an injured female arrives at the centre, she is X-rayed for eggs while she is examined for her injuries. We incubate, hatch and release them back to the mother’s wetland, helping to reverse some of the effects of roads on turtle populations. For most of Ontario's turtle species, the sex of the hatchling is determined by the temperature of incubation, with certain nest temperatures producing males and certain temperatures producing females. Since we always see as many males as females, incubators are set at specific temperatures so that we can ensure we hatch an equal number of males as females. The exception is map turtles- uniquely in this species, we rarely see males.

The eggs take a lot of work—every week, each clutch is weighed, and any moisture lost has to be replaced. This can take an entire day. We are hatching over 6,000 eggs!



Donnell & Joanna weigh and water egg bins, incubators surround them!



Once eggs are hatched and the hatchlings' yolk sacs have been absorbed (this is how they would get their first nutrition in the nest), they are moved into water setups with proper lighting and basking areas. This is a huge job for our Vet Techs. Left, Amanda Klack weighs, measures and checks each hatchling.



While they are here, an army of dedicated volunteers feed and clean their habitats and record data such as the date, weight of each hatchling, food remaining, and food given, an impossible task without them! Once it is time to return the hatchlings to their mother's wetlands, this is where our hotline and Turtle Taxi people take over!



Hotline is operated by summer students from May to the first weekend in September. In the early months they are exceptionally busy with intakes – filling in log sheets and online data and arranging rides for turtles from across the province.

Pictured left are our summer students Madison (left) and Holly (right), recording data and making arrangements for Turtle Taxi – rides to the centre for injured turtles, and back to their home wetlands for rehabilitated turtles and hatchlings. Hatchlings always go to their mothers' home wetlands as this is where they're meant to be—this is why it's so important that we get a point of origin from the finders!

Different Ways to Donate

DONATE: your financial contributions mean we can continue with our work. Donate in person by cash, cheque, debit or credit card, or donate online at www.ontarioturtle.ca. We appreciate your support and partnership in the effort to save Ontario's turtles!

You may also choose to donate equipment, supplies, or skills. We have a wish list on our website and to Amazon. All may be found here: www.ontarioturtle.ca/donate

SAVE TURTLES AND TAXES BY DONATING

SECURITIES TO OTCC: A donation of publicly traded securities such as stocks, bonds, mutual funds and segregated funds to OTCC may provide you with significant tax benefits, while conserving at-risk turtle populations.

When you transfer securities that are listed on a public stock exchange directly to OTCC you may not pay tax on capital gains. This may provide you with a tax saving of up to 50 percent and may be a greater tax savings than donating the cash proceeds from the sale of the securities. Donors also qualify for a charitable tax receipt based on the asset's fair market value. It's easy to give the gift of securities. Contact OTCC for more information and a transfer form at info@ontarioturtle.ca or 705-741-5000.

BEQUESTS: Planned gifts allow you to leave a lasting and sizeable legacy to turtle conservation, without affecting your current income. We highly recommend that you obtain professional financial advice to assess options that are best for your goals, stage of life, and financial circumstances. Options are: gift in a will, charitable gift annuity, RRSP or RRIF beneficiary, charitable remainder trusts, or gifts of life insurance. For more information or to obtain a brochure, please contact us at info@ontarioturtle.ca.

RIGHTCYCLE: Since enrolling in Kimberly Clark's recycle program, we have recycled over 500 pounds of disposable gloves that protect us and the turtles from the spread of infection and disease. As a conservation organization, we don't want to contribute to the problem of excessive waste in our landfills, or the garbage that finds its way into our ecosystems. We're thankful for the people who have volunteered to sponsor this program! If five more people were to contribute \$5.00 per month, the expense of this would be fully covered. If interested in helping with this program, please visit our website and click the donate button, where you'll have the option to give monthly, either by credit card or via your PayPal account.



AUTUMN TURTLE ENCOUNTERS - OPEN HOUSE

Saturday November 2nd, 11:00 am – 2:00 pm

There's always lots to see and do! Meet our ambassador turtles and learn more about Ontario's native species of turtles.

Christy from "Face It" will be here again – kids will love her face painting skills, or they may choose to do a craft and visit our photo booth!

LUNCH: for a suggested minimum donation of \$5.00 per person, you get a hamburger (meat or veggie) or hot dog, a drink and a cookie. Now that's a deal! The coffee pot will be on too!

Visit our gift shop and treat yourself to one of our new t-shirts or hoodies, or maybe start your Christmas shopping early! And be tempted by the delicious treats that will be on our bake sale table – you won't want to pass this by!

See you on Saturday, November 2nd at 4-1434 Chemong Rd., Selwyn.

**Please do not park on Pro-tech Pool and Spa property – they are open for business on Saturdays. Lots of parking behind our building!*



New to our Gift Shop!



"Saving the world...one turtle at a time" now available in t-shirts, black only with green printing, adult sizes S-2XL for only \$20 each.

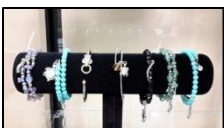


Just in time for winter weather - we now have pullover hoodies available with the same design but white printing, on navy, burgundy, dark green, dark gray, sizes S-XL for \$45 (+shipping on website orders).



or

While we're thinking of winter, why not get yourself a toque? Available in black or forest green, these have lots of stretch and fit comfortably. Still only \$20 each!



If it's bling you're looking for, we've got turtley awesome choices! Many of the items in our gift shop are unique and not available online. Shop in person!



Shop online at www.ontarioturtle.ca/shop

The Hatchling Hub



Eastern Musk Turtle, or "Stinkpot"

The Eastern Musk Turtle, or "Stinkpot" as some people like to call them, is Ontario's smallest turtle. In fact, they are one of the world's smallest turtles! They like still, quiet, shallow water which they rarely leave, and walk along the bottom beneath lily pads and weeds looking for food such as snails and insects. Why do some people call them Stinkpots? Good question! Their scientific name is "*Sternotherus odoratus*" – *is that a good hint???* When stinkpots feel threatened by a predator, they release some stinky stuff from four glands at the edges of their shells...and it stinks! This stuff makes them smell and taste bad! Because they're so small, even a big fish could eat one, so they need their own special protection. They have very strong instincts to protect themselves!

Our populations of Musk turtles are threatened by habitat loss. They are found crossing roads and are often brought to the OTCC with car-related injuries. However, we don't see them in great numbers as with other species.

Zig & Zag

Zig and Zag are the best of friends and live here at the OTCC. These Eastern Musk turtles were illegally taken ("kidnapped") from their native wetland and kept as pets until they came here to live with us. Unfortunately, we do not know where their home wetland is, so they can't be released back into the wild. Eastern Musk turtles are listed as species of "Special Concern" both federally and provincially

Musk turtles are very secretive in the wild, and most people never get a chance to see them. They don't tend to bask in the open like other species, and often prefer to stay hidden. If you visit us at the OTCC, we sometimes have to look for these two as they are very good at hiding in their pond, and they are so small that sometimes they look just like the rocks at the bottom of the pond!



Zig and Zag...or is it Zag and Zig???



Smile!

Question: What does a turtle need to ride a bike?

Answer: A shellmet!

There once was a snail who was robbed by two turtles. He called the police. When the police asked him what happened, he said, "I don't know. It all happened so fast."

Question: Where do turtles go when it rains?

Answer: to a shelter!

Turtle Taxi & Releases!

This year, our amazing group of nearly 700 Turtle Taxi volunteers drove thousands of kilometers and spent many hours either delivering injured turtles to the OTCC, or releasing turtles and hatchlings back to their home wetlands. Our task would be impossible without these compassionate people – *thank you to each and every one of you!*



Jan and Moe rescued turtle eggs and had the pleasure of releasing the hatchlings, with Rachelle



Maureen Kavanagh released this snapping turtle in the Breslau area



Leslie Lewis released this snapping turtle



Kristina releasing hatchlings to Perth



Susan Hartwell released this snapping turtle to Gravenhurst



Tammy McKenzie (left) releasing a snapping turtle to a perfect location! She knows how to handle a snapping turtle too!

Sandy Elder drove about 10 hours to release this painted turtle (right) to the London area.

