

TOMMY THOMPSON PARK

Master Plan Implementation Project

Community Newsletter

Winter 2009-10



Aquatic planting in Embayment A, September 2009.

NATURAL AREA ENHANCEMENT PLAN UPDATE

Terrestrial and Aquatic Plantings

Thousands of plants were installed at Tommy Thompson Park (TTP) this year! Over 4500 deciduous trees and shrubs were planted in the spring, and another 1000 in the fall, in various areas around the park. The four peninsula and embayment rehabilitation areas were the focus of the new plantings, as well as areas along the Neck, Cell One, Goldfish Pond and the Toplands. To help encourage plant survival, all plants were mulched and trees were fitted with predator guards to reduce stem damage by the park's rodent and rabbit population. Beach marram grass (*Ammophila breviligulata*) was installed in the sand dune restoration areas; and the wetlands in Embayments A, C and D and Cell One received over 30,000 aquatic plants during the summer. Fencing was put up around the newly planted marram grass and aquatic vegetation to prevent herbivory by the park's rabbit and waterfowl population. All of these plants increase biodiversity and provide essential habitat for resident and migratory wildlife.

Wildflower Meadows

Another focus of restoration work this year at the park was the establishment of native meadow and grassland habitats along the Neck, the old Toplands and around Cell One. In the spring, prior to seeding, soil was added to meadow areas to improve depth, moisture retention and nutrient availability. Native grasses and wildflowers were then seeded and covered with biodegradable straw matting, and the areas were enclosed with fencing to protect the seeds from being eaten by birds. The straw matting increases moisture retention in the soil by reducing the amount of evaporation and creating conditions that promote seed germination and growth. Later in the spring, wildflower plugs were also planted in the seeded areas. Seeded and planted areas were watered regularly and tended for weed growth. Some of the wildflower seed requires several years to bloom, but the plugs bloomed this season and provided a rich nectar source for the many species of butterflies and insects at the park!



Cell One Wildflower Meadow, September 2009.
Species include Black-Eyed Susan and Little Bluestem

Embayment A Habitat Enhancements

The habitat enhancements in Embayment A are finally complete! Characterized as the coldest embayment at TTP due to the influence of currents from Lake Ontario, Embayment A formerly lacked warm water refuge areas and consequently experienced low juvenile fish survivorship and reduced aquatic vegetation establishment. The shoreline enhancements were aimed at increasing primary productivity, expanding coastal wetlands and improving physical and thermal refuges for fish and reptiles. Work included surcharging a section of the embayment with clean sand dredgeate and installing rock shoals, anchored logs and woody stumps to improve the

structural diversity of the shoreline and nearshore area. Small islands, backwater lagoons and isolated wet pockets were created and will be planted with aquatic and riparian vegetation in the coming year. These features provide a variety of habitats for wildlife offering specific benefits to fish, invertebrates, reptiles and waterfowl.



Embayment A shoreline enhancement, October 2009.

INFRASTRUCTURE UPDATE

Entrance, Staff Booth, Research Station & Environmental Shelter!

We are very excited to announce that the Waterfront Toronto Design Review Panel has approved the conceptual designs for new park infrastructure including a new entrance, staff booth, environmental shelter and ecological research station! Maintaining the core concepts of the urban wilderness, the structures are being designed by Montgomery Sisam Architects Inc. to naturally blend into the surrounding landscape. Buildings will feature washrooms, interpretive displays, self-sustaining green energy sources, and bird friendly design. The front entrance and parking lot will be redesigned to accommodate the various park users, creating separate entrances for pedestrians, cyclists and vehicles. A shelter will be erected adjacent to the parking lot where washrooms, information and a shuttle waiting area will be available. The

staff booth will be located near the current Toronto and Region Conservation Authority (TRCA) and Toronto Port Authority (TPA) booths, and will provide informational displays and a small sheltered gathering area for park visitors. Incorporated into the meadow at the east end of Cell One will be the environmental shelter. This building will appear sunken into the landscape and open to the wetland. It will be used primarily as a gathering area for school groups during field trips,

and provide children with washrooms and a storage area for their belongings. A lookout facing the wetland on the roof of the shelter will create opportunities for nature viewing and interpretation. The ecological research station will be located on Peninsula D where the current Bird Research Station is. This building will allow for enhanced programming and viewing of birds by visitors of the station. Many thanks to Tommy Thompson Park Advisory Committee (TTPAC) for their continued support and advice.



Conceptual design of the proposed Environmental Shelter. Courtesy of Montgomery Sisam Architects Inc.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Winter Waterfowl Workshop - Saturday March 6

Tommy Thompson Park is the premier location in Toronto to experience winter waterfowl. Dubbed 'Florida of the North', the park is home to a variety of northern ducks during the winter. These ducks, such as the Long-tailed Duck and the White-winged Scoter, spend their summers breeding in the Arctic and migrate south to Toronto where conditions in the winter are favourable compared to the extreme conditions in the north. Please join TRCA staff Saturday March 6th from 10 a.m. to 12 p.m. to learn about and view these spectacular winter 'snowbirds'. Dress warmly for the outdoors and bring binoculars and a bird field guide if you have them. The TTP shuttle van will be running between the front gate and the viewing station. The event is free, but registration is requested. To register, call the TTP

Hotline at (416) 661-6600, ext. 5770 or email ttp@trca.on.ca. In the event of extreme weather conditions on the day of the event, call the hotline for a notice of cancellation.

Spring Bird Festival - Saturday May 8

Please join us at TTP on Saturday May 8th from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. for the 10th annual Spring Bird Festival! The festival will feature something for everyone, from new to experienced birders! Activities will include guided bird hikes, interpretive displays, bird banding demonstrations and fun activities for children. In coordination with International Migratory Bird Day, we will have many birders participating in the Baillie Birdathon, a fundraiser and data collection event run by Bird Studies Canada. Participants will be scouring the park searching for as many bird species as they can find! Please check out www.springbirdfestival.ca or the TTP website www.trca.on.ca/ttp for more details.

NOTABLE WILDLIFE SIGHTINGS

Another first for TTPBRS!

On April 25, 2009 staff and volunteers at TTPBRS were delightfully surprised to find a Worm-eating Warbler (WEWA) in a mist nest. A WEWA has never before been recorded at TTP and is rather rare for the area, although there have been other sightings in Toronto periodically throughout the last decade. The WEWA is a small olive and yellow coloured bird that prefers a dense forest habitat. It winters in Central America and the Caribbean and breeds during the summer in eastern United States. WEWA are uncommon in Toronto because it is further north than its typical range. Tommy Thompson Park Bird Research Station is one of 25 Canadian Migration Monitoring Network stations, contributing data on migratory birds, like the WEWA, to help inform bird conservation priorities. For more information please visit www.ttpbrs.ca



Worm-eating Warbler, courtesy of Juan Zuloaga, TTPBRS Volunteer.

INTERESTING TIDBITS

Spring Bird Festival 2009

The 9th annual Spring Bird Festival held on Saturday, May 23, 2009 was our largest festival ever! An estimated 2000 people enjoyed the festival and over 250 people participated in organized walks led by expert birders, including TTPBRS, TFN and TOC volunteers! Participants had the opportunity to learn about wetland species at the Spit Cart at Cell One, bird friendly gardens at the Project Chirp! and Healthy Yards displays, the six species of colonial waterbirds and the Double-crested Cormorant Management Plan at the colonial waterbird display at the Pedestrian Bridge, and the important monitoring and research taking place at TTPBRS. Tommy Thompson Park Bird Research Station also offered live bird banding demonstrations and guided bird hikes along the Peninsula D trail. Dr. Bridget Stutchbury, a York University researcher and author of *Silence of the Songbirds*, was our guest birdathoner for the Baillie Birdathon. She searched the park top to bottom looking for as many bird species as she could find; a grand total of 74 for the day! Festival attendees were treated to speeches by special guests Bridget Stutchbury, Steve Hounsel (Ontario Power Generation), and Caroline Schultz (Ontario Nature). Toronto and Region Conservation Authority (TRCA) was pleased to have partnered with Ontario Nature and a free raffle draw for activities at the festival including bird box building for children and an invasive species removal program. Other notable guests at the festival included the City of Toronto's Environmental Programs, Birds and Beans Coffee, and the University of Guelph's WEEP (Wildlife and Environmental Education Program) who brought their live educational birds. Special thanks to all festival participants and especially the volunteers! We are looking forward to seeing everyone again next year at the 10th annual Spring Bird Festival.

Butterfly Migration Festival 2009

In partnership with Ontario Nature, TRCA hosted the first Butterfly Festival on Sunday, September 13 2009. Over 400 people took part in guided hikes, button making, wildflower planting, crafts and face painting. Special thanks to all participants and volunteers especially Ontario Walks, TFN, TEA, Claremont Native Plants and Project CHIRP! for making it a great day for all!

For further information regarding Tommy Thompson Park, please visit www.trca.on.ca/ttp

If you have specific questions regarding the project or if you would like to be placed on the project mailing list, please contact:

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