

# TURTLE TIMES



Ontario Turtle Conservation Centre\*



## Winter Hours:

**Monday to Friday 9 - 5**  
**Saturday 9 - 3**

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\* Ontario Turtle Conservation Centre is the operating name of the Kawartha Turtle Trauma Centre



## OTCC Hospital: The Year in Review

*by Dr. Sue Carstairs, Executive and Medical Director*

With year-end approaching, I want to first and foremost commend and thank all of our amazing staff, volunteers, and supporters, for persevering through a difficult year. Through their efforts, we met the challenge of continuing our vital conservation initiatives, despite a Global Pandemic. The Turtles Thank You!

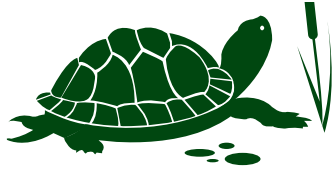
With full measures in place to protect the public and staff, we were able to continue to offer all our hospital services, resulting in over 1,000 turtles being admitted and treated! With a no-contact method



of drop-off and pick-up, our amazing Hot-line staff navigated the transport of these turtles to OTCC. With over 3,000 phone call inquiries to manage, we kept our 3 hotline summer staff very busy for 12 hours a day and 7 days a week!

With about 40 First Responders across the province, turtles were able to receive care quickly and efficiently even if they were too far to be brought to OTCC right away. These First Responders are primarily veterinarians who volunteer their time to help us to ensure emergency care for the turtles. They are provided with any training needed, 24/7 support, and any equipment required, by OTCC. They are truly very special people! Our 840 Turtle Taxi Volunteers were coordinated by our Hot-line staff, to allow transfer to a First Responder, and further transport to OTCC – resulting in many thousands more phone calls and emails!

*Continued on page 2*



## ONTARIO TURTLE CONSERVATION CENTRE

*Home of the Kawartha Turtle  
Trauma Centre*

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OTCC's mission is to protect and conserve Ontario's at-risk native turtles and their wetland habitats. The Ontario Turtle Conservation Centre is Canada's leading dedicated turtle rehabilitation and conservation centre.

Ontario Turtle Conservation  
Centre is the operating name of  
Kawartha Turtle Trauma Centre  
Registered Charity  
# 85752 4409 RR0001

**TURTLE TIMES** is published  
for the members and  
supporters of the Ontario  
Turtle Conservation Centre

*Your Donations At Work!*

## OTCC Hospital: The Year in Review

*Continued from page 1*

Our hospital underwent accreditation inspection by the College of Veterinarians of Ontario (CVO) in 2020. This will make OTCC one of a very few wildlife hospitals in Canada to be accredited by the CVO. Accreditation ensures that wildlife hospitals meet the same rigorous standards to which private veterinary hospitals dealing with owned animals, are held. It requires oversight and management by a licenced veterinarian, and all the same procedures, records, and equipment that are necessary in a private clinic.

Our hospital also grew in many other ways in 2020! Dr. Kristen Jenke joined us again, for extended periods throughout the summer. Kristen has worked alongside Dr. Carstairs for many years now. After working with OTCC both as a student and after graduation from Ontario Veterinary College (OVC), Kristen will be moving to Peterborough and joining our team full-time in 2021! We are delighted of course, and Kristen is a perfect fit for our hospital team.



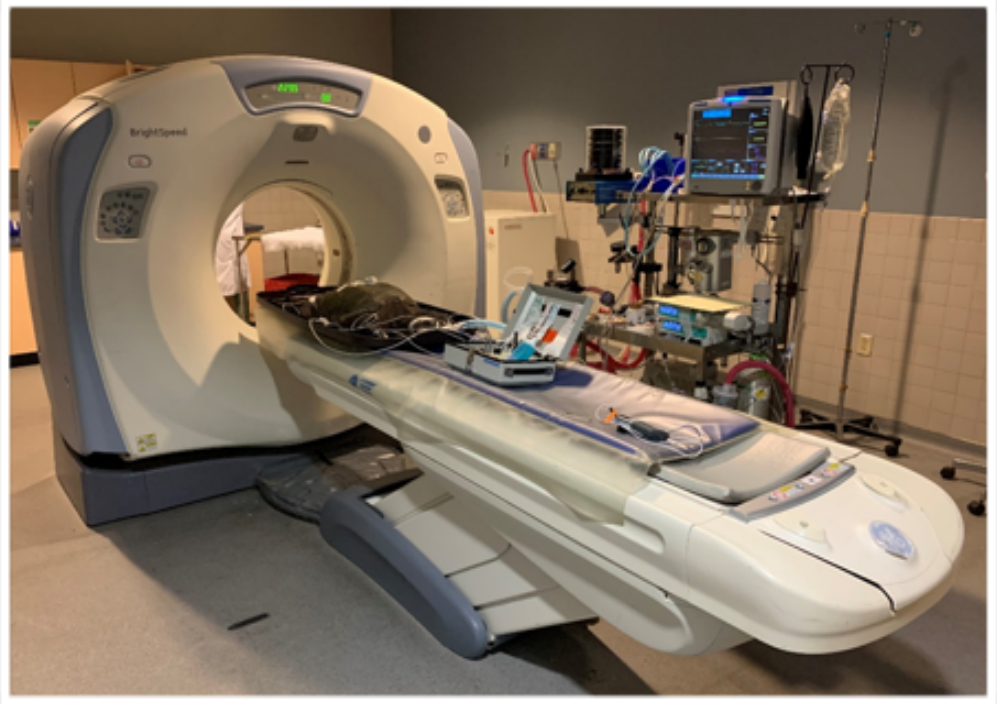
*Dr. Kristen Jenke is an avid outdoors adventurer, and has been with OTCC since she was a veterinary student! We are delighted to be welcoming her to our team full-time in 2021!*

Dr. Chris Dutton also joined us in 2020, and spent from April to September working with Dr. Carstairs in the hospital. Chris is a veterinarian that has specialized in zoo and wildlife medicine for 25 years. He most recently held the position of Head of Veterinary Services at the Toronto Zoo, and he is now Adjunct Professor at the Ontario Veterinary College (OVC), and is a Specialist Veterinarian in the Avian and Exotic Animal department at OVC. We were honoured to have him declare working with OTCC “one of the most satisfying highlights” of his long career. We continue to work in partnership with Chris and OVC and he intends to keep working in the hospital during the summer, and hopefully bring along OVC Residents for training in Turtle Trauma!



*Above: Dr. Chris Dutton brings a wealth of experience and knowledge to the OTCC team and we look forward to continuing to work with him in his new role at the Ontario Veterinary College.*

*OTCC worked in partnership with Dr. Chris Dutton and Team at Ontario Veterinary College, with one particularly difficult snapping turtle case. We are optimistic that with their help, this turtle will be able to be released to the wild in the spring. In the photo at right, he is having a CT scan carried out at OVC.*



*Continued on page 4*



## Save Turtles and Taxes by Donating Securities to OTCC

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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](mailto:info@ontarioturtle.ca) or 705-741-5000.

*Hospital continued from page 3*

Of course every adult turtle we return to the wild has a population benefit as they are impossible to replace. For an adult snapping to have time to replace him/herself in the population, it can take upwards of 60 years! Their long lives ensure that this is possible, but only if adult mortality is near zero. Road mortality tips this balance, and we are helping to tip that balance back, and "buy time" until the problem can be more fully resolved with the implementation of Ecopassages.



*Our surgery was in constant use all season, as usual!  
Thank you to Drs. Kristen Jenke and Chris Dutton for  
all their amazing work helping Dr. Sue Carstairs to  
keep up with it all!*

## Hatchling Program

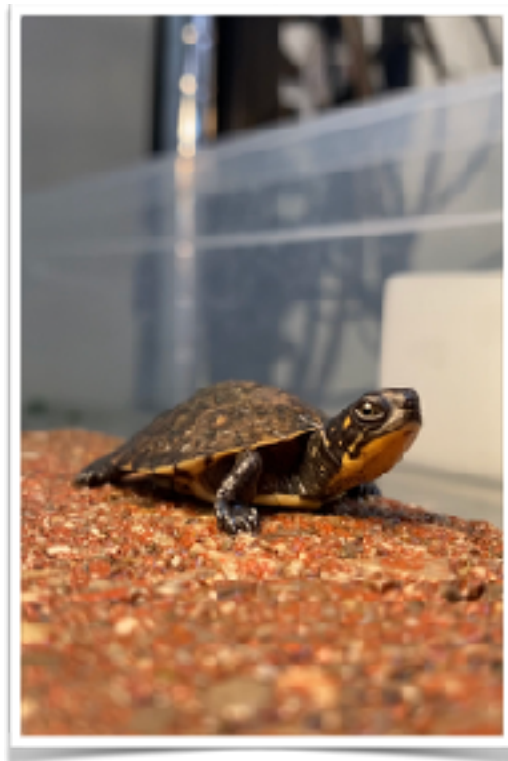
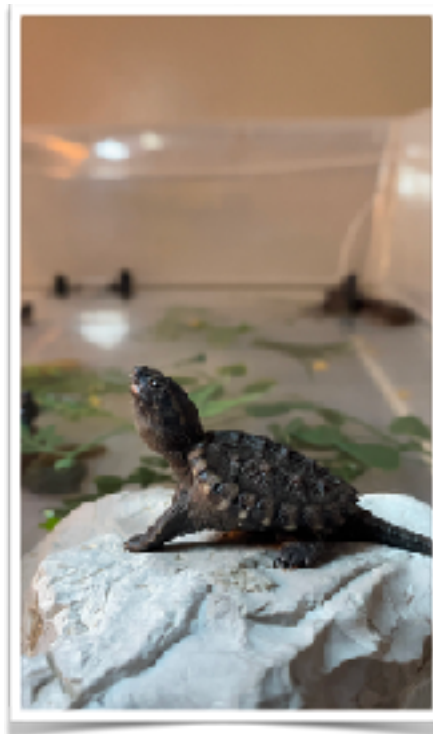
Our hatchling program evolved as a natural extension of the hospital. With about half of the admitted turtles being females, and many of these struck by vehicles on their way to lay eggs, we ensure that none of these eggs are lost. Incubating almost 5,000 eggs this year, was a “Labour of Love,” and the resultant hatchlings are now overwintering at the centre, growing, and getting ready for release in the spring.

This program provides us with another opportunity to augment turtle populations. Even if the adult mother did not survive, we can ensure that her offspring will be returned to her home wetland, to carry on her genes!



*Photos above and left:  
Three rooms of  
hatchlings being head-  
started, (overwintered)  
at OTCC.*





*Some resident hatchlings overwintering at the centre, Clockwise from top left: Painted, Snapping, Blanding's, and Map Hatchlings*

# Notes from the Field

*by Dr. Sue Carstairs, Executive and Medical Director*

Our field work evolved as a natural extension of the hatchling program, as we fill knowledge gaps in this area, and ensure the best “success” for these released juveniles. With much unknown in the field of “headstarting”, OTCC has helped to add to the existing knowledge, with our research so far indicating that these juveniles are adding to the subadult population. They are comparing very favourably with the wild-hatched juveniles that we are also tracking via radiotelemetry!

We are following a group of headstarted juvenile Blanding’s that were hatched from injured turtles admitted to the OTCC, alongside a group of juvenile Blanding’s that were found at our study site. This allows us to compare the movement patterns, behaviour, growth, and survival, between the two groups. This project is quite unique in having a “control” group and allows us to accurately evaluate the “success” of our headstarted turtles. We plan on following these turtles through to maturity, to ensure they are contributing to the adult population.

While our field season was a bit delayed due to closure of Ontario’s Parks, as soon as we got the green light, we were ready to go! The field team managed to find all the turtles from 2019, and had a very successful season following our turtles!



*Photo Right: April coordinated, trained, and worked alongside the Field Crew in 2020. She is still working with us, analyzing data and helping out in many areas. Thank you for everything, April and Field Crew!*



*The field crew must be commended for working under very difficult conditions this season. Not only did they have to contend with the usual heat, bugs, and difficult swampland, but they also had to wear both masks and visors in 2020. With their usual amazing attitude, they were heard to say “that’s ok, it helps to prevent branches from hitting us in the face!”*



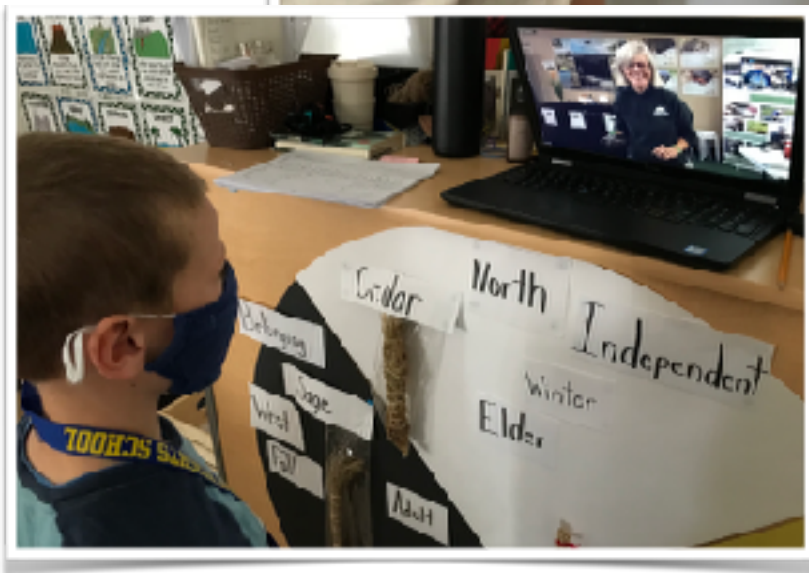


# Education and Outreach: The Year in Review

*by Wendy Baggs, Education Program Coordinator*

During times of social distancing in place, and large gatherings on hold, the OTCC Education Program had to come up with a way to ramp up any future events. OTCC's live virtual field trip was launched! This virtual field trip takes you behind the scenes, and gives participants the opportunity to see turtle patients in various stages of healing - a real-time experience! Participants share the thrill of viewing a "turtle hatchling nursery", or depending on the time of year, witness the emergence of a turtle hatchling breaking free from the confines of the egg shell, the shell that provided shelter and nourishment for almost 60 days! All of our programs are curriculum based.

We also asked our many supporters that follow us via social media to submit suggestions of turtle-related questions and topics by emailing to [education@ontarioturtle.ca](mailto:education@ontarioturtle.ca). This resulted in the development of another program, "Turtle Times!" For this program we choose a topic from these suggestions, and highlight this topic through either a live or pre-taped episode on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter. We are able to reach thousands, and sometimes millions of people through these channels. Participants see how the internet that they use daily, can be used to conserve and protect Ontario's native turtles and the habitat in which they live.



Despite COVID-19 restrictions, our education program completed 81 virtual tours across the province of Ontario and beyond, reaching close to 2500 individuals! The majority of these virtual tours were students. Through private tours conducted prior to COVID-19 restrictions, we reached an additional 1400 people, bringing our total reach to 4,000 direct contacts in 2020.



## Testimonials from Participants

"The staff and students of the Arrowsmith School Peterborough would like to thank Wendy and Lisa at the Ontario Turtle Conservation Centre for the fabulous virtual field trip that we had. We enjoyed walking through the different areas of the Centre, even going into the hospital section that we would not have been open to us if we were there in person! Wendy's passion for her work and love for the turtles was very evident right from her introduction. We were amazed at how many turtles arrive at the Centre in a year and how many are actually housed right on the premises at this time. We didn't know there were so many turtle in our area. Seeing the turtles up close and learning about each one was cool. Now we have learned how important turtles are for our environment and were even shown how we



*Above: Alcona Glen Elementary School Grade 6 class, Photo credit: Shannon Reeves*

should handle a turtle that is in danger on a road. We learned so much and the time flew by so fast." Wendy was very good with answering all the questions. This was a very worthwhile activity. Thank you. Wendy and Lisa!"

*The Arrowsmith School Peterborough Students and Staff.*



*Photo above: Wendy presents a virtual workshop to the 1st Oakville Rangers*

Sarah Wiebe, leader of the 14th Hamilton Path Finders shared this: "Wendy provided an excellent presentation to our Girl Guide group over Zoom. The presentation was interesting, educational and inspired our unit to take action in our community to help turtles. Meeting the education turtles helped them understand the importance of helping these animals and the impact humans have on nature. Thank you OTCC!"

*If you're interested in booking an event or tour (virtual until restrictions are lifted), or would like a copy of the education brochure, please contact Wendy at 705-741-5000 or email her at [education@ontarioturtle.ca](mailto:education@ontarioturtle.ca)*



A graphic of a spotlight with a yellow beam of light shining down.

# Volunteer Spotlight

## 2020 OTCC Volunteers

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*by Isa Knor, Volunteer Coordinator*

2019 was our biggest year yet. We had almost 1500 intakes, thousands of eggs and hatchlings, and our volunteers donated over 6700 hours! Looking ahead to 2020 it seemed like we had faced our biggest challenges and made it through to the other side. Little did we know...

2020 started off like any other year. Winter allowed us to catch up on anything we didn't have time for in the summer or fall. We started and completed renovations on one building over at our new Television Rd. location. We gained many new volunteers and staff. Then suddenly the news of the pandemic hit. It was a very uncertain time. While we were all worried about the safety of ourselves and our loved ones, we were also worried about the turtles. We didn't know the extent of what the closures would be. We didn't know how we would be able to cope if we didn't have our volunteers. We made plans for the worst and hoped for the best.

OTCC volunteers are the reason this organization is so wonderful. During this pandemic you have all continued to support us in whatever ways you can. You have gotten the word out that *YES* we are still taking in injured turtles and that their lives and futures are important!

You have taken turtles back to their home wetlands again after you have cared for them during their stay here. You have continued to come in every single week to make sure the turtles are well fed, clean, and getting stronger! You have continued to advocate for turtles on social media by sharing, liking, and commenting on our posts. You spread awareness of the OTCC by sharing your knowledge and the experiences you have had here with your communities. You have helped us renovate our two new buildings and donated so many of the various items we have needed. You have done all of this and so much more. It is impossible to include everything you do in one short paragraph compared to the insurmountably generous time and effort you contribute.

We hope that you know you're the reason we have been so successful in helping to conserve Ontario's turtles. We truly could not do this life saving work without you. We've had well over 5000 volunteer hours contributed this year!

The OTCC board and staff want to say a huge "*THANK YOU*" for all that you have done.





# New Buildings Update

*by Isa Knor, Volunteer Coordinator*

Throughout the year, we have been busy completing renovations at our second location, adding a massive 3,100 square feet to our hospital and hatchling facility. Through the course of the year we have been loosely referring to our second location as “pre existing building 1”, “newly renovated building 2”, “little building”, “big building”, and a variety of other names that described the buildings and their features. We felt it was time to update this!

These buildings are no longer just that, but places where Ontario’s turtles can heal and feel comfortable prior to release. The two

buildings are now being referred to as “Acorn” and “Oak”. Over the course of this year, we have been moving turtles who are on their last stages of recovery over to these two buildings as well as some clutches of hatchlings. Acorn, the smaller of the two, and the first one renovated, is currently housing 55 adult turtles as well as 5 clutches of hatchlings. Acorn is also currently being used for our physiotherapy treatments, and we have also made use of the much needed space in Acorn for our incubators! Oak, the larger building and the second completed, is housing 55 adult turtles as well as 36 clutches of hatchlings!



## Shop the OTCC Store



Shop our extensive collection of turtle merchandise. Many of the items are available on-line at <https://ontarioturtle.ca/shop/>, or call 705-741-5000 for more information. 100% of the proceeds from all sales goes towards the conservation of Ontario's Turtles.

***We are extremely proud of the work, that with your support, all of us have accomplished together throughout this unprecedented year. Please consider making a donation so we can continue our vital work to protect and conserve our at-risk turtle populations.***

### **Yes! I want to support OTCC!**



☐ \$350 ☐ \$250 ☐ \$150 ☐ \$100 ☐ \$50 ☐ Surprise us \_\_\_\_\_

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

*Please complete if your contact information has changed*

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ Province: \_\_\_\_\_ Postal Code: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

☐ Please charge my **credit card**

☐ Please find enclosed my **cheque**

(payable to Ontario Turtle Conservation Centre)

Credit Card type: \_\_\_\_\_ Card Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Expiry Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Code from back of card: \_\_\_\_\_

Name on card: \_\_\_\_\_ Signature: \_\_\_\_\_



One of many turtles that went home this year because of your help!

4-1434 Chemong Rd., Selwyn, ON K9J 6X2  
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