

Connections

www.rougepark.com

Fall 2009/Winter 2010

The Teenage Years
Page 2

Celebrating Rouge Park Award Winners
Page 3

Slime, Scales, Feathers and Wings
Page 4

Continuing to Build a Mosaic
Page 6

Happy Trails!
Page 7



The Teenage Years: Growth spurts and Guidance

Upon the creation of the Park in 1995, the federal and provincial governments each provided \$10 million for the establishment of Rouge Park, to help protect the Rouge River Valley System. Along with this funding, the Rouge Park Alliance was formed as a voluntary partnership that would oversee the implementation of the Rouge Park Management Plan.

Since its inception, the Park has grown considerably, and continues to evolve. While the goal and vision of the Park remain true today, the Rouge Park Alliance has begun to consider its structure, funding and partnerships so that we can continue strongly into the future. Like most teenagers we have

been giving thought to what we want to be, and how we'll accomplish that.

Ideas are coming from several places. The Town of Markham has written a well thought out document that addresses many of the issues facing an expanding, super-municipal park. A dedicated committee has formed striving to see Rouge Park achieve national park status. The Alliance members themselves wish to see the Park meet its full potential.

As such, the Alliance will work directly with a steering committee and consultant to develop research, models, and approaches to help us achieve our vision. We plan to take these

recommendations and develop an implementation strategy that will guide us in managing a diverse and exciting Rouge Park.

So as most teenagers, we eagerly look ahead to an exciting future, bright with possibilities and filled with interesting prospects.

*Alan Wells,
Chair, Rouge Park Alliance*

Since 1995, the park has expanded from the area encompassing the Rouge River in Toronto, to include tracts of land in York and Durham Regions, and protects areas of the Petticoat and Duffins Creeks watersheds.

Take a Hike!

With the cooler weather settling in, many of us begin our research. Maybe this year will be the year we figure out how to hibernate, or at the very least, avoid the chill by any means possible.

This year at Rouge Park, we are taking another approach - we

will be diving in feet first, and hope you will join us. We are offering guided outings, perfect opportunities to get your blood moving and temperature rising.

Who knows, you might even enjoy exploring our trails and inhaling that crisp winter air! It's

the perfect excuse for a big mug of hot chocolate afterwards, and perhaps a long winter nap.

Keep an eye on our website for the hike schedule. Bring mittens! www.rougepark.com/media/hikes.php

Michelle Holmes, Visitor Experience

Celebrating 20 Years!

Congratulations 10 000 Trees for the Rouge, we are honoured to be a part of your success.



On April 26, 2009 10,000 Trees for the Rouge celebrated 2 decades of planting trees in the Rouge Valley. We commend them on their enthusiasm, commitment and dedication to restoring and enhancing Rouge Park.

Rouge Valley Foundation Presented With Rouge Park Award

The Rouge Park Alliance has honoured the Rouge Valley Foundation by presenting the important conservation group with the 2009 Rouge Park Award.

“Members of the Rouge Valley Foundation played an essential role in the creation of Rouge Park, and the group continually shows their commitment to their park through fund raising, volunteer efforts and a strong dedication to the preservation of Rouge Park,” said Alan Wells, Rouge Park Alliance Chair.

RVF has been active for 25 years supporting and fostering many conservation initiatives including 10 000 Trees for the Rouge, Citizen Scientists, and the Pearse House education centre.

The Rouge Park Alliance recognizes members of the



The Rouge Valley Foundation is a valuable team of park champions. In this photo, a few of the pillars of the organization, along with Alan Wells, Chair of Rouge park Alliance. From left to right: Alan Wells, Murray Johnston, Bill Lewis, Lionel Purcell, Lois James, Colin Creasy, and artist Paul Harpley.

community who have made outstanding contributions to the Rouge Park goal, vision and objectives through the Rouge Park Awards.

Michelle Holmes, Visitor Experience

Picture Perfect

We were pleased to present an original painting by renowned local artist, and close friend of Rouge Park, Paul Harpley. Rouge Park is part of the migratory route of the Blackburnian Warblers depicted.

The More We Get Together...

We often describe Rouge Park as a “partnership park” for without partners, and the work of many volunteers, we would not be celebrating as many accomplishments as we do. It is with this attitude that we undertook two restoration projects this spring – for as the children’s song goes, the more we get together, the happier we’ll be. And of course, the stronger the Park will be.

We recognize that our partners and teams of volunteers have much to contribute to the restoration and enhancement of the Park, and we welcomed the opportunity to team a few of these park stewards together.

And what a team it was - the Toronto Region Conservation Authority, York Region, Rouge Valley Naturalists, Trees Ontario, numerous students, and Rouge Park staff. Each participant was not just willing, they were enthusiastic about both the collaboration and the projects ahead of them. This excitement was one of the most important elements of the joint venture.

With two sites in mind, one along 16th Avenue and the other on Reesor Road in Markham, our restoration champions were engaged and ready to get their boots dirty. Together the sites were planned, designed, and restored, everyone pitching in at every step along the way.

We look forward to continuing this style of partnership restoration in the Park. The enthusiasm is contagious!

Vicki MacDonald, Biologist



Slime, Scales, Feathers and Wings - These are a few of our favourite things!

With nearly 5000 hectares (12 000 acres) of land to manage, and many ongoing habitat creation and enhancement projects, it is important to be aware of wildlife populations and how they are responding to our efforts to improve the Park.

This year, Rouge Park has begun several projects to study natural systems and their flora and fauna. This involves counting amphibians, monitoring birds, and researching pollinators found in the area.

One key element of successfully monitoring these natural communities are the volunteers who participate in these monitoring projects. They offer an invaluable service to the Park, while learning equally important skills, such as recognizing a bullfrog's serenade and building a bluebird's home.

Frogs and salamanders are finely tuned to seasonal climate patterns, making them both susceptible to, and good

indicators of climate change. Frogs and salamanders also have highly permeable skin which readily absorbs pollutants in their environment. For all of these reasons, amphibian monitoring is a useful tool to help us evaluate the success of habitat restoration and enhancement projects.

As warm spring days arrive earlier, frogs will emerge earlier as well and begin calling for a mate. By recording the dates of these calls, and what types of frogs are present, we can observe this change over time. Volunteers participating in our Frog Watch program venture out to wetlands on spring evenings to listen to the chorus of frogs.

Other volunteers assist us by setting up and monitoring 'salamander subdivisions,' a series of wooden disks

set in a grid pattern in ideal salamander habitat. Under these wooden disks, the ground is dark and damp, most inviting to salamanders. While these subdivisions often take a year to encourage salamanders to move in, we have already discovered them living in their new homes within months.

Our breeding bird surveys and winter bird count help us monitor our feathered friends in Rouge Park. Our committed volunteers have been surveying various areas of Rouge Park in the winter, spring and summer, investigating which species of birds are nesting in the park, which areas are most important to them, and what threats they may be facing.

Pollinating insects are an incredibly diverse group, with thousands of species living in the Rouge Valley. Installing 'bug houses' in Rouge Park allows researchers to study the composition of insect populations, their food sources, parasites, and other aspects of their life cycles. We have installed two so far, one near the Rouge Valley Mennonite Church on Reesor Road, and a second at Whittamore's Farm on Steeles Avenue, drop in for a peek!

We continue to gather information on wildlife populations in the Park, aiming to use this information in planning our restoration projects. The efforts of our many volunteers are what make these monitoring programs possible.

*Maria Papoulias, Natural Heritage
Sheryl Santos, Stewardship*



Pollinator Diversity is Abuzz at Rouge Park

When we consider bees, our minds easily stray to the sweetness of honey, or the clumsy flight of the bumble bee. But did you know that there are more than 20 000 species of bees worldwide, with an estimated 900 species living here in Canada? Many of these bees neither make honey, nor bumble about, but they all play an essential role in our ecosystem.

Bees are part of a group of insects called pollinators; insects that help ensure the development of seeds and fruit in food crops, as well as the efficient pollination of many wild plants and trees. The diverse natural areas protected within Rouge Park provide valuable habitat for many of these bees and other pollinating insects.

Many misconceptions surround bees and wasps and some of these include the idea that all bees and wasps live in hives, and will sting you given the chance. In reality, most types of bees and wasps live a solitary life with a single female doing all the work to support her 10 or so offspring. These include the leafcutter bees, mason bees, yellow-faced bees, sweat bees, cellophane bees, wool carder bees, and long-horn bees. In fact, the bumble bee is the only bee native to Canada that makes honey and lives in a hive!

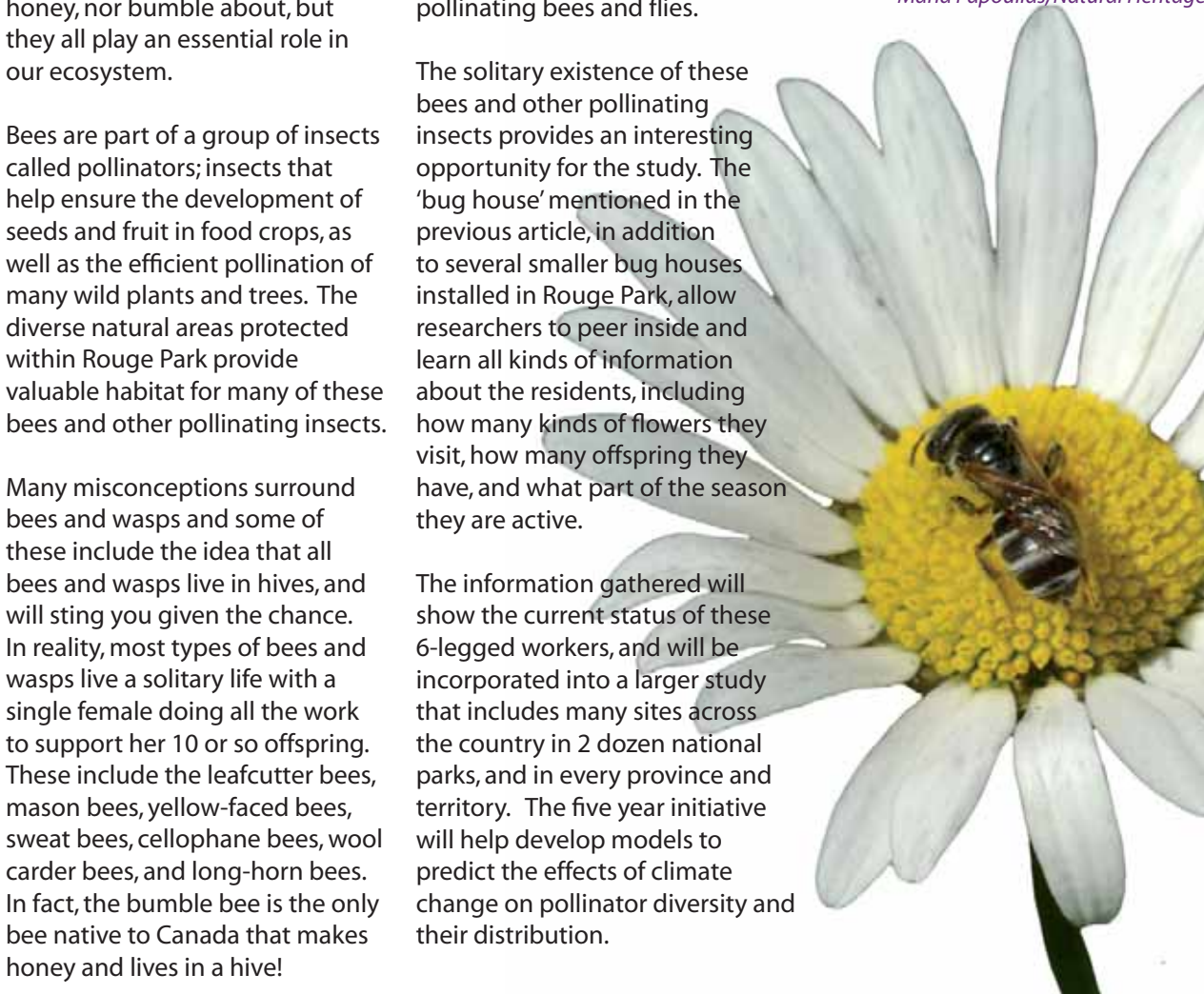
Beginning this spring, Rouge Park, in cooperation with Dr. Laurence Packer's Lab at York University and the Canadian Pollinator Initiative (CANPOLIN), directed by University of Guelph professor Dr. Peter Kevan, initiated research within the Park aimed at assessing the abundance and diversity of pollinating bees and flies.

The solitary existence of these bees and other pollinating insects provides an interesting opportunity for the study. The 'bug house' mentioned in the previous article, in addition to several smaller bug houses installed in Rouge Park, allow researchers to peer inside and learn all kinds of information about the residents, including how many kinds of flowers they visit, how many offspring they have, and what part of the season they are active.

The information gathered will show the current status of these 6-legged workers, and will be incorporated into a larger study that includes many sites across the country in 2 dozen national parks, and in every province and territory. The five year initiative will help develop models to predict the effects of climate change on pollinator diversity and their distribution.

So, next time you hear the buzz of bees as you explore Rouge Park, consider how the bee is not only an integral part of the ecosystem, but also a participant in an important national climate change study. Now that's sweet.

*Lincoln R. Best, York University
Maria Papoulias, Natural Heritage*



What happens inside the Bug House?

The Bug House contains about 750 cavities of various sizes, which are intended to house different species of cavity-nesting insects. Female insects move into the cavities and make their nests there, often by lining the cavities with bits of leaves or petals, mud, pebbles or waxy substances. They lay their eggs in the nest cavities and provision them with pollen and nectar to feed the young insects after they hatch. The young will normally remain inside the cavities until the following spring, when they finally emerge as adults.

Happy Trails! Along the Way to a Successful Master Plan

Rouge Park encompasses a unique mosaic of river valley, creeks, forests, meadow and rural landscapes, within the Rouge River, Petticoat Creek and Duffins Creek watersheds in the Greenbelt, and represents Canada's largest natural environment park in an urban setting. Park visitors can explore rustic hiking trails, participate in exciting wildlife monitoring programs, and learn about their natural surroundings.

We are now in a position where striking the balance between habitat restoration and visitor experience is more crucial than ever in order to ensure that Rouge Park is able to meet its full potential as Canada's largest urban wilderness park.

We have exciting plans for our Park trails, both future and existing, and we are thrilled to have the support of our partners

as we venture forth in developing a Rouge Park Trails Master Plan. We look forward to expanding our trail system to one that is able to connect with the Greater Greenbelt, joining with the Oak Ridges Trail in the North, the Seaton Trails to the east, and form a stronger link to the Waterfront Trail and Trans Canada Trail. We will celebrate the day when hikers can trek from Lake Ontario all the way up to the Oak Ridges Moraine and beyond!

With a diverse trail system, supported by a volunteer-led trail association, visitors will experience a rewarding, refreshing and exciting outdoor adventure, take part in interesting interpretive opportunities and learn about responsible trail use.

Put on your hiking boots and take the opportunity to hike along trails that were once ancient logging routes, see active farms,

and become actively involved in the restoration and enhancement of this valuable green space in the Protected Countryside.

With the addition of Trail Coordinator and hiker extraordinaire, Diana Smyth, to Rouge Park's staff, we have begun to offer a variety of guided outings in the Park. As this program grows, we will be enlisting and training volunteer trail leaders, and exploring beyond Park boundaries.

If you are interested in learning more about becoming a volunteer hike leader, or would like to join us on a hike, please check www.rougepark.com, or drop us a line at hike@rougepark.com. You can also share your experience along our trails by filling out the survey on our website. See you on the trails!

Michelle Holmes, Visitor Experience

Blazing the Trails of the Past

Rouge Park is proud to be home of two National Historic Resources, one of which is the eastern branch of the Toronto Carrying Place trail. This was an original portage route along the Rouge River to the Holland River, linking Lake Ontario in the south to Lake Simcoe to the north.

This route was created by First Nations peoples, and later used by early European fur traders, explorers and settlers.

As part of the Southeast Collector Enhancement Project, York Region commissioned a study to provide a historical overview of this eastern branch of the trail.

"While it is tempting to imagine that there was one trail that people used for millennia, it is clear that depending on their objectives and experiences along the route, people chose slightly different routes," observed Ronald Williamson, Chief Archaeologist and Managing Partner from Archaeological Services Inc., the consultants who conducted the study.

"One of our biggest surprises was that despite careful scrutiny of the archival record including all of the relevant land surveyor records, we were unable to find a reliable period detailed map of the entire original route from Lake Ontario

to the Holland River" noted Williamson.

While the route may not be distinct, the consultants have compiled information that projects the approximate routes of the Carrying Place Trail through the north eastern section of Rouge Park. With our Trail Master Plan, and Rouge East Lands planning underway, we will use this study to assist us in interpreting this important part of our local and national history.

*Ron Williamson, Chief Archaeologist ASI
Michelle Holmes, Visitor Experience*

Discover Rouge Park's Winter Wonderland

Rouge Park's vibrant fall colours have faded and while we've enjoyed an unseasonably warm and dry fall, we know winter is on the way. And that means seeing the Park in its winter white! Winter in the Park will awaken your senses to its sights and sounds.

The Little Rouge Creek gurgles under glossy ice cover, breaking through here and there as the sun warms the valley. Evergreen boughs on the Cedar Trail are laden with snow, and bare branches glitter on the Vista Trail with the crystalline sparkle of hoar frost.

Spotting our wintering and year-round wildlife species is also easier without the summer leaf canopy, and tracks are more easily seen in the snow. This is the time to say hi to our winged seasonal visitors before they head home in the spring! Don't forget your binoculars!

While safety is paramount throughout the year, extra caution is needed throughout the winter months. If it is icy out, settle in for a warm cup of tea instead, and venture out another day.

Follow these tips for a cozy winter walk and join us on the trail for a guided outing, and some snowy exploration. Find out more: www.rougepark.com/media/hikes.php

Diana Smyth, Trail Coordinator

Dressing for the Weather:

The key is to be dry and comfortable. Layering helps you manage your body heat as your outing progresses, so you can have just the right combination at any time. Put this 3-layer system together for a warm and dry outing:

A **base layer** is next to your skin, wicking away perspiration. The **mid layer** is usually a polyester fleece or 'thermal' that helps retain your body heat but still wick away sweat. If it's very cold, try 2 mid layers. An **outer layer** keeps snow from getting into your other layers. Look for a wind/waterproof jacket and pants, plus, look for features like armpit zips, leg zips and adjustable hoods for more versatility. Avoid 'rain gear' as it's not designed for breathability.

Above all, avoid cotton, even jeans. Cotton absorbs moisture (sweat, snow, rain); chilling your skin and making you work harder to keep warm. Keep the cotton for after your outing.

For your feet, a blend of Merino wool with synthetic fibres is a popular choice for socks. Stay even more trail-ready with boot-traction devices and snowshoes.

Use these tips to get ready for winter walking and hiking and you'll hit the trail for a great outing as soon as the snow flies!



About Us

Rouge Park is Canada's premier urban wilderness park. The 47 km² of protected lands in the Ontario Greenbelt preserve wilderness habitats in and near Toronto, Canada, from the Oak Ridges Moraine to Lake Ontario. Visit us to enjoy hiking, camping, a beach and spectacular views. Many areas are accessible by public transit. Alan Wells is Chair of the Rouge Park Alliance, the Park's board of directors. Rouge Park's General Manager is Lewis Yeager.

Our Vision

Rouge Park will be a special place of outstanding natural features and diverse cultural heritage in an urban-rural setting, protected and flourishing as an ecosystem in perpetuity. Human activities will exist in harmony with the natural values of the Park. The Park will be a sanctuary for nature and the human spirit.

Our Goal

To protect, restore and enhance the natural, scenic and cultural values of the Park in an ecosystem context, and to promote public responsibility, understanding, appreciation and enjoyment of this heritage.

Connections

We welcome your news, stories and photos. E-mail us at share@rougepark.com or send to Rouge Park
Connections newsletter
50 Bloomington Rd. West
Aurora, Ontario, Canada L4G 0L8

© Rouge Park 2008. No content may be reprinted without permission from the publisher, Rouge Park.
Design: Michelle Holmes, Rouge Park.