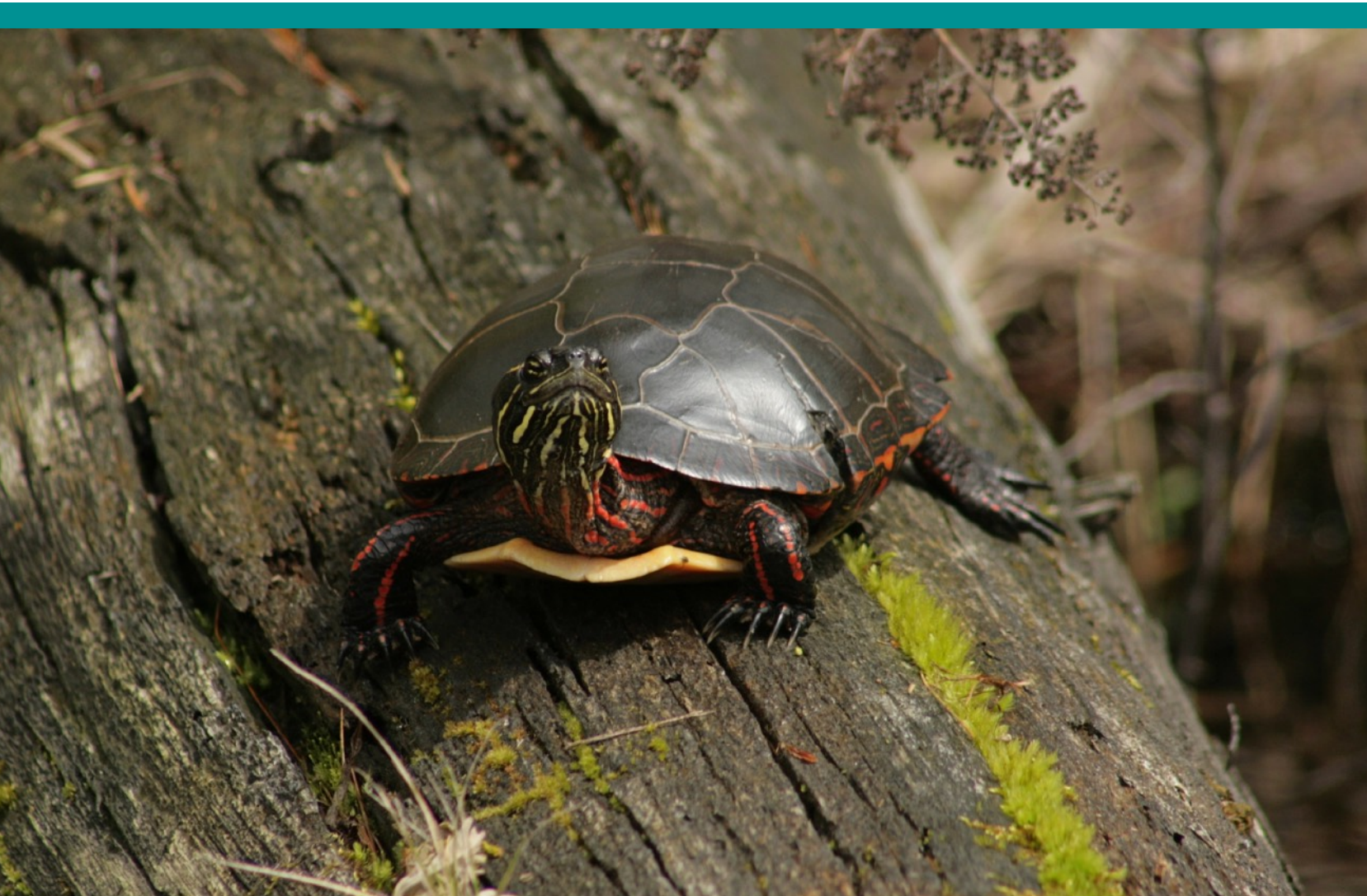


ONTARIO TURTLE

CONSERVATION CENTRE

Home of the Kawartha Turtle Trauma Centre



2020 ANNUAL REPORT



Cover Photo, Midland Painted Turtle, and Photo at Left, Northern Map Turtle by Isa Knor

*Ontario Turtle Conservation Centre's mission is to protect and conserve
Ontario's native turtles and their habitat*

Our goals:

Turtle Conservation and Education Leadership

International Scientific Recognition

Organizational Excellence



A Message from our Executive and Medical Director

2020 was of course an extremely challenging year for everyone, especially charities. Since March 11, 2020 when the Global Pandemic was declared, we have continued to navigate through this new reality at OTCC. We initially wondered if our operations would be considered “essential,” and allowed to continue. Would our staff and volunteers be allowed to care for the more than 1,000 turtles housed at our Centre? Would we be able to admit turtles to our hospital, or would the hospital have to close for the season? We anxiously awaited the answers to these questions. I had formulated a worst case plan, whereby myself and my poor long-suffering husband, would isolate at the centre and care for the turtles 24/7. We breathed a sigh of relief when we discovered we would be able to continue our care for the turtles as an essential service. As the province moved through the various stages/zones/colours/restrictions, we continued to refine what is now our current mode of operation. We have a fully functional and staffed hospital, with strict COVID-19 precautions in place. We continue to admit turtles from across the province, but admission is contactless. We moved the education programming to a virtual mode, and shopping is offered exclusively on-line. With their usual optimism and enthusiasm, our staff has seized this opportunity to implement new and innovative educational programming that has actually increased our reach, and expanded our scope. As a result, our programs as well as our fundraising, maintained their momentum.

As the pandemic raged on, we continued to do what we do best – turtle conservation and public engagement, always with human safety paramount. No staff were laid off, and our volunteer base remained constant. In fact, many volunteers voiced that coming to the Centre was a huge help in distracting them from the bombardment of bad news in the world; they felt better after contributing to something positive. We pulled together to accomplish something hopeful and life-giving in 2020 - an increase in turtle conservation initiatives. We continued an ambitious initiative to renovate buildings at our second site, with the turtles greatly benefitting from the new space. We also proceeded to launch the first phase of our Capital Campaign to raise funds for a purpose-built centre at this new site, with the public phase to be launched by the Spring of 2021.

We are one of the fortunate charities, and we feel for those who were not so lucky in weathering this year. We have our wonderful supporters, and amazing team to thank for this, who took the time to look out for turtles, even at a time when their own existence was at stake. We are looking forward to 2021 with gratitude and optimism.

Sue Carstairs

Dr. Sue Carstairs, O.Ont.
Executive and Medical Director



“Mappy,” OTCC’s Education Ambassador for the Northern Map Turtle Species
Photo Credit: Emily Miceli

HOSPITAL



The work of the OTCC hospital was no exception to the unprecedented changes experienced around the world due to the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020. New procedures were quickly implemented to allow turtle admissions to continue, without direct human to human contact. Throughout the 2020 season, all First Responders continued their collaboration with OTCC, and all Turtle Taxi Drivers continued their commitment in bringing turtles to OTCC. We were even successful in bringing on new First Responders, despite the travel challenges. Our hot-line staff responded to 3500 calls throughout the season, navigated the *No Hands-On* new norm, and our services continued without interruption. By the end of 2020, 1097 turtles from all 8 species of at-risk native turtles had been admitted to OTCC from across Ontario,

and 1647 turtles were released back into their home range wetlands. In addition to the rehabilitated turtles that were successfully released, some overwintered at the centre for further healing.

Disease surveillance continued to play an important role in our work. In addition to on-going monitoring for Ranavirus and Herpesvirus, OTCC also investigates any turtle with signs of other

disease or illness. One of these was a snapping turtle from the Eastern Georgian Bay Region, with an unusual growth, that underwent full diagnostics, including CT scan and surgery at the Ontario Veterinary College. There is no proof that this growth is due to environmental issues, but it cannot be ruled out. We also compiled data on cases of aural (ear) abscesses in painted turtles admitted to OTCC between 2011-2020. The cause of these abscesses is not

known, but it has been linked to the presence of Polychlorinated Biphenyls (PCBs) in the environment. The majority of these cases tended towards the areas of higher human population density.

Research and data compilation continued, with a new publication completed and submitted for review last year. Dr. Sue Carstairs, in partnership with Dr. James Paterson and Dr. Christina Davy, compiled research that demonstrates the tangible and significant impact that OTCC's rehabilitation efforts have on turtle populations. Our hospital also underwent accreditation inspection by the College of Veterinarians of Ontario (CVO) in 2020. This makes OTCC one of the 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 the same procedures, records, and equipment that are necessary in a private clinic.

1097 Turtles Admitted to the Hospital

1647 Turtles Released Back to Source
Wetlands Across Ontario



HATCHLING HEAD-START PROGRAM AND FIELD RESEARCH



Blanding's Hatchling Photo Credit: Isa Knor

1602 Hatchlings Head-started for Return to Wild in 2021

The first baby turtle of 2020 hatched on July 27, with 1602 hatchlings eventually arriving as a result of this program throughout the year. Hatchlings from all species were head-started, (cared for throughout the winter) at the OTCC hatching facility, since the larger they are when released, the greater the chance of survival when they are released back to their source wetlands in 2021.

Data on 596 Turtles Collected at Field Site

We continued our ninth season of field research in the summer of 2020. This long-term project involves following a group of head-started juvenile Blanding's hatched from injured turtles admitted to the OTCC, alongside a group of comparably sized wild-hatched juvenile Blanding's turtles living at the field site. Through this research we can compare movement patterns, behaviour, growth, and survival, between the two groups. Despite the fact that the 2020 field season was delayed due to the closure of Ontario's Parks, the team was ready to go as soon as they got the green light. The field crew worked under very difficult conditions last season. Not only did they have to contend with the usual heat, bugs, and difficult swampland, they also had to wear both masks and visors. They managed, however, to have a very successful season following our turtles, and found all turtles being tracked, alive and well. We plan on following the head-started turtles each year, through to maturity, to ensure they are contributing to the adult population.



Photo of Field Technician Lisa Browning by April DeJong

EDUCATION AND OUTREACH



Field Trips and Workshops

2020 began like any other year, with our education program booked solid by schools and community groups for field trips to OTCC, and outreach events at various locations. It all changed in March 2020, however, when OTCC's education program moved to an on-line format in response to COVID-19 restrictions. For schools and community groups that have access to internet connectivity, we set up virtual workshops and field trips to the OTCC hospital. When the summer months came, and restrictions lifted, a few in-person tours were conducted for visiting families, returning exclusively to on-line events in the fall. While they don't take the place of meeting our

education ambassador turtles in person, the on-line events have been highly acclaimed, and have had the positive effect of

4000 participants attended in-depth workshops and tours

greatly expanding our geographical reach, enabling distant locations to connect with our conservation work. Despite the cancelling of the majority of in-person events, our education

program directly engaged 4000 participants in 2020.



First Responder Training and Conference Presentations

Our First Responder Training and conference presentations also shifted to a virtual modality in 2020. OTCC's virtual conference presentations reached audiences from the local to international levels, and were delivered last year by Dr. Sue Carstairs, Dr. Kristen Jenke, and Dr. Christopher Dutton. Two on-line videos providing up-to-date knowledge in Turtle Trauma were also produced: *Initial Treatment of the Injured Turtle* and *Turtle Trauma; Beyond the Initial Stabilization*. The videos were introduced at virtual conferences in 2020, and in response to the positive feedback, plans are in place to provide access to these resources for veterinarians and rehabilitators across the province in 2021.

EDUCATION AND OUTREACH

Turtle Time Videos

"Turtle Time," a new on-line video series was launched in April 2020, and has been enthusiastically received, reaching over 3,000,000 viewers last year. The videos cover a variety of turtle and wetland topics, including safely moving turtles from roads, helping injured turtles, egg laying, and nest protection. The videos are

3,000,000 Views of Turtle Time Videos

available
on-line
through our
social
media



outlets such as Facebook (<https://www.facebook.com/OntarioTurtleCC/>) and Instagram (<https://www.instagram.com/ontarioturtlecc/>). Viewers have been encouraged to submit questions to be answered, and suggestions of topics that they would like to see in future videos. The video on *How to Safely Move a Snapping Turtle* went viral with over 12,000 shares and 1,200,000 views on Facebook within days.

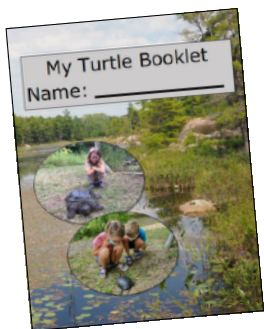
Booklets and Brochures



A number of new educational resource materials were developed in 2020. Available both in print and on-line, our now extensive series of booklets, brochures and fact cards cover a variety of turtle topics, and provide an excellent complement to our workshops and presentations. In partnership with Kassie McKeown from Alderville First Nation, currently working with Turtle Island Conservation (TIC) at the Toronto Zoo, and with support from Ganawenim Meshkiki, we published a brochure on *Turtle Connections to First Nations Culture*, which provides a brief overview of traditional knowledge of turtles and conservation. Other new educational resources developed in 2020 included a brochure on *Ecopassages*. This new brochure summarizes

the basics of ecopassage structure and implementation, a valuable resource in enabling more of these projects to be undertaken. We also developed a

brochure on *Poaching*, which explains the impact that the illegal collection of our native turtles is having on populations, and provides tips on how to help remedy the situation. *My Turtle Booklet*, a booklet designed specifically for kids, introduces Ontario's turtle species in a kid friendly format, and engages youth with quizzes and a word search puzzle.



WHERE COMMUNITY AND CONSERVATION CONNECT



2020 was an exciting and action-packed year at our second location on Television Road in Peterborough. We completed the first phase of *Where Community and Conservation Connect*, an ambitious campaign and project to our move our operations to the new location. By the end of 2020, we had completed renovation of the two existing buildings, adding a massive, and much needed 3,100 square feet to our hospital and hatchling facility. The new facility not only adds to the capacity of the hospital, the turtles admitted to the hospital now have larger enclosures that allow for maximum rehabilitative exercise, decreasing hospital stays and accelerating the turtles

return to their source wetlands. By the end of the year, we had moved turtles who are on their last stages of recovery over to these two buildings as well as some clutches of hatchlings.

The two buildings are now being referred to as “Acorn” and “Oak”. *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 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. Our sincere gratitude to Mary and Gerry Young for the use of their extraordinary property, and to the Ontario Trillium Foundation, the Gordon and Patricia Gray Animal Welfare Foundation, the Rotary Club of Barrie, and many individual donors for their support of the building renovations.



Photo Top Left: Digging of new well prior to renovations, with outside of Oak on the left, and Acorn on the right.

Photo Left: Acorn during renovations.

Photo Above: Oak during renovations

A NEW HOME FOR OTCC



Photo Top Left: Acorn prior to renovations, and Top Right after renovations.

Photo Middle Left: Oak prior to renovations, and Middle Right, after renovations;

Photo Left: Midland Painted Turtle recuperating in the new spacious facility (photo credit: Isa Knor).

FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

Statement of Revenue and Expenditure

Year Ending December 31

Revenue

	2020	2019
Grants	577,292	570,964
Donations	374,251	379,339
Special Events and Fundraising	58,009	68,443
Investment Income	<u>7,095</u>	<u>7,485</u>
	1,016,647	1,026,231

Expenditure

Wages and Benefits	274,341	263,813
Turtle veterinary care and supplies	222,506	204,349
Occupancy, Telephone and Utilities	121,076	109,672
Office, Professional fees, Bank charges	85,355	59,978
Special Events / Fundraising / Outreach	22,306	33,265
Amortization	<u>20,087</u>	<u>7,516</u>
	745,671	678,593

Excess of Revenue Over Expenditure **270,976** **347,638**

Statement of Financial Position

As at Year Ending December 31

Assets

Current Assets

Cash	219,402	663,128
Accounts Receivable	-	953
HST Receivable	112,660	63,933
Grants Receivable	212,524	169,453
Prepaid Expenses	5,097	5,097
Short Term Investments	<u>858,764</u>	<u>313,968</u>
	1,408,447	1,216,532

Long Term Investments

	-	102,704
Capital Assets	<u>271,541</u>	<u>34,875</u>
	271,541	137,579

Total Assets **1,679,988** **1,354,111**

Liabilities

Current Liabilities

Accounts Payable and Accrued Liabilities	36,472	24,444
Deferred Grant Revenue	<u>200,944</u>	<u>158,071</u>

Total Liabilities **237,416** **182,515**

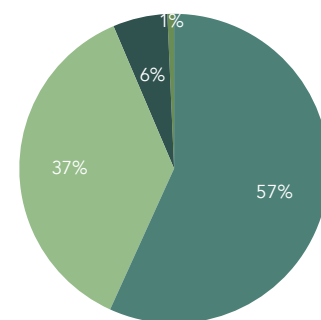
Fund Balances

Operating Fund	607,428	375,000
Internally Restricted Fund	*563,603	625,974
Externally Restricted Fund	-	135,747
Invested in Capital Assets	<u>271,541</u>	<u>34,875</u>

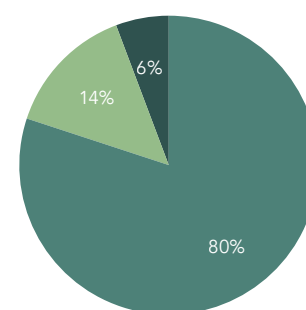
Total Net Assets **1,442,572** **1,171,596**

Total Liabilities and Fund Balances **1,679,988** **1,354,111**

*Internally Restricted Fund 2020 of \$563,603 includes \$137,629 Capital Campaign Fund



Grants
Donations
Special Events and Fundraising
Investment Income



Turtle Conservation Programs
Administration
Fundraising

Note to Financial Statements

OTCC follows the restricted fund method of accounting. The Operating Fund accounts for the Centre's daily operating activities, and consists of funds sufficient to support the Centre for at least 6 months. The Capital Asset Fund reports the Centre's capital assets, related liabilities, revenue and expenditures. The Internally Restricted Fund reports activities of the Strategic Sustainable Fund which currently consists of funds set aside by the Board of Directors. The Capital Campaign Fund reports activities of the Centre for the development and construction of a new facility.

Despite the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic and its global effect on businesses and charities, OTCC maintained its grant, donation and fundraising income consistent with 2019. The audited financials for 2020 present the Funds slightly differently than 2019, with the Operating Fund reflecting the balances of the Unrestricted, Restricted and Capital Asset Funds. The Operating Fund balance as shown in the 2020 column, reflects the Unrestricted Fund balance in the audited financials. OTCC plans to move approximately \$150,000 of this amount to the Internally Restricted Fund in 2021.

Our Volunteers

In Appreciation

A special thank you to our many volunteers who generously offered their time and expertise, and adeptly navigated new protocols for health and safety in 2020. OTCC's volunteers continued to care for turtles, transported them across the province, returned them to their source wetlands, and supported the organization in a myriad of ways. We would also like to thank the many individuals, businesses and organizations that made generous donations of equipment, services, and supplies.

Photo Credit: Jessica Holdcroft

Kelton Adderley-Heron
Marley Aikens
Martina Alber
Wendy Baggs
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Laura Yantha
Breana Zielonka
Melissa Zubrickas

Thank you to the 842 Turtle Taxi Drivers who drove injured turtles to the Trauma Centre from across the province.

In-Kind Donations

Thank you to Adam Chapman for donation of Architectural Drawings; Terry Wilk for landscape architectural drawings; Ray McNiece for artwork depicting proposed new building; Herb Lang Well Drilling for work on the well at new location; Gervais Vignola of FishDog for production of the video providing a guided tour of new location, and Scott Adams of Birch Bark Media for the drone footage; the Riverview Park and Zoo for the donation of turtle supplies and picnic tables; Michael Belovich and Alan Donais for donations of equipment to the Lab and Surgery; the Think Turtle Conservation Initiative for donations of supplies; Martha Jacobs for donation of her hand-made jewelry to the gift shop; Linda Huffman for supplies; and MacEwan Gas for gift cards.

OUR SUPPORTERS

OTCC's work is made possible through the contributions of individual donors, foundations, governments, corporate partners and organizations. We are deeply grateful for your generosity.

Photo Credit: Jessica Holdcroft

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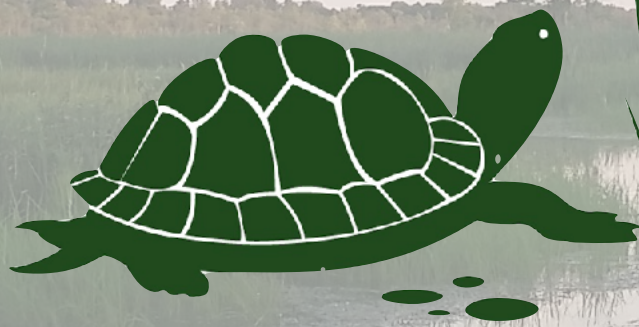
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The Ontario Turtle Conservation Centre is Canada's leading turtle rehabilitation and conservation centre. The mandate of the OTCC is to protect and conserve Ontario's at-risk freshwater turtles and their wetland habitats.



ONTARIO TURTLE CONSERVATION CENTRE
Home of the Kawartha Turtle Trauma Centre

4-1434 Chemong Road, Selwyn, Ontario, K9J 6X2, 705-741-5000

www.ontarioturtle.ca info@ontarioturtle.ca

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The Ontario Turtle Conservation Centre respectfully acknowledges that it is situated on the treaty and traditional territory of the Michi Saagiig Anishnaabeg. We offer our gratitude to the First Peoples for their care for, and teachings about, our earth and our relations.