

Final Project Report to Ontario Wildlife Foundation Submitted by



ONTARIO TURTLE CONSERVATION CENTRE

HOME OF THE KAWARTHA TURTLE TRAUMA CENTRE

4-1434 CHEMONG ROAD, SELWYN ON, K9J 6X2 705-741-5000

www.ontarioturtle.ca info@ontarioturtle.ca

 Ontario Turtle Conservation Centre  @OntarioTurtleCC  @OntarioTurtleCC

CHARITABLE REGISTRATION # 85752 4409 RR0001

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Educational Outreach and Organizational Sustainability Project

A. Background:

In 2016, Ontario Wildlife Foundation supported OTCC through a donation of \$10,000 towards launching year 1 of our Educational Outreach and Organizational Sustainability Project. Complementing the Interim Report, provided March 31, 2017, the following provides a final summary of the project from April 1, to the end of September 2017.



The primary objective of this project is to develop and launch an extended education and outreach program that would provide participants with the knowledge and skills to become active stewards of Ontario's at-risk turtles and wetlands. A secondary objective of the project is to put mechanisms in place to ensure that the education program, and indeed the critical conservation work of the turtle hospital is sustainable over the long run. Early in the project, three options for in-depth workshops and presentations were developed. These consist of 1) on-site workshops, 2) off-site outreach sessions and 3) presentations via Skype. In each of these three programs, participants meet our non-releasable education turtles and learn about their unique biological characteristics, requirements and role in our wetland ecosystems. Issues addressed include road, fishing and boating mortality, consumption of turtles for food, poaching of native turtles for

the pet trade, and how to safely and knowledgeably help a turtle when one is encountered on our roadways. Participants are given suggestions as to how they can become involved and take action.



In addition to putting the core program components in place, and delivering on an ever-increasing schedule of presentation requests for all three options, OTCC hosted a number of special events, including one hatchling event in 2016 and four hatchling events in 2017. As part of this project, the OTCC

was also able to participate in dozens of festivals, workshops and hands-on displays across the province, creating awareness of turtle and wetland conservation among thousands of participants in the process.

B. Project Impact:

Education and Public Stewardship of Turtles and Wetlands

Sixty-seven events have been held since the beginning of the April, providing in-depth presentations to 5660 people, and utilizing 20 volunteers. To date 100% of participants in our programs have indicated that they were inspired to take conservation action, including helping to move turtles from danger so they aren't injured in the first place.

A number of these events were held in partnership with other organizations. An event to plant a pollinator garden took place at the OTCC Education Centre on June 27 in partnership with Camp Kawartha and Otonabee Region Conservation Authority's "Be a Watershed Steward" program involving 60 students, and 8 adults. 250 plants of 9 different species of Ontario native plants were planted. The OTCC presented a total of six workshops at Camp Kawartha throughout July and August, while two events were held in conjunction with the Otonabee Region Conservation Authority, one at Warsaw Caves on July 22, and one at Beavermead park on August 12. Two events were run in partnership with the Riverview Park and Zoo in May and June. OTCC also presented at a special Partners in Protection Event at the Royal Ontario Museum on May 7. In addition to schools, and the organizations listed above, workshops were presented to Fleming College, Girl Guides, Cubs and Beavers, Junior Field Naturalists, at Forest and Water Festivals, Eco/Earth Day events, and at our own special events.



Comments on all of the workshops from participants have been overwhelmingly positive, and as the graph attached in Appendix A illustrates, the program is also effective in meeting its objectives. All participants have indicated an increase in knowledge of Ontario's turtles and wetlands, and all of them have been inspired to take action as a result of attending the sessions. The outreach events covered a wide geographic range. A map of locations of outreach sessions, and turtle admissions from 2017 is attached in Appendix B.

Community Engagement in Hatchling Releases

OTCC invited and involved the public, and our partner organizations in four hatchling releases in the 2017 season. The first was in partnership with Earth Rangers and the Schad Foundation involving 10 youth at a release at the Otonabee River in the Peterborough area. The event was filmed by a representative of the Schad Foundation, and the video will be made available for social media posts. The second release took place in the Newmarket area, in partnership with the Simcoe Region Conservation Authority. A large public release event, attracting over 200 people in celebration of Canada's natural



heritage for the 150th

anniversary of confederation, was held at the Ken Reid Conservation area on July 7th, in partnership with Kawartha Conservation, The Schad Foundation, The Alan and Patricia Koval Foundation, Great Lakes Guardians Community Fund, and the Community Foundation of Greater Peterborough. 15 members of the public had an opportunity to release a hatchling. A fourth event in partnership with the Schad Foundation and Earth Rangers was held on July 27.



Communications and Promotions

In terms of communications and promotions, an educational flyer was developed and distributed to schools in Peterborough and the surrounding area. In addition to the active participation of The Schad Foundation in filming the hatchling release events outlined above, The Alan and Patricia Koval Foundation has been assisting in promotion of OTCC's conservation work, in partnership with the Turtle Survival Alliance. Media coverage this summer has been extensive – with OTCC being covered in over 65 features. Coverage has included the Toronto Star, Chex Television (3 features), TVO, Rogers, the Discovery Channel, Vice and Macleans magazine. Our Facebook and Twitter pages are regularly updated and have attracted a significant following. We also developed and uploaded a searchable page on ontariotravel.net outlining our programs. Finally,



referrals to other organizations and schools on the quality of our programs has quickly spread from past participants, increasing demand.

Project Partnerships

Many organizations have been involved in project delivery and have added to the geographical and demographic reach, and the impact of the programs. Project Partners have included: the Kawartha Pine Ridge District School Board, Riverview Park and Zoo, Otonabee Region Conservation Authority, Camp Kawartha, The Schad Foundation, The Alan and Patricia Koval Foundation, Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry, Federation of Ontario Cottagers' Associations, Adopt a Pond Program, Kawartha Conservation, and Lake Simcoe Region Conservation Authority. Discussions have begun with Turtle Island Conservation and a planned poster is still in the design stage.



D. Complementary Programs and Projects

In our project proposal to OWF, we outlined that there would be additive conservation benefits to this project over and above the direct project indicators. This year the OTCC hospital has reduced mortality of adult turtles from injuries through the treatment of over 800 turtles including at-risk species such as the Blanding’s turtle, snapping turtle, musk turtle and map turtle. This is over double the number of admissions in any previous season. Since the admissions this season have been exceptionally high, the number of eggs collected from gravid (egg-carrying) females admitted to the hospital is correspondingly high, and we are now incubating over 3000 eggs. Over 700 hatchlings that were “head-started” or overwintered from the previous year have been released back into their source wetlands. Weather conditions and increased encroachment of roads into turtle habitat played a significant part in the increase in admissions. Public outreach however, played no small part as well. In 2017, the OTCC delivered 129 education events (on-site, off-site, and pre-booked private tours), compared to 56 events from 2016. With each event we deliver, we are informing more individuals about the actions that can be taken to help an injured turtle.

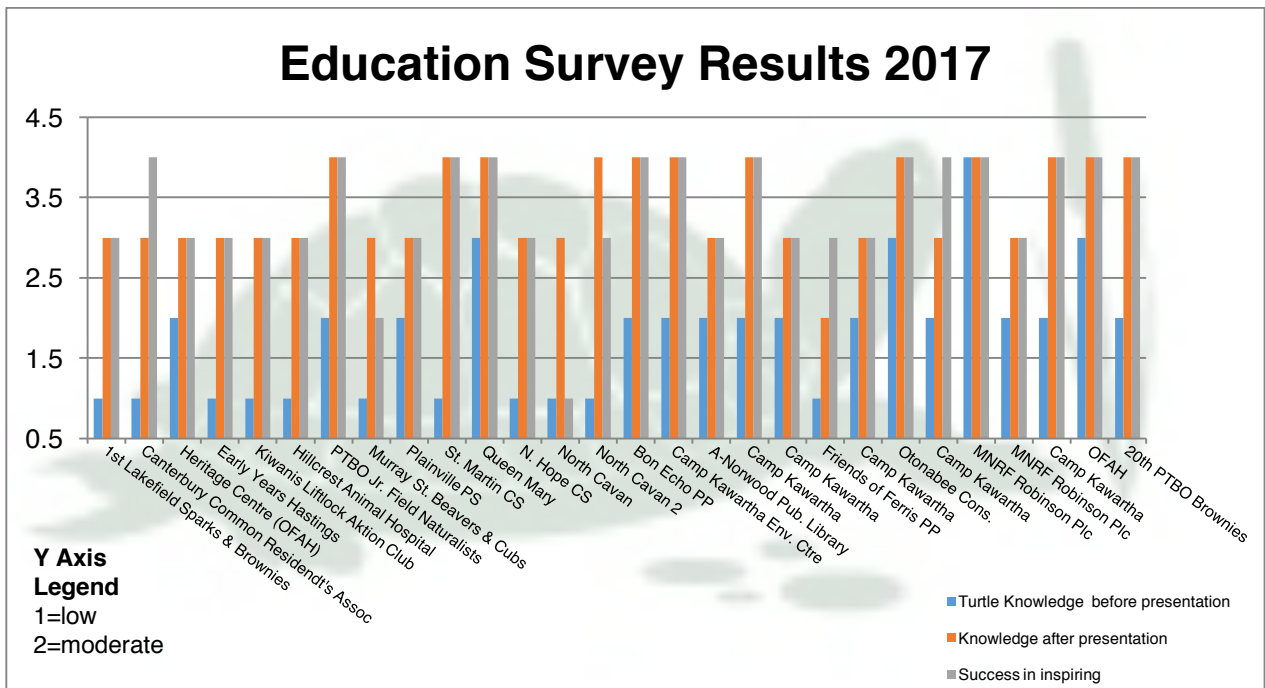
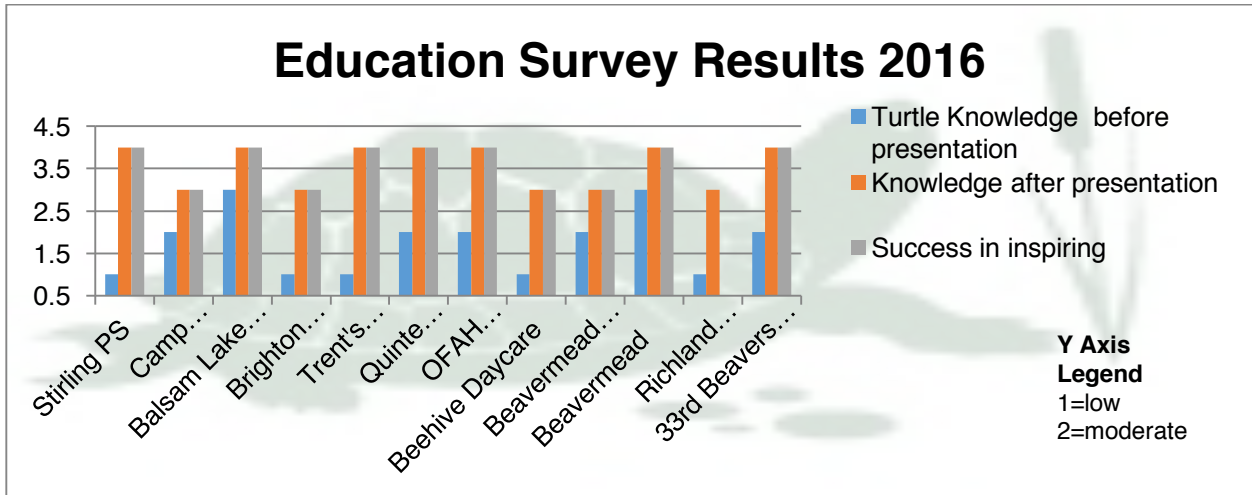


E. Summary

This comprehensive Educational Outreach Project has made an enormous impact, providing over 10,000 community members of all ages with the knowledge and tools to become active stewards of Ontario’s turtles and wetlands through in-depth, hands-on workshops. Thousands more were introduced to turtle conservation through, displays, festival events and media. Ontario Turtle Conservation Centre greatly appreciates the generous support of Ontario Wildlife Foundation that enabled us to launch this program.



Appendix A



Appendix B

Map of Turtle Admissions and Outreach Workshops 2017

