

October 15, 2011

Hello everyone.

Thank you to the many who have contacted me in support.

It is important to me that everyone is properly informed about what has happened concerning the raid of Constance Creek Wildlife Refuge (CCWR) by the Ministry of Natural Resources (MNR), so I will try to explain it here.

### **The events of Oct 11, 2011**

- On Tuesday evening around 6pm, a group of approximately 15 Sparks (5 to 6 year old aspiring Girl Guides), with their leaders and families, arrived for a pre-arranged educational tour of the farm.
- At the same, at least two Ministry of Natural Resources (MNR) vehicles with at least four MNR officials arrived.
- An MNR constable served me with a warrant to search the property.
- I decided to focus on giving the planned tour to the Sparks.
- The MNR officials searched the property and found 2 juvenile raccoons in an enclosure.
  - These raccoons were scheduled for release later that night.
    - They had been:
      - brought to me as orphans;
      - vaccinated against rabies, panleukopenia and distemper and treated for parasites;
      - bottle fed for a month;
      - weaned;
      - and allowed to socialize with other raccoons and grow strong.
- The MNR officials took the 2 raccoons.
  - Their disposition is unknown at this time.
- The MNR officials said they saw more raccoons in the garage, which was locked.
  - I refused them access.
  - They said they would return with a warrant to search the garage.
  - So far, they have not done so.

### **Background**

In June 2011, I applied for a licence from the MNR for rehabilitating fawns

This licence is pending since that time.

At present, I am in the process of applying to extend the fawn license to include small mammals and rabies vector species.

For the last two years I have been working to satisfy the requirements to obtain the Wildlife Custodian Authorizations from the MNR.

In that time, I have, at my own expense, done the following:

- Established a volunteer network of approximately 25 people who contribute on a regular basis
- Obtained a charity licence
- Created a board of directors in accordance with the terms of licence
- Obtained \$20,000 in grants.
- Passed the MNR and Rabies Vector Species exams.
- Secured the services of wildlife veterinarians.
- Built enclosures that comply with MNR standards for different species.
- Built a clinic where wild animals can be
  - observed;
  - examined and assessed;
  - receive basic first aid including:
    - wound care,
    - rehydration and,
    - stabilization.
- Created a standardized data base for keeping records of all the animals in our care in order comply with MNR requirements to release each animal within 15km of where it was found.

I have used donated funds to:

- install proper fencing to prevent the public from interacting with the wildlife and prevent wildlife from contact with domestic animals;
- create a quarantine room to:
  - keep animals separate for observation and
  - prevent the spread of disease.
- purchase vaccinations, medications and specialized wildlife formulas to ensure wildlife undergoing rehabilitation is healthy
- build wildlife enclosures appropriate to each species

I have, at my own expense, also:

- attended a 5 day Wildlife Rehabilitation symposium
- been vaccinated for rabies

I have never sought nor received any compensation for my time from the charity. The charity occupies the majority of my property free of charge.

*I believe that the CCWR complies with every MNR requirement except that of having been granted the licence for which we have applied.*

It is regrettable that the MNR lacks the resources to consider licences applications in a timely fashion.

### **Ottawa needs more wildlife care**

In June of this year, callers informed me that every licensed wildlife rehab centre they contacted in the province was unable to take in more animals.

People who called CCWR with animals in need of rehabilitation had already made considerable efforts to place them, including:

- the Ottawa Humane Society (OHS);
- Rideau Valley Wildlife Sanctuary (RVWS);
- the City of Ottawa; and
- the MNR.
- many other wildlife rehabilitation centres in Ontario

None of these resources offered them the answer they wanted.

- OHS cannot rehab wild animals;
- RVWS was unavailable;
- the City referred people to the MNR; and
- the MNR would tell them to "let nature take its course".

### **For the Record**

The MNR has previously responded to reports wildlife on the property. They have warned me that I am not allowed to rehabilitate wildlife until I receive a licence to do so.

- The first time, they did give me 2 days notice before their visit.
- The second time, they did not give notice and they took away 2 fawns that were in my care and issued a fine for \$250.
- The third time there was no wildlife in my care.
- This time they came with a warrant to search the property,
  - took away 2 juvenile raccoons, and
  - charged me and
  - issued a summons for court.

I did decide to take in wildlife despite knowing that I did not have a licence to do so. I feel that I have the resources and skills necessary to provide proper rehabilitation care to orphaned and injured wild animals. Thousands of volunteer hours have been spent to provide the resources needed for proper rehabilitation care for the animals that were brought to CCWR. In some cases, wildlife orphans were left on the doorstep while I was at work.

I had to decide whether to give them a chance at life or deny them that chance. I feel that we humans already deprive too many wild animals of life and that life should be valued and not easily thrown away.

These orphans are innocent and have no voice. They are orphans because humans have either killed their mother or trapped her and moved her. Someone needs to stand up for wild animals.

I believe that I am in compliance with all the MNR requirements for wildlife rehabilitation other than having a licence, for which I applied in June 2011.

### History of the licence application

- Last winter, I spent over an hour discussing my plans in detail with MNR biologist Scott Smithers.
- In March 2011, Scott Smithers assisted me in applying for an MNR grant. I used the grant application to request funds to build fawn enclosures. The funding was denied.
- As of June 1 2011, I started receiving increasing numbers of calls from people telling me that RVWS was full to capacity. I received so many calls that I contacted Scott Smithers by email and phone during May and June of 2011 many times. I asked if he could give me a list of licensed centres to which I could refer people.
- He did not answer my request, but instead said I should refer all callers to him.
- In June, I asked Mr. Smithers if there was some way I could open with a restricted or temporary licence which would allow CCWR to operate until all remaining conditions could be met.
- I was told that there this couldn't be done. However, the document ***WilPr2.2.2 Issuing a Wildlife Custodian Authorization\_June07*** under the section titled ***Issuing a New Wildlife Custodian Authorization*** states:

#### 4) Ministry may:

**a. issue a 1 year Wildlife Custodian Authorization to allow applicant to act as a wildlife custodian while working with the district to meet all authorization conditions;**

- Construction delays prevented the main CCWR site from being ready during the summer.
  - I set up a separate fawn rehabilitation site and applied for a licence at the end of June 2011.
- An MNR biologist, Marie-Ange Gravel, inspected the site and forwarded the application for processing
  - I was informed that processing usually takes about two weeks.
- During the summer the MNR again told me that this application should only take a "couple of weeks".
- I was informed in September that processing had been delayed by staff turnover and holidays.

- I informed the MNR at this time that construction was nearly completed on the main site and that I would be submitting an additional application to rehabilitation for small mammals and rabies vector species.
- Construction on the main site was completed in September in time for the scheduled grand opening fundraiser which was attended by Deputy Mayor, Eli El-Chantiry and dozens of volunteers and supporters.

I believe the main CCWR site at 2494 Dunrobin Road met all of the MNR requirements for wildlife rehabilitation as of the grand opening event.

**What happens next:**

- I believe that my actions were for the greater good and as such, I accept full responsibility for them.
- It is my dearest hope that what has happened does not prevent CCWR from fulfilling its goals and my worst fear that it might.
- I hope that a judge will understand that I was complying with the *intent* of the law, which was meant to keep private citizens from adopting wild animals as pets and endangering the health of these animals and the public, and make a decision which is in everyone's best interests.
- I hope that the charges will be dismissed and that the MNR will be encouraged to assist CCWR in obtaining a license.
- I have friends who are trying to get a pro-bono lawyer to work with me on my case.

Once more, thank you to all who expressed their support and well wishes in this troubled time.

Lynne Rowe, Founder  
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Ottawa, ON