

Annual Report 2008



Wildlife Preservation Canada

RECOVERY ■ CONSERVATION ■ KNOWLEDGE

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Charitable Registration Number 89171 0535 RR0001



Letter from the President

During 2008 Wildlife Preservation Canada continued to meet a number of challenges and to go forward with a strong Eastern Loggerhead Shrike recovery program, while seeing significant achievements in our other vital programs.

Of central significance to our programs, the generous flexibility shown by the LCBO/Boisset French Rabbit, allowed us to utilize a significant portion of the Boisset Wines funded LCBO Natural Heritage Foundation grant to cover the major delays in Environment Canada funding commitments. The shrike recovery program was thereby literally “saved”, as without this commitment we would not have been able to launch the shrike field breeding season.

Our shrike program saw significant achievements in 2008. In an independent review, the recovery program has been recognized as performing highly by all measures. We saw the return of eight captive-bred/released birds among which were two 2006 release birds, our first ever confirmation of two year old birds. Our returning captive bred shrikes were represented in over 20% of the wild breeding pairs found in Ontario in 2008, and are contributing significantly to the wild population. For the second year in a row we saw an increase in the number of wild pairs found in Ontario.

In British Columbia, our executive director, Elaine Williams, braved freezing cold in April, to help with the Burrowing Owl releases in the BC Burrowing Owl Recovery Program. The released owls fledged over 128 birds in the wild and we saw a return of triple the number, that had returned prior to implementing the soft-release techniques pioneered by the WPC team in Saskatchewan.

Over 700 little turtle hatchlings made it safely into Lake Erie to begin their next stage of life, bringing the number of spiny Softshell, Blanding’s and Northern Map hatchlings saved by Ryan Bolton, our team leader, to over 2,000 since 2005.

Canada’s New Noah program graduates continue to make valuable contributions to conservation. Lance

2nd Annual Run Wild with Wildlife Preservation Canada!

On Sunday, September 27 do your part to save our planet’s endangered wildlife by supporting the Run Wild team. Register as a runner or walker and encourage your friends to join you in walking or running the Scotiabank Toronto Waterfront 5K, Half-Marathon or full Marathon. Or, sponsor one of our Run Wild team members online at www.torontowaterfrontmarathon.com and receive an instant tax receipt.



Woolaver, a past New Noah, has been hired by the Durrell Wildlife Conservation Trust as Scientific Director of their Madagascar Conservation Programs.

On behalf of WPC I wish to express my to gratitude Louise Gervais, who resigned from the Board for personal reasons, after 14 years of valuable service. Her presence and involvement will be sorely missed.

On a final note, the 2008 Annual Dinner and Auction, held at the University of Toronto Faculty Club, was very successful thanks to the hard work of the Auction Committee and our Auctioneer, Jay Mandarino, as well as an excellent and well received presentation by one of our young Canadian Collection scientists, Ryan Bolton. The 2009 Annual Dinner and Auction will, once again, be at the University of Toronto Faculty Club, on Wednesday, November 04, 2009.

Best wishes,

Alec Monro

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Established in 1985, WPC is a non-profit charitable organisation (Reg. #89171 0535 RR0001) dedicated to saving critically endangered animal species from extinction.

Contact us at:

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WHO WE ARE AND WHAT WE DO

Wildlife Preservation Canada is a lean, hands-on organization based in Guelph, Ontario. Since 1985, WPC has worked to save critically endangered species both in Canada and around the world - species whose numbers are so low that a great deal more than habitat protection is required to recover them.

Wildlife Preservation Canada believes that extinction is forever. The loss of any one species can damage the web of life, resulting in unexpected environmental changes that impact other species, including our own. Without urgent action, these irreplaceable animals will be gone forever.

Wildlife Preservation Canada is the only independent, national, non-profit organization in Canada that focuses *exclusively* on the active recovery of critically endangered wildlife by utilizing both scientific knowledge and practical recovery experience in the field. WPC is also the first non-profit organization to be the lead in implementing a Species Recovery Action Plan under Section 11 of the federal government's Species at Risk Act - for the eastern loggerhead shrike in Ontario.

Professional training, scientific field research, captive breeding, reintroduction, population management, habitat stewardship, public education and community involvement - WPC uses each of these important tools to pull species from the brink of extinction. Species such as the Mauritius kestrel, pink pigeon and echo parakeet would be extinct today if it were not for WPC and its sister organizations. We are increasingly applying what we learned overseas to endangered species recovery efforts in Canada.

In addition to WPC's involvement with species recovery, a special priority is training young scientists to create a network of skilled professionals who will drive conservation efforts in Canada and



Mauritius Kestrel - SAVED

around the world for decades to come. This is done through our Canada's New Noahs training program and the Canadian Collection - a granting program for dedicated Canadian conservation graduate students undertaking applied research with endangered species.

Wildlife Preservation Canada was established in 1985 by the late author and naturalist, Gerald Durrell, and is primarily funded through individual, foundation and corporate donations. Any government funding we receive is directed to restricted program activities.

WPC, with the support of donors like you, has supported significant scientific advances with over 25 endangered species in Canada and around the world, from birds to foxes to lemurs to turtles. You are vital to helping us save animals from extinction. Thank-you.



Eastern Loggerhead Shrike Recovery



Once plentiful in Canada, the eastern loggerhead shrike now numbers only a few dozen in the wild in just a handful of locations in Ontario and Manitoba. This unique songbird hunts like a hawk, using its strong hooked beak to impale its prey of grasshoppers, crickets, dragonflies, beetles and even small snakes, mice, voles and smaller birds on thorns or barbed wire.

2008 marks the eighth year since Wildlife Preservation Canada was invited to be the lead non-governmental organization responsible for coordinating and implementing the recovery activities for the eastern loggerhead shrike in Ontario. The ultimate goal of any recovery program is to increase the wild population to self-sustaining levels. The Eastern Loggerhead Shrike Recovery Program consists of several components to reach that goal - wild population monitoring, captive breeding and release, genetic research, habitat stewardship and community outreach and involvement in the recovery.

An independent review of the Eastern Loggerhead Shrike Recovery program was highly favourable in all measures, including cost effectiveness. The review, conducted by esteemed Senior Research Scientist at the Smithsonian Institute, and North

American Liaison to the IUCN (World Conservation Union) reintroduction Specialists' Group, Dr. Devra Kleiman, compared the ELOSH program favourably (or more so) to six other endangered avian captive breeding and release programs. The most remarkable achievement noted by Dr. Kleiman was that captive-bred shrikes returned to successfully breed in the wild only four years after the first releases, something that typically takes more than 10 years.

The Eastern Loggerhead Shrike Recovery Program is now Wildlife Preservation Canada's largest single project. Innovative outdoor avian enclosure design, strict protocol development and the dedication of devoted professionals like Wildlife Preservation Canada's Species Biologist Jessica Steiner and skilled interns, have made this species recovery program one of a kind in North America. Both Dr. Kleiman's review and a review by Environment Canada's Science and Technology division recommended that the breeding and release program be continued for at least another three years. Both reviews indicated that the Eastern Loggerhead Shrike Recovery Program may ultimately provide a model for future recovery programs for migratory songbirds.



Eastern Loggerhead Shrike Recovery

Wild Population

The wild population of eastern loggerhead shrike was monitored in traditional shrike habitat in various locations in Ontario. We saw a 32% increase in the number of wild pairs confirmed, with almost a quarter of the pairs made up of a bird released from our breeding aviaries in previous years. Though still critically small, the Ontario wild population was at its largest in the last four years, with 27 confirmed pairs fledging at least 79 young. Single pairs of shrikes were confirmed in the historic breeding areas of Renfrew and Smith Falls, and a single bird released in 2007 was confirmed near field breeding enclosures in Dyer's Bay. An effort to band all wild adults was made in 2008 to provide insights into the composition of the breeding population.

Field Breeding & Release

Our two field breeding sites were staffed by avicultural interns, overseen by Species Biologist Jessica Steiner, who cared for 24 pairs of birds. The pairs are housed in outdoor aviaries specially designed to create a safe and comfortable environment to maximize the healthy production of young. And did they produce! A record 103 juvenile shrikes were fledged and released into the wild. Fifteen high-priority young were retained and joined our adult birds for the winter at the Toronto Zoo, our Ingersoll facility or with our new partner, African Lion Safari.

Wildlife Preservation Canada is forever grateful for the ongoing dedication and enthusiasm of field interns, volunteers and local landowners. Without their support and involvement, these recovery activities would not be possible. Other project partners include: Crabtree Foundation; Bird Studies Canada; BOISSET Family Estates (makers of French Rabbit wines); LCBO Natural Heritage Fund; Environment Canada; Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources; Couchiching Conservancy, Toronto Zoo; and over 250 landowners!

Radio Telemetry

Radio tracking is a vital tool in recovering endangered species. Piloted in 2007, the radio-telemetry portion of the shrike recovery program was continued in 2008. A joint effort between Wildlife Preservation Canada, Dr. Ryan Norris at the University of Guelph, and Dr. Bridget Stutchbury from York University, 20 juvenile shrikes from the captive breeding program were equipped with a small radio-transmitter and released from the Carden field breeding site. The birds were tracked by foot, car and even plane by two experienced telemetry staff. We learned that the shrikes tend to disperse at night, that 75% survived before leaving on migration, and while one was tracked as far south as Hamilton, we were unable to follow them on migration into the United States. Further research will lead us to more answers to help save this unique songbird.

Tagged shrike ready for release





Freshwater Turtle Conservation

Tortoises and freshwater turtles are among the most endangered species of animals. Of the estimated 300 species of tortoises and freshwater turtles in the world, World Conservation Union's (IUCN) Red List Authority has so far assessed approximately 200 species and has already found 122 to be threatened. Analysis by IUCN and partners suggests that at least 40% - possibly more than 60% - of all tortoise and freshwater turtle species are in imminent danger of extinction.

Through the Canadian Collection, Wildlife Preservation Canada has supported Ryan Bolton's research on five freshwater turtle species nesting along a beach of an Ontario provincial park since 2005. Through these studies, he found that all five species experienced 100% nest failure due to mammalian predation. In attempts to halt their disappearance from the park, Ryan implemented mitigation techniques to protect the nests and eggs of three of the threatened species.

Human settlement brings with it increased predator populations. Motion-activated cameras used at night identified raccoons and skunks as the main predators, followed by opossums and coyotes. These animals dig up nests and consume the eggs soon after they are laid. As turtles are exceptionally long-lived, have a very high annual adult survivorship, and lay eggs nearly every year, Ryan's work focuses on conservation strategies in the early stages of egg-laying to ensure greater hatchling survival.

In 2008, Ryan released at least 700 hatchling Spiny Softshell, Blandings and Northern Map turtles, bringing the total number released since 2005 to over 2000! Some nests were protected by wire cages and whereas others were transferred to a large-scale predator enclosure, a protected communal hatchery in the natural environment.



Ryan Bolton and turtle hatchlings

Besides the fact that turtles are beautiful and unique, researchers have recently discovered that a turtle's organs do not gradually break down or become less efficient over time, unlike most other animals. It was found that the liver, lungs, and kidneys of a centenarian turtle are virtually indistinguishable from those of its immature counterpart. This has inspired genetic researchers to begin examining the turtle genome for longevity genes.

Ryan's research and conservation strategies will help ensure Spiny Softshell, Blanding's and North map turtles not only survive in Canada, but will one day thrive again. The assistance from Wildlife Preservation Canada and its donors will help ensure this valuable work continues.



Ridgway's Hawk

The island of Hispaniola, divided between the nations of Dominican Republic and Haiti, is an international conservation priority due to its unique biological diversity, and home of the most critically endangered hawk on the planet, the Ridgway's Hawk. Once commonly distributed throughout the island, this hawk has been reduced in the last century to a single declining population of 90-100 pairs.

Learning about the basic biology of a species, where it lives and raises its young, and what threats it is facing, are the very first steps in saving a species from extinction. Until Lance Woolaver began his research with the support of Wildlife Preservation Canada in 2005, only three nests had ever been described and observed for the Ridgway's Hawk. Since then, Lance and his team have monitored over 100 nests and observed young successfully fledging. The participation of males in incubation is among the previously unknown breeding behaviour now observed and DNA samples are being col-

lected to examine genetic variations among remaining individuals.

An essential part of any conservation program is raising awareness in local communities of the beauty, uniqueness and imminent danger of extinction of their native species. Lance and WPC, in partnership with Sociedad Ornitologica de la Hispaniola have been carrying out activities at the community level, including school trips, community plays, training young Dominican and Haitian biologists and issuing framed certificates to over 50 landowners protecting nesting hawks on their property. Alternatives to slash and burn agriculture are being explored, including the use of cacao plantations that would provide excellent habitat for endemic species, including Ridgway's Hawk.

By equipping local villagers with the tools necessary to research and monitor their endemic species, Lance and his team are creating a legacy of conservation.

Ridgway's Hawk chicks, aged 6 and 8 days.

LANCE WOOLAVER





Burrowing Owl Recovery

WPC has been involved in burrowing owl recovery since 1995, when this little owl was listed as nationally endangered by the Committee on the Status of Wildlife in Canada. Between 1995 and 2002 we established a small captive breeding colony in Saskatchewan and experimented with different release methods. We found that the “soft-release” technique of pairing captive-raised 11 month-old owls in a small field enclosure and leaving the enclosure on until clutch initiation, was most successful.

Since 1992 British Columbia has been releasing captive-raised burrowing owls in an effort to re-establish a population in this province from which they disappeared in the early 1970’s. WPC had been trying to convince the BC Team to implement the softer-release techniques we developed for burrowing owls in Saskatchewan. Through the Canadian Collection program, between 2005 and 2006 WPC funded MSc. candidate, Aimee Mitchell’s research comparing the “hard release” traditionally being used in BC and the enclosure-based “soft release” method.

Aimee’s research conclusively proved that the “soft” release technique was significantly superior - 20% more owls remained at release sites to breed, 14% more survived the breeding season, and the reproductive performance was higher with 20% more young fledged than their “hard release” counterparts. When Aimee’s results were presented to the B.C. Burrowing Recovery Team, the Team decided to adopt the “soft-release” technique for releases in 2007 and beyond.

Despite the lower prey abundance in some of the southern burrowing owl nesting sites in the Nicola Valley, 26 nests still successfully produced 125 wild-born juvenile burrowing owls during the 2008 field season. Though lower than the previous



MIKE MACKINTOSH

season, it is a significant increase since soft-release methods were adopted. Of these 26 pairs producing young, 40% of the soft-released pairs successfully nested, significantly more than the 6% of the population of hard-release pairs.

In 2008, 15 owls returned to the breeding grounds, the same number as 2007; less than was hoped for but up to triple the number of owls returning yearly before soft-release techniques were introduced. The majority of the 117 owls were released using the soft-release techniques. However, due to several factors such as a higher percentage of sexing errors and lower prey abundance, the owls were not as successful in breeding as they have been in previous years.

The BC Burrowing Owl team would like to thank the many volunteers who participated in installing an additional 20 portable PVC enclosures built to house the captive-bred burrowing owl pairs, enabling the program to reach its goal of constructing 50 soft-release enclosures. The team also thanks WPC and its supporters for their commitment to re-establishing burrowing owls in B.C.



Canada's New Noahs

Wildlife Preservation Canada launched this unique ten-month practical training and field experience program in the conservation and management of endangered species in 1985. Since that time, 19 young Canadian biologists have graduated from the program and continue to make vital contributions to conservation. Through the Canada's New Noahs program, WPC is ensuring that a growing pool of dedicated Canadian biologists have the specialized knowledge and tools to prevent extinctions in the decades to come.

Our most recent graduate, 18th Canada's New Noah, Christina Davy returned to Canada in February, 2008. In Mauritius, Christina worked with the re-introduction of the critically endangered Mauritius fodies on a small offshore island, Iles Aux Aigrettes, which is predator free. She also spent over three months hand-rearing Mauritius olive white-eyes, the smallest bird species ever hand-reared. Upon her return to Canada, Christina initiated her PhD on mating strategies of Ontario's freshwater turtles.

Our 2008 or 19th Canada's New Noah, Ewa Bednarczuk, travelled first to the International Training Centre adjacent to the Jersey Zoo in the English Channel Islands for four weeks, and then to Mauritius for seven months of practical field work with some of the world's rarest birds. Canada's New Noahs have contributed to the tremendous successes in saving the Mauritius kestrel, echo parakeet and pink pigeon from certain extinction.

Ewa reported that her code name while working with the Mauritian Wildlife Foundation (MWF) was 'Sparrow Girl'. Her duties were to assist in the eradication of the invasive European House Spar-



Ewa Bednarczuk with a sparrow on Round Island.

row (HOSP) from Round Island (an offshore Mauritian islet) before the critically endangered Mauritian fody can be translocated there. This conservation strategy will boost the fody's chances of surviving in its native environment.

Recent news about former graduates: Natasha Lloyd, CNN # 17, returned to intern at the Calgary Zoo's Conservation Research Department and initiated her MSc. on black-tailed prairie dog survival, density and colony expansion; Diane Casimir, CNN #11, accepted a position as Species at Risk Biologist for Parks Canada; David Stepniski, CNN #9, is Senior Wildlife Biologist with the Alberta Sustainable Resource Development; and CNN #8, Lance Woolaver was hired by the Durrell Wildlife Conservation Trust as Scientific Director of their Madagascar Conservation Programs.

Graduates of the program express their boundless gratitude to WPC and you, our supporters, by supporting the aims and goals we share in their commitment to conservation throughout their careers.



Thank You!

Wildlife Preservation Canada is pleased and honoured to recognise the following donors whose outstanding generosity has made our critical conservation activities possible. WPC is grateful to the thousands of other donors and volunteers who contributed throughout the year. We apologise if we have mistakenly omitted your name.

Corporate & Foundation Partners

(\$150,000 or more)

Environment Canada

(\$20,000 to 100,000)

The Harold Crabtree Foundation
Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources
Boisset Family Estates/French Rabbit

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Terry Turner
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Dawn Williams

Wildlife Guardians

The following joined our

monthly giving program in 2008.

Nancy Biehl
David Boag
Blake Freeman
Richard Klotz
Chandra Mahabir
Jayne McLean
Diane Sheddan
Terez Stone
Gina Gaylor
Louise White

Annual Dinner & Auction

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Hannah Williams

Volunteers



WPC Financial Highlights *

STATEMENT OF REVENUE AND EXPENSES AND CHANGES TO FUND BALANCES Year ended December 31, 2008

	General Fund 2008 \$	Restricted Fund 2008 \$	Endowment Fund 2008 \$	2008 \$	Total 2007 \$
REVENUE					
Individual Donations	98,612	1,390	--	100,002	119,421
Foundation Donations	36,045	53,500	--	89,545	84,000
Federal government grants	12,000	271,218	--	283,218	271,157
Provincial government grants	--	88,303	--	88,303	29,634
Other grants	--	24,200	--	24,200	--
Special Events [gross]	34,529	--	--	34,707	34,707
Other Income	4,732	--	--	4,732	5,361
Investment income	10,392	--	--	10,392	10,218
	196,310	438,611	--	634,921	554,498
EXPENSES					
Project Implementation	49,614	55,225	--	104,840	94,376
Conservation grants	--	376,806	1,000	377,806	318,590
Grant Expenses	34,031	20,401	--	54,432	47,865
Administrative and fund raising	71,052	20,000	--	91,052	95,776
Special Event	7,466	--	--	7,466	8,905
	162,164	472,432	1,000	635,596	565,512
Excess (Deficiency) of revenue	34,146	(33,821)	(1,000)	(675)	(11,014)
Fund balances, beginning of year	136,813	--	66,137	202,950	213,964
Transfers between funds	(16,782)	33,821	(17,039)	--	--
Fund balances, end of year	154,177	--	48,098	202,275	202,950

Notes:

- The General Fund reports unrestricted revenue available for any purpose. The General Fund records all general revenues. This Fund records expenses that the Board has allocated from the General Fund to mission related activities such as species recovery programs, professional training and education, as well as administrative operating and fund raising expenditures associated with the general management and maintenance of the Organisation.
- The Restricted Fund consists of funds available for spending that are restricted by the donor.
- The Endowment Fund consists of contributions received by the organisation where the endowment principal is required by the donor or the Board to be maintained permanently in the Endowment Fund, or where funds or income can be utilized to assist with the cash flow requirements of the organisation, as deemed appropriate by the Board. The Gerald Durrell Fund for Wildlife is an internally endowed fund. It was created to continue the conservation work of Gerald Durrell, and can be allocated to projects which fulfill that mandate. The Futures Fund is an internally endowed fund. Based on a decision by the Board, fifty percent of any revenue surplus in excess of budget is deposited into the Futures Fund annually. The first funds were deposited in 1998. The Bequest Fund is an internally endowed fund. Bequests in excess of \$10,000 will be considered restricted, and will be brought into the annual budget to fund conservation programs over a five year period. Fifty percent of bequests over \$100,000 will be permanently endowed.

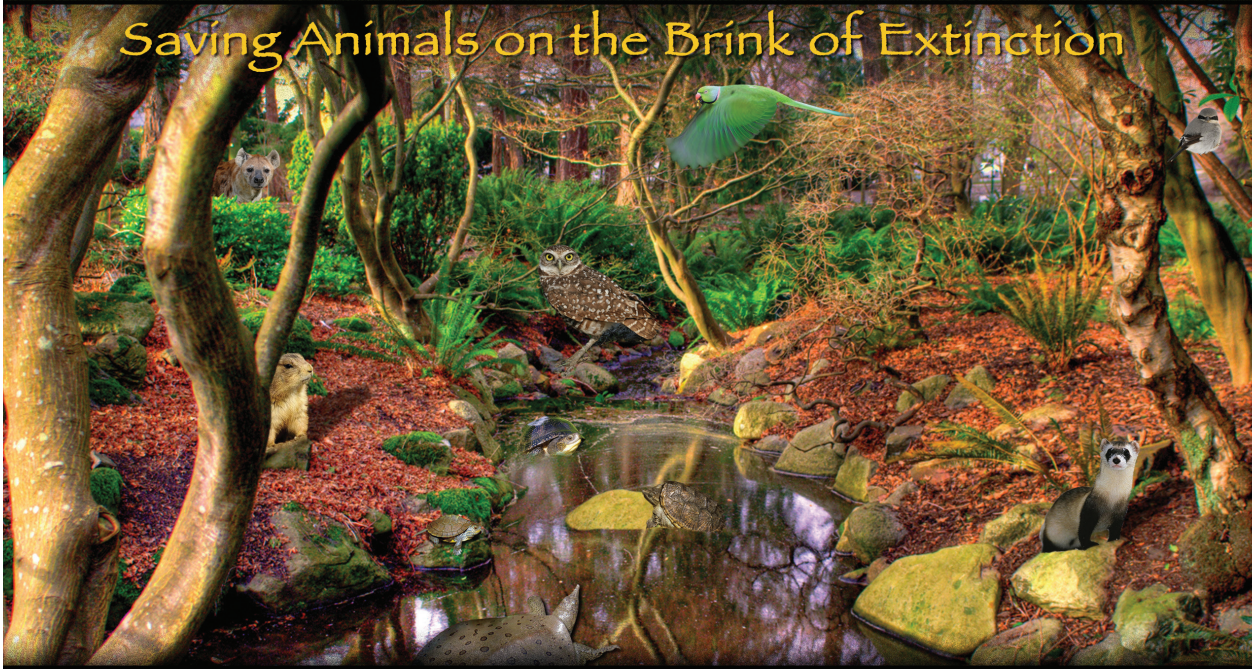
*For a complete set of the audited financial statements prepared by Robinson Lott & Brohman, please call (519) 836-9314 or e-mail us at admin@wildlifepreservation.ca



Annual Dinner & Auction

FEATURING: JAY MANDARINO, *Auctioneer*
SPECIAL GUEST SPEAKER: GRAEME GIBSON, *Birder & Best Selling Nature Author*

Saving Animals on the Brink of Extinction



WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 4, 2009 - Cocktails & Auction: 6:00 - Dinner: 7:00



Wildlife Preservation Canada

RECOVERY • CONSERVATION • EDUCATION