

Things to Do:

A Guide to Spring and Summer Activities in the Rouge Park



Get involved! Rouge groups are always very busy in the spring months, with all kinds of environmental awareness and ecological restoration events going on. Don't forget **Earth Week (April 22-30)** which winds up with the **10,000 Trees for the Rouge Valley's annual planting day on the 30th**; and **Environment Week (June 4-10)**. We can connect you to the action groups doing projects as well as event dates. Please call Sue Russell at (905) 713-6007 or email srussell@rougepark.com for more info.



For up-to-the-minute Rouge event listings, see our web site: www.rougepark.com, or give Sue a call at the above number.



You can also call the Save the Rouge Valley System folks (416) 282-9983 for times and dates of their **once-a-month Rouge Valley hikes**.



The Town of Markham Recreation Department is offering new outdoor adventure programs at Camp Chimo in the Milne Dam Conservation Area. Programs include canoeing, archery, backpacking, family camping and the "high ropes challenge." Contact Shawn Hermans, coordinator, at (905) 474-1007 or email shermans@city.markham.on.ca for more adventure information.

This Newsletter
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Connections

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The Second Annual Rouge Park Awards Night

A Well-deserved Evening of Appreciation for Lois James



Feliks Kivikink, award woodcarver, and Lois pose for the camera

At least 150 well-wishers gathered at the Zoo Atrium last November 18th to see Lois James accept the **Rouge Park Award** for 1999. Family members and friends looked on as Lois received the award from Ron Christie, accompanied by Pauline Browes (last year's recipient). West Rouge woodcarver Feliks Kivikink had created another fine carving work; the free-standing red fox carved from cherry wood was greatly admired by all present. A letter of congratulations from Toronto Councillor and Chair of TRCA Dick O'Brien and a scroll from Toronto Mayor Mel Lastman were also presented to Lois.

During the planning of this event, we spoke to a number of people who have known or worked with Lois over the last twenty years and the same themes kept echoing - "got the ball rolling", "Lois was always there, with her great table", "she never went away", "a mentor in the fight to preserve the Rouge Valley", "persevered" and so on. With the support of her husband Bob, family and friends, Lois has led the charge to protect the Rouge since the early 1970s. She was co-founder of the Save the Rouge Valley group in 1975 and founding secretary for the Rouge Valley Foundation, also formed around that time.

Just before the Award Night, Lois phoned us up to ask if she could have a table for some information and petitions she wanted to bring. "Of course" was the reply, to which she added, "It's just who I am." We would have been disappointed if Lois had arrived with nothing to add to the occasion. That night, Lois's "Twelve Wishes for the Rouge" gave everyone present something to think about (or act on, as Lois would). Here at the Rouge Park, we will certainly act on as many of the Twelve Wishes as we can, *with your help*, as the new millenium begins.



Turn to the next page to find out about the *new* Awards presented that night...



What have we been doing to help protect, restore and enhance the Rouge Park? A Report from Gord Weeden, General Manager:

Rouge Park staff have been working with Park partners on a number of management activities throughout the Rouge watershed. Here's what we've been working on since our last report:

TRCA Implements Transfer of Lands to the Rouge Park

Last April, the Province of Ontario announced its intention to transfer 648 hectares of provincial land to the Rouge Park. This generous donation presented the Rouge Park Alliance with a new challenge - how to oversee the transfer of these lands and administer the accompanying leases. One of our lead partners, The Toronto and Region Conservation Authority, came forward and offered their expertise, via the Property Management Division. Accordingly, led by TRCA Land Management staff Don Prince and Ron Dewell, the transfer of lands south of Steeles Avenue is nearly complete. Land surveying and property visits are continuing in the Rouge North, with the goal of completing all transactions by year end 2000. The Rouge Park Alliance greatly appreciates the assistance by the TRCA with this significant milestone in the history of the Park.

A New Rouge Park Alliance Partner

In December of 1999, Ron Christie announced that the Government of Canada has joined the Rouge Park Alliance to be represented by MP Derek Lee (Scarborough -Rouge River) and MP John McKay (Scarborough East). Mr. Robert Loptson, EA to Mr. McKay, will serve as alternate. The federal government provided start-up funds for the Rouge Park and will now continue their commitment, assisting with the implementation of all Park plans.

Rouge Park Committee Restructuring

Our many committees have been amalgamated into four new ones, with an Alliance member appointed as Chair for each. They are: Heritage Committee, Brian Denney (Director, Watershed Management, TRCA) Chair; Communications and Interpretation Committee, Councillor Randy Barber (Markham) Chair; Finance Committee, Regional Councillor David Barrow (York) Chair; and Management Review Committee, MNR Aurora District Manager Rob Messervey, Chair.

Rouge Park Natural and Cultural Heritage Projects Map - Be sure to check out the centre fold map, which shows all of the projects that have received funding from the Rouge Park since 1996!

New Awards Presented at the Rouge Park Awards Night, November 1999

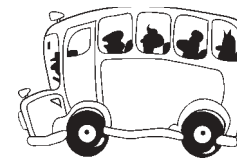


Rouge Park Alliance Chair Ron Christie presents Mark Heaton, (and family!) with a Heritage Award.

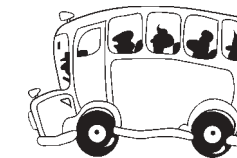
In addition to Lois James' Rouge Park Award, four **Heritage Awards** were presented last November to: Mark Heaton, Biologist, Ministry of Natural Resources; Jim Robb, Projects Director, Friends of the Rouge Watershed; Glenn De Baeremaeker, President, Save the Rouge Valley System; and Colin Creasey, Chair, 10,000 Trees for the Rouge.

Murray Johnston, President, Rouge Valley Foundation, received the **Education Award** for excellence in environmental education by the Foundation.

We would like to thank the Toronto Zoo for their excellent venue, the Atrium, and the very helpful assistance by staff with organizing the event. Also, for the support of Rouge Park Alliance members and to those who attended, Rob Messervey (District Manager, MNR Aurora District), City of Toronto Councillors Raymond Cho and Bas Balkissoon, and MPP Gerry Phillips.



Jersey Cows, Blueberry Pies, and Pioneer Stories: The Rouge Park Heritage Bus Tour, October 1999



By Sue Russell



A local resident looks on as we depart.

A surprise onlooker, lively anecdotes and beautiful brown-eyed cows helped make the fall 1999 heritage bus tour the most enjoyable one yet, from beginning to end. Just as we were leaving the Markham Museum parking lot, out trotted a Museum resident to see us off - a completely nonchalant red fox. She sat down not thirty feet from the bus and calmly observed the goings-on. Our bus tour was off to a great start - you don't have to go far to see wildlife in the Rouge!

Our first stop was Barry Little's Jersey cow farm on Steeles Avenue. On land squeezed between the railroad, the hydro corridor and Steeles, Barry takes care of his prize Jersey herd on the family farm, first settled in the 1860's. With bloodlines dating back to 1890, the herd is recognized as one of the best in Canada. It proved difficult to persuade everyone that we had to move on - the cows and calves with their big brown eyes were irresistible. We thanked Barry for the tour and reluctantly departed.

As we drove east on Steeles Avenue past a number of Mennonite farm complexes, Lorne Smith, our entertaining guide, related story after story about the families who migrated from Pennsylvania and settled here from the late 1700s on. It was very much a history of the Reesor family, one of the most prominent names in this part of the Rouge. Past the restored Mennonite meeting house, and on to Cedar Grove, our next stop was the Rouge Valley Mennonite Church. Here, we were met by Paul Burkholder, who, like Lorne, is a descendant of the early Mennonite settlers. Paul talked about the history of Cedar

Grove and the church, and gave us a personal view of how hard life was in the early days. But, supported by strong beliefs and a sharing way of life, the Mennonite farms and agricultural businesses expanded and thrived. In recent times, a changing world has placed severe pressure on the financial viability of this agricultural community.

Our last stop gave us renewed hope for agriculture in the Rouge watershed. Jay Reesor's roadside produce stand, on Elgin Mills Road at the 9th Concession, is designed to cater to the city dweller seeking an enjoyable day in the country and it's a busy spot. Lots of fresh vegetables and very tempting home baking (I don't think there was any left after our visit) are featured. Of course, there were pumpkins galore and an ingenious corn maze that brave souls could try and find their way through. The "dollar-a-try" fee for the maze is a fund raiser for the Canadian Foodgrains Bank project that sends food to war torn and disaster areas around the world.

Back at the Museum, Carol DeGeer and Carol Smith served up hot drinks and baked treats from the "fritter shack" - a great way to end the day.

I feel fortunate to have met so many knowledgeable and helpful people while planning this year's tour. Special thank you's to: The Town of Markham Transit Office and Councillor Randy Barber, the Markham Museum, Lorne and Carol Smith, Carol DeGeer, Paul Burkholder, the Rouge Valley Mennonite Church folks, Barry Little and Jay Reesor.

Producers of Native Trees, Shrubs, Grasses and Flowers
(Plants and Seeds) Southern Ontario Ecotype



PTEROPHYLLA

We'd like to thank Mary and Peter of Pterophylla for the kind donation of a plentiful supply of native wildflower seeds, which will be given to landowners who participate in the Rouge Park Stewardship Program.

Mary E. Gartshore, Peter J. Carson
R.R.# 1, Walsingham, Ontario N0E 1X0
Phone: 1-519-586-3985 Fax: 1-519-586-2926 e-mail: gartcar@kwic.com

Rouge Ramblers: Peter Money, Wildflower Photographer

by Sue Russell



Peter and Frances Money

I first met Peter Money in 1997 in an unlikely setting - the glass and steel tower of the Consilium building, in the former City of Scarborough's offices - invited by Victoria Jeffery of the Parks Department to view Peter's wildflower slides of the Rouge. Having no idea what to expect, the quality of the slides I saw that day was impressive indeed. No stranger to wildflower photography myself, I certainly could appreciate the time, effort, persistence and sheer talent that were demonstrated in Peter's work, slide after slide. The best part was still to come - Peter offered to donate copies of his slides to the Rouge Park and continue his project of photographing, as comprehensively as he could, all of the vascular plants in the Rouge - a formidable task!



Wildflower photographs by Peter Money



The following paragraphs provide an autobiographical "snapshot" of Peter's photographic history in his own words:

"On a visit to relatives living on Vancouver Island in 1995, I experimented with close-up photography, using a telephoto lens with a macro setting. The subjects included various flowers and I was pleased with the results. In Toronto that summer, I photographed whatever natural subjects would stay still long enough for me to take their picture - which, not surprisingly, were mainly flowers."

In the fall of 1995, I bought the Toronto Field Naturalists' listing of Metro Toronto's vascular plants, and decided to see how many I could photograph. In 1996, my wife Frances and I concentrated on ravines and parks close to our north (old city) Toronto home. Frances is a superb spotter of some of the more difficult species to find. She enjoys relaxing and reading while I wait for them to stop blowing in the breeze long enough to take pictures.

Because the TFN list has so many species found only in the Rouge, we decided in late 1996 to tackle this area. Since 1997, I have photographed in the Rouge and provided copies of my slides (mainly wildflowers) to Rouge Park management.

At present, my slide collection includes over 400 species photographed throughout Toronto, including many locally rare or uncommon species photographed in the Rouge Park. We still have to track down a number of species reported to occur in the Rouge - the effort will continue."

Peter would like to encourage others to help report and document uncommon species in the Rouge, and photograph them if possible. In this way, he hopes to discourage "plant thieves", as they are unlikely to report sightings. Peter is also prepared to give slide shows to interested groups, so be sure to contact the Rouge Park office at (905) 713-6007 if your group would like to participate.

ROUGE ROUNDUP



What's New with Stewardship in the Rouge?



As of last July, Samantha Mason became the Rouge Park Stewardship Program Manager. Samantha has a strong fisheries management background and can provide expert advice to interested Rouge landowners.

Samantha is currently working on an exciting landowner incentive project called the **River Keeper Recognition Program**. This program acknowledges the contributions of local residents, companies and institutions who own or manage land in the Rouge watershed and have made the extra effort on their properties to help restore healthy aquatic ecosystems. To recognize these efforts, participants receive a 5" X 17" white aluminum sign that features the term "River Keeper". The sign can be affixed to a mail box or fence post. A framed certificate with the landowner's name and project description is also presented to the landowner.

A number of presentations to various community groups in the Rouge watershed have taken place or are planned to establish partnerships. Through these meetings, several new remedial projects on privately owned lands are planned for next year. Samantha is also administering the Rural Clean Water Program (RCWP), for the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority. In this program, up to \$10,000 is available for farm property water protection projects. This is just the beginning! If you or someone you know is interested in learning more about or participating in private land stewardship and the RCWP, please contact Samantha at smason@rougepark.com or at (905) 713-7729.

NEWS! NEWS! NEWS! A Rare Sighting in the Rouge Marshes



A Blanding's Turtle was discovered in a hoop net during an inventory study of the wildlife in the Rouge Marshes last summer (see photo). This species is distinguished by its bright yellow throat and hinged lower shell. The upper shell is covered with profuse light spots, which often run together. These turtles feed on worms, insects and various plants and average 20 cm. in length. Because this endangered species is a rare inhabitant of the Toronto area, the Rouge discovery is very good news!

Photo by Ken Dion, Ontario Streams

CONTACT US

Want to see your poem, story or artwork in print? We welcome all submissions to *Connections*. Please contact Sue Russell at (905) 713-6007; email srussell@rougepark.com; or send your work to: Rouge Park, 50 Bloomington Road West, Aurora, ON L4G 3G8. Also, for up-to-the-minute Rouge event listings, see our web site: www.rougepark.com, or give Sue a call at the above number.

