

Annual Report

2024



Ottawa Valley
Wild Bird Care Centre



About

The Ottawa Valley Wild Bird Care Centre is a registered Canadian charity and is licensed by Federal and Provincial governments. As a licensed rehabilitator, the Centre is exclusively dedicated to wild bird rehabilitation, providing emergency critical care to thousands of birds each year.

Mission & Values

Our primary mission is to provide care for injured, sick, or orphaned wild birds with the goal of releasing them back into their natural habitat where they can continue to play an important role within the environment upon which we all depend. We also provide educational services to people of all ages, giving them an opportunity to learn about wild birds, their habitats and conservation.

We feel every bird deserves our compassion. We believe that responsible stewardship includes trying to fix and reduce some of the damage humans have caused to wildlife. We believe that each bird saved and released can contribute to generations of birds in the future, thus helping the survival of its own species. With so many bird populations experiencing dramatic declines, every bird can make a difference.

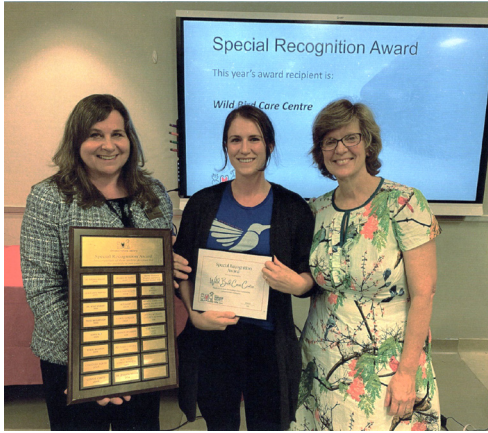
Message from Our Chair

Although our late founder, Kathy Nihei's plans for the Centre were modest, massive declines in bird populations are now demanding more action from us to stop this alarming trend. Especially for those species that are at risk of becoming extinct, each precious life saved can have a real impact on the survival of its species. Our new advanced care facility to be built in 2025 is badly needed and will be an amazing win for thousands of wild birds in the Ottawa region and beyond.

On June 1, 2024, we celebrated the ground-breaking of our new facility and the launching of the final phase of our building campaign to raise the additional funds needed. After overcoming numerous challenges dealing with municipal planning departments and other obstacles, we are proud to say construction finally began in 2024! We are all eagerly awaiting the day we can move into our new permanent home.

With so many people experiencing financial difficulties we, like many other charities, had to make some difficult decisions and dip into our reserves to meet expenses in 2023. To save costs on the preparation of our audited financial statements, the Board decided to move its fiscal year end from December 31 to August 31. Recognizing that not all charities are alike, the organization was restructured. The administrative position of Executive Director was eliminated, and the new positions of Operations Manager and Avian Rehabilitation Specialist were created to better suit our specific needs.

Although the 2023-2024 fiscal year finished with a small surplus thanks to our donors, the 2024-2025 fiscal year ahead will pose financial challenges as we need to raise funds for both our operations and the building of our new facility.



Although most of our summer staff left by the end of August, we also said farewell to a couple of our regular staff who returned to academia to pursue additional studies. We wish them all the best in their endeavors.

On September 10, 2024, the Centre received the Ottawa Humane Society's Special Recognition Award for its work in caring for thousands of injured, orphaned and ill wild birds and championing the welfare and protection of wild birds.

Left to right: Sharon Miko, President & CEO (Ottawa Humane Society), Maia O'Sullivan, Operations Manager (Ottawa Valley Wild Bird Care Centre), Jean Nelson, Chair (Ottawa Humane Society)

We have been fortunate to have recruited more volunteers to help with daily bird care, but we could not operate without our highly specialized staff. Investing in skilled staff and their training allows us to provide improved care as new techniques and technologies are developed. With the ongoing risk of Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI), and no options for the intake of waterfowl that were feasible or practical, the staff got creative. Thanks to the development of new care protocols and carefully designed spaces, in 2024 we were able to safely accept Wood Ducklings and Mergansers again. A total of 16 Wood Ducklings and 3 Hooded Mergansers were released. Since both Merganser and Wood Duck species are known to accept other young birds into their flocks, we were thrilled to see all the released ducklings successfully join new families. View release video of Wood Ducklings: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bT4bSVntIUU>.



On behalf of the Ottawa Valley Wild Bird Care Centre, we wish to express our deepest gratitude to our many contributors, without whom our life-saving work could not continue. Thank you so much for your support!

A very special thank you goes to Lynwood Animal Hospital; we couldn't keep doing what we do without you!

We also wish to thank all our volunteers, including our deeply committed Board of Directors who have contributed countless hours of work supporting our mission in many ways.

Thank you for caring about the birds!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Juliette'.

*Juliette Marczuk
Chair, Board of Directors*

Admissions

Period: January 1, 2023 - August 31, 2024

5733 Admissions
141 Unique species
39 Individuals of
Species at Risk, Ontario

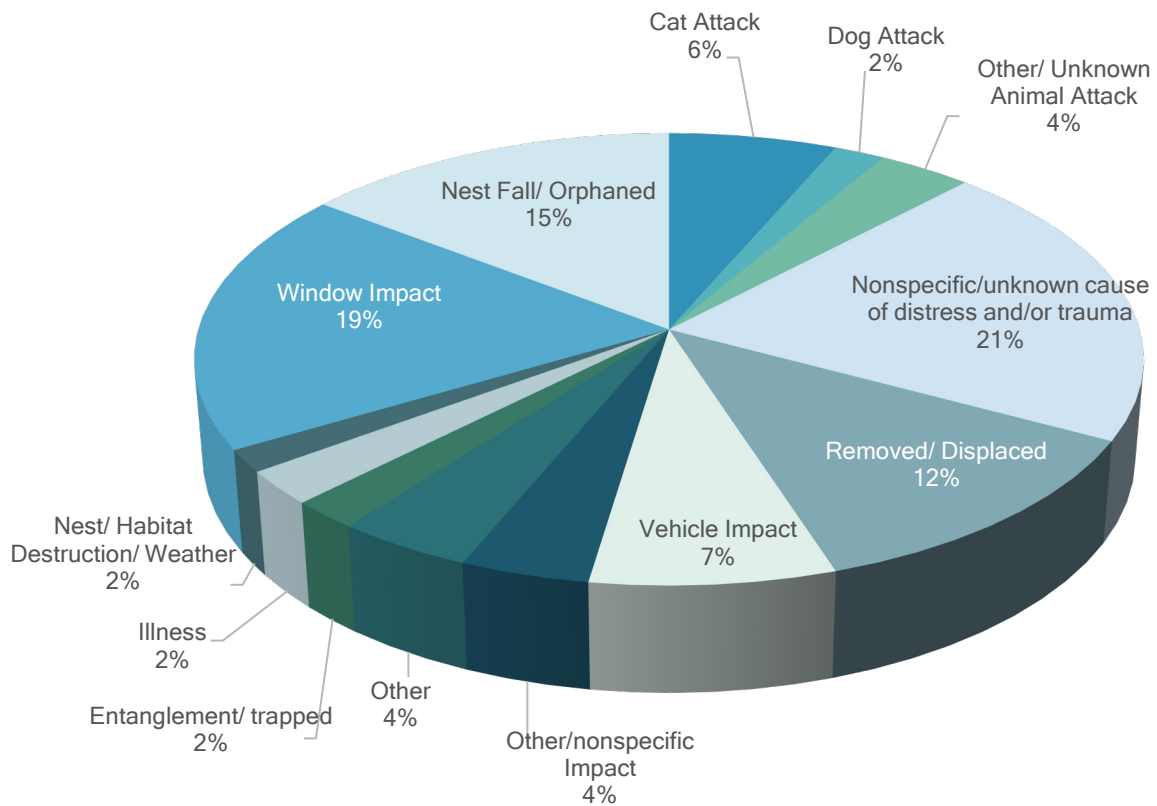


Wood Ducklings & Merganser

Admitted Species at Risk in Ontario:

- Bald Eagle
- Barn Swallow
- Bank Swallow
- Eastern Wood-peewee
- Evening Grosbeak
- Olive-sided Flycatcher
- Peregrine Falcon
- Wood Thrush

Reasons For Admission



Highlights – Your Donations at Work

Changing Trends

Each year, the Centre receives more than 120 different species of wild birds, with the most common being those that rescuers are likely to encounter in their backyards, parks, and communities. The life-saving work at the Centre helps address declining bird populations and we are continually learning and preparing for changes in bird illness, threats to wild birds, and changing weather patterns that may affect wild bird movements. Each day at the Centre is somewhat unpredictable, but our skilled team is always ready to provide the best care for every bird that arrives. Although not all can be saved, they all receive compassionate, comforting care.



The American Robin is one of the species we receive the most frequently, with over 900 arriving between January 1, 2023 and August 31, 2024. These common backyard birds have adapted well to suburban environments, utilizing human-made structures such as eaves, downspouts, window ledges, and light fixtures to support their nests. They also take advantage of backyard micro-habitats for food and shelter.

In the fall, robins naturally shift their diet to focus primarily on fruits and berries. They are capable of withstanding Ottawa's cold weather as long as there is adequate food available, and the winter is not too harsh. With the recent winters in Ottawa being milder and having less snow, we have noticed an increase in the number of robins arriving at the Centre during the fall and winter months and even more phone calls from rescuers spotting them in their snowy backyards. As robins continue to find resourceful ways to survive the winter, you might spot these "signs of spring" even while winter is still in full swing! While our backyards may be small, they are an important habitat for many wild birds. Planting even just a few native species will help create a habitat and a food source for many birds. Thank you for doing your part to make the wild a safer and healthier place for wild birds!



A Remarkable Recovery

Every day birds arrive at the Centre with their own unique stories and some of their rehabilitation journeys can be remarkable. One bird that left a lasting impression in 2023 was a Barred Owl that was spotted lifeless on the side of the road. Suffering a severe concussion from colliding with a vehicle, this owl did not have the strength, balance, or sight to move itself as it lay there helpless.

Thankfully, the rescuers spotted the bird and pulled over with the very small hope that the bird was still alive. Incredibly the owl was and slowly began to stabilize just from the kind act of being

placed in a safe, secure, quiet box. In obvious need of immediate emergency care, the rescuers brought the owl to the Centre as soon as they could. The Barred Owl received both medical and supportive care for weeks and eventually was strong enough to move around and eat independently in the flight enclosure. A few more weeks to regain flight strength and balance, this Barred Owl was returned to the rescuers to be released. Wild birds are both delicate but at the same time, incredibly resilient. No matter how grim their situation may look, if they are still alive there is a chance we may be able to one day return them to the wild! Watch the release video here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AFMIJJv6_s



Aerial Insectivores

The [State of Canada Birds 2024](#) report identified aerial insectivores (birds who consume insects in flight) as a group of birds that have declined in numbers by 43% since 1970. In Ontario this decline is also reflected in two swallow species being added to the *Species at Risk Act* for additional protection; the Barn Swallow (special concern) and the Bank Swallow (threatened). Factors such as habitat changes, a decrease in insect populations, and the widespread use of pesticides are negatively impacting these bird species.



Swallows are not a typical backyard bird, and many are brought to the Centre by rescuers living in rural areas or cottage areas. We are grateful to all of the rescuers who take time out of their busy schedules to make the drive to get these special birds the care that they need! At the Centre, aerial insectivores receive hand feeding every 20 minutes throughout the day. Their diet consists of various supplements and live insects which ensures that the dietary needs for their growing bodies are met.

Thanks to the dedicated efforts of our team, in the last two summers we released 18 swallows and 21 Eastern Phoebes (some of which are pictured here) back to their natural habitat where they can help contribute to the much-needed population growth of their species and of course, keep pesky insects in check.





Small, but Fierce

Not all predator birds are large. In fact, several species of owls, hawks, and falcons are about the size of a Blue Jay. Over the last two summers, the Centre has received more than two dozen nestling raptors that were too young to fend for themselves but unable to be re-nested with their families. Merlins use old squirrel or hawk nests without making any

repairs, putting them at higher risk of nest failure during severe storms. American Kestrels, Northern Saw-whet Owls, and Eastern Screech Owls all nest inside cavities such as those found in older trees. Locating the nests of these species to re-nest them can be quite challenging!

Although they are small, these young raptors are fierce! Part of their care involves providing them with hunting opportunities, such as giving them live crickets to catch. In the wild, all these species consume a significant number of large insects, including grasshoppers, cicadas, and dragonflies, as well as small rodents. They may be small, but they play a vital role in the ecosystem as natural pest controllers. We are thrilled that we were able to return 24 of these young raptors to their habitats over the past two summers!

View: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PrCPL28qxAY>



Education and Outreach

The Centre's wild bird conservation also reaches well beyond its hospital facilities. Our educational outreach continues to expand, delivering over 120 offsite presentations to classrooms and community groups each year, reaching thousands of bird enthusiasts of all ages. The lasting impact of these presentations leaves attendees with the knowledge and inspiration to take small actions in their communities to support

wild bird conservation. Every action we take really does matter.

In the spring of 2024, Patty McLaughlin, our Education Program Manager, received the Mary Steward Education Award from the Ottawa Field Naturalists in recognition of her dedication to wild bird education and the success of the Centre's outreach activities.

The Centre continues to expand its public outreach events, thanks to our dedicated volunteers and supportive organizations. We collaborate with Wild Birds Unlimited several times a year to offer bird walks, complete with binoculars and activities, and to celebrate World Migratory Bird Day. In 2024, we had the opportunity to set up activities, information booths, and ongoing stage presentations for thousands of visitors at the Canadian Tulip Festival. As the only rehabilitation centre in the Ottawa Valley area dedicated exclusively to wild birds, we also partner with the Upper Canada Migratory Bird Sanctuary to participate in their annual Kids Nature Zone Day and March break programming.



Our Future Centre

The vision of the new Centre is coming to life!

Graebek Construction will be bringing the project to fruition and Phase 1 (including rough grading and foundation work) began in December 2024. If all goes according to plan, and sufficient funding is in place, the main building is expected to be ready for occupancy by the summer/fall of 2025.



Believing in the importance of the Centre's work in helping to save birds' lives, members of our design/engineering/construction team have gone well above and beyond to help the Centre realize this dream. Their support is greatly appreciated!



Our Chair and Site Supervisor standing "in" the new building's footprint.

As the cost of construction has risen dramatically since the project was conceptualized in 2019 and numerous changes were necessary to satisfy the site plan and building permit requirements, the project's budget is now estimated to be \$4.5M. Thanks to our donors, over half of the funding has been realized as of December 2024 but another \$2M is still urgently needed.

With no assistance from any level of government, we are relying on the support of our generous community for the funding required to complete this project.

The facility will be constructed in phases as funding allows, so that we can avoid financing charges to the greatest possible extent.

Naming opportunities are still available for this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. For more information, contact our Chair, Juliette Marczuk: juliette@wildbirdcarecentre.org Cell: (613) 291-1137.

Donors donating \$100 or more are eligible to receive recognition on our website's building contributor page, and on a digital display in the new building.

Check out our website for updates on the construction progress: <https://wildbirdcarecentre.org/building>

Generations of future birds thank you!

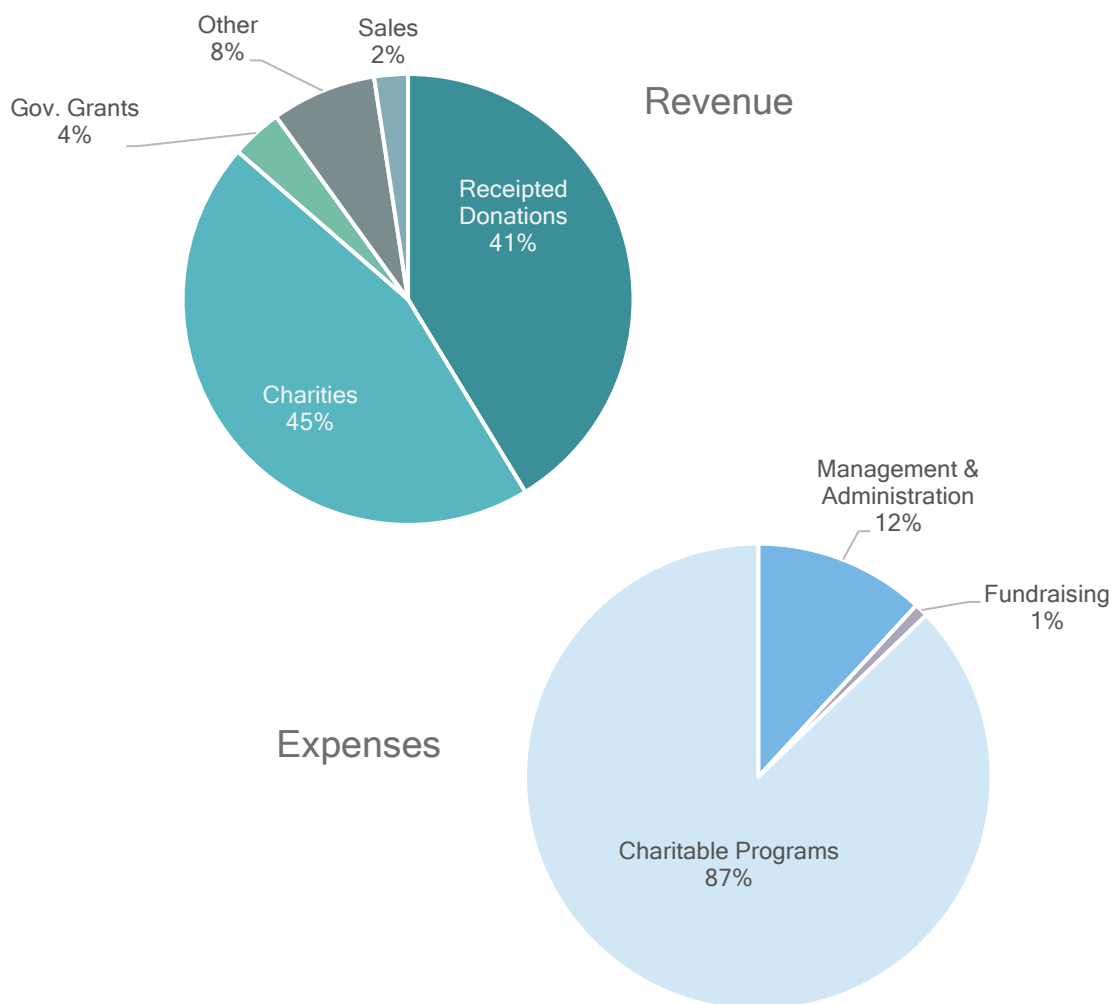


December 2024, the first truck with concrete arrives!

Financial Summary (Jan. 1, 2023 to Aug. 31, 2024)

	Operating Fund	Building Fund ¹	Total 2023-2024 (12 mo)	Total 2023 (8 mo)
Revenue ²	637,678	226,674	864,352	377,145
Expenses	622,696	291	622,987	531,616
Excess revenue over expenses	14,982	226,383	241,365	(154,471)
Total Investment Income (loss) ³	4,650	42,488	47,138	30,331
Excess revenue over expenses	19,632	268,871	288,503	(124,140)

2023-2024 Fiscal Year



¹ Building Funds are reserved for the building of the Centre's new facility, invested until needed. As of August 31, 2024, Building Fund net assets amounted to approximately \$2,143,283.

² Received donations include planned giving donations. Funds received from charities include individual donations, as well as donor-advised funds and grants from charities.

³ Includes gain/loss investments and loss on disposal of capital assets.

Our Leadership Team (as of August 31, 2024)

Board of Directors

Chair
Vice-Chair

Juliette Marczuk
Ted Yuzyk

Secretary
Treasurer
Director
Director
Director
Director

Susan Phillips
Jeff Rowsell, CPA
Robert Burns
Robin Jackson
Murray Kronick
Christina Zeigler

Staff

Operations Manager
Avian Rehabilitation
Specialist

Education Program Manager

Maia O'Sullivan
Sabrina Banfield

Patty McLaughlin



Our Donors & Supporters

Our work is only made possible with the help of our generous community. Individual donors continue to provide the bulk of our funding. We are deeply grateful to each and every one of our supporters. Thank you for your support!

Our Building Fund Supporters

We wish to extend a very special thank you to all our donors and supporters who have contributed to the building fund thus far. Although construction was delayed until late 2024, you believed in the project while it was still in its pre-construction phase.

By donating to the Building Fund, you are helping to ensure that there will be an advanced emergency avian care facility in the Ottawa Valley Region for many years to come!

Thank you!

To view the most up-to-date list of contributors to our Building Fund:

<https://wildbirdcarecentre.org/building-fund-contributors>.



Charitable Registration: 893401380RR0002

Visit our website to find out more about how you can make a difference:

<https://wildbirdcarecentre.org>

Donate online: <https://wildbirdcarecentre.org/donate>