Our Sentient Friends

honouring all animals, everywhere

~ Fall 2026 ~



Included in this issue ...

- Helping Turtles in Wellington County
- The Remmy Project: Turning Grief Into Purpose
- See Yellow, Give Space: The Story Behind AwareWalk

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ONE THOUSAND TREES
empowerment through storytelling & connection

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On Our Cover:

A Midland Painted Turtle. Photo courtesy of the Wellington Turtle Conservation Group. (See *Helping Turtles in Wellington County* on page 3).



Publisher's Ponderings

When I woke up this morning, and opened the back door to let my dog Ashley out, I couldn't help but notice the frost on the rooftops. I'm not sure I'm ready for winter just yet ... but I am enjoying the beauty of the fall colours. The photo on the left was taken last autumn, at Belfountain Conservation Area, where Ashley and I spent a glorious afternoon.

As I write this article, the final component before the magazine goes live, I am overwhelmed with gratitude for the many people who I have been honoured to meet, who love and care for the animals with whom we share the planet, and for the planet itself. It is my ever-increasing connection with animals that has sustained me through some very difficult times. I love the first two lines of a well-known poem by Walt Whitman:

I think I could turn and live with animals,
they are so placid and self-contain'd,
I stand and look at them long and long.

They do not sweat and whine about their condition,
They do not lie awake in the dark and weep for their sins.

Being around animals fills me with peace, and being out in nature does the same. I am grateful to be able to do both, as often as I like.

A few years ago, I met with Penny Burton, the owner of Brae Ridge Farm & Sanctuary, to discuss a children's book I was publishing for her. The book, titled *Willow & Douglas: The Unlikeliest of Friends,* is the true story about Willow, a pot-bellied pig, and Douglas, an alpaca, and the unbreakable bond between them. Penny told me two things as I stood in the barn with her:

1. Willow had been kicked at the farm where she lived before coming to the sanctuary
2. Douglas was very protective of Willow

As she spoke, Willow came up to me, and started sniffing around my feet. Instantly, Douglas ran from across the field, and stood face to face with me, about a foot away. "Don't hurt my friend" was the clear message. As I looked him in the eyes, standing stock still, he calmed down, realizing that I was not going to harm Willow. After that, the entire herd of alpacas came closer, and formed a circle around me, as Penny watched in astonishment.

I was used to such encounters, although this was the first with a pig and an alpaca! I have lost count of the number of times I've been around horses, and one of the herd comes galloping across the field to stand directly beside or in front of me. More often than not, the horse is one who experienced abuse at a previous location. I believe these sentient souls can sense my energy, as I too, have experienced abuse in my past.

It is this bond that led me to sponsor a beautiful donkey named Phoenix, who lives at The Donkey Sanctuary of Canada. When I first saw Phoenix, I noticed the branding on her neck ... the markings of the organization who found her in the wilds of Arizona. When I read her story, which included the fact that Phoenix has had to struggle with trust issues as a result of the mistreatment she has suffered, I couldn't help but cry ... tears of compassion and empathy. I am so grateful that she has found a loving, supportive home at the Sanctuary.

Willow, Douglas and Phoenix are three of the many reasons why I do the work that I do. And there is not a day that goes by that I do not experience immense gratitude for being able to do it.

Until next time,

Lisa



Photo Credit: The Donkey Sanctuary of Canada



Photo Credit: Brae Ridge Farm & Sanctuary



Lisa Browning has been writing stories for as long as she can remember. She received a BA in English from York University in 1988, and subsequently worked as an editor for a Toronto-based publishing firm for over fifteen years before founding One Thousand Trees in 2010. No matter what she does, Lisa is inspired to make a difference in this world, to empower others, and help them realize their passion, through storytelling and connection. She is especially passionate about empowering both animals and children, and advocating for a mutually supportive connection between them. She was honoured as a Community Champion at the Guelph Y's Women of Distinction event in 2018. She lives in Guelph with her devoted and much loved dog, Ashley.

Helping Turtles in Wellington County

by Claire Forestell

Finding My Way Back to Fieldwork

I couldn't believe my luck when I saw a post in our neighbourhood group asking for help monitoring a turtle nest. Turtles have long been my favourite animals, and I had always dreamed of working in turtle conservation. Yet, even during the 10 years I spent in wetland research and ecosystem restoration, that opportunity never arose.

For the past 13 years, I have mainly been a stay-at-home parent and part-time occasional teacher. I missed fieldwork and wanted to do something positive for the environment, so I replied immediately. Sandy Nicholls trained me to monitor the nest and watch for emerging hatchlings so we could help them avoid the road and reach a nearby wetland. I was hooked.

Over the following year, I learned a great deal. Sandy had volunteered for almost a decade with rare Charitable Research Reserve, a local land trust and environmental research institute whose Turtle Rescue Program collects vulnerable nests, incubates the eggs and returns hatchlings close to where the nests were found. Through rare's provincial authorization, I received training to help excavate vulnerable nests. At the time, only a few volunteers were involved.

As the need—and the area to cover—became clearer, Sandy established the Wellington Turtle Conservation Group (WTCG). The group has since grown to about 30 volunteers and built a strong social media following. Only trained, authorized members handle activities that require provincial permission, but every volunteer contributes in valuable ways.



Painted Turtle hatchlings ready to be released

In spring and early summer, WTCG volunteers watch for turtles moving between wetlands and toward nesting sites. When it is safe, we help turtles cross roads in the direction they were travelling and arrange care for animals struck by vehicles. We place protective covers over confirmed nests and monitor nests that do not need to be excavated. Trained members working under authorization may excavate nests in especially dangerous locations and take the eggs to rare for incubation.

After the eggs hatch, we release the hatchlings to the wetlands where the nests were found, or at the closest suitable wetland when a nest came from an unsuitable location such as a stormwater pond. We

also monitor protected nests until they hatch and help emerging hatchlings reach the water. These interventions can reduce immediate risks, especially for nests beside busy roads.



Nesting female snapping turtle on busy road near popular nesting site

Ontario is home to eight native turtle species. Their legal status varies by jurisdiction: seven are currently listed as species at risk in Ontario, while the western painted turtle is not provincially listed; all eight have a federal at-risk designation when painted turtle populations are considered by subspecies. Southern Ontario supports the greatest diversity of turtles in Canada, but it is also the part of the country where human activity is most concentrated. WTCG's local work centres on snapping and painted turtles, which are most often seen crossing roads or nesting in exposed areas. Blanding's and wood turtles occur at much lower densities in the region, and any records of these rarer species are especially important for conservation.

Why Turtles Need Help

Habitat Loss and Degradation: Across southern Ontario, wetlands have been drained, filled, fragmented by roads or replaced by engineered stormwater ponds. These stormwater ponds can attract turtles, but they are not the same as natural wetlands. They are designed to collect runoff and trap sediment and pollutants, which can expose wildlife to contaminants that may accumulate in the food web. They also require periodic maintenance and sediment removal. Because turtles are long-lived and take 8 to 20 years to reproduce, the loss of breeding adults during pond maintenance can have lasting effects on local populations.

Road Mortality: Turtles may travel considerable distances to find mates, nesting areas and overwintering sites. Roads beside wetlands often cut across these routes. Gravel shoulders, parking lots and construction sites can also look like appealing nesting habitat, placing both adult females and their nests at risk.



Snapping turtle found on road

Misinformation: Many people are unsure how to help a turtle cross a road safely, how to handle different species or what turtles need to survive. Misunderstanding snapping turtle behaviour can also lead people to fear or harm them unnecessarily. Other human-caused threats. Turtles may be illegally collected for food or the pet trade, struck by boats, or injured and killed as fishing bycatch or by discarded fishing gear.

How WTCG Is Responding

Advocacy and Habitat Improvements: We work with local governments to reduce harm to turtles

before stormwater ponds are dredged. We advocate for wildlife crossings and exclusion fencing in areas with high road mortality. We have also helped secure artificial nesting sites made with suitable materials and placed in safer locations, encouraging turtles to nest away from road shoulders and giving hatchlings a better chance of reaching a wetland.

Road Patrols and Rescue: We search for turtles in places and seasons when they are likely to be moving. When it is safe, we help them cross roads and take injured turtles to participating first-response veterinary clinics. From there, Turtle Taxi volunteers can transport them to the Ontario Turtle Conservation Centre (OTCC) for specialized treatment. We also advocate for warning signs in areas where road mortality has been documented. We have launched a new turtle hotline if someone spots a nesting turtle or hatchlings or needs help with a turtle. Call us and we will jump into action. The Wellington Turtle Hotline Number is (226) 906-7014.

Education and Outreach: We believe that knowledge makes conservation more likely. Volunteers visit schools, lead programs for Scouts and other community organizations, and attend markets and community events. We explain how to move a turtle safely in the direction it was already travelling, how to hold a turtle without lifting it by the tail, and how turtle anatomy, life cycles and habitat needs shape conservation efforts. People are more likely to protect turtles when they understand them.

Safer Fishing Areas: We install signs and fishing-line disposal containers near known fishing areas to reduce injuries caused by discarded line and hooks. We also share guidance on what to do if someone accidentally catches a turtle.

WTCG is one of many groups working to protect local turtle populations across Ontario, and there is still much to do. We are especially fortunate to have the Ontario Turtle Conservation Centre in Peterborough. The OTCC operates Ontario's specialized hospital for native turtles and coordinates a province-wide network of first-response veterinary clinics and volunteer Turtle Taxi drivers. Anyone who finds an injured turtle—or a turtle that appears dead but may be carrying eggs—should contact the OTCC for instructions. When transport is needed, volunteers may drive turtles in relays over long distances; some trips have even involved volunteer pilots. Drivers transport the animals in enclosed containers, so no direct handling is required.

Looking ahead, we hope to reach more wetlands and help more turtles. With additional volunteers, we can monitor more nests, respond to more injured animals, collect useful local data and expand our educational programs. Each observation, rescue and conversation adds to what we know—and strengthens the community working to help turtles survive.



Snapping turtle nesting on roadside.
(I watched her for hours to make sure she was safe.)

I am still learning every time I go out with the turtles. Being near wetlands brings me an immense sense of calm and joy, and I lose track of time as I take in the complexity of life around me. Snapping turtles especially fascinate me. Their lineage stretches back tens of millions of years, yet within little more than a century, human activity has damaged many turtle populations and placed some local species at risk of disappearing. Helping even one turtle can feel like a small act, but together those acts give these remarkable animals a better chance.

WELLINGTON TURTLE CONSERVATION GROUP

TURTLE HOTLINE

(226) 906-7014

Reptiles: They're Smarter Than You Think

by Nathaniel Gibson

There's a widespread myth surrounding reptiles, often promoted by various media outlets, that these creatures are unintelligent and inherently aggressive. However, at Apollo and within our passionate community of reptile advocates, we've discovered an entirely different reality. Each day, we are fortunate to engage with over thirty unique species of reptiles, unveiling their remarkable intelligence and rich personalities. From our slow but mighty tortoises to regal twelve-foot reticulated pythons, our experiences have shown us just how captivating these animals truly are. This is our story of how we fell in love with a world that society often deems unlovable.

When we think back to our childhood, many of us can identify a Sci-fi movie that made a lasting impression, portraying reptiles as evil killers, like in Anaconda, or as city-wrecking beasts, like Godzilla. Movies like these, along with countless others, can shape our early perceptions of reptiles, leading us to see them as naturally aggressive animals that we should be afraid of. In reality, these creatures are usually responding defensively when they feel threatened or vulnerable, rather than acting out of aggression. In the wild, for instance, a snake does not actively seek out humans to attack; bites typically happen when the snake feels threatened and is trying to protect itself.

Apollo started as a rescue for these misunderstood animals, which is how we came to take in a twelve-foot reticulated python. Titan came to us severely underweight and extremely defensive. Much like dogs and cats, his past experiences made him wary of humans. We recognized early on that this endeavor would require significant time and commitment.



Our first step was to provide Titan with a spacious enclosure where he could feel at ease and secure. He transitioned from a small, cramped tank that restricted his movement to a much larger habitat where he could fully stretch out, complete with various hiding spots for added comfort. After upgrading the enclosure, we wanted to teach him that food is not a scarcity anymore and fed him on a healthy consistent schedule. It was only then that we started a gentle touch training process, gradually introducing physical contact to help him acclimate to being touched, which ultimately cultivated a strong and healthy bond between us. Titan has been in our care for 3 years and has totally changed in the way he trusts humans.



Another animal that came into our care was Aang, the Blue Tree Monitor. When we first received Aang, he was very shy and quick to run away. We knew monitor lizards are very food motivated, and we could use this to our advantage. We began luring him with food onto our arms, encouraging him to approach us on his own rather than forcing interaction. Over time, Aang became more comfortable climbing onto our arms and remaining close to us while eating. Along with providing a large enough enclosure for him to feel secure, this positive reinforcement helped Aang associate our presence and handling with a safe and rewarding experience. As his confidence grew, we were able to gradually increase our interactions with him and develop a strong, trusting bond.

Our goal is to challenge the misconceptions surrounding these animals and show people that species often viewed as dangerous and aggressive are actually misunderstood animals capable of trust, connection, and positive interaction.

Animal Awareness Days

October 4: World Animal Day

October 9: World Migratory Bird Day

October 18: World Okapi Day

October 20: International Sloth Day

October 21: National Reptile Awareness Day

October 22: International Wombat Day

October 23: International Snow Leopard Day

October 24: International Gibbon Day

October 25: National Hug a Sheep Day

October 30: World Lemur Day

November 1: National Bison Day

November 19: World Anteater Day

November 29: International Jaguar Day

December 4: International Cheetah Day

December 4: Wildlife Conservation Day

December 9: National Llama Day

December 10: International Animal Rights Day

December 14: Monkey Day

What If Your Animal Has Something To Tell You?

by Ursula Darby

Animal Communication was not something I had ever considered possible. I didn't take a course; in fact, I'm completely self-taught. For many years, I would pretend to say what an animal was thinking out loud to friends and they thought it was funny, giving them dialogue was entertainment to me until it wasn't. I had no idea that I could communicate with animals or read them until I tried and had success.



So how does it work? I use my 5 senses to share what is being shown to me. I read in person or by distance using Zoom. Distance doesn't affect my accuracy. I ask the animal in my mind to tell me about themselves, what they need and what would support them. I then see images in my mind of locations, people, or even residences. I feel pain or discomfort which indicates inflammation, pain, blockages, illness, injuries, or disease in their body. I am shown how to support them and next steps to help them recover or manage their symptoms. I am also shown their behaviours, where they stem from and what steps to take to help them heal from a challenging or abusive past. I see how people have treated them, which can be very painful to witness. They share with me their caregiver and their relationship. The purpose is to understand what the animal may be experiencing and what could help them. With animal readings, I don't let my clients speak or share any information about themselves or their animal companion. For authenticity purposes and my own policies, I don't want to know anything.

I have a lot of difficulty remembering readings.

When a session stays with me it's because I found it fascinating or shocking. I was invited to give a group reading and the homeowner was surprised when I gave details about her cat, who had died. Their cat showed me a bedroom, which the person confirmed was theirs. It had a particular design to it to affirm that this was her cat. The cat then showed me that her husband literally kicked him to get him off the bed, and that it was a regular occurrence. She was horrified and so were her guests. Animals have a voice, and paying attention to it can change how we understand and care for them.



I recall meeting with a horse in person with his caregiver and for privacy reasons, I will name him George. George was in a field with a few horses and there were many fields surrounding him filled with

horses. He told me that he was 29 years old. He shared that the mare that was with him was pushy and to be careful. She later shoved me in my stomach and it hurt a lot! He told me about a white horse. He made me turn my head to see him in another field with a group of horses. He told me that they were friends and he wanted to spend his time with him. He described physical symptoms that he did not currently have, to alert his caregiver that when they happened, he was ready to go home. He told me that those changes would happen in 9 months. The caregiver confirmed that the white horse was his friend and that they had been separated by the owner of the farm. She brought them back together and she sent me a picture of them. Nine months and four days later, George's caregiver contacted me, she had given George his forever sleep. She told me that he had demonstrated debilitating symptoms and she knew that it was his time.



I have worked with animal rescues and veterinarians to support farm and domestic animals. I was helping a rescue and a few cows indicated that something was in the far end of the field and it frightened them. They burst into tears and said that a cow in their family had died and she was buried there. It didn't mean that she needed to be moved, it meant that a conversation about her death had been overlooked. Human beings don't think to speak to the animals in their care and the cows wanted to talk about it. Their fear was that they saw their friend alive and then they never saw her again. I have stayed in touch with the rescue and they speak with all of their animals daily which has changed their relationships dramatically. When I arrived, they were very skeptical of me and my abilities and when I left they had a better understanding of their animal family members.

The challenge in this work is that people tend to humanize animals and make assumptions about their behaviour. People need to educate themselves about the behaviours of their animal friends so they can build healthy relationships and provide them with a wonderful life. Since we have domesticated animals it's on us to inform ourselves to make their lives better, not ours. We don't have control over them and we don't own them. They reside in the world with us.

The benefit of having an animal reading is to help inform and educate a caregiver, strengthen their bond and make the home safer and more comfortable. For example, if a dog is terrified of the floor, they are afraid of falling and hurting themselves because they have pain in their joints, which their person may not know. The easy fix is to lay down runners to accommodate their dog. A reading is not to tell the caregiver how to make their animal bend to their will and be a good dog, horse or cat. It's to do their best to meet their needs, make them feel safe, support their recovery or manage symptoms, and love them until the end of their life.

Creating a meaningful relationship with your animal companion is the goal.



The Remmy Project: Turning Grief Into Purpose

by Denise MacDonald

Losing a pet can be one of the hardest experiences in life. Especially losing that one pet of a lifetime, the one you loved more than all the others combined, your soul animal. The grief can be overwhelming. At least it was for me when I lost my soul cat Remmy to cancer at the age of 14 in July 2024. He was such a huge part of my life, my best friend and sidekick, my little sweet potato. I had never shared such an incredible bond with an animal in all my life so losing him was absolutely devastating. I still miss him so much every day.



But, my grief fueled me to do something meaningful to honour him, and I have always believed that the best way to honour an animal is by helping another one. I had been involved with multiple rescues during the 10 years leading up to his death and they all shared the same number one challenge…not enough money for vet bills. So I decided to make/sell catnip squares and donate the money to a cat rescue. That was going to be it, just one project (hence the name) to honour Remmy and help some rescue cats.

However, that one project and one rescue turned into another, and then another, and after 9 months and 10 rescues, I had raised $7,500 in various ways to help these rescues. I didn't tell many people what I was doing because it was never about the recognition, it was about honouring Remmy and helping rescue cats. Then people started asking how they could support my efforts. I never went into this expecting anyone's help but I am so completely grateful for it. And after seeing what I could do on my own, and how many more rescues needed help, I saw this as an opportunity to inspire other pet parents and animal lovers to get involved so we could help even more animals. So on April 23, 2025, I decided to make it official and "The Remmy Project" was born.

Now, just over a year later, we have grown into an amazing community of cat lovers working hard to raise money for cat rescues all over Southwestern Ontario, to honour all of our pets (on both sides of the rainbow bridge).

We raise money all year long by selling a variety of cat-themed items (for cats and cat lovers) through Marketplace and community events, and by running various fundraisers, and on Christmas day we surprise rescues with e-transfers to help pay for spay/neuter surgeries and additional medical care. We also donate items like cat gift baskets for rescues to auction/raffle and cat toy bags for rescue cats and for rescues to sell, and we collect community donations of cat food, litter, etc., and pass them along to rescues.



Some of the rescues The Remmy Project has helped are:

- Arthur Animal Rescue
- Axel's Imprint Rescue and Sanctuary
- Before the Bridge Senior Cat Sanctuary
- Brantford Cat Rescue
- Dogwood Animal Rescue (formerly Dorset Rescue Kittens)
- Feral Cat Rescue
- Good Will Good Karma
- North Halton Kitten Rescue
- Paws Forward
- Pet Patrol
- Rags to Riches Cat Rescue
- Real Trooper Cat Rescue
- Super Senior Cat Sanctuary
- Wagtime Rescue

In 2026, our first full year of The Remmy Project, we plan to help even more.

One thing that is different about The Remmy Project is that we at least double (or triple+) the value of every donation we receive. We use the money from donations to buy merchandise and supplies for the items we make and sell, we then sell these items at a higher cost, and pass along 100% of that money to rescues so we can help even more animals. We don't do anything unless it will at least double the value, otherwise you might as well just donate to a rescue directly. But we are not trying to take away any donations from rescues, we are trying to raise as much money as possible to help them.

Animal rescues are struggling more than ever right now and desperately need help. Donations are at an all-time low, adoptions are down, rescues are at full capacity, volunteers are burnt out, family pets are being abandoned due to hard economic times, and there is a major cat and kitten over-population crisis.

There are thousands of cats and kittens waiting to be adopted in our province because there are not enough homes for them all. Sadly, many will be euthanized or fighting to survive on the streets alone, often suffering from injuries and illnesses, because rescues can't keep up and lack the volunteers and resources to save them all. Many are brought to rescues in terrible shape and need extensive/expensive medical care.

The items and money we donate at The Remmy Project are invested back into the community to help address these issues, while working to address the overpopulation crisis and prevent further suffering. This also reduces the amount of time animals spend in shelters and foster homes; the sooner they can receive medical care and be spayed/neutered and vaccinated, the sooner they are ready for their forever homes.

Our goal is to support rescues however we can, to alleviate some of their financial stress. Every dollar that we can raise is a dollar that a rescue doesn't have to, so they have more time to focus on what really matters...the animals.

If you can help in any way, either by volunteering your time, making a small donation or by donating any of the items listed below, we would be so grateful for your help. We are based out of Guelph but also have drop-off locations in other towns/cities.



- Auction Items
- Cat-themed items we can sell at events
- Gift Cards (for our monthly draws)
- Catnip
- Catnip Spray
- Fabric
- Bed pillows (new - for stuffing)
- Yarn
- Thread
- Cellophane Rolls & Bags (clear)
- Curling Ribbon
- Ribbon (1/4"-1/2")
- Pipe Cleaners (no glitter)
- Pom Poms (1/2"-3/4")
- Hot Glue Sticks (non-toxic)

For more information about The Remmy Project, please follow us on Facebook and/or Instagram, check out our website at:
theremmyproject.weebly.com
or email: theremmyproject@gmail.com.

E-transfer donations can be sent to the email address above.

I truly hope The Remmy Project will continue to grow and inspire more pet parents and animal lovers to get involved in some way, to help other animals and honour their pets as well. We all have something to give...a few hours of our time, a few dollars here and there, a skill or talent, the ability to share a post or support a fundraiser. If we all contribute and work together, we can help so many animals in need.

Thank you to everyone who has supported The Remmy Project along the way. We sincerely appreciate every single one of you, and we couldn't do any of this without your support. I know Remmy (and all of our pets) would be very proud of what we are doing to help rescue cats.

The Remmy Project

TURNING GRIEF INTO PURPOSE
...one paw at a time

See Yellow, Give Space.
The Story Behind AwareWalk

by Leanna Pugsley (Co-Founder)

Sometimes an idea begins with a simple conversation.

For AwareWalk, that conversation happened at a dog park in Guelph. My mom and fellow co-founder, Gloria Gallagher, was there with her dogs, Coco and Uma, when she began chatting with another dog owner who was incredibly nervous about walking her reactive dog. My mom mentioned the Yellow Dog Project, an initiative she knew of in the UK where yellow is used as a visual signal that a dog needs additional space.

The woman immediately connected with the idea. She wished there were something similar - and more widely recognized - here in Canada. That conversation stayed with my mom. What if people in our community understood what yellow meant? Could a simple visual signal reduce some of the stress of a walk by communicating a dog's need for space before an interaction?

Not long afterward, I received a text from her. I mulled it over, did some digging, and soon Gloria, Ron and I were talking about what this could look like in Guelph. Those conversations became AwareWalk.

More Than a Product

We initially talked about creating a business, but our conversations quickly became less about what we could make and more about what we wanted people to understand.

We considered putting words on the signals. Maybe they could say "give me space" or explain a dog's circumstances. But words have to be read, meaning someone must get close enough to read them. Wording can also be interpreted differently, and a handler should not have to announce their dog's medical condition, history or behaviour simply to have their need for space respected.

The person approaching does not necessarily need to know why. They just need to know what the dog needs. Yellow doesn't tell you why. It tells you what the dog needs. Our goal is simple: See yellow. Give space.

One Colour, Many Reasons

As we began talking about the idea with people around us, we quickly realized how varied those reasons could be. One of my mom's neighbours, for example, has a small senior dog with arthritis. She is very friendly and may happily attract attention, but physical interactions can leave her in pain. Nothing about looking at her would necessarily tell someone that she needs a gentler interaction or a little more space.

A dog may need space because they are reactive or fearful, but they may also be in training, recovering from surgery, managing a medical condition, pregnant or in heat, a puppy learning about the world, or a senior whose body is changing.

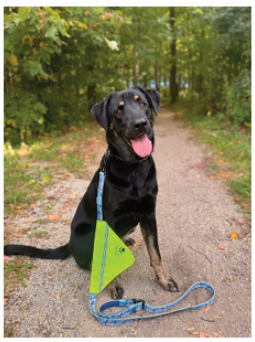
Yellow is not meant to label a dog as aggressive, dangerous or unfriendly. It is simply information: a quiet request to pause, create some distance and let the dog and handler lead the interaction.

Learning From Real Dogs

We knew we could not develop AwareWalk in isolation. My mom brought the physical side to life, hand-sewing bright yellow bandanas and versatile signal ribbons. She also creates handmade embroidered AwareWalk patches in two sizes that can be ironed onto different items. We wanted the signals to work with gear people already use rather than requiring a new setup.

Our prototype testers have shown us how many different stories can exist behind the same yellow signal.

Kaido, a rescue German Shepherd in Kitchener, is incredibly sweet but fearful and does not like being approached. His person wanted to help educate people in her community and within the rescue world. When she sent us photos, we saw that she had creatively looped his bandana through his leash instead of having him wear it traditionally. It was visible and practical - exactly the kind of real-world learning we hoped testing would produce.





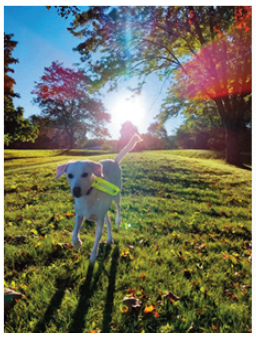
Kaido's family looped the yellow bandana directly onto his leash for outings

Giorgi has unique mobility needs after having both front legs amputated at a young age following trauma. He naturally attracts attention when he is out. People are curious and want to come closer, but even well-intentioned attention can become overwhelming when a dog is surrounded and cannot retreat. His yellow signal gently reminds people to give him that choice.



Giorgi's yellow signal asks others to give him room and let him choose when to interact

Ruby lives with epilepsy and takes medication to manage her seizures. The medication can leave her nervous and jumpy, and she sometimes needs extra space and time to warm up to people. Her brother is much more social and happy to say hello. Yellow helps communicate that difference before someone reaches down to pet her.





Ruby demonstrates two ways to use the yellow signal - a signal ribbon and a bright yellow bandana

Starting in Guelph, Thinking Bigger

We are still at the beginning. Our prototypes are being tested, we are listening to feedback, and we are attending community events where we can talk directly with dog owners about what yellow means. But our long-term vision goes beyond the items we make. Education comes first. We would love to see this education in parks, schools, municipalities, community organizations and even dog-walking platforms.

Eventually, we hope to explore a broader colour system, including red for "not today" and green for a dog who is friendly and open to interaction. But yellow is where we are starting because the need it represents is so broad.

We are not asking people to stop loving dogs or wanting to say hello. We are asking people to notice first.

A dog cannot explain that they are sore, recovering, nervous, learning or simply not ready to interact. But perhaps, with enough awareness, they will not have to.

A safer, kinder walk does not always require knowing a dog's whole story. Sometimes, it simply starts with seeing the signal and respecting the space.

About AwareWalk

AwareWalk was co-founded in Guelph by Leanna Pugsley, Gloria Gallagher and Ron Gallagher to help create safer, more respectful walks through visual signals and education.

See yellow. Give space.

World Animal Day Market

Thanks, and see you next year!

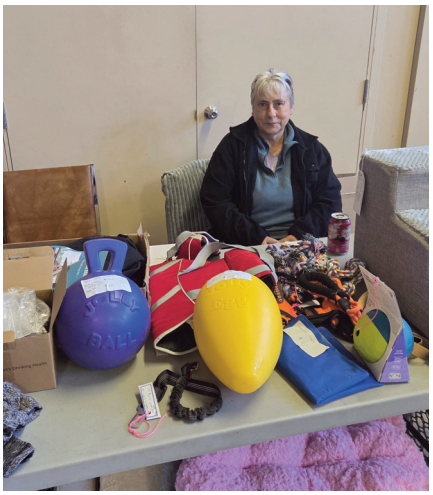


So grateful to all the vendors and exhibitors who took part in this year's market ... and to all those who came out to support them. I couldn't have done it without you!

Please turn the page for vendor/exhibitor photos, and check out their contact information on page 18.

Next year's market will take place on Saturday, October 2. Would you like to be a part of it? Email lisa@onethousandtrees.com for details.


BLUE ROSE
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www.bluerosepetbakery.com




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Bracelets
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PAWS ON THE GROUND
The Remmy Project


SANCTUARY


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AWAREWALK






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PAWS ON THE GROUND
DOGS WELCOME
PEOPLE TOLERATED
PAWS
ON THE
GROUND


The Benjamin
Project
www.thebenjaminproject.ca


WATERLOO REGION
Climate Initiatives



Thank you to all of the amazing exhibitors and vendors who took part in this year's World Animal Day Market (photos on pages 16-17, left to right) ...

Blue Rose Pet Bakery - www.bluerosebakery.ca

JC Pet Supplies - https://www.facebook.com/joy.cressman

Running Rabbit Farm Rabbit Rescue & Sanctuary - www.runningrabbitfarm.com

Sparkles with Diamonds - https://www.facebook.com/sarah.christensen.1426

Reflections Pet Aquamation - www.reflectionspet.ca

Season Charms and Gifts - https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=61580806470987

The Remmy Project - http://www.theremmyproject.weebly.com/

Carlisle Creek Sanctuary - https://sites.google.com/view/carlislecreekfarm/

AwareWalk - www.awarewalk.com

Derek Smith Books - https://guelpharts.ca/uncategorized/what-one-story-can-do-spotlight-on-derek-smith/

Izzy is Busy - www.izzyisbusy.ca

Apollo Reptiles - www.apolloreptiles.com

Rainforest Jewellery Collection - https://guelpharts.ca/uncategorized/an-orangutan-calling-spotlight-on-patty-cuthbert/

Wellington Turtle Conservation - https://www.facebook.com/groups/1683132698658083/

Paws on the Ground - https://www.facebook.com/p/Paws-on-the-Ground-61558508236267/

The Benjamin Project - www.thebenjaminproject.ca

Waterloo Climate Initiatives - www.climateactionwr.ca

One Thousand Trees - www.onethousandtrees.com

Carlisle Creek Sanctuary

WINTER MARKET

Saturday, November 14 • 11 AM – 3 PM

480 Carlisle Road, Carlisle, Ontario

All purchases and donations directly support the sanctuary animals

Children's Books

Baked Goods

Carlisle Care Products

Jewellery

Soup Mixes in a Jar

Handcrafted Wood Pieces
(Benches • Cutting Boards • Platters)

Tours by Donation



Lost Dove

by MaryRose Lessoway

"There's a DOVE at our bird feeder!" I exclaimed to my mom, as I stood looking out the kitchen window at the two tall spruce trees in our yard. The year was 2002 and I had returned to my home town of Grande Prairie, Alberta in my fifties, to take care of my aging parents. Our town was in the far north, we did not have wild doves living there, so it was an exceptional surprise to see one at my bird feeder. I talked to her gently through the open screen. She seemed to be listening. She returned day after day and gradually, I went outside and stood beside the tree talking to her. I got close enough to her, but kept a respectful distance. I did not want to scare her off.



I called the SPCA to see if anyone had lost their pet dove, and put notices in the local paper. A young woman answered the ad, saying she had two doves, but one had gotten away and its mate missed him. But something felt off. I don't know what exactly, it was just an intuition, but I didn't trust her. I questioned her and finally got it out of her that she was lying. She did have a dove but wanted another one for free. I was appalled and told her so. I told her that no way was she getting this dove. She left. That was around the end of August. Then one day in early September, the dove didn't come to the feeder. It just disappeared. I looked for it every day.

A few days later, there was a knock at my door. It was the young girl who lived next door, who was about sixteen at the time. She was holding the dove! She told me that she worked at the local SPCA and someone brought it to them. She recognized it and told them that it was "MaryRose's dove."

The poor thing had its feet frozen. The nights had turned cold and there was frost. The dove was found hanging upside down, stuck to a branch by some other neighbours of ours.

So the beautiful dove had found its way back to us. My mom and I took care of it, giving it loving and tender attention. I bought a very large cage for it, but it could not hold onto the branch because of its damaged feet. So I found a cauldron that it could rest on and not have to put weight on its feet. It sat on the edges of the round bowl and its feet could hang inside of it. I am sure that it had to be in pain. But animals don't complain the way humans do.

Of course I took it to the vet, and there was nothing we could do for it. My mom and I tended to it daily, until we saw that its feet were turning purple, because the nerves were dying. The vet suggested that we euthanize it. I took it home, in tears and held it for hours. Finally we accepted the inevitable.

Back at the veterinarian's, I held it as it took its last breath. I don't think I ever mourned so much for any human as much as I did for that small bird.

When I told the story to my Elder, she said that the dove chose me to help it die, because of my Keeper of the Dead role and my connection to the dove. “White Dove” was the Spirit Name I had received when I first started on my path, the Red Road. And, someone in our Indigenous community had died around the same time.

To this day, I think of our precious little dove, who lived with us only ten short days... but touched me and my mom on a deep soul level. To me, that is kin! I don’t remember if I named her, but her memory, her sad eyes and soft breast are engraved forever in my heart.

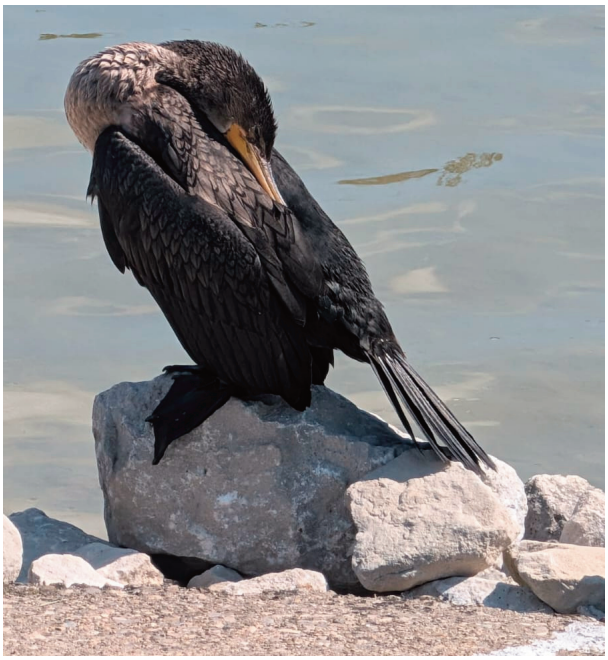
One detail I forgot in the story, which makes it even more amazing, is that the girl, our neighbour who brought me the dove, had just started working at the SPCA that very day that she brought it to me. If she hadn’t been there, I never would have seen our friend again. Spirit had arranged things perfectly!



Rescuing a Cormorant

by Nelly Novotna

The Bruce Peninsula is well-known for its lively wildlife, especially birds. The campground I work at in the area had a frequent visitor for the better part of a week—a lone cormorant.



If you know anything about these birds, you’d know that cormorants are very wary of humans and often travel in flocks. The one that practically lived on our busy dock, however, was never with his flock and didn’t get scared easily by the campers going by. It wouldn’t be alarmingly surprising for any other bird species, but out of all the summers I’ve spent up north, I’ve never gotten anywhere near one of these birds.

At first, the manager and the park seasonals were concerned he was brain-damaged or ill, and didn’t

know what to do. After a few days of observing the bird, we came to the conclusion that it was probably okay to leave him alone, as he was still flying, swimming, and hunting normally. The cormorant still didn't let people get too close, but he wasn't as quick to run away as cormorants usually are, so we

thought that he might've been rescued at some point and gotten accustomed to people already. A lot of people said he was like the guardian of the dock, keeping geese away and making camping for guests more unique and magical.

After a few days without incident, two little kids tracked me down and told me they had seen the cormorant get spooked by a group using the boat launch on the dock. He had tripped and gotten lodged between the smooth concrete of the launch and the big rocks beside it. I took precautions and put on a long-sleeved shirt and thick gloves to prevent any contact or scratches just in case and went out to help. The poor thing was trying to free himself, but he couldn't get out.

I waited for a minute for him to settle down and become comfortable with me being so close, then I slightly lifted him by his belly. Luckily, he was very calm and didn't make any attempt to bite or attack me. Once the cormorant was safely back on the dock, he began to stumble and fall over a few times, before lying down. I was concerned for him, but I had to get back to the office. I made sure he wasn't falling over anymore, and asked the kids to watch him from the beach for a little while.

An hour later, I went to check up on the cormorant again. I found him stuck in the same spot, unable to free himself. I rushed over to help him once again and got him free the same way as before. It was heartbreaking to see this poor bird clearly not doing well anymore, especially when there was a man sitting on the dock, just a few metres away from the trapped cormorant. I can't say for certain that he knew the bird was stuck right behind him, but the black cormorant was a strong contrast against the white dock and rocks, and he was noisily flapping his wings.

I was willing to get so close to the cormorant and rescue him from the rocks all on my own, and seeing no one else, at the bare minimum, take notice of an innocent animal in danger was pretty devastating. My boss took the bird back to a private property, with hopes of calling a professional, but unfortunately the cormorant passed away just a few hours later. I'm still not sure if he was unwell or if he got injured after getting scared, but at least he's in a better place and not suffering anymore. It was a sad ending to the week, but I'm grateful that I got to have this very unique experience with that cormorant, who made my work days more exciting. I'll miss that beautiful, sweet bird.



Hugelkultur and How It Transformed Our Sanctuary

by Nicki Pollock

Hugelkultur literally means hill culture….a hill or mound created from rotting logs, leaves, sticks, compost, aged manure to act as a garden bed.

We moved here October of 2013. Other than a few mature trees in front of the barn, we were surrounded by a sea of grass. At first, I noticed how pristine it looked. Then I noticed how silent it was. There was no sound of fluttering butterflies, bees or wasps buzzing, croaking frogs. House sparrows dominated the skies along with chickadees and crows. It felt sterile and abandoned.

When I dug into the ground, I discovered very little topsoil. Beneath that thin layer was mostly sand. Great for pounding in fence posts in but growing vegetables? Not so much.

So we started digging. We laid down old fallen logs, branches, leaves and rotting material, manure and compost. The largest material was laid on the bottom to act like a sponge, holding moisture, while the lighter material was added on top to create air pockets and give worms plenty of room to wiggle their way through the soil.



Before



After

Over the last decade, we've continued adding to the mounds as they decompose and settle.

There is something very satisfying about ditching the gloves and digging in the soil with bare hands. I can reach in and pull up handfuls of dark rich earth teeming with worms.

The vegetables grew huge, zucchinis the size of baseball bats. And yes, so did the weeds.
(Disclaimer: a weed is just a plant in the wrong spot.)

But unless they were inhibiting sun from getting to my vegetables or threatening to overtake the garden, I preferred to leave them and allow the soil to stay cool and intact. Otherwise, pulling unwanted plants would be disturbing the soil, leaving it exposed to dry out and damage the life beneath the surface, including the mycorrhizal fungal network.

How does incorporating hugel kultur into our land impact the herd at our sanctuary?

Once I adopted this idea, I began to think differently about the quality of our soil in general.

Over the years, my focus has been to create bio-diversity, enriching the lifeless soil, and encouraging pollinators back to the land.

On the flip side, I have tried to bring the wild back to the horses and donkeys in our care.

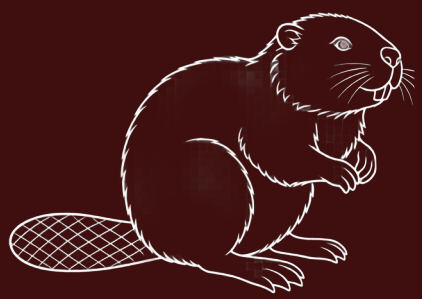
The more native trees, shrubs, and flowers they could interact with, the better they felt, emotionally and physically.

It was like the movie Field of Dreams — if you plant it, they will come. And they did! Every year, I meet a new butterfly or bird or dragonfly….every day, I use my Seek app to tell me what I'm looking at.

So whether you want to grow a small flower garden or a massive pumpkin patch, hugel it!

Plant your layered hill and watch and wait. You won't regret it.

Plant for your animals as well! Mix flowers in with your vegetables and herbs, add plenty of mulch and watch your topsoil grow year after year!



Support the development of Canada's first beaver conservation organization! Email Julianna Van Adrichem at jvanadri@gmail.com to learn more.

Plan With Care, Not in Crisis: Understanding Pet Aquamation and Your Aftercare Choices

by Michelle Kaczmarek



As pet parents, we plan for almost every stage of our pets' lives. We think carefully about what they eat, choose veterinarians we trust, buy far too many toys and treats, manage medications as they age, and do everything we can to keep them healthy, comfortable and happy.

Yet there is one part of their journey that many of us know very little about:

What happens after our pet passes away?

It is completely understandable that we would rather not think about it. Unfortunately, avoiding the conversation doesn't prevent the day from coming. It can mean that when it does, families are suddenly faced with unfamiliar decisions at one of the most emotional and overwhelming moments of their life.

That is why I believe pet parents should have the opportunity to plan with care, not in crisis.

Learning about pet aftercare ahead of time doesn't mean you are giving up on your pet or expecting something bad to happen. It simply means understanding your choices so that, when the time eventually comes, you can spend less time trying to figure out what to do and more time focused on your pet.

Planning Ahead Doesn't Mean Expecting the Worst

Perhaps your pet is elderly or facing a serious diagnosis.

Or perhaps they're perfectly healthy and currently asleep beside you without a care in the world.

Either way, you are allowed to ask questions.

- You don't need to make arrangements.
- You don't need to choose an urn.
- You don't need to know exactly what you will want when the time comes.
- You can simply learn.

Aftercare Is About More Than the Process

When families begin researching aftercare, they often understandably focus on one question:
What will happen to my pet's body?

But choosing aftercare involves more than deciding between aquamation and traditional flame cremation. Understanding who will care for your pet, where they will go, and what happens along the way can provide important peace of mind during an incredibly emotional time.

Some questions worth asking include:

- Where will my pet go after leaving my home or veterinary clinic, and who will transport them?
- What is the difference between aquamation and flame cremation?
- What is the difference between private and communal aftercare?
- Will my pet remain at one facility throughout their care, or will they be transported elsewhere?
- How is my pet identified and tracked throughout the process, and how can I be confident the remains returned to me are theirs?
- Will I have an opportunity to spend time with my pet and say goodbye?
- What memorial and keepsake options are available?
- Which decisions need to be made right away, and which ones can wait?

These questions matter, and families deserve clear answers.

What Is Aquamation?

Aquamation, also known as alkaline hydrolysis or water cremation, is a gentle alternative to traditional flame cremation.

Rather than using fire, aquamation uses a combination of water, gentle water movement, controlled temperature and alkali to accelerate the natural process that occurs when a body returns to the earth.

At the completion of the aquamation process, the remaining bones are carefully air-dried and processed into a soft, fine, white-coloured powder that can be returned to the family. In comparison remains from traditional flame cremation are typically grey and coarser in texture and may contain visible bone fragments depending on how thoroughly they have been processed.

For many families, aquamation provides the same memorial options they are already familiar with—such as keeping their pet's remains in an urn, scattering them, incorporating a small amount into memorial jewelry or choosing another meaningful way to remember their companion.

The difference is how that pet is cared for during the aftercare process.

A Gentler Environmental Choice

One of the reasons I was drawn to aquamation was its environmental benefits.

Traditional flame cremation relies on extremely high temperatures—typically between 1,400°F and 1,800°F (760°C–982°C)—and the combustion of fossil fuels such as natural gas or propane, resulting in direct CO_2 and other emissions being released into the air.

Aquamation takes a much gentler, lower-energy approach. Instead of fire, it uses water, electricity, alkali, gentle circulation and temperatures of approximately 204°F–206°F (95°C–97°C).

Because there is no combustion, the aquamation process produces no direct emissions into the air and uses significantly less energy than traditional flame cremation.

Even the water used during an aquamation cycle is thoughtfully managed and returned through our water system, where it is processed through local water recycling facilities and safely returned to the environment.

For pet parents, aquamation offers an aftercare choice that is both gentle and respectful for our pets and gentler on the environment. With a significantly lower carbon footprint of traditional flame cremation, it is an option worth knowing about—giving families a meaningful way to honour a beloved companion while choosing an aftercare method with a significantly lighter environmental impact.

It is one of the cornerstones of our philosophy at Reflections Pet Aquamation Services: Reflecting love, honouring life in a gentler way for pets and the environment.

Understanding Private vs. Communal Aquamation

With Private Aquamation, pets are cared for together within the aquamation system but are separated in their own individual, stainless steel partitioned compartment throughout the process. This allows each pet's remains to remain separate and identifiable so they can be individually removed, gently dried, processed and returned to their family afterward. At Reflections, our Private Aquamation service includes a choice of standard urn or scatter tube, along with complimentary ink print and fur clipping memorial keepsakes.

With Communal Aquamation, multiple pets are cared for together without individual separation. Because their remains cannot be individually identified afterward, remains are not returned to families. At Reflections, the combined remains are respectfully scattered on a rural private, family-owned forested property outside Waterloo.

Neither choice reflects how much a family loved their pet. Some families find great comfort in having their companion's remains returned home, while others prefer not to receive remains back and find solace in knowing their pet's remains have been scattered in a peaceful natural surrounding. The right choice is simply the one that feels right for you, your pet and your family.

Understanding the difference ahead of time is important because private versus communal aftercare is a decision that needs to be made before the aquamation process begins. So learning about your options before you are in the middle of a loss can make things a little less overwhelming.

About Us

At Reflections Pet Aquamation Services in Kitchener, your pet's care takes place onsite at our Care Centre. We use a comprehensive identification and tracking system throughout every step of the process, so families can know where their pet is, who is caring for them and how they are being cared for—providing peace of mind that their beloved companion is being treated with compassion, dignity and respect throughout their time with us.

We also encourage families to spend quiet, unhurried time with their pet in our private Comfort Room, where they can say goodbye in whatever way feels meaningful to them.

We take the time to explain the differences between aftercare options, answer questions, discuss memorial choices and help families understand which decisions need to be made now and which can wait. There should never be pressure to make hasty decisions or choose more than feels right for you and your family.

Because compassionate aftercare is about more than what happens after a pet passes. It is about knowing they are in caring hands, having choices, and being given the time and space to honour the life and love you shared—not simply completing a transaction.

You Have a Choice in Who Cares for Your Pet

Something many pet parents don't realize until they are faced with a loss is that you have a choice when it comes to your pet's aftercare.

Your veterinary clinic may have an established relationship with a particular cremation or aftercare provider, and they may offer that service to you when your pet passes. While this can certainly be a convenient option, you are not required to use the aftercare provider offered by your veterinarian.

You can choose the provider, type of aftercare and memorial experience that feels right for you, your pet and your family.

This is especially important for families interested in aquamation.

If your veterinary clinic doesn't currently offer aquamation as one of its aftercare choices, that doesn't mean aquamation isn't available to you.

You can choose Reflections directly.

If your pet passes at your veterinary clinic, simply let their team know that you have chosen Reflections Pet Aquamation Services for your pet's aftercare.

Depending on what feels most comfortable for you, you can bring your pet directly to our Care Centre, or we can work with your veterinary team to coordinate pickup and transportation into our care.

If your pet passes at home, you can also bring them directly to us by appointment or contact us to arrange for home pickup.

Our goal isn't to replace the relationship you have with your veterinarian. Your veterinary team has cared for your pet throughout their life, and we are happy to work alongside them to make the transition into aftercare as seamless and compassionate as possible.

Knowing this ahead of time can be incredibly valuable. Rather than being presented with an aftercare option during an emotional goodbye and assuming it is your only choice, you can already know:

I have options. I can choose who cares for my pet. I can choose aquamation even if my veterinary clinic doesn't offer it. And I can ask my veterinarian to release my pet into the care of the provider I have chosen.

That is another important part of what it means to plan with care, not in crisis.

You Don't Have to Make Every Decision at Once

Grief can make even simple decisions feel enormous.

Choosing an urn, keepsake or memorial immediately after losing your pet may feel important to one family and completely overwhelming to another.

Both are okay.

It is important to never feel pressured into making hasty decisions. That is why we give families time to breathe and process.

We explain the choices that need to be made right away and which ones can wait. We can talk through memorialization options, answer questions and help families understand what is available without expecting them to purchase more than they want or need.

Compassionate aftercare should be personal, giving families time, information and choices—not pressure.

Grief Can Begin Before Goodbye

Pet aftercare conversations shouldn't begin only after a pet has died.

For families caring for an aging, seriously ill or terminally ill pet, grief can begin long before the final goodbye. This is known as anticipatory grief.

You may find yourself watching every meal, every breath, every good day and every difficult one.
You may be wondering about quality of life, euthanasia, what a natural passing at home might look like, how other pets and family members will cope—and what you will do if your pet passes unexpectedly at home, especially in the middle of the night, on a weekend or during a holiday.

One of the most frightening parts of an unexpected loss can simply be:

I don't know what to do or who to call.

Your regular veterinary clinic may be closed. An emergency veterinary hospital may be unable to assist with aftercare, or the cost of an emergency visit may be difficult to manage when what your family really needs is compassionate help caring for a pet who has already passed.

This is why Reflections offers families a 24/7 contact number and home pickup options, including evenings, weekends and holidays.

As the only local pet aftercare provider offering this level of direct around-the-clock access, families can reach out and speak with someone when they need guidance—not simply wait until regular business hours or try to navigate the situation alone.

Whether your pet passes peacefully at home following a long illness or their death is completely unexpected, you don't have to be left wondering what to do next.

We can help explain the next steps, arrange for your pet to be brought into our care and give you the time and information you need to make aftercare decisions without adding unnecessary pressure to an already difficult moment.

We also provide access to complimentary grief and educational resources covering senior pet care, caring for an ill or terminal pet, anticipatory grief, euthanasia and end-of-life decisions, natural passing at home, sudden and unexpected loss, and coping with the sadness, quiet and loneliness that can follow the death of a beloved companion.

Support shouldn't suddenly begin when your pet arrives in our care. Sometimes it begins with simply answering the phone and helping a family know what to do next.

One Less Decision on One of the Hardest Days

I'm Michelle, owner of Reflections Pet Aquamation Services. I started Reflections in memory of my own sweet Dixie and because I wanted pet parents in Kitchener-Waterloo and surrounding communities to have something we didn't have when we said goodbye to her: another choice—and a gentler, more personal approach to pet aftercare.

It was important to me to create a place where families could receive personalized, compassionate care; ask difficult questions without feeling uncomfortable, rushed or pressured; and, perhaps most importantly, have a dedicated, peaceful space to spend time with their beloved companion and say goodbye in their own way.

If there are four things I hope pet parents take away from this article, they are these:

Ask questions before you need the answers. Know that you have a choice in who cares for your pet. Remember that aquamation may still be available even if your veterinary clinic doesn't offer it. And know who you can call when the time comes.

We are always happy to explain aquamation, discuss aftercare and memorial options, answer questions about what happens when a pet passes at home or at a veterinary clinic, show you our Care Centre, or simply help you understand what choices are available. There is no obligation to make arrangements just because you reached out to learn more.

And whether you are pre-planning a goodbye or facing an unexpected loss, help is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week—including evenings, weekends and holidays. You can speak with someone who can help you understand what to do next and, when needed, arrange for your pet to be picked up from home and brought safely into our care.

During regular business hours, you can reach Reflections Pet Aquamation Services at (226) 750-6619.

For emergency after-hours assistance, our partners at Waterloo Wellington Transportation – a wonderfully compassionate team we trust to care for our families – can be reached at (519) 885-4754.

Sometimes, simply knowing who you will call, what your choices are and how you want your pet cared for can mean one less decision to make on one of the hardest days we will face as pet parents.

Planning ahead isn't about focusing on losing them. It's about knowing your options, choosing who you trust and knowing there will be someone there to help when you need them.

So, when that heartbreaking time comes, you can focus less on figuring out what happens next and more on what matters most: Loving them. Being fully present with them. And saying goodbye in the way that feels right for you, your pet and your family.

At Reflections Pet Aquamation, we are here for you—before, during and after goodbye.



Animal Sentience

by Malcolm Bernstein

Like all animal lovers, the subject of animal sentience is something near and dear to my heart. We know intuitively that animals feel, think, and experience a range of emotions. Now of course, there is a raft of research to confirm this, and many organizations dedicated to advancing the cause … making a meaningful impact on animals' lives and building a better world for animals and people alike.

Animal sentience is defined as the capacity of an animal to experience subjective, emotional states—such as pain, pleasure, fear, and joy. It means an animal has a conscious inner life and can actively feel and perceive its surroundings, distinguishing it from basic physical reflexes.

Amongst others, two wonderful films about octopuses—My Octopus Teacher (2020) and Remarkably Bright Creatures (2026)—are testament to this sentient quality. High-profile groups of researchers have formalized positions like the New York Declaration on Animal Consciousness, emphasizing that the empirical evidence for animal consciousness cannot be ignored. Dozens of countries and the European Union have formally updated their legal codes to recognize animals as sentient beings rather than mere property. Further, recognizing sentience shifts ethical obligations toward reducing suffering and ensuring positive welfare conditions across agricultural, domestic, and scientific domains (source: AI).

Animals showing care or aid for one another include elephants rescuing calves from water, dogs adopting or comforting other species. Dogs, monkeys, and pigs have frequently been observed taking in orphaned babies of completely different species, providing warmth, protection, and comfort. These acts highlight empathy, social support, and cooperation in the animal kingdom.

Many social animals possess brain structures similar to ours that allow them to feel and recognize distress in others. Dogs, monkeys, and pigs have frequently been observed taking in orphaned babies of completely different species, providing warmth, protection, and comfort. Further, nurturing members of one species or other species often strengthens community bonds and overall safety within an ecosystem. Strong maternal or paternal drives can cause an adult animal to care for any small, vulnerable creature, regardless of what species it belongs to.

Advocacy organization World Animal Protection writes that many people underestimate the significance of an animal's emotions or dismiss them as subjective and difficult to comprehend or quantify. However, it attests that this is not accurate. Over the past two decades, scientific knowledge about animal sentience has greatly advanced. Scientists now have a wide range of tools to measure and understand the emotional experiences of animals, and these can be used to ensure that animals have the lives they deserve.

World Animal Protection puts it so powerfully: "We firmly believe that every animal matters. We strive to understand the world through their perspectives and give them a voice. Sentience lies at the core of everything we do." World Animal Protection remains committed to promoting this field of

science and showcasing the growing body of research that demonstrates the diverse range of the emotional lives of animals. Canada's Animal Justice is another organization doing exceptional work to advocate for animals as sentient beings that deserve the most humane treatment.

In the last edition of Our Sentient Friends, I wrote about Tara and Bella, an elephant and little dog reported on by Steve Hartman (On the Road with Steve Hartman, CBS News, 2009) who lived on an animal sanctuary in Tennessee and were inseparable. Last week, Steve reported another wonderful story about Louie the duck and Barley, a golden retriever, and their indelible bond (On the Road with Steve Hartman, CBS News August 7, 2026). A New York family adopted newly hatched Louie from a local school property and brought him home at a time when their golden was dealing with the strong side effects of medication for his seizures, causing him to be very lethargic. But in no time, the two bonded, and Barley regained his form as both animals became fast friends engaged in constant play, mutual grooming, eating together, and sleeping side by side.

Like all such stories, this one puts a smile on your face a mile wide. And provides another testament to where this article began: Animal Sentience. That irrefutable quality which animals possess to exhibit a range of behaviours and experience a range of emotions which make their and our lives better.





Photo Credit: Braiden (Focus on Nature)

Sovereign Swan

Grace floats alone
on the glassy water
not in loneliness
but
solitude.
Sacredness lived aloud
majestic in sovereignty
one with the water
trusting naturally at its core.
How we could learn from
such gentle courage.

Lisa Lindsay



Vinnie & Fritz: A Special Christmas

story and illustration by Paul Hock

Excerpts from The Tree - Discovery
© Paul Hock – Paul Hock Publishing

The two little mice were curled up, all cosy and sleeping in the fur-lined slipper. They snored under the pale glow of a December moon that shone through the frosted window of a young boy's bedroom. During the winter months, they performed a nightly ritual. They would wait under the big feather bed for the young boy, Jonathan, and his dog, Typsy, to drift off to sleep. The two mice would then push and pull that comfortable slipper halfway across the room, lining it up with the window. Positioning it so the first morning light would awaken them before the boy and his dog stirred.

The oldest mouse twitched as the first rays of the eastern sunrise warmed his whiskers. The dog also reacted. He stuck his nose out from under the enormous down-stuffed quilt and sniffed at the air. Sensing the tiny creatures, he let out a whine. Tempted but not ready to leave the comfort of that warm bed.

It was a funny scene. Fritz the mouse nudging his pal Vinnie out of a deep sleep, and the dog finally letting out a low growl, which sent the pair scurrying back under the bed. They would quickly exit the room under a loose floorboard.

This morning, they would complete an annual Christmas event and join Agnes, who lived across the lane, on her yearly trip into the forest.

Jonathan rubbed his sleepy eyes. He felt the rough wet tongue of Typsy, his dog licking his cheek. The young boy finally built up enough courage to crawl out from under the warm cover and step into the chilled room.

The room, located over the old summer kitchen, attached to the back of their farmhouse, never warmed up in winter. The only heat was a pipe that poked through the wall from the kitchen cookstove. Once the embers had died down in that stove, the floor in his room looked like a skating rink. A thin layer of frost often coating the wide pine planks.

Every night, Jonathan placed his slippers with precision right next to the bed. Every morning, one would somehow have found its way to the middle of the room. Today was no different; as he swung his feet over the edge of the bed, his toes groped and only found one slipper.

He had asked his mother, "How does this happen?" She had just shrugged her shoulders and said, "It must be the slipper gremlins."

He wiggled his right foot into the single moccasin, then nimbly hopped over to the other and slipped it on. That's strange, he thought, it feels warm. He walked to the window, scraped off a layer of frost, and gazed out at the wintry scene.

"Well, look at that, Typsy."

As if understanding, the dog rose on his rear legs and pressed his nose to the window. He saw two tiny creatures scurrying down the laneway towards the neighbour's cabin.

Typsy growled.

Jonathan questioned, "Now, where do you suppose those little critters are off to?"

The neighbour was Mrs. Sweetwater. Jonathan had always thought she was just a little bit different. There was a sadness about her, but whenever he visited, she seemed to cheer up.

To his surprise, he spotted the older woman setting out across the field behind her cabin, moving at a slow, steady pace towards the forest. She was pulling a small toboggan laden with a hay bale and some bulging sacks. She also carried a pack on her back.

Now, where would she be going?

The dog's ability to see movement in low light allowed him to zero in on the two mice. They had caught up to and hopped on the toboggan. They quickly disappeared into one of the sacks. Typsy gave another growl.

Jonathan hadn't noticed the mice. "Hey, Typsy! Why are you growling at Mrs. Sweetwater?"

The boy found it all very confusing. No one lived in the forest, or for that matter, for miles around. He thought: she must be going to visit someone, after all, it is Christmas.

A year later Jonathan followed Agnes Sweetwater into the forest. The words to my song explain where she was going.

The Tree

Come all ye children, I'll tell you a tale
About an old lady who lived in a cabin of logs
Near the forest, by the Chippewa trail
And each year, she would go to the tree

She'd gather up berries, save dried scraps of bread
Roots and corn from her garden, and straw for a bed
Seeds from the flowers, saved till Christmas day
The day, she would go to the tree

I followed her footsteps, for I had to know
Why she saved all these things
And where she would go
And while she was walking, she sang this song
On the day, I first saw the tree

Singing la la la la la la la la
My friends in the forest hear me
La la la la la la la la
I've come to visit on this Christmas day
and we will all meet at the tree

I stood in the shadows, all hidden away
I watched in wonder,
as she worked her magic of love
In the meadow so, deep in the wood
Then I saw, and I understood

Decorations of carrots, and corn on the boughs
A garland of roots, and a blanket of straw
lay before me that day, a most wonderful sight
The day I first saw the tree

And each year come winter
When the forest was froze
From her bed Christmas morning, the lady arose
With her sack on her back
She would trudge through the snow
Each year, she would go, to the tree

Singing la la la la la la la la
My friends in the forest hear me
La la la la la la la la
I've come to visit on this Christmas day
and we will all meet at the tree

Yes I've come to visit, on this Christmas day
And we will all meet at the tree.

Music & Lyrics by Paul Hock 1996 ©





Do you have a story to tell?

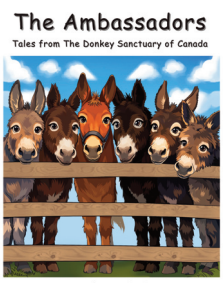
Are you interested in submitting an article, story or poem for our Winter issue?

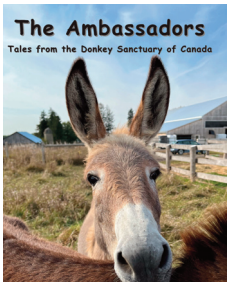
The deadline is December 15, and the magazine will go live on January 1.

Email lisa@onethousandtrees.com for more information.

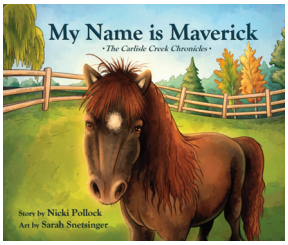
The Bookshelf

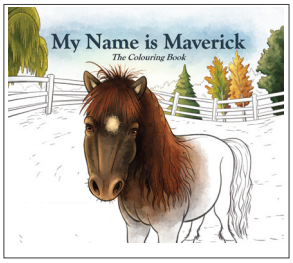
The following books were published by Saplings (the children's branch of One Thousand Trees), and are available from www.onethousandtrees.com/bookstore.



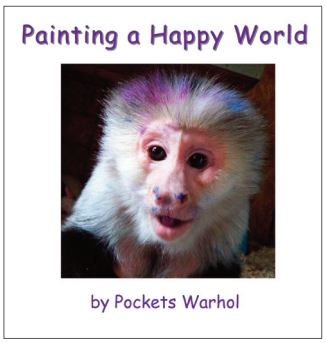


In support of The Donkey Sanctuary of Canada





In support of Carlisle Creek Sanctuary



In support of Storybook Farm Primate Sanctuary



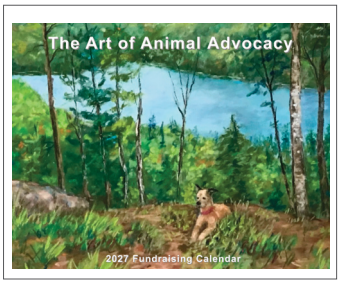
In support of International Animal Rescue's Orangutan Program

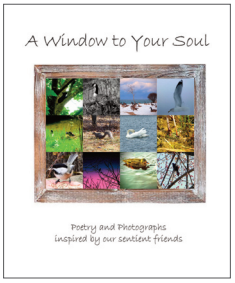


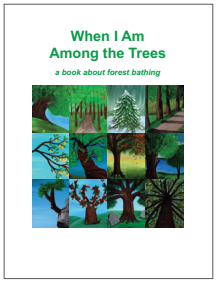
In support of Brae Ridge Farm & Sanctuary











In support of various animal advocacy projects facilitated by One Thousand Trees and Saplings

This month's contributors ...



Malcolm Bernstein *(Animal Sentience)*

Malcolm and his wife Helen founded The Benjamin Project in 2014. Established in honour of their dog, Benjamin, the project is a non-profit organization educating children on responsible pet ownership and animal stewardship, and raising funds for shelters, sanctuaries and rescues. In addition to his involvement with the project, Malcolm works as a management consultant in Toronto, and a volunteer with Toronto Humane Society, Meals on Wheels, and Out of the Cold. For more information about the Benjamin Project, visit www.thebenjaminproject.ca.



Ursula Darby *(What If Your Animal is Trying To Tell You Something?)*

Ursula is an Animal Communicator, Psychic Medium, Certified Grief Educator, and Public Speaker with over 22 years of experience. She has worked with thousands of clients worldwide and appeared on television, radio, and podcasts. Her animal communication work focuses on living animals, helping people better understand their behaviour, needs, and relationships. Grounded, direct, compassionate, and funny, Ursula focuses on specificity and accuracy rather than vague information. A former stand-up comedian, she uses humour to soften difficult conversations while still exploring grief, loss, and connection. She also educates the public about manipulation and fraud within the industry.



Claire Forestell *(Helping Turtles in Wellington County)*

Claire is an elementary school teacher with the Upper Grand District School Board. Before becoming a teacher, she spent 10 years working in wetland research, forestry and ecosystem restoration. She now combines her love of nature and teaching through her volunteer work with the Wellington Turtle Conservation Group, where she continues to learn alongside like-minded people while helping her favourite animals ... turtles.



Nathaniel Gibson *(Reptiles: Smarter Than You Think)*

Nathaniel was born in Guelph, Ontario. His love for reptiles began in childhood when his father brought home a Veiled Chameleon named Sally G. That passion grew after Nathaniel got his first snake, Pazu, as a teenager. During the COVID-19 pandemic, Nathaniel opened Apollo Reptiles, a reptile rescue. Through his work, he began asking how he could better support reptiles and their owners before surrender became the only option. This vision led to the creation of Apollo Reptiles CO-OP. Nathaniel also owns film company Equals 2 and last year produced the documentary Swimming in Plastic, combining his passion for animals, conservation, and storytelling.



Paul Hock *(Vinnie & Fritz: A Special Christmas)*

As many of his friends and certainly, his wife and son would attest to, Paul has never had a shortage of imagination. Thankfully retirement brought with it the time to write, sing and illustrate to his heart's content. When a fellow writer Don Smith approached him with the idea of creating wonderful photo stories that children and adults seem to love, he welcomed the opportunity ... and the *Critter a Week* series was born. You can read more about Paul and his many projects at https://www.paulhockpublishing.com.



Michelle Kaczmarek *(Plan With Care, Not in Crisis)*

Michelle is the founder of Reflections Pet Aquamation Services, a locally owned pet aftercare provider dedicated to offering compassionate, dignified, and affordable care to families throughout the Waterloo Region and beyond. As a Registered Pet Funeral Director and Certified Bereavement Specialist, Michelle understands the importance of honouring the human-animal bond and providing families with meaningful choices during an emotional time. A lifelong pet lover and proud pet mom to Lainey and Cooper, she founded Reflections to create a more personal, gentle approach to pet aftercare: one rooted in respect, transparency, and genuine care for every family and pet entrusted to her.



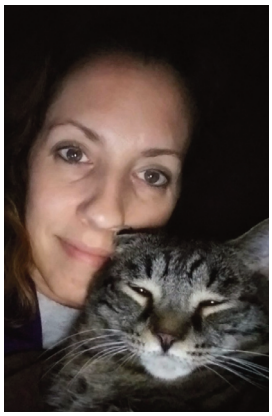
MaryRose Lessoway *(Lost Dove)*

MaryRose is an Indigenous Elder from northern Alberta. She was a teacher, art therapist and a natural health consultant, but her true calling was as a Keeper of the Medicine Wheel. For over thirty years, she led Indigenous Sacred Circles across Canada and the United States. She is now retired and working on her memoirs. She has always been a cat person, taking in many strays. She is a firm believer that animals are sentient creatures and love unconditionally, that they are here as messengers, teachers, healers and guides, and also that humans also have a totemic (animal) nature.



Lisa Lindsay *(Sovereign Swan)*

Lisa is beyond grateful for animal friends and family in her life. It's a creative joy and honour to be able to write about them. They inspire her to write! Lisa volunteers with ElderDog Canada, which is an extra precious gift right now with the loss of her pup. She enjoys poetry, meditation, qi gong, painting and nature to support herself on her healing journey. It's important to Lisa to share about death and grief to support our community in embracing death as part of life. She has completed death doula training, qi gong teacher training, and Realization Process teacher training, and she is now receiving the gift from these practices on her own grief journey.



Denise MacDonald *(The Remmy Project: Turning Grief Into Purpose)*

Denise is a huge cat lover (especially senior cats) and lifelong Guelph resident who is an advocate for animal welfare and has been involved with multiple rescues since 2015. She has been battling Lyme disease for many years and now spends her time raising money for cat rescues through The Remmy Project whenever her health allows. She is also the proud cat mom of two senior cats, Willow and Finn.



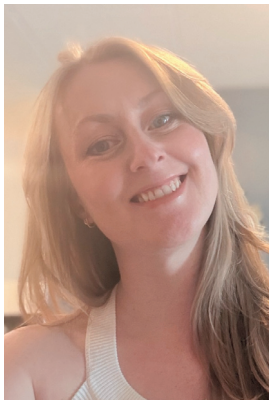
Nelly Novotna *(Rescuing a Cormorant)*

Nelly is a 16-year-old Czech-Canadian senior at Laurel Heights Secondary School. Driven by her curiosity about the human psyche and the legal system, she constantly seeks out challenges that expand her understanding of human behavior and society. When she isn't analyzing the world around her, Nelly spends her summers working on the Bruce Peninsula, where her interactions with both people and local wildlife inspired this piece.



Nicki Pollock *(Hugelkultur and How It Transformed Our Sanctuary)*

Nicki and her husband live on a 40-acre farm, sharing their home with horses, donkeys, cows, chickens, dogs, and cats. After leaving her career as an elementary teacher in the city, Nicki's daily encounters with both their domestic animals and the surrounding wildlife have revealed the distinct personality in every creature. It is this discovery that led her to share their stories, through two children's books and one colouring book, with more to come!



Leanna Pugsley *(See Yellow, Give Space: The Story Behind AwareWalk)*

Leanna is a Guelph-based Addictions Counsellor and co-founder of AwareWalk, a community-focused initiative working to create safer, more respectful interactions between dogs and people through education and a simple visual signalling system. AwareWalk was co-founded alongside her mom, Gloria Gallagher, and Ron Gallagher, and grew from a shared belief that greater awareness can make everyday spaces safer and more inclusive. Leanna brings her background in community support, education and advocacy to AwareWalk, helping build partnerships, share its message and grow the initiative from its roots in Guelph.