

In this issue...

FREE admission offer for the
Sugarbush Maple Syrup

New projects for the

What you can do and see

Late breaking news...

Securing Village Securities

In February 2002, the City of Toronto Council voted to explore the purchase of the 10 hectare "Village Securities" site on Staines Road, as recommended by the Rouge Park Alliance and the TRCA. Alliance members Councillor Raymond Cho and Glenn De Baeremaeker have been tireless advocates to protect the important archaeological artifacts and ecological values on this property. Call 905-713-7374 to find out

Update: Rouge North Management

The Rouge Park and the Town of Markham hosted a workshop with municipal planners, the *Urban Development Institute* and other stakeholders on February 28, 2002 to discuss the ecological criteria for determining Rouge Park boundaries in the North Rouge. Public consultations

On the



Do you know where you can find 55% of the remaining coastal wetlands in the Greater Toronto Area? Right here in your park, the Rouge Park! The Rouge Marsh is a 68-hectare wetland complex located at the southern end of the park, where the Rouge River flows into Lake Ontario. Accessible from the Lawrence Avenue, east of Port Union Road, the Rouge Marsh is one of the Rouge Park's most beautiful and most ecologically significant areas.

The largest and most diverse coastal wetland in the GTA, the Rouge Marsh is an area of exceptional biodiversity, classified as Provincially Significant by the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources (OMNR). The marsh provides a nursery and breeding site for more than 27 species of fish, in addition to several bird species, such as the Least Bittern, considered Provincially Vulnerable.

The location of the Rouge Marsh in an urban area surrounded by residential, commercial (and formerly industrial) land uses led to a degraded ecosystem. Since 1996, much restoration work has been done including:

- building a hibernaculum, which provides hibernation areas for snakes
- constructing fishing piers for recreational purposes
- installing 100 bird nesting structures and 10 turtle and frog basking logs
- over 200 m² of native wetland plants have been planted and are flourishing
- installing an Osprey nesting platform and several Black Tern nesting platforms
- removing over 15,000 Purple Loosestrife plants (an invasive species) and over 30 bags of garbage
- creating the Rouge River Marsh Working Group to provide an open forum for discussing, coordinating and planning wetland rehabilitation projects



Red-winged Blackbirds

All of these were organized through joint efforts of OMNR and the not-for-profit group, Ontario Streams, with the support of over 3500 hours of volunteer time from the community. Work at the Rouge Marsh has been funded in part by the Rouge Park Natural and Cultural Heritage Programme since 1997. The City of Toronto and the OMNR have also been strong supporters, offering funding and staff support for these restoration efforts.

The Rouge Park recognizes the importance of continuing the restoration efforts at the Rouge Marsh and has contributed funding for further work to be done in 2002, including creating a vegetation buffer near the parking lot, Purple Loosestrife removal and wildlife monitoring. For 2002, volunteer time and labour will continue to be a vital part of these ongoing restoration efforts. You can help with work on Saturday April 20th at 9:30 am, and on other dates this spring. Contact Joanna at Ontario Streams, 905-



Removing Purple Loosestrife

Sweet and Sappy in the Rouge


Late winter and early spring bring the cold nights and warm days that sweeten the Rouge...with the sweet sap from sugar maples. In Canada, maple syrup making is a tradition unique to Ontario, Quebec and the Maritime provinces. Groves, or "sugar bushes" full of sugar maple trees are "tapped" to extract their sap, a clear liquid which is boiled to a thick, syrupy consistency.

Since the early days of European settlement in the Rouge, local farmers and other homesteaders, who learned of maple syrup from First Nations peoples, have been tapping trees to make maple syrup.

Lorne Smith, of the Markham District Historical Society, shared some stories about the history of maple syrup in the Rouge. According to George Reesor, on the Christian Reesor homestead, in what is now Scarborough, the trees along the driveway and the road were tapped.

The maple syrup created was used to supplement the precious supplies of sugar rationed during the war.

Carman Lewis reported that when he was a boy his father let Bill Lawrie produce syrup in their wood lot, one spring the bush caught on fire because it was so dry. Mr. Lewis also reminisced about the Gower family, who lived just north of the Presbyterian Church on Main Street in Markham. The Gowers tapped the large maple trees around their home. To make the syrup, they boiled the sap on the stove inside the house, creating quite a bit of steam. When they came downstairs the next morning all of the paper had fallen off the walls!

Many people in the Rouge continue to operate private sugar bushes. If you don't have any trees to tap, you can still join the fun of maple syrup season in the Rouge North by visiting the *Sugarbush Maple Syrup Festival* at Bruce's Mill Conservation Area in Stouffville. Ride on a horse-drawn wagon, visit the working sugar bush and Sugar Shack for old-fashioned and modern maple syrup making demonstrations. Enjoy pancakes with delicious fresh maple syrup. Best of all, take some home! Maple syrup and maple sugar candies and other goodies are available for purchase. Weekends are best for family visits. School groups are welcome during the week. Call 416-667-6299 for info. 



Enjoying a wagon ride through the sugar bush at Bruce's Mill. Photo: Rosemary

Sugarbush Maple Syrup Festival at Bruce's Mill Conservation Area

2 for 1 Admission

Use this coupon to receive one free admission with the purchase of a second of equal or greater value.

Valid only on individual general admission rates.

May not be used in combination with any other offer: expires April 7, 2002.



thank you **thank**
thank you

The Government of Canada recognized the Rouge Park for service and contribution as a volunteer with Green Toronto during 2001: International Year of

Protect the Environment in Your Own Backyard: Become a River Keeper

For more info or a free site visit, call Aileen Barclay, Stewardship Coordinator, 416-661-

The Rouge Park "River Keeper" environmental stewardship program provides grants and free technical assistance to assist private landowners with tree planting, slope stabilization, pond management, erosion control, livestock fencing, septic system repair, backyard naturalization, habitat creation and other Best Management Practices on property within the Rouge watershed. Whether you live on a farm or in a subdivision, changing the way you live on the land and becoming an environmental steward will provide you with many returns on your investment. By becoming a River Keeper, you will help to:

- ✓ Increase the value of your property
- ✓ Increase the passive recreational opportunities on your property
- ✓ Provide your family, friends and employees with a safe and healthy environment
- ✓ Improve the quality of your drinking water
- ✓ Reduce the risk to yourself and others from exposure to potentially harmful chemicals
- ✓ Improve and safeguard the health of the Rouge Park watershed for future generations
- ✓ Improve habitat opportunities for wildlife



2002 Natural and Cultural Heritage Projects in the Rouge Park

The Rouge Park and watershed will benefit from \$1.5 million worth of ecological restoration and enhancement projects in 2002. The Rouge Park Alliance will provide start-up funding of \$219,000 for 16 projects this year. "The Rouge Park Alliance is proud to continue its commitment to funding the work of community groups and other organizations to build ownership in the Rouge Park," said Ron Christie, Chair of the Rouge Park Alliance.

From tree planting in Toronto, to a community stream adoption program in Richmond Hill, groups from all over the Rouge are working to enhance the health of the watershed and help people feel connected to their local environment. The Rouge Park supports these efforts by providing funds to help these groups get started.

Rouge Park funding supports not only restoration efforts such as reforestation and stream rehabilitation, this year funding will also go towards large-scale, long-term ecological management initiatives such as the creation of a base flow monitoring study to guide future planning for the protection of ground water in the Rouge watershed.

Base flow is a measurement of ground water discharge for an entire drainage basin. Stream flow measurements will be taken in various areas of the Rouge watershed in late summer and early autumn this year. These measurements will be added to a database of information that will be shared with the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority, neighbouring Conservation Authorities, the Region of York and others to be interpreted in the context of watershed management in the Greater Toronto Area.

Base flow measurements conducted over time are vital to monitoring the health of the aquifer, a reserve of ground water. These monitoring efforts are important for decisions about land use in the watershed, and prioritizing preservation and restoration efforts in the Rouge Park and watershed.

The health of our groundwater affects not only humans, but the plants and animals that rely on the Rouge for habitat. The Rouge Park is one of the first watersheds in the GTA to participate in base flow monitoring.

Many other projects in the Rouge involve more grassroots efforts, proposed by people throughout the Rouge who want to improve their local environment. All members of the public are welcome to submit projects in the Rouge watershed for Rouge Park funding. The projects are reviewed in October each year. For more information contact Barb Casier, Natural and Cultural Heritage Programme Manager at the Rouge Park, 905-713-6022.

This issue...Web sites for Wetlands

The *Wetland Habitat Fund* (WHF) provides private landowners in Ontario with financial assistance for projects that improve the ecological integrity of wetland habitats:

<http://www.wetlandfund.com/index.htm> .

The *Society of Wetland Scientists* is a non-profit organization founded in 1980 to promote wetland science and the exchange of information related to wetlands:

<http://www.sws.org/> . Information about the Canadian Chapter and useful educational materials can be found at:

<http://www.sws.org/regional/canada/> .


The *U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Wetlands Research Program* (<http://www.wes.army.mil/el/wetlands/wetlands.html>) provides

a wealth of useful information on restoring and creating wetlands. Particularly helpful are *Technical Notes* at

(<http://www.wes.army.mil/el/wrtc/wrp/tnotes/tnotes.html>) and other publications

2001 Rouge Park Award Winners

Each year, the Rouge Park Alliance bestows a Rouge Park Award on members of the community who have made an outstanding contribution to the Rouge Park vision, goal and objectives. The Rouge Park Heritage Awards are given to members of the public who have helped to further the goals of the Rouge Park Natural and Cultural Heritage Programme. Individuals and groups who have contributed to the educational goals of the Rouge are honoured with Rouge Park Education Awards. Groups or individuals who have made efforts towards land stewardship are recognized with a River Keeper Award.

Any member of the public may submit a nomination. The 2002 Rouge Park Award nomination deadline is August 31, 2002. For more info visit www.rougepark.com or call 905-713-6007. 



(Left to right): Jim MacDonald, 10,000 Trees for the Rouge Valley won a Heritage Award; Terry Tamblyn, teacher with York Region District School Board won an Education Award; Steve Gahbauer, Rouge Valley Foundation won an Education Award; Cathy Gregorio-Robb and Jim Robb won the Rouge Park Award; Patricia Lowe, Darryl Gray and staff from the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority representing Bruce's Mill Conservation

Spring & Summer 2002 Events

Saturday March 2 - April 7 **Sugarbush Maple Syrup Festival** at Bruce's Mill Conservation Area. Crackling wood fires, steaming kettles and wagon rides. Demonstrations of pioneer and modern methods of



Monday March 25, 7:00 pm FREE **"Healthy Yards" workshop**

Learn how to make your property eco-friendly and save money. Bruce's Mill, Whitchurch-Stouffville, South side of Stouffville Rd, East of Warden. Call 416-661-6600 X5660 to register.



Monday April 8, 7:00 - 9:00 pm FREE **"Butterflies & Their Gardens" workshop**

Learn all about butterflies and how to attract them: what plants to use, where to plant them and more. Bruce's Mill CA, South side of Stouffville Rd, East of Warden. Call 416-



Saturday April 20, 10:00 am FREE Friends of the Rouge Watershed and Toronto Councillor Raymond Cho host the **Rouge Park Multicultural Tree Planting**. VOLUNTEERS are needed to help with planting trees and shrubs. FREE lunch, nature walks held after planting from 12:30-3:00 pm. Dress for outdoor work. Meet at Toronto Zoo overflow parking lot, off Meadowvale Avenue, Toronto.

Sunday April 21, 9:00 am FREE **"10,000 Trees for the Rouge Valley" 13th annual tree planting VOLUNTEERS**

are needed for this fun tree planting day in the Rouge Park, Toronto. Dress for outdoor work, possibly muddy conditions. Bring shovels and gloves if you have them. Refreshments are provided for volunteers. Park on Littles Road (a dirt road) that dead ends at the planting site. Sorry,

Saturday April 27, 10:00 am - 12:00 pm **VOLUNTEER Tree planting at Milne Park, Markham**

Plants & equipment provided. Free busing to planting site is provided. Meet in southeast parking

Saturday May 4, 10:00 am **Friends of the Rouge Watershed VOLUNTEER tree planting and nature walk.**

FREE lunch & nature walks held after planting from 12:30-3:00 pm. Dress for outdoor work. Meet at Hillside School, Meadowvale Avenue, Toronto. Shuttle buses will bring you to planting site. Call

Saturday May 25, 1:00 to 3:00 pm FREE **"Don't Step on the Flowers" workshop**

Enjoy a day walking through wildflowers. Learn how to identify spring wildflowers and some interesting facts about different wild plants and their uses...even how to make beer from birch bark! Milne Park, Markham, East side of McCowan Rd, south of Hwy #7. Call 416-661-6600 X5660



Wednesday June 5, 7:00 to 9:00 pm FREE **"Pond Life" workshop**

A great event for the whole family! Biologists will teach you how to identify fish, insects, worms and all kinds of great little critters found in ponds. Bring your boots, all other equipment will be provided. Bruce's Mill CA, South side of Stouffville Rd, east of Warden. Call 416-661-6600 X5660



Tuesday June 25, 7:00 - 9:00 pm FREE **"Insectmania" workshop**

Bugs, bugs, bugs! We'll teach you what they eat, who eats them, where they go, how they get around and how to tell them apart. Join us on a guided hike to look for insects of all sizes, shapes and colours. Bruce's Mill CA, South side of Stouffville Rd, east of Warden. Call 416-661-6600 X5660



Rouge Park Vision

The 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.

Rouge Park 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 submissions of events info, news, stories and photos. Mail info to:

**Rouge Park
Connections newsletter**
50 Bloomington Rd West,
3rd Floor

Aurora, Ontario L4G 3G8
or e-mail to:

rougepark@rougepark.com

Sorry, we cannot return items submitted.

Connections is published by the Rouge Park Alliance. No content may be reprinted without express written permission from the Rouge



CONSERVATION
FOUNDATION

Support
the
Living
City

...find out more
at

The Rouge Park is pleased to have Aileen Barclay of the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority join us as our Stewardship Coordinator. Aileen has an Honours Degree in Biology from Trent University and has worked for not-for-profit groups and on special projects for the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources and the Canadian Department of Fisheries and Oceans in biology and natural restoration.



Rouge Park

Wild in the City!