

# Bring Back the Don

SEASONAL UPDATE

FALL 2001



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## On Being a Valuable Volunteer

Janice Palmer, Task Force Member

This is the International Year of Volunteers, and the Task Force celebrates the work carried out by volunteers around the world. Most of our efforts to restore the Don Valley to its natural state would be impossible without volunteers. Your efforts are appreciated!



Volunteers planting along the East Don

People volunteer for many reasons: they support the cause or goals; it feels good emotionally; it even feels good physically once the initial fatigue disappears; they want to work with others who have similar interests. The first of these should be the main reason. The others will follow automatically.

Some agencies encourage volunteers by promoting the fun they will have. I have always found that volunteers actually are more interested when it is stressed that the work is important and will be challenging. The result is usually that fun just happens!

A valuable volunteer is someone who is ready to work hard, and who is willing to learn. New information often makes it necessary to change procedures, and everyone can use a few reminders about the details. It is better to do a small job well than to do any job badly.

Sometimes I wonder if volunteerism is an inherited characteristic. Many people have never volunteered and respond to the suggestion as if it were an appeal to personally test toxic chemicals. Others seem willing to take on more and more volunteer tasks. I find that it is those people who already have full lives that are the most willing to volunteer to do even more.

Many people are quick to list things that ought to be done but are not willing to do any of those things. Whenever you sense that something ought to be done, ask yourself, "If not now, when? If not me, who?" Whatever your reason, whatever your cause, volunteer now!



# Wildlife Sightings at Restoration Sites

Katie MacDonald

Hey volunteers, your work is making a difference! In the last year, volunteers and staff have reported the following animal sightings at restoration sites in the Don:

*American Toads* - hopping around at the Riverdale Farm Ponds, Milne Hollow, Nordheimer wetlands, and many other project sites

*Beavers* - taking down trees at Chester Springs Marsh, swimming at the Brick Works

*Coyotes* - standing by during a tree planting event at Helliwell's Hills wetland

*Deer* - feeding at Milne Hollow

*Fox* - hanging out near Chester Springs Marsh and the North Toronto Treatment Plant

*Green Frogs* - breeding at the Brick Works, as well as Milne Hollow

*Hawks* - foraging at the Riverdale Farm Ponds, the Nordheimer wetlands, Milne Hollow, and the North Toronto Treatment Plant

*Herons* - feeding at the Brick Works, Chester Springs Marsh, and the Riverdale Farm Ponds

*Muskrats* - feasting at Chester Springs Marsh, going for a swim at the Brick Works

*Snakes* - garter and brown snakes have been seen at the Brick Works, Yellow Creek Butterfly Meadow, the North Toronto Treatment Plant, Chester Springs Marsh, and the Lower Don Trail

*Snapping turtles* - two seen laying eggs at the Brick Works

*Wood ducks* - resident in the Riverdale Farm Ponds

Plus ... lots more, including many species of native plants!!! Tell us what wildlife you've seen in the Don Watershed, call our hotline at 416-392-0401.



## Issues Update

John Wilson, Task Force Chair

Will Toronto City Council consider widening the DVP?

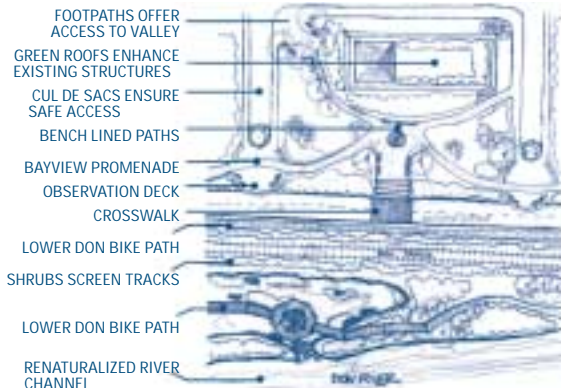
In its next session starting October 2, City Council will decide on a proposal to study the feasibility of adding four toll lanes to the Don Valley Parkway. Bring Back the Don has submitted its opposition to this proposal. We believe that the city should not consider any further degradation in the valley that we are working so hard to restore. You can make your opinions count by contacting your councillor. If you don't know his or her number, please call 416-338-0338.

Greening the Narrows Kick-Off Event

The Task Force to Bring Back the Don will be holding a community event on October 14th to launch the Greening of the Narrows – the area between Queen, Gerrard, Broadview and River Streets. The concept of Greening the Narrows was described in our Spring 2001 newsletter. (See concept drawing bottom left)

The Task Force has established a sub-committee called the Don Narrows Team. The objective of the Team is to organize a process of public consultation that will result in a new vision for the area. This event will be the first general public involvement in the process.

The event will be held at 230 Oak St. (between the apartment building and the Bayview extension) from 9:30am to 12:30pm. All residents and stakeholders of the Don Narrows, and adjacent areas, are invited. There will be music, a pancake breakfast, tree plantings, face-painting, displays and a variety of other attractions for residents of all ages. You will be able to discuss your ideas for the Narrows with members of Bring Back The Don.



A DON NARROWS CONCEPT:  
NATURALIZATION AND IMPROVED ACCESS  
BY JOHN WILSON AND MICHELLE REID



Bring Back the Don

## UPCOMING EVENTS

Events happen rain or shine, and usually last a couple of hours.

For more information about any of our events, call 416-392-0401. Everyone is welcome!

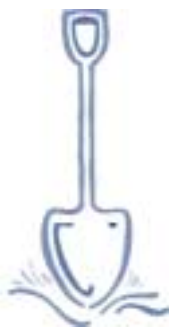
# Upcoming Events

Attention teachers, youth groups and community organizations:

In addition to weekend planting events, **Bring Back the Don** also holds events during the week, and invites you to sign up your group. Events usually run 10am to noon and are a great way to learn about local environmental issues in an outdoor setting. Interested individuals available during the week are also welcome. Please call **Keri at 416-392-0373** for a list of the weekday events and to register your group.

**Saturday, September 15 - 10am - noon**  
North Toronto Treatment Plant wildflower meadow planting  
Located behind the Loblaws grocery store on Redway Road (off of Millwood Road between Laird Drive and the Leaside bridge over the Don). Look for the blue and white North Toronto Treatment Plant signs and head down the hill into valley.

**Saturday September 29 - 10am - noon**  
Lower Don Trail tree and shrub planting  
Plant trees and shrubs along the channelized section of the Don, south of Gerrard Street. Meet on the trail at the base of the stairs from the footbridge connecting Riverdale Park East and West.



**Sunday, October 14**  
– 9:30am - 12:30pm

Greening the Don Narrows  
Kick-off Community Event at 230 Oak St.

Help launch the **Greening the Narrows Initiative** at the Oak Street apartments, just south of Gerrard Street and east of River Street. We will be planting and having lots of fun and games. There will also be information on the Task Force's vision for a clean, green and accessible Don Narrows. Everyone welcome! For more information, see the article on page 2.

**Saturday, October 20 - 10am – noon**  
Cedarvale Ravine tree and shrub planting

Plant trees and shrubs at a new aquatic habitat enhancement project site in Cedarvale Ravine, just north of Bathurst Street and St. Clair Avenue. Please call **Keri at 416-392-0373** for the meeting location.

**Sunday, October 21, 2pm**  
Walk through Moore Park Ravine

Come and learn about the history of the Don Valley and find out about our restoration initiatives. Walk from Craighleigh Gardens down Milkmen's Lane and then up the Moore Park Ravine. Meet at Castlefrank Subway Station.

**Saturday, October 27 – 10am - noon**  
North Toronto Treatment Plant tree and shrub planting

Located behind the Loblaws grocery store on Redway Road (off of Millwood Road between Laird Drive and the Leaside Bridge over the Don). Look for the blue and white North Toronto Treatment Plant signs and head down the hill into valley.



North Toronto Treatment Plant  
Spring 2001  
Maddie Ritter - 3 1/2

# Volunteers

Other Bring Back the Don volunteer opportunities.

Task Force Sub-Committees

- Our Communications Team is looking for volunteers to help with some exciting education and outreach projects.
- Or if you are interested in learning more about the Task Force's habitat restoration and water quality projects, join our Projects Team.
- The Task Force Policy/Planning Team examines policy and strategies issues for the Task Force.
- The Funding Team researches opportunities for new funding partners.

If you are interested in joining one of the sub-committees, call the Task Force office at 416-392-0401.



Bring Back the Don

## UPCOMING EVENTS

Events happen rain or shine, and usually last a couple of hours.

For more information about any of our events, call 416-392-0401. Everyone is welcome!

# Other People's Events

**Saturday and Sunday, September 8 and 9 – 9:30am – 3:30pm**

Riverdale Farm Annual Fall Festival.

Enjoy a traditional country celebration in the heart of downtown Toronto with activities for the whole family. Also, barn dance, Saturday, 6:30 – 9pm. For more information, please call 416-392-6794.

**Sunday, September 16**

Toronto Islands Planting event with Toronto Bay Initiative at Hanlan's Point

Meet outside of the Ferry Terminal gates (city side) at 11am sharp to take the ferry to Hanlan's Point. Or meet at the Hanlan's Point ferry dock on the island at 11:30. Please call TBI in advance to register at 416-943-8080 ext. 227.

**Sunday, September 16 - 2 pm**

A Lost Rivers Walk of Burke Brook Watershed/ Sewershed with Taddle Creek Watershed Initiative and Toronto Bay Initiative

This walk takes a look at a small section of Burke Brook which may soon gain many thousands of extra residents. Meet at the northwest corner of Avenue Road and Woburn Avenue.

**Sunday, September 30**

Toronto Islands Planting event with Toronto Bay Initiative at Hanlan's Point

Meet outside of the Ferry Terminal gates (city side) at 11am sharp to take the ferry to Hanlan's Point. Or meet at the Hanlan's Point ferry dock on the island at 11:30. Please call TBI in advance to register at 416-943-8080 ext. 227.

**Sunday, September 30 - 10am - noon**

Water in the City Walk with RiverSides Stewardship Alliance

Participate in a fascinating walk that follows the path of rain water from where it falls in our neighbourhoods, enters the city's underground sewer system, and discharges into local rivers and the Bay. Learn how every house, school and business can be part of the clean water solution. Walk includes hilly terrain and short, off-trail excursions. Meet outside the Chester Subway Station (Danforth line). Call RiverSides at 416-392-1983 to register.

**Saturday, October 13 - 10am - noon**

Milne Hollow tree and shrub planting with Friends of the Don East

Help with the planting of trees and shrubs in the Heritage Garden around Milne House. Park entrance is located at the end of Old Lawrence Avenue, off of the south side of Lawrence Avenue East, just east of the Don Valley Parkway exit. Meet in the parking lot at the bottom of the hill.

**Friday, October 19 - 4:45pm to 6:00pm**

R.C. Harris Water Filtration Plant Guided Tour

Join Toronto Bay Initiative for a free guided tour of the R.C. Harris Water Filtration Plant. See first hand the equipment and processes used to turn water from Lake Ontario into Toronto's drinking water; and explore one of Toronto's most beautiful and interesting historical buildings.

Located at 2701 Queen St. East (at Victoria Park Avenue). Meet at the parking lot at the bottom of the hill. Please call Toronto Bay Initiative to register: 416-943-8080 ext. 227.

**Sunday, October 21 - 1:00pm**

In Search of Taddle Creek: A joint walk with the Taddle Creek Watershed Initiative, Toronto Bay Initiative, Evergreen and Toronto Field Naturalists.

An interpretive walk along the course of the stream, which now lies buried encased in sewer pipes, highlighting points of interest, past regeneration activities, and opportunities for "daylighting" Taddle Creek. Meet at Wychwood Avenue and St. Clair Avenue West (west of Bathurst) on the steps of the church. Bring your own refreshments. Please call Eduard Sousa at 416-599-4171 to register.



# Autumn Colour

Peter Hare, Task Force Member

Each fall we are presented with one of nature's great spectacles. The summer green of our trees will be replaced with a symphony of colours, ranging from yellows and rusty browns to reds and purples. The change to bright fall colours, which started in August in northern forests, moves south as days shorten and the air cools. While trees in northern towns, such as Kapuskasing, reach peak colours in mid September, Huntsville is surrounded by hills of red Sugar Maple at Thanksgiving. Here along The Don, at the northern edge of the Carolinian zone, full colour comes later October.

White Ash is one of the earliest trees to change, showing colour by mid September and completing leaf fall early in October. By that time the colour change of other trees will be well along the way. Along city streets, our native Sugar Maple turns earlier than the introduced Norway Maple. Oaks tend to be later. While the peak colour may be as late as the third week of October, by early November nearly all trees have shed their leaves except for the odd Willow and a few Oaks that hold on to brown leaves till spring.

Contrary to popular belief frost does not cause the colour changes of autumn. In fact, early frosts can kill leaves, leaving them shrivelled and brown. As the days grow shorter and cooler towards the end of summer, broad-leafed trees grow a layer of corky cells at the leaf base which cuts off nourishment and provides a weak point allowing the dead leaf to break off and fall. As water and minerals are lost, chlorophyll breaks down and with its disappearance, the green colour fades, revealing underlying colours. The yellows and oranges come from carotenes and xanthophylls and the brown and rusty colours from tannins. On the other hand, the crimson, red and purple pigments are anthocyanins, which were not present in the leaf earlier, but result from chemical changes in the dying leaves.

The change varies from tree to tree depending on inheritance, soil conditions, disease and the weather. Trees on dry hills especially at the end of a long dry summer turn early. Dark and rainy days can reduce the brilliance of the foliage and shorten the period of leaf fall. On the other hand there are dark days in the fall when the leaves can look especially saturated with colour.

Quotes of the Season

*Autumn is a second spring when every leaf is a flower.*

- Albert Camus



Colour me 

*Come said the wind to  
the leaves one day,  
Come o're the meadows  
and we will play.  
Put on your dresses  
scarlet and gold,  
For summer is gone  
and the days grow cold.*

- A Children's Song of the 1880s



Winter Advice

Road salt is harmful to many plants and animals.

- Shovel your walk and driveway.
- Use sand, cat litter or calcium magnesium acetate instead of salt wherever possible.

# Volunteering in the Don

Katie MacDonald

The Task Force to Bring Back the Don has charged itself with the responsibility of restoring the Don River Valley to a healthy and natural state. It is through the efforts of the volunteers that this goal becomes a possibility.

There are many committed volunteers who join us every weekend in the spring and fall to plant native trees and wildflowers at restoration sites. A few of these volunteers regularly wake up extra early on Saturday and Sunday mornings to help Keri and me unload trees from the delivery truck and equipment from our cube van in preparation for an event. Tree planting events are typically small and attract many of the same faces; however, there have been days when we have had more than one hundred people at a planting event. It is times such as these that exemplify how many people are willing to give their time to help restore the Don.

To complement our planting work, we have teams of volunteers that meet regularly to maintain restoration sites. These volunteers, who we call stewards, maintain the trees and plants that have been planted by other volunteers. Stewards spend many hours monitoring their designated site for nonnative invasive species, and the subsequent removal of them. Stewards also create and maintain habitat structures, such as bird boxes and brush bundles. Through regular sessions of weeding, litter collection, and general maintenance of their sites, the stewards are largely responsible for the success of a restoration site.

The final group of volunteers that I work with in the valley are the community monitors. These volunteers listen for frog and toad calls late into the night, spend Sunday mornings sorting benthic invertebrates out of a tray of mud, watch patiently for bird activity at our wetlands, as well as trek to a site once a week to test the water quality and record water levels. These volunteers depict the health of a restoration site by looking at key environmental indicators. Without these volunteers we would not know how the sites are faring and what needs to happen to improve our work.

Bring Back the Don volunteers deliver an impressive level of dedication to the job. Without such dedicated volunteers our goal of a clean and green Don River Watershed would simply not be possible.



Volunteers identifying vegetation in the Don.

**Thanks to our 2001 Funding Partners**  
So far this year, funding for Task Force projects has come from: City of Toronto, Environment Canada, Great Lakes Sustainability Fund, Unilever Canada, Toronto Remedial Action Plan, Toronto Community Foundation, TD Friends of the Environment Foundation, Shell Canada Limited, Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources, Ontario Great Lakes Renewal Foundation, Deloitte Consulting, The First Narayever Synagogue, the York School, and many others.

Bring Back the Don also thanks the many individuals, corporations, school groups and community organizations that have participated in our projects and have contributed to “bringing back” the Don watershed.

## BRING BACK THE DON

The Task Force to Bring Back the Don is a 23-member citizens’ group sponsored by the City of Toronto that works to “bring back” a clean, green and accessible Don River Watershed.

The Task Force to Bring Back the Don  
Metro Hall  
23rd Floor  
55 John Street  
Toronto ON M5V 3C6

For information about events or activities, please call 416-392-0401, or e-mail us at [driver@city.toronto.on.ca](mailto:driver@city.toronto.on.ca).

Bring Back the Don events are posted on the City of Toronto’s Web site: [www.city.toronto.on.ca/don](http://www.city.toronto.on.ca/don)

## DOING RESEARCH ON THE DON?

A collection of Don River materials is housed in the Urban Affairs Branch of the Toronto Public Library at Metro Hall, 55 John Street (John at King). Call 416-397-7241 for more information.

