



June 25, 2011

***Turtles are disappearing from the planet faster than any other group of animal.
Today, nearly 50% of turtle species are identified as threatened with extinction.***

- www.parcplace.org

I am writing to you because we need your help.

Despite tremendous successes, Kawartha Turtle Trauma Centre (KTTC) is at the risk of closing its doors before this season is over.

Turtle nesting season is upon us and female turtles all across Ontario are leaving the safety of the water to search for nesting sites. It is not uncommon for a female to travel several kilometers in her search, but it is a sad statistic, here in Southern Ontario you are never more than 1.5 km from a road. As a result, these slow, prehistoric, creatures are heading for our roadways.

Last year Kawartha Turtle Trauma Centre (KTTC) was able to provide care to 140 turtles and successfully hatch 102 eggs. This resulted in more than 242 turtles being treated at our clinic. None of those turtles or hatchlings would have survived without the help of public donations.

2010 also saw us conduct our most ambitious education campaign yet, speaking at events across the province about the plight of turtles. That hard work is clearly paying off! Our intake this year is unprecedented as people from far and wide count on our expertise to save injured turtles they find. It is only June, but we have already surpassed last year's admissions. As of June 26th we have admitted 163 injured turtles and are now incubating over 500 eggs. It is still only mid-way through the season.

Last season we admitted a massive, 37lb granddaddy snapping turtle from North of Huntsville. These magnificent creatures have an undeserved bad reputation, yet play a critical role in keeping our waterways clean by eating dead and rotting things. Sadly, this turtle was admitted with a massive section of his carapace (top shell) completely sheared off and trauma to his face. Yet these devastating injuries were actually the result of a well-intentioned driver attempting to miss him!

Everyone knows that snapping turtles snap, but not necessarily *why* they snap. While most turtles can hide in their shell when threatened; snapping turtle's shells are too small. They can't hide inside! So, in order to defend themselves, they have a long spiky tail at one end and a dangerous snap at the other. Yet in the water, they have no predators and are quite docile.

This massive turtle was trying to cross a small hwy when a driver tried to straddle it with his tires, rather than steering dangerously into oncoming traffic. Unable to pull into the safety of its

shell, this ancient turtle, feeling threatened, reacted by jumping and biting the undercarriage of the car. Thankfully, another driver found him and immediately contacted KTTC for help.

Upon admission, he was given medication for his pain, fluids for blood loss, and antibiotics to combat infection. Once stabilized, he was x-rayed to see the extent of his injuries only to discover that he also had a large fishing hook lodged in his intestines. Surgery was immediately scheduled to have it removed. While recovering, he was set up in a giant water trough to provide enough room for him to move around. His wounds had to be carefully cleaned and dressed daily, medications were administered to manage pain and control infection. It was critical to keep his water shallow and clean to prevent infection while he was healing, so his tank needed to be cleaned every other day for the first several months.

In May of this year, after one full year of treatment and care at KTTC, this giant turtle was fully healed and ready to be released back into his home territory. Due to his enormous size, his release did present a challenge... he was simply too heavy for many of our volunteers to be to safely lift. Thankfully, Jason, the volunteer who had been his primary cleaner, was not only strong enough to lift him but also willing to make the 3.5 hour drive to release him back where he came from. Without donations from people like you, this majestic creature would have slowly died from his injuries.



Jason releasing the snapping turtle

It is a terrible irony that during the busiest year of our history, funding has dropped dangerously low. Some past funders have not been able to support us this year and now **we are in danger of having to close our doors -- unless you can help.** Because turtles are very slow to heal, many often spend one year at KTTC. The cost of medical supplies, specialty foods, and specialized equipment used to care for turtles is rising quickly as more and more turtles are admitted to the hospital.

Please, make a donation today to help us through this critical season. Please consider making a donation through our website at www.kawarthaturtle.org. Using the Donate Now link, you can make a secure donation online. Or you may send a cheque payable to the Kawartha Turtle Trauma Centre with the attached donation form and self-addressed envelope.

Seven of the eight species of Ontario's turtles are now at risk of disappearing forever. Help us continue to save Ontario's threatened turtle species. We are the only specialty rehabilitation hospital in Ontario focused on native turtles. They need our help, and yours.

Thank you for your help,

Dr. Sue Carstairs
Medical Director
Kawartha Turtle Trauma Centre