

# Animal advocate to host info session Saturday

By Mark Kerr

EMC Events – Matt Ellerbeck, a well-known animal rights activist and wildlife conservationist in the local area, will host an information and fundraising event this Saturday at the Kingston Sustainability Centre.

The display is entitled “Animals in Peril.” Ellerbeck will have several live exotic animals on display, mostly snakes and amphibians. Ellerbeck stresses that he didn’t capture the animals; rather, he rescued them from neglectful homes.

“I want it to be educational, and hopefully the animals will inspire empathy in people,” he said last week.

Ellerbeck, who describes himself as an animal advocate, said there are many different animal and wildlife issues. He said that during his work as a conservationist, he found that even though issues such as conservation, animal rights, welfare and cruelty were intricately related, no one was connecting them. He decided to focus on doing that.

“Conservationists are usually only concerned about one animal population and only if that population is threatened or endangered,” he said.

Ellerbeck uses the example of shark finning to illustrate his point. Shark

finning is the practice of cutting off a shark’s fins for food purposes. Because a majority of the sharks die after their fins are cut off because their gills quit working or they are devoured by other animals, the sharks become endangered or threatened, which is a conservation issue. However, the inhumane practice also raises issues of animal cruelty, rights and welfare.

Although he has strong beliefs, Ellerbeck said he doesn’t preach during his presentations.

“I am not here to tell people how to live their lives. I want to make them aware of the facts in a digestible manner for people of all walks of life and ages,” he said. “Even if they do a little bit, it makes a difference.”

Ellerbeck expects that most of the people who attend his presentations have at least some interest in helping animals. He hopes to take that interest and encourage them to become more active.

At the end of his presentations, Ellerbeck always directs people to his website that has information on the issues and ways that they can make a difference.

“I am not all doom and gloom,” he said with a laugh. “I want people to walk away inspired and empowered.”

Ellerbeck will be at the



PHOTO/MARK KERR

**Matt Ellerbeck, a well-known local animal rights activist and wildlife conservationist, will host an information and fundraising event this Saturday at**

**the Kingston Sustainability Centre. He will be collecting donations with the money supporting the Sustainability Centre.**

Sustainability Centre from 11 a.m. until 4 p.m. He said he doesn’t anticipate having a formal presentation. Rather, he will meet people in one-on-one situations and in small groups.

Ellerbeck said he will focus on the local area to a certain degree. He said

that people don’t realize the number of different threatened and endangered species of turtles and snakes in the local area.

At the same time, he will stress to people that local actions can have a global impact.

“A decision you make

here could have a ripple effect half way around the world,” he said, noting that buying a snake-skin purse impacts the snake population wherever it lived.

The Kingston Sustainability Centre is located at 193 Princess Street (at the corner of Princess and

Montreal streets). Ellerbeck will be collecting donations at the display and giving the money to the Sustainability Centre.

To learn more about Ellerbeck and his work, you can visit his website [animaladvocacy101.weebly.com](http://animaladvocacy101.weebly.com)