



Release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Rouge Park Celebrates Lives of Important Conservationists: Bob Hunter, Frederick Urquhart, Arthur Richardson

TORONTO – Current friends and supporters of Rouge Park gathered today at a new memorial in Rouge Park, the Celebration Forest. Bob Hunter, Dr Frederick Urquhart and Dr Arthur Richardson were added to the list of nine individuals previously honoured for their contributions to the Park's legacy during their lifetimes.

"Although Rouge Park is young, there is a rich history behind its creation," said Gord Weeden, Chair of the Rouge Park Alliance, the Park's board of directors. "Conservationists, citizen advocates, politicians and others worked to protect different aspects of the Park. Today, we fondly remember the lives of some of these people, and express our appreciation for their work."

Well-known activist and co-founder of Greenpeace, Bob Hunter was one of Canada's most prolific environmentalists. As a journalist, he explained environmental issues in an accessible way to the public and brought attention to a variety of environmental "causes". Bob appreciated the natural beauty of Rouge Park, often doing TV broadcasts on-site. His legacy continues as new lands bearing his name were recently designated for protection adjacent to the Park, providing broader ecological linkages.

Pioneering Monarch butterfly researcher, Dr Frederick Urquhart conducted studies in and nearby the area that is now Rouge Park, furthering the understanding of butterfly migration for over 40 years during his career. Working with his wife Norah, who survives him, they encouraged thousands of people to assist in tracking Monarch migration over thousands of kilometres to central Mexico. These winter habitats of the Monarchs were later protected by the Mexican government.

Dr Arthur Richardson was an early advocate for conservation of the Rouge River valley areas in Toronto in the mid-20th century. Dr Richardson's work with the Rouge-Duffin-Highland-Petticoat Conservation Authority is commendable for its contribution to protecting the ecosystems in and nearby what would eventually become Rouge Park. His vision of a "large-scale wilderness parkland and nature preserve" took almost 40 years to become a reality when Rouge Park was created in 1995.

Other individuals honoured in the Celebration Forest are: Charles Sauriol, Ron Pratt, Brian Harrison, Frank Faubert, John Boyd, Robert Holland, Robert James, Murray Speirs and Patricia Brooks. The memorial concept in Rouge Park was created in 1996; this new Celebration Forest was built in November 2005 and this event is its official opening.

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Backgrounder

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Individuals Honoured in Rouge Park Celebration Forest

Charles Sauriol

Well-known naturalist, author and visitor to the area for decades before Rouge Park was created. Charles was a strong advocate for the protection of natural areas, his interest began in the Don River valley and he later turned his attention to Rouge River areas and the Oak Ridges Moraine. He was highly respected for his commitment to natural areas protection. An annual fund raising event is still held in his honour each year by the Conservation Foundation of Greater Toronto and Oak Ridges Moraine Land Trust.

Ron Pratt

Strong advocate for the protection of Rouge River ecosystems, especially the marshes at Rouge Beach on Lake Ontario, Ron was active with the West Rouge Community Association. Understanding the importance of local input, he engaged the community to participate in the planning process for the Park's first management plan. He later shared his heritage collection with the citizen group, the Rouge Valley Foundation.

Brian Harrison

As a City of Toronto Councillor Brian supported the Rouge Park concept and secured Toronto support for the Park. He also advocated for the Park through his role as Chair of Management Board for the Toronto Zoo and was a founding member of the Rouge Park Alliance.

Frank Faubert

Former MPP, Scarborough Councillor, and later Mayor of Scarborough, Frank was a great supporter of Rouge Park, and a founding member of the Rouge Park Alliance. He hosted several fund raising events and Rouge Park announcements. He saw the Park as one of Scarborough's and Toronto's greatest assets and worked to get funding and planning support for the protection of the Park.

John Boyd

A strong environmentalist, community advocate and founding member of the citizen groups Save the Rouge Valley System Inc., and the Rouge Valley Foundation. John also served as the Vice President for the Rouge Valley Foundation.

Robert Holland

A member of the Board of Directors for the Rouge Valley Foundation and founder of The Upper Rouge Network, its northern counterpart in the Richmond Hill area. Bob was also instrumental in preserving the structure of an early pioneer house, which was rebuilt in 2005 and is now used as an outdoor education centre by the Town of Richmond Hill in one of Rouge Park's satellite day use areas, Phyllis Rawlinson Park. He also served on the Rouge Park Interpretation & Communications Committee.

Robert James

One of the founding members of the citizen group Save the Rouge Valley System, Inc., Robert James was a teacher and a strong environmental advocate. Sharing words of wisdom on what needed to be done to protect the environment, Robert never craved the spotlight, but always worked diligently behind the scenes, including supporting his wife Lois in her activism, which was officially recognized when she received the Rouge Park Award in 1999 and the Order of Canada.

Murray Speirs

Zoologist, educator, author, birdwatcher, conservationist and recipient of the Order of Canada, Dr Murray Speirs left not only an intellectual legacy, but also a living legacy with his donation of land which was added to the Altona Forest. As an avid naturalist and he made extensive, detailed field notes over decades in the areas in and near Rouge Park, many of which are still used by researchers today.

Patricia Brooks

Local resident, Patricia Brooks, put her creative energies and professional communications skills to work in the early days of Rouge Park. Working for the Rouge Valley Park project, under the direction of the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources, she helped to promote the Park concept prior to its establishment, in conjunction with the Rouge Valley Park Advisory Committee. She was an outdoor enthusiast who very much enjoyed the Park.

Added to the Celebration Forest in 2006**Arthur Richardson**

Dr Richardson was an early advocate for conservation of the Rouge River valley areas in Toronto and an instrumental force in the birth of the Conservation Authority concept in the mid-20th century. Dr Richardson's work with the Rouge-Duffin-Highland-Petticoat Conservation Authority is commendable for its contribution to protecting the ecosystems in and near what would eventually become Rouge Park. Equally as important were his words regarding the importance of the lands in the Rouge River watershed and their great potential to be a "large-scale wilderness parkland and nature preserve." It took almost 40 years for this vision and his words to become a reality. We think he would be proud to see what the Park has become today.

Frederick Urquhart

Dr Urquhart and his wife Norah were pioneers in research on the migration habits of Monarch butterflies, for over 40 years during his career. Their work encouraged thousands of people to become "citizen scientists", assisting with tracking the migration of these fascinating creatures as they made the journey thousands of kilometres south to central Mexico. Recognizing their significance, these winter habitats of the monarchs were soon protected by the Mexican government, but also important are the summer habitat areas the Urquharts studied in Scarborough.

Bob Hunter

Activist, journalist, co-founder of the most well-known international environmental non-government organizations, Greenpeace, Bob Hunter was one of Canada's most prolific environmentalists. He was able to explain environmental issues to the mainstream public in an accessible way. He brought profile and media attention to a variety of environmental "causes" over his many years as a journalist. Bob enjoyed nature and appreciated the natural beauty of Rouge Park, often doing broadcasts on-site in the Park, including coverage of the purchase of Rouge Park's Glen Eagles site, the most expensive piece of property in the Park. New lands bearing his name are now protected in the Park. This new area, dedicated in 2006, thanks to the Ontario Government, provides additional protection to Rouge Park ecosystems from nearby suburban development, as well as ecological linkages, restoration potential, wetland creation potential, and trail and interpretive opportunities.

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