

# Annual Report

2021 Fiscal Year



OTTAWA VALLEY  
WILD BIRD  
CARE CENTRE

# Ottawa Valley Wild Bird Care Centre Annual Report 2021

## Mission

Our mission is to assess, treat, and rehabilitate injured, ill, or orphaned wild birds for the purpose of releasing them back into their natural habitat. We also provide the public with information on bird intervention, safe handling techniques, and avian injury prevention. Our education programs are directed to people of all ages regarding the natural history, conservation, and rehabilitation of wild birds through off-site presentations.

## Our Leadership Team

### Board of Directors

Chair	Juliette Marczuk
Vice-Chair	Ted Yuzyk
Secretary	Susan Phillips
Treasurer	Eric Garrison
Director	Barbara Adams
Director	Robert Burns
Director	Murray Kronick
Director	Christina Zeigler

### Staff

Executive Director	Sandra Sawers
Avian Care Manager	Maia O'Sullivan
Education Program Manager	Patty McLaughlin

## Chair's Message

Due to the pandemic and its associated uncertainties, the 2021 year was again a challenging one. Although some charities and businesses had seen closures, the Centre remained open, admitting over 4,100 birds, comprising of 149 different species. We could not have accomplished all that we did without the generous support of our donors and volunteers: Thank you!

The charitable sector has increasingly come under more scrutiny over the years, it is now more important than ever for charities to ensure they establish and maintain good governance practices. The Centre restructured its corporate model in 2021 to become more efficient and effective while reducing risks and positioning itself for growth and future challenges. The new streamlined model now in place serves to improve the organization's governance capability and protect its operational structure and integrity. Our Annual Reports, first introduced for the 2019 fiscal year, is an important tool for providing information to all our donors, partners, stakeholders, and the general public interested in our organization and are available on our website.

The Centre's corporate model was also restructured to provide better support for our growing needs. A new Executive Director, Sandra Sawers was hired in March of 2021. Holding a Bachelor of Science Honours degree in biology and master's degree in Philanthropy and Nonprofit Leadership, Sandra is a professional in her field, has held multiple leadership roles in the nonprofit sector and brought with her an impressive, robust set of skills. Taking on her new role during the Centre's busiest season, Sandra faced some unique and unexpected surprises, including a move to our new location with over 300 birds in tow!

Care and treatment of wild birds has changed significantly over the years, and our commitment to improving bird care is ongoing. Being a life-long learner myself, I was delighted to see that the current

staff is eager to seize new opportunities to hone their skills and expand their knowledge. Implementing the latest best practices was made a priority this past year with Maia O’Sullivan, our Avian Care Manager spearheading the creation of new and improved protocols for bird care and staff training.

As a growing organization, we looked towards new opportunities for developing a sustainable future which included diversifying our funding sources, increasing monthly donations, and building new partnerships, with more in the works. Due to the efforts of Sandra Sawers, our spring Baby Boom campaign was the most successful ever, raising over \$43,000, and our Holiday Giving Campaign raised over \$23,400 for the building campaign and \$39,700 for general purposes. Thank you to our most generous donors who continued to support us through these difficult times!

In 2021, the Centre celebrated its 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary since our late founder, Kathy Nihei, first rehabilitated her very first patient, a tiny Ruby-throated Hummingbird named “Pip”. Engaging the community that is part of our history and future, a commemorative calendar was created which showcased the people and birds that made the Centre what it is today.



The special anniversary edition of our newsletter, *Wingbeats*, highlighted some key moments of the Centre’s journey, from the early humble beginnings in Kathy’s home, to where we are now and our dreams for the future.

We also reconnected with Kathy Nihei’s son David, who shared a special bond with his mother and her passion for birds. It was an honour to give David a tour of our interim facility and hear his incredible stories of growing up surrounded by wild birds. It was also reassuring that the changes made, direction and leadership of the Centre met with his approval.



We are most grateful for the grants received from the Ottawa Community Foundation, Eco-Canada, the Ottawa Humane Society, Nature Canada, and the Canada Summer Jobs program.

We’d like to thank our partners especially Wild Birds Unlimited, and Otto’s Subaru, for their past and ongoing support. A very special thank you goes to Lynwood Animal Hospital: we couldn’t keep doing what we do without you!

I wish to personally thank our staff, board members and volunteers who remain deeply committed to the organization, and especially our donors, who play a vital role in advancing our mission, saving so many birds’ lives.



*Juliette Marczuk*  
*Chair, Board of Directors*

## Executive Director's Message

2021 presented a career opportunity like no other I have ever known, and it was one that I embraced whole-heartedly with great optimism and enthusiasm. Becoming the Ottawa Valley Wild Bird Care Centre's new Executive Director has fulfilled my lifelong passion to positively impact wild bird conservation. For what could be more exciting than the Centre's vision to build a new advanced care facility and become the premier provider of wild bird rehabilitation for Eastern Ontario? Giving wild birds a second chance at life and educating the public about wild birds has never been more important.

I have enjoyed meeting and getting feedback from the Centre's many stakeholders. My one-on-one meetings with our staff and volunteers allowed me to identify the immediate needs and their interests for training and improvement. With a focus on health & safety and updating policies to provide the very best standard of care for our feathered patients, we made great strides in 2021. Everyone is excited about the changes and the Centre's future direction.

I am so lucky to have developed a strong working relationship with a board that is progressive, and a chair that is extremely knowledgeable about charitable sector best practices, especially fundraising. They supported my initiatives for a special 40th anniversary calendar and Sponsor a Bird packages to engage and celebrate our community. They trusted my ability to create compelling fundraising campaigns and diversify our promotional and outreach tools to reach new audiences for increased grant and revenue opportunities in 2021.

I have been so impressed with our team, especially the unwavering support and dedicated efforts of my two managers, Maia O'Sullivan (Avian Care Manager) and Patty McLaughlin (Education Program Manager). A visit from our MNDMNR (Ministry of Northern Development, Mines, Natural Resources and Forestry) representative, who oversees our rehabilitation permit, reinforced that we were on the right track. He was so impressed how we were going above and beyond to meet the minimum standard of care and congratulated the board on the move to our interim facility and for improving the conditions for wild bird rehabilitation.

Change is hard at any time and starting a job in the middle of a global pandemic certainly had its challenges. I wish to thank everyone who made me feel welcome. I am so fortunate to continue working and learning alongside with such a knowledgeable and invested group. We have great staff, dedicated volunteers and compassionate donors that are committed to the best interests of the birds and the continued success of the organization.

As ED, I am focused on bridging the gap between staff operations and the board's strategic vision to position the Wild Bird Care Centre for growth and future opportunities. I have been extremely pleased at the progress we were able to achieve in 2021 and I couldn't be more excited to help the Centre realize its dream to deliver advanced care for ill, injured, and orphaned wild birds in the future.



*Sandra Sawers,  
Executive Director*

## 2021 Highlights



### Moving to an Interim Facility

When it became clear that the pandemic would delay our being able to construct our new facility, the Board was tasked with the difficult job of finding a suitable temporary location that could be retrofitted for the needs of a busy wild bird hospital. An incredible amount of planning, sourcing, purchasing, packing, organizing, cleaning, building, transporting and more could not have been achieved without their valued help and support - they even wrangled their significant others and friends to help out!

Thanks to our Chair who ingeniously designed the enclosures using a cost-effective solution using rented fence panels to provide structure, the birds were afforded larger species-specific free-flight areas. We could not have undertaken this monumental move alone and it's all thanks to our generous community who rallied to the cause in a very big way!

The Humane Society kindly donated pet carriers which were used to transport the birds in our care, while the various pet kennels donated were retrofitted to make them safe and comfortable for the birds during their stay at our temporary home.

Other amazing partners, like Safe Wings Ottawa, also helped to provide continuous care to injured, orphaned wild birds before, during and after the move.

Now settled into our temporary space, the birds are better segregated in larger enclosures, which helps reduce the birds' stress and aids in with recovery. This is just a taste of what we will have once our new Centre is built. We can't wait for the day when we will start building our new facility!



*"I have always loved animals, but I knew virtually nothing about birds when I began volunteering at the WBCC in the fall of 2015. I had no insight into how fascinating and extraordinary they are, and no idea I would come to love them as much as I have.*

*The move from the building on Moodie Drive to the interim facility on Cedarview in July 2021 was a huge undertaking, but was essential for the well-being of staff and the welfare of the birds in care... Cedarview has given a hint of the potential that the Centre could realize in the proposed permanent facility...*

*As another frantic baby season begins to wind down, I am continually astonished at the energy, dedication, inventiveness and expertise that the Board and staff bring to the care of the thousands of birds brought to the Centre. The WBCC is a gem that deserves the highest level of support from the Ottawa Valley community."*

- Tom Malloch  
Volunteer & Donor (2015 - present)

## “Lucky”, the Barn Swallow

Many birds admitted for treatment are listed as species currently at risk in Ontario. This young Barn Swallow was discovered struggling to keep its head above water and would have surely drowned if it had not been rescued out of the water by two kind-hearted paddle boarders who carefully scooped it up and rushed it over to the Ottawa Valley Wild Bird Care Centre.

Arriving in a weakened state, the tiny bird was experiencing lung issues from aspirating water. The Avian Care team worked quickly to provide emergency care and stabilize the bird. After days of hand-feeding a specialized diet and resting in an incubator, the Swallow was moved to a new, larger enclosure where it could rebuild its muscles by flying freely and foraging on live insects in preparation for life in the wild again. Just a couple of weeks after its arrival, it was successfully released near the location where it was found.



## Owl be Seeing You... in the Wild!



In the latter part of 2021, four beautiful Barred Owls (victims of traumatic vehicle and window collisions) were successfully rehabilitated at the Centre and released back to the wild. Since moving to our interim facility in July of 2021, we achieved a 100% success rate from rescue to release with these particular amazing owls! Contributing factors to this success included: having a dedicated raptor room which provided a quiet, more spacious flight enclosures which increased comfort while lowering stress levels; investing in new equipment to better diagnose and assess injuries and illnesses; making improvements in avian care through ongoing training and collaboration opportunities; and further reducing disruptions in care caused by transferring birds to other facilities. Seeing such promising results in our interim space provides reassurance that we are definitely on the right track!

## Record-Breaking Day and a Very Special Chick

During the spring and summer months, the Centre receives hundreds of birds each week. In 2021, we broke a previous record, receiving 85 birds in just one day. One of these birds was a Least Bittern chick who was rescued from a cat attack. Least Bitterns are one of the smallest herons and are listed as



threatened under the federal *Species at Risk Act* (SARA). For the Least Bittern, “Threatened” means that the species lives wild in Ontario, is not yet endangered, but is likely to become endangered if steps are not taken to address factors threatening it. Found in wetland habitats, preferably marshes, it nests hidden among the cattails. The destruction of wetland habitat and human disturbances such as lighting from buildings, boat wakes and loud noises are its main threat. They will leave the area entirely if the activity or habitat alteration becomes too great. Once again, we are reminded that our seemingly harmless daily actions can have an impact on wild bird populations.

For the Least Bittern chick that was rescued, the Centre was its last hope for survival. The chick was hand fed fresh smelt and worm segments every 20 minutes daily. A warm incubator, fluids, and critical medical treatment made all the difference, and it was soon well on its way to recovery.

*“Kathy Nihei was dedicated to helping wild birds and it was an honour to work with her. She would be proud of all the hard-working volunteers and staff that have continued with her journey. It has been a pleasure to provide advanced medical care to birds at the Centre for over 30 years.”*

- Dr. Robin Roscoe  
 Veterinarian, Lynwood Animal Hospital (1989 - present), Volunteer and Board Member (1989-2016)



## Future Centre

During 2021, the Centre’s building project went through more cycles of the site plan control process with the City of Ottawa. The project has been hampered by unusual delays as a result of pandemic-related issues, but the process is ongoing with site plan approval expected to be finally completed in 2022.

The building campaign came close to reaching its target of \$1.7M in 2021, and at the time of this writing, has now been surpassed! We would like to thank our Chair, Juliette Marczuk, for running such a successful campaign. The campaign will continue to accept donations until the project is completed. Additional funds raised will enable the Centre to cover cost increases of construction and upgrade materials. Naming opportunities will also remain available for donors interested in lending their names for this once-in-a-lifetime project. We wish to extend a very special thank you to all our donors who contributed to the building fund thus far, especially those who chose to name a space at the new facility.

## Our Donors

Our donors range from individuals to corporations. We wish to thank each and every one of our donors who have contributed to either, or both our general operations and our building fund. As the building is a very special project for us, we're acknowledging those who contributed \$100 or more to our building campaign since the campaign was started and have given us permission to publish their names:

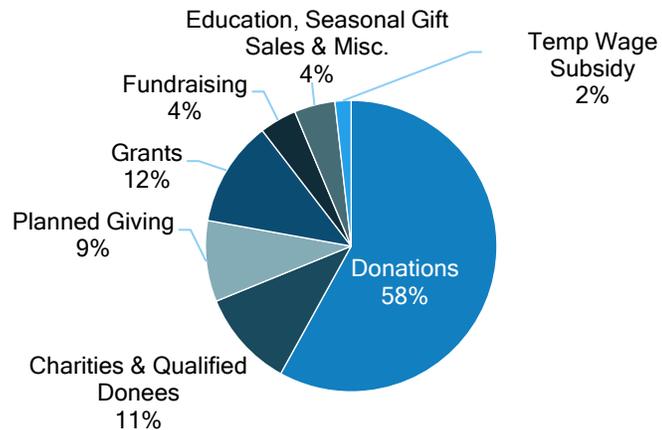
<https://wildbirdcarecentre.org/BuildingCampaignDonors.html>

## Financial Summary

	Operating Fund	Building Fund	Total 2021	Total 2020
Revenue	606,807	513,000	1,119,807	687,158
Expenses	602,766	2,335	605,101	505,764
Excess revenue over expenses	4,041	510,665	514,706	181,394
Total Investment Income, gain/loss on investments, & loss on disposal of capital assets	(88,885)	12,112	(76,763)	19,644
(deficiency) excess revenue over expenses	(84,844)	522,787	437,943	201,038

### Operating Revenue

- Donations
- Charities & Qualified Donees
- Planned Giving
- Grants
- Fundraising
- Education, Seasonal Gift Sales & Misc.
- Temp Wage Subsidy



### Operating Expenses

- Rent & Property Taxes
- Advertising, Fundraising & Marketing
- Amortization
- Bird Care med. & supplies
- Bank & Merch. Fees
- Education, Training, Travel & Misc.
- Insurance, Office & Telecom
- Professional Fees
- Repairs & Maintenance

