

On the Don Don

This publication can be viewed online at www.trca.on.ca/don_newsletter

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Coming soon to a Don watershed tributary near you...

The Don Watershed Regeneration Council (DWRC) are pleased to announce that thanks to support from Toronto and Region Conservation (TRCA), the Town of Markham and City of Toronto, signs identifying the local rivers and tributaries will soon be raised across the Don River watershed. Marking the tributaries of the Don River along key roadways running through the watershed has been a long-standing target of the DWRC. "This is an important undertaking which will heighten people's recognition of the river within the community and encourage greater public awareness and stewardship of local water resources," says Don Watershed Regeneration Council vice chair Peter Heinz.



You may begin to see signs as early as the New Year and for sure signs will be in 'full bloom' within the City of Toronto portion of the Don River watershed by spring 2009. Spring time may also see signs 'popping up' along the Don through the Town of Markham. Once unveiled in Toronto and Markham, it is the DWRC's hope that this pilot project will roll out watershed-wide in the remaining Don municipalities, and then from there, to our neighbouring watersheds in the Toronto region. In fact, this sign may look familiar to some as they have already been up for over a year now in portions of the Rouge Park located in the Don's neighbour to the east, the Rouge watershed. The DWRC would like to thank the Rouge Park Alliance for allowing the design to be adopted in the Don River watershed; as well as Markham Deputy Mayor Jack Heath and Toronto City Councillor Janet Davis (Ward 31, Beach-East York) for helping see this project realized in their municipalities. Finally, a big thanks to City of Toronto staff from both the Parks and Recreation and Transportation divisions for getting the signs produced and installed.

A new channel is born

Soil erosion is a major environmental problem that affects slope and channel stability. On Thursday, October 23, 2008, TRCA recognized the completion of the significant erosion control project on the Don River at E.T. Seton Park, and the generous financial contribution of TREMCO.

The Wicksteed Avenue Erosion Control Project was initiated in 2003 to remediate ongoing slope erosion and instability that was occurring along the West Don River near Wicksteed Road in Toronto's E.T. Seton Park. In order to prevent further loss of property at the top of the slope and to protect existing buildings and other vital structures from the hazards of erosion and instability, the creek was directed into a new channel. The channel realignment was designed using principals of natural channel design and includes a variety of habitat features for aquatic species. A backwater wetland feature was created out of the old channel alignment. Toronto and Region Conservation chair, Gerri-Lynn O'Connor, and Ward 26 Councillor, John Parker, were on-hand for the celebration, and thanked project partners and contributors including the City of Toronto and TREMCO Canada Division.



Students from Valley Park Middle School and Bayview Middle School help TRCA staff plant the new slope.

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East Don Parkland

By Andrea McDowell

An inconspicuous asphalt path leads you down to the East Don Parkland off Sheppard Avenue near Leslie Street. Just past the third bridge, a bench faces away from the river into the trees. Boulders slope steeply to the banks, where shallow water rushes over stones and gravel. In late summer, dragonflies swoop and dance in pairs, while a few metres downstream hand-sized newborn garter snakes thrash through the grass. I've seen a hawk, a pair of herons, and five deer—three does and two fawns.



"Digging in" at a fall planting event hosted by the East Don Parkland Partners.

There are also erosion blankets under the boulders. A storm outfall pokes directly into the water, and trunks fallen over the river sometimes catch floating masses of foam.

The seven lumber mills and lone brickwork that once lined the Don River between Sheppard and Steeles avenues are long gone. Native trees planted by volunteers blend into the landscape, assisted by other volunteers who water them and remove invasive species. Federal, provincial and municipal governments, conservation authorities, task forces and community groups have collaborated on a stack of reports feet deep, each of which are slowly being implemented; all to create a space so convincingly natural that the park's human and non-human users can take it for granted.

On a Saturday morning last September, approximately 40 volunteers coordinated by the East Don Parkland Partners gathered just north of Cummer Avenue to plant 400 trees over two hours as part of a wetland restoration project, in addition to the 10,000 trees planted since 1999. The landscape afterwards made an odd picture: existing trees and shrubs and a dense matt of old grasses interspersed with fresh choke cherries, elders and dogwoods carefully surrounded by plastic guards and piles of mulch, like a hybrid forest-garden. Look closely and here you'll find a place where the boundary between what's natural and what's artificial can be endlessly debated, and possibly erased.

Don Valley Brick Works ground-breaking ceremony

By Sue Arndt, Evergreen staff and Don Watershed Regeneration Council member

On December 8, 2008, Evergreen took a huge step forward in turning the Evergreen Brick Works project into a reality. Despite falling snow and temperatures that felt like -13°C, over 200 community members came out to mark our official ground-breaking. Evergreen staff joined with, Minister Jim Flaherty, Federal Minister of Finance; Minister Aileen Carroll, Ontario Minister of Culture; Mayor David Miller, City of Toronto; David Pecaut, chair of Toronto City Summit Alliance; Bill Downe, president and chief executive officer of BMO Financial Group and students from Cassandra Public School to celebrate our collaboration and to plant trees signaling the official start of construction.

The "official" opening is set for May 2010, however our Saturday Farmers' Market and a range of family-friendly events and activities will continue running during the spring, summer and fall of 2009.

Evergreen wishes to thank TRCA and the City of Toronto for their continued support of the project. They have played a key role in turning this vision into reality.

To stay up-to-date on the progress happening at this Don Valley site, please visit the online journal at <http://www.evergreen.ca/rethinkspace/>



David Mckee, Brantford Town Crier reads out the official announcement.

Your help is needed...

...To create an accurate and up-to-date overview of past and ongoing stewardship and restoration efforts undertaken within the Don River watershed (examples include: plantings, clean-ups, environmental education/outreach, water quality and/or quantity initiatives, etc.). The information you share will support the Don Watershed Plan Update currently underway. We are interested in projects undertaken since January 2007.

A questionnaire will be available on the TRCA website shortly and active watershed groups will be notified. All non-governmental organizations that complete and submit their project questionnaires will be entered into a prize draw.



16th Annual Paddle the Don
Sunday, May 3, 2009
www.paddlethedon.ca

With the cold and snowy days of winter upon us it is hard to believe that the 16th annual Paddle the Don is only a few short months away.

Interested paddlers should visit our website and sign up to be notified by email of this years registration and event details.

We are once again offering an opportunity for corporations to get involved by entering the Banrock Station Corporate Canoe Challenge. Participation in the Challenge provides a fun and truly unique team building opportunity. Join other corporations to raise awareness and funds to support projects in the Don river watershed.

For information on entering a team in the Banrock Station Corporate Canoe Challenge or other available sponsorship opportunities, please contact us at paddlethedon@trca.on.ca



Terrapex Environmental Limited, 2008 Banrock Station Corporate Canoe Challenge winning team.

Hot Don issues and updates

Cleaning up our waterways – The Don River and Central Waterfront Project wade into the discussion!

The City of Toronto's Don River and Central Waterfront Project will bring together the recommendations of the Wet Weather Flow Master Plan for improving water quality in the Don River and the inner harbour with upgrades to the Don and Waterfront trunk sewer system. Once completed and put into action, this project will help the city to improve water quality and the environment, and will be an important step to delisting Toronto's waterfront as an Area of Concern.

Public participation in this study is critical—find out more and get involved. Wade in!

- Learn more about the sewer system and treatment options being considered and how they will be evaluated. Look for more information about the second Public Information Centre, scheduled for late February 2009.
- Add your name to the stakeholder list. Email cleanwaterways@toronto.ca or call 416-338-5470. Information will be distributed via e-mail wherever possible.
- Visit the City's website at www.toronto.ca/involved

TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE

Bird species found in the Don

1. I am a frequent visitor to the Don watershed all year 'round.
2. I am known to visit backyard birdfeeders, especially in the winter.
3. My song is my name.
4. I am approximately five inches (13 centimetres) in length.

What species am I?

Answer on page 4.

Sustainability in all its forms, from the personal to the corporate to the national to the world at large, is and must be, our collective "better way." But at a time of crisis, can we afford to pay attention to something as esoteric sounding as sustainability? We can't afford not to.



Ray C. Anderson, founder and chairman of Interface Inc. and keynote speaker at the 15th Annual Charles Sauriol Environmental Dinner for The Living City held November 6, 2008.

ANSWER: Black-capped Chickadee

The Black-capped Chickadee (*Poecile atricapillus*) is one of nature's most interesting creatures.

Because they will over-winter in moderate and sub-arctic areas, they are at risk of freezing. They have proportionately large surface areas through which to lose heat and thus must eat continuously during short daylight hours to stoke their metabolic fires. If they do not, they will not reserve enough energy to see them through the long night. A wintering chickadee living at 40 degrees below freezing must spend something like 20 times as much time feeding per day as it would in the warmth of spring.

The Black-capped Chickadee lives and breeds in North America. Its preferred habitat is deciduous or mixed deciduous-coniferous forests, and forested areas adjacent to meadows and thickets.

The Black-capped Chickadee does not build a nest. Instead, it will seek out a small cavity in a dead tree and line it with down, moss, hair or feathers. Both sexes will incubate three to seven eggs for 11 to 13 days. Chicks fledge after 14 to 18 days but will remain with their parent for a short while, then disperse.

Chickadees' diet consists of seeds and insects, especially when feeding their young.

Conservation note: Black-capped Chickadees will forage and roost in stable flocks of up to 12. Flocks include a few young, low-ranked birds that lack pair bonds and often switch flocks. Dense conifers and empty nests used as winter roosts but if nesting box is ready available they will often use it. If feeding birds in the winter make sure you offer the Black-capped Chickadee black-oiled sunflower seed. This particular seed is high in calories, which creates a lot of energy for the chickadee and will help it through the cold winter nights.



Photo provided by:
Greg Sadowski, TRCA

Other events of interest

WALK AT DAVID DUNLAP OBSERVATORY (DDO)

Saturdays, 2–3 p.m., 123 Hillside Drive, Richmond Hill

Join Richmond Hill Naturalists for their interpretive walks at DDO.

RSVP required. Email: joe.agg@hotmail.com or phone 905-884-5012.

SHERWOOD PARK RESTORATION WALK

Tuesday, February 17, 2009, 1–3 p.m.

Join Toronto Field Naturalists (TFN) for a walk to explore this ravine park and learn about its protection. Contact TFN at 416-593-2656 or email: office@torontofieldnaturalists.org for details.

NORTH AMERICAN NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY (NANPS)

WINTER SPEAKER SERIES, Tuesday, February 17, 2009, 7:30 p.m.,

Toronto Botanical Garden, 777 Lawrence Avenue East

Denis Flannigan and Charles Kinsley will speak on gardening trends. For more information, email: nanps@nanps.org or leave a voicemail at 416-631-4438. Cost \$5 members or \$10 non-members.

NORTH AMERICAN NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY (NANPS)

WINTER SPEAKER SERIES, Tuesday, March 17, 2009, 7:30 p.m.,

Toronto Botanical Garden, 777 Lawrence Avenue East

Ken Parker will speak on green gardening. For more information, email: nanps@nanps.org or leave a voicemail at 416-631-4438.

Cost \$5 members or \$10 non-members.

NORTH AMERICAN NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY (NANPS)

WINTER SPEAKER SERIES, Tuesday, April 7, 2009, 7:30 p.m.,

Toronto Botanical Garden, 777 Lawrence Avenue East

Todd Irvine will speak on native trees of southern Ontario. For more information, email: nanps@nanps.org or leave a voicemail at 416-631-4438. Cost \$5 members or \$10 non-members.

EARTH DAY

Wednesday, April 22, 2009. See events at www.earthday.ca

THE GREEN LIVING SHOW, Friday, April 24 to Sunday, April 26, 2009, Direct Energy Centre, Exhibition Place, Toronto

Get information and purchase the latest new green products and services from over 450 participating exhibitors. Visit www.greenlivingonline.com/torontoshow

THE TAYLOR MASSEY PROJECT – see spring events at

www.thetmp.org/calendar.htm

FRIENDS OF THE DON EAST – see spring events at www.fode.ca/calendar

For Information On TRCA Events And Activities, Visit www.trca.on.ca/events



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On the Don is a newsletter about the Don River watershed and the efforts to rehabilitate its waters and lands. This newsletter is published by Toronto and Region Conservation in partnership with the Don Watershed Regeneration Council.

Toronto and Region Conservation

With over 50 years of experience, Toronto and Region Conservation (TRCA) helps people understand, enjoy and look after the natural environment, for a cleaner, greener and healthier place to live, for you today and for your children tomorrow.

Don Watershed Regeneration Council

The Don Watershed Regeneration Council is a volunteer, watershed-wide advisory committee established by Toronto and Region Conservation in 1994 to help restore the Don River watershed to a healthy, sustainable natural environment.

Please send an email to donlist@trca.on.ca with the message 'subscribe' or 'unsubscribe' if you wish to be added or removed from the *On the Don* mailing list.