

6 MONTH REPORT FOR R.E.A.C.T

REHABILITATION, EDUCATION AND CONSERVATION FOR TURTLES



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From REACTiOn to Action – A Project Update

Staff and volunteers at Toronto Wildlife Centre (TWC) are so grateful for the support of the Ontario Wildlife Foundation (OWF) to help threatened turtles across the GTA and beyond throughout 2015/16. Since this project began in September, grant money has been put to work rehabilitating turtles that otherwise would not have made it through the winter; patient profiles of who you are helping are included in this report. Since spring and summer is our busiest time for admitting turtles, we've also been busy preparing for injured turtles arriving shortly as they move about during egg-laying season, making them susceptible to being hit by cars as they cross busy roads.

Support from OWF has also allowed TWC to educate the public on issues affecting turtles through social media, including promotion of an educational drop-in day where members of the public had the opportunity to learn about urban wildlife – including turtles.



This event allowed visitors to get up close and personal with TWC's Snapping Turtle Ambassador Hot Dog. Guests learned why 7 of Ontario's 8 species of turtles are currently considered "at risk" and how to safely help a large snapping turtle across the road. Hot Dog's story of being captured and kept in captivity informed people about the importance of keeping these long-lived, resilient giants in the wild.

Helping People and Turtles Thanks to OWF

People find injured and displaced turtles in all kinds of situations. When they call TWC's Hotline, they are often frantic and desperate to find help for the turtle. Here are a few examples of the situations you are helping to resolve!

Sept 1, 2015 - Andre calling from Toronto

"Hi, I work as a life guard and today we found a baby snapping turtle in the pool. I am just wondering what to do with him as he was believed to be in the pool all night with the chlorine and everything. I really do not know what to do with him. If you can call me back that would be great. Thank you."

Sept 6, 2015 - Jane calling from an East York Veterinary Clinic

"Hi, this is Kingston Road Animal Hospital. We have a turtle in our care that has been brought in by a member of the public. We want to know what the options are."

Sept 27, 2015 - Elena from Shelbourne

"Hi there, my name is Elena. I'm calling from the King area. I found a turtle that's been hit by a car and it's alive, I'm not sure. I don't want to leave him on the road. I was wondering if there's someplace I can bring him to. Please let me know what I should do, thank you!"

Regardless of the circumstance, funding from OWF gives our community a trusted place to bring injured and displaced turtles to receive expert medical and rehabilitative care. As is evidenced in these calls, a wide range of people rely on TWC to provide the answers and care that will get these amazing at-risk animals healthy again and back to the wild. Your generous support creates the capacity for this to happen.

"Shell"struck at TWC's Wild Ball

Last October, friends of TWC attended a party in support of wildlife rehabilitation.

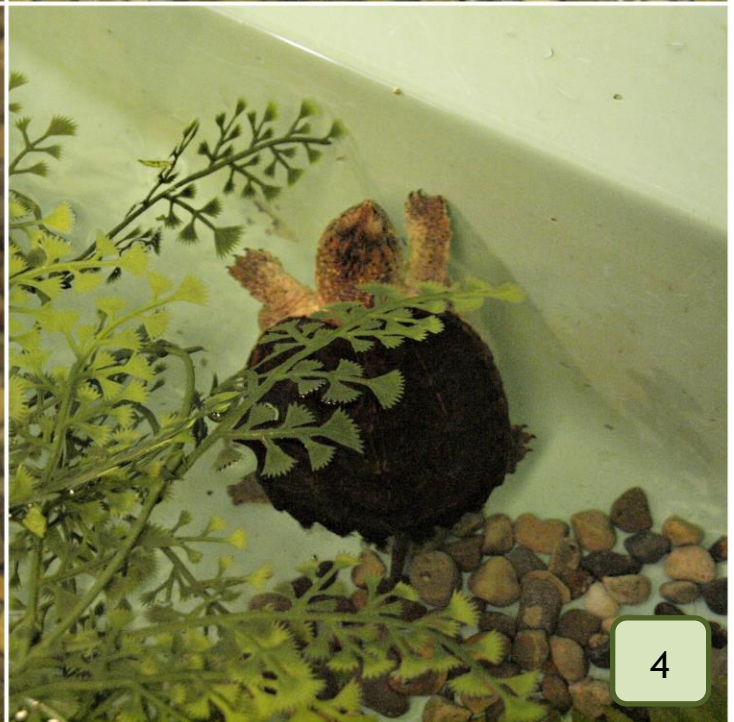
All of us at TWC were thrilled to have the opportunity to meet and speak with the people that make wildlife rehabilitation a possibility; however, our guest of honour was most definitely our Turtle Ambassador Hot Dog.

With so many guests eager to meet this giant snapping turtle and learn about his story, Hot Dog and his handler Julia were busy all night speaking to attendees about the plight of turtles and the importance of protecting them in the wild.



Second Chances: The Faces of Turtles Helped by OWF

Sometimes words cannot fully describe the value of giving a wild animal a second chance at life in the wild. But looking into the eyes of even one wild patient that has suffered makes the importance of saving wild lives clear. To better connect you with the important work you are supporting, we would like to introduce you to some of our turtle patients that have spent the winter at TWC.



1 – Turtles enter hibernation in late fall, spending their winter at the bottom of waterways, buried under dirt or beneath debris. This painted turtle was found covered in mud on some patio stones in November. No injuries were apparent but because he would not survive the winter outside of hibernation, he has spent the last few months at TWC.

2 – These two snapping turtles were found in November when a gardener was doing some late-season digging and found them still in their original nest! Since their hibernation was disrupted, they were brought to TWC for care.

3 – This painted turtle came to TWC with some health problems in July 2015. She was suffering from a mild eye inflammation and a likely case of pneumonia. She tends to tilt to one side when swimming, a condition which has been improving and doesn't impede her ability to find food, swim and climb. She is now healthy and medical staff are connecting with another turtle rehabilitation expert in considering her release back to the wild.

4 – On September 14th staff and volunteers wished a very happy birthday to this wee snapping turtle! Hatched from an egg incubated in our care, this turtle was slightly smaller than others “born” at TWC. She also had poor limb strength and was reluctant to eat. Happily, she has grown up to be healthy, strong and so good at eating that her food was reduced a bit as she was getting a bit chubby! She should be released to experience the wild for the very first time in late spring or early summer.

Social Media Posts – Turtle Education for the Masses!

TWC's Communication team has been busy spreading the word about protecting turtles!

- Facebook November 13 – Shared post about road alterations to save turtles
- Facebook November 24 – Advertised TWC's Education Drop-In Day and chance to meet TWC's Turtle Ambassador Hot Dog
- Facebook November 25 – Shared a post from BuzzFeed highlighting snapping turtle facts (#4 was a former TWC patient!)
- Facebook February 4 – Shared a post about sea turtle comeback
- Facebook and Twitter March 13 – Post to thank Ontario Wildlife Foundation for your support of turtle rehabilitation



Toronto Wildlife Ctr @TWC_Wildlife · Mar 13

Q: What kind of photos do turtles take? A: Shellfies. #turtlehumour
#ontariowildlife foundation #readyforspring



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Moving Forward – The Spring and Summer Months

As spring turns to summer, turtles will benefit from the generous support of OWF more than any other time of year. TWC will be admitting many females hit by cars as they cross busy roads to lay eggs. Some will require surgery to repair cracked shells, broken jaws and other injuries. For those beyond repair, eggs will be harvested for incubation – a highly particular process which requires keeping eggs in their original orientation and stable as well as at an appropriate temperature. Males are also at risk as they simply move around more this time of year.

We are entering into the busiest and most critical phase of this project. While much has been accomplished since this project began in September, this report cannot capture the breadth of services provided to people and turtles that will occur over the next few months. As such, we look forward to providing OWF with a final report in September 2016 which will include detailed information about the project as well as an overall evaluation.

*Toronto Wildlife Centre
would like to express our sincere gratitude to the
Ontario Wildlife Foundation
for funding wild turtle rehabilitation.*

*We cannot do it alone and your support makes a
significant difference for at-risk turtles.*

*Each turtle released back to the wild is a victory -
one we celebrate with you.*

