At long last, turtle hatchlings appear



Wallace holds up a hatchling to show its size. / SUBMITTED



Hatchlings dug their way out over Thanksgiving weekend. The total group numbered 45 by Sunday?s end. / SUBMITTED



Female snapping turtle, Boadicea, climbed out of Tait Lake and made her nest at the foot of Kelly Wallace?s driveway. / SUBMITTED

It was looking like the turtle hatchlings might not show up this year but good news, although later than usual, the hatchlings are emerging from their nests.

After a year that has been so bad for the turtles in Ontario ? the most recent update from the Kawartha Turtle Trauma Centre was that 847 turtles had been admitted to it as of Sept. 30, with 90 per cent having been struck by a motor vehicle ? new baby turtles are a welcome sight and a sign of hope for a better future.

On June 16, my husband and I felt quite honored that a female snapping turtle, affectionately known as Boadicea, climbed out of Tait Lake and made her nest at the foot of our driveway. Unfortunately, the location she chose, as female turtles so often do, was the sandy shoulder of the road. Knowing that every manner of predator, from raccoons to skunks, foxes, weasels, etc., would be attracted to the nest, and the eggs stood little chance of survival, we immediately set to work constructing a nest cage. Thereafter, the nest sat soaking up the sun and rain. Then, the unseasonably cold temperatures and the 60 day incubation period passed. Then, the 90 day incubation period passed. There was still no sign of hatchlings but, all the time, we were excitedly checking and re-checking the nest. Equally as excited were neighbours and passers-by. They kept inquiring if the hatchlings had shown up yet.

Fortunately, as nature has been known to do even when the odds seem stacked against a positive outcome, the happiest of days arrived on Wednesday, Oct. 4 at 1:30 p.m., and 1:32 p.m., and 1:33 p.m., and so on and so on as did 39 robust snapping turtle hatchlings raring to set forth on the big adventure of life. To add to this already memorable experience, on Sunday, Oct. 8, just as my family and I were about to sit down to our Thanksgiving dinner, six more snapping turtle hatchlings decided to make an appearance for a grand total of 45. I consider this a very successful venture of using a nest cage.

With the help of neighbours and friends, all 45 snapping turtle hatchlings have since been set off on what will hopefully be a long and fruitful life.

It was truly a special experience that I, and many others, will always remember about this Thanksgiving and the days leading up to it.

I have spoken with and heard from many people in the community over the last couple of months that they have turtles nesting on their property each year but, in almost all cases, predators have dug up the eggs within the first few days. At some point prior to nesting season of 2018, I will be conducting a seminar about protecting turtle nests from predators and turtle friendly landscaping. This in hopes that more people will be inspired to use nesting cages and look out for the turtles on their property. If you would be interested in attending a seminar please e-mail me at kkwalrus@yahoo.ca so that I can add your name to what I hope will be a growing list. Thank you again and again for your concern and time spent helping turtles.

Submitted by Kelly Wallace