

GETTING TO KNOW WILDLIFE - One animal at a time



Photo by: Sally Hansen smhansen@magma.ca

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When we did rehabilitation of orphaned and injured mammals we found it was the individual animals that people were able to connect with. This makes sense when you think of it, a population of a species, or a concept about biodiversity or habitat does not sound very interesting to many people, but a story of a fox that overcame being hit by a car and needing to have a hind leg amputated is.

Much of the work we currently do at the Ottawa-Carleton Wildlife Centre is aimed at getting people interested in wildlife. We work to help people recognize that urban wildlife are a vital part of our landscape and that when wildlife and people share habitat, there will be potential for conflicts so people need to be

given the tools to coexist. We work to educate people that we are part of nature, not simply an outside observer who can manage and manipulate it.

So, while some of the stories we tell could be viewed as anthropomorphic at times, we are trying to focus on the similarities we have with wildlife as opposed to our differences in an effort to better understand and appreciate why wildlife do the things they do. For example, raccoons are not getting into our garbage to drive us crazy, but rather because they are hungry and garbage can often be an easily accessible and tasty snack. Kind of like that chocolate cake that calls your name from the kitchen at 9:00 at night. We know we shouldn't but sometimes we cannot resist the temptation.

We should also state that when we did wildlife rehabilitation, the goal was to raise the

animals so they could be successfully released back into the wild. While they were very young or injured they needed and even welcomed our care, but once older or better they were happy to have nothing to do with us and that was our goal.

In Ottawa we are very fortunate to have a rich diversity of species living in and around our city. We will talk about a variety of these animals, including some of the typical urban wildlife species such as raccoons and squirrels but also about some animals that some people may be surprised to learn we share our spaces with such as fishers, bears and foxes. We hope you enjoy hearing about these animals as much as we enjoy sharing their stories with you.

We will also occasionally focus on tips for coexistence, but in the meantime if you are having a problem with wildlife, detailed information can be found on our website www.wildlifeinfo.ca