

Bring Back the Don

SEASONAL UPDATE

FALL UPDATE 2003



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Beechwood Wetland – Project Update

In the Spring 2003 *Seasonal Update*, Beechwood Wetland was introduced to readers for the first time as a major terrestrial and aquatic habitat restoration project. Since then, this new partnership initiative has seen a huge amount of activity to improve the quality of wildlife habitat of an otherwise degraded area along the Lower Don Trail.

Thanks to the many volunteers that have helped plant and steward the site this spring and summer, there is no shortage of exciting developments. Some of the highlights include:

- Removal of many truckloads of Japanese knotweed, an extremely aggressive non-native invasive plant;
- Protection of a 150 year-old bur oak near the north end of the site;
- Planting of 1,200 native trees and shrubs and 2,800 herbaceous wetland plants;
- Involvement of over 200 volunteers at spring planting events;
- Establishment of a stewardship team of seven dedicated members working at the site once a week;
- Killdeer immediately found the site to be desirable and proceeded to nest near the water's edge;
- Mallards, green herons, wood ducks have been observed in the area;
- Green frogs, dragonflies and monarchs found on-site;
- Deer tracks in fresh mud and evidence of browsing on our young trees.



New plants growing along the bank at Beechwood Wetland

And this is just the first season!

Beechwood Wetland promises to be an effective educational project demonstrating how wetlands and woodland provide habitat and improve water quality, and helping to restore part of the Don's wildlife corridor. Please see the planting plan on the centrefold pages 4 & 5 for more details on plant communities and species, or visit the site yourself to monitor its progress.

Stay tuned for further developments such as interpretive stations and signage, fencing, new habitat features and a grand-opening event this fall. See the events listing for more information.

Thank you to all of the partners involved in this project, including City of Toronto Parks and Recreation, Federation of Ontario Naturalists, Toronto and Region Conservation Authority and the many other groups and individuals who have participated in planting. Further, thank you to EcoAction for a new grant for 2003-2005, contributing funds to this, and other Lower Don projects.

To get involved in this project, or for more information, please call the Don River info-line at 416-392-0401.

Alternatives for Mosquito Control

Steve Gahbauer, Member, Habitat Restoration Team

We are concerned about the impact of West Nile Virus (WNV) on wildlife and people, but some of the "cures" that have been proposed could have wide-ranging consequences for the ecosystems we are trying to protect and restore.

Technology's way

Currently, two direct forms of mosquito control, larvicides and adulticides are used by municipalities across North America. Some larvicides contain the biological control Bti, a micro-organism that kills the larvae. Other larvicides are chemical-based, such as methoprene, an insect growth regulator. These chemicals prevent the larvae from becoming the adults that actually transmit the WNV. The chemical-based controls are toxic in varying degrees to a variety of wildlife. If they are only used in catch basins, their environmental impact will be somewhat reduced, but local streams and rivers could become contaminated when catch basins flood during rain events.

Adulticides are more troubling. Malathion, for example, contaminates groundwater and kills insects indiscriminately – not just the mosquitoes. It is highly toxic to bees (very valuable insects) and amphibians, and moderately toxic to birds, crustaceans and some fish species. This poison can cause dizziness, nausea, headaches, diarrhea and eye, nose and throat irritation in humans.

Nature's way

There are eco-friendly and people-friendly alternatives to pesticides. Nature supplies a whole range of predators that eat mosquitoes at larva and/or adult stages and we have many of them in the Don. Dragonflies, minnows, frogs and toads, as well as some tadpoles, all eat mosquito larvae. There are also some birds that feed on adult mosquitoes; for example, chimney swifts, nighthawks, and swallows.

By far the most efficient mosquito eliminators are the swallows, particularly purple martins. Swallows are already found in various places along the Don such as Chester Springs Marsh. Let's make sure that we keep these birds in the valley by providing healthy, attractive, and *unsprayed* vegetation and by maintaining existing wetlands.

A Thoughtful Approach

For the next mosquito season, let's work *with* nature: encourage insect-eating birds to make the Don Valley their home; ensure a good supply of larva-eating predators in wetlands; and remain firmly opposed to indiscriminate spraying. We should explain the need and value of healthy wetlands and promote better pollution and runoff control measures. *Culex pipiens*, the mosquito frequently cited as the major WNV culprit, is particularly abundant in built up areas, where it breeds and thrives in pools of stagnant water. Like everything else, controlling WNV is a learning process. Before we unleash modern technology and harmful chemical "weapons," let's take some clues from Mother Nature and work within the natural systems, not against them.

For more information about West Nile Virus check out the following Web sites: Federation of Ontario Naturalists, www.ontarionature.org, Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-term Care, www.healthyontario.com. City of Toronto, www.toronto.ca/your_health



Bee on Spirea at Beechwood Wetland

Issues Update

John Wilson, Task Force Chair

Sometimes it's necessary to use a stick as well as a carrot to clean up our waterways and natural areas. City Council should be commended for two new phone "hotlines" where you can report offences that damage the environment. Keep these numbers handy, say, on your refrigerator.

FIRST, to protect our waters:
416-392-9940 – during business hours
416-392-8280 – after business hours

Calls to these numbers will remain confidential. Use these numbers to:
Report someone disposing harmful chemicals illegally in a waterway or down a storm drain;
Report heavy foam in a river or the lake;
Report discoloured discharge from a storm outfall.

SECOND, to report illegal dumping:
416-392-5326 (39-CLEAN)

City Council has approved a \$100 reward for anyone providing information leading to a conviction for illegal dumping in parks and ravines. You must be prepared to "assist in a conviction", in other words, to testify to what you saw.

In early July, I was one of about 35 people cleaning up a ravine in E. T. Seton Park that had obviously been used as an informal, illegal dump for quite some time. It was pretty disgusting, and it didn't get that way through occasional careless littering. City Council has shown that it is prepared to get harsh with those who illegally dump in parks and ravines. An "increased enforcement pilot project" will be starting in the Rouge River area this September. Next year, it will expand to other wards. The fines for illegal dumping will also increase. But that doesn't mean you have to wait until next year to report illegal dumping in the Don.



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, please call 416-392-0401.

Planting Events

Weekday Planting Events

Attention Students and Teachers:

Our planting events are a great way for students to learn about environmental issues in an outdoor setting and have a lot of fun! Weekday events are scheduled with school groups in mind and usually run from 10 a.m. to noon, rain or shine. A weekday event schedule may be obtained by contacting Keri at 416-392-0373 or kcmahol@toronto.ca. Please note that we ask groups of ten or more to register with us in advance of the event.

High school students are welcome to gain volunteer hours with Bring Back the Don at our weekend planting events. Please see the schedule below and contact Keri at 416-392-0373 or kcmahol@toronto.ca if you have any questions.

Weekend Planting Events

Plantings are fun for families, individuals and groups. We provide shovels, gloves and other tools. You just need to wear sturdy shoes and clothing that can withstand a little dirt.

All events are from 10a.m. to noon, unless otherwise specified.

Please contact Keri for more information or to register a group of ten or more.

Don Narrows Special Event at Oak Street Park

Sunday, September 21

Come celebrate community efforts towards Greening the Don Narrows. Information display, pancake breakfast, children's activities. The park is located at the north-east corner of Cornwall and River Streets.

Riverdale Park East Wetland

Sunday, September 28

Located in Riverdale Park East on the west side of Broadview Ave, just north of Gerrard St. East. Meet at the wetland at the north end of the park.

Beechwood Wetland Grand Opening Event

Join the Beechwood Wetland project partners, including the Federation of Ontario Naturalists, Bring Back the Don, the City of Toronto and TRCA to mark the opening of this exciting high-profile wetland habitat. We will be planting trees, shrubs and herbaceous wetland plants. Everyone is welcome. Please call 416-392-0401 for event details.

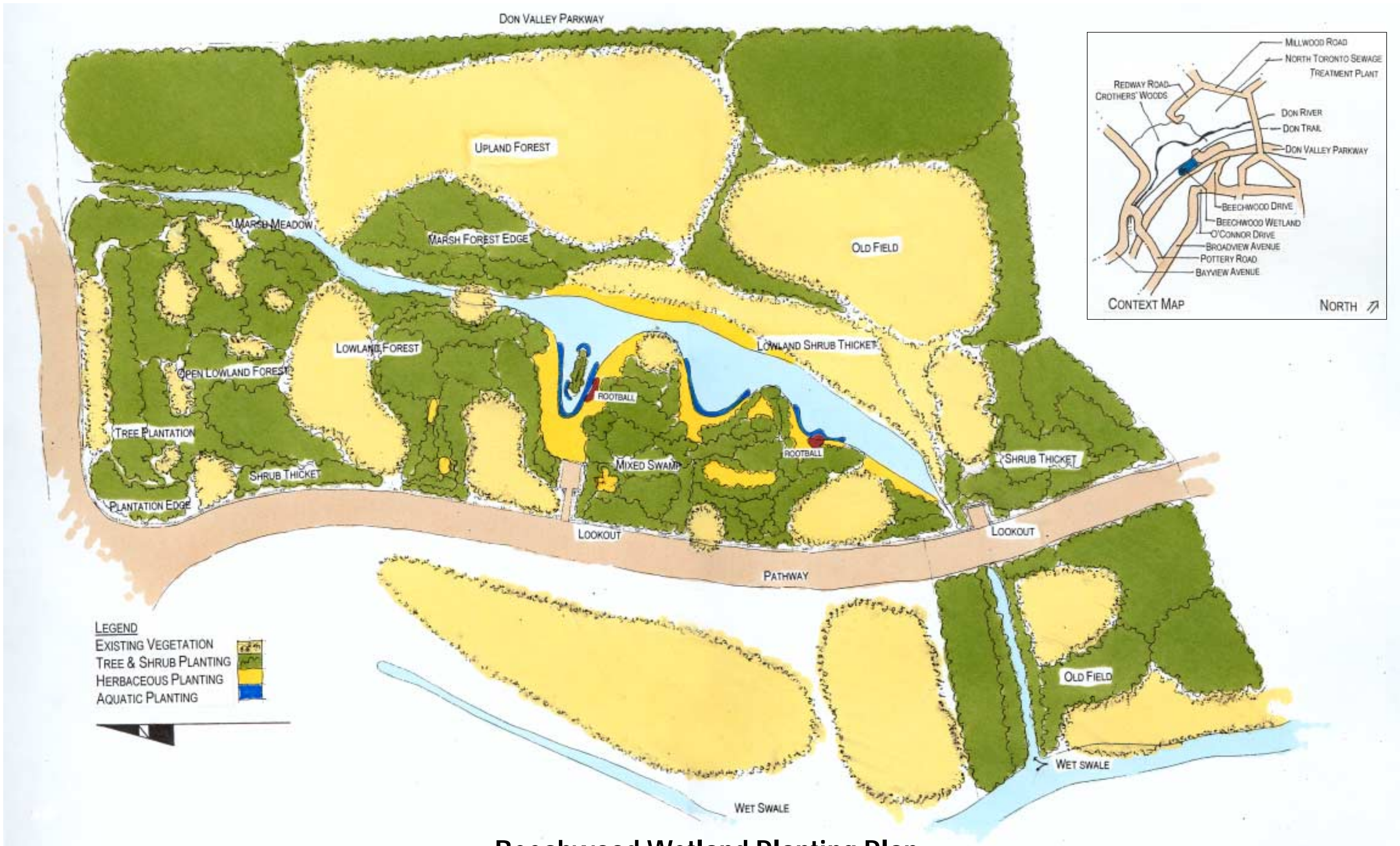
Lower Don Tree and Shrub Planting

Sunday, October 26

Plant trees and shrubs along the channelized section of the Don, just south of Dundas St. Meet on the trail at the base of the Queen St. stairs.



Trees and shrubs laid out ready to be planted by volunteers at Beechwood Wetland, Spring, 2003



Beechwood Wetland Planting Plan



Bring Back the Don

UPCOMING EVENTS

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For more information about any of our events, please call 416-392-0401.

Other People's Events

The Don Watershed Regeneration Council Celebrates 10 years!

Sunday, September 14, 1 – 4 p.m.

Join us in celebrating the past, present and future of the Don River. The event will include music, entertainment, children's activities, an art gallery and special guests. Official ceremony with David Crombie will take place at 2 p.m. Located at the Don Valley Brick Works, 550 Bayview Ave. Admission is Free.

Toronto Island Sand Dune Restoration Planting

Sunday, September 14, 10 a.m. – 1 p.m.

Sunday, September 28, 10 a.m. – 1 p.m.

Plant shrubs and grasses on Toronto's only sand dunes. Meet outside the ferry terminal gates (city side) at 10 am, for the 10:15 ferry (free for volunteers). Contact Toronto Bay Initiative at 416-598-2277 to register. Partners: City of Toronto, Toronto Bay Initiative.

Spadina Quay Wetland Stewardship Events

Please register for the following events by calling Toronto Bay Initiative at 416-598-2277. Meet at the foot of Spadina Avenue, at the water's edge. Bring gloves and trowels (if you have them), hard-soled shoes, sunscreen, a drink and a hat.

- Wednesday, September 17, 6 – 8 p.m.

Join TBI for a last maintenance event to clear out unwanted invasive plant species and make room for the new plants coming in next weekend.

- Saturday, September 20, 10 a.m. – 2 p.m.

Planting of native shrubs and wildflowers. Our resident native plant expert will be on hand to tell you everything you need to know.

Partners: City of Toronto, Toronto Bay Initiative, Toronto and Region Conservation Authority.

Evergreen Wildflower Work Bees & Plant Giveaways

Come and learn at Evergreen's wildflower habitat community gardens in local parks. New volunteers always welcome. For more information and events, contact Sarah Brierley at 416-596-1495 x 30 or

sarah@evergreen.ca or visit www.evergreen.ca

- Sunday, September 14, 3 p.m.
Parkdale area: Beaty Boulevard Parkette Community Garden.
- Saturday, September 20, 3 p.m.
Bloor East & Sherbourne area: St. James Town West Park Community Gardens.
- Sunday, September 21, 3 p.m.
Bloor & Bathurst area: Seaton Walk Parkette Community Garden.

Glendon Forest Tree and Shrub Planting

Saturday, September 20, 10 a.m. - noon
Located across the river from the horse stables in Sunnybrook Park. Meet in the clearing on the west side of the footbridge. Partners: Friends of Glendon Forest, City of Toronto. Please call 416-392-LEAF for more details.

Toronto and Region Conservation Authority Seminars

For info and to register call 416-661-6600, x 5660, or visit www.trca.on.ca. Located at Tommy Thompson Park, Toronto, south end of Leslie Street, south of Lakeshore Blvd. Partner: Toronto Bay Initiative.

- Saturday, October 4, 9 – 11 a.m. Please register.
A Bird in the Hand. Watch TRCA staff band migrating songbirds, learn how to identify different species, about their travel habits and the challenges of migration.
- Saturday, November 22, 1 – 3 p.m. Please register.
Winter Waterfowl. TRCA staff will identify various species, offer identification tips and talk about the habitat needs of the many local waterfowl inhabiting Toronto's waterfront.

Riverdale Farm Spring Bulb Planting

Saturday, October 4, 9:30 a.m.

Meet at the Drive Shed, located at the Winchester Street side entrance gate. For more information, please call Ruth or Curtis at 416-392-6794 or email farm@toronto.ca.

East Don Parkland Partners Tree and Shrub Planting

Saturday, October 4, 10 a.m. - noon
Planting of trees and shrubs in the East Don Parklands near Finch Avenue. Please call Kim at 416-392-1339 for event location and further details. Partners: City of Toronto, East Don Parkland Partners, Evergreen.

Lost Rivers Walks

- Wednesday, October 22, 1:30 p.m.
The Beltline West. Admire fall wildflowers along the abandoned railway, ancient creek valleys, vistas across glacial meltwater channels, and more. Meet at Eglinton West subway station.
- Sunday, November 16, 2 p.m.
Russell Creek. Trace a long lost creek through downtown Toronto. Meet at the SE corner of Simcoe and Front Streets.
- Saturday, December 20, 11 a.m.
The Ravines at the Solstice. Start at St. Clair West subway station, entrance south side of St. Clair Avenue. Bring a bag lunch to eat in the Archives. More details TBA.

Friends of the Don East

FODE runs a number of educational and community involvement initiatives to protect the Don watershed. For a listing of FODE's fall planting events and other activities, please visit www.fode.ca or call 416-466-9153.



In July, volunteers joined Bring Back the Don, Toronto Parks and Recreation staff and The Beer Store in a clean-up event in E. T. Seton Park. The couch seen in the photo was one of the pieces they removed!

Beechwood Wetland Plant Species List

Mixed Swamp Tree and Shrub List

<i>Acer saccharinum</i>	Silver Maple
<i>Amelanchier laevis</i>	Smooth Serviceberry
<i>Cephalanthus occidentalis</i>	Buttonbush
<i>Cornus sericea</i>	Red Osier Dogwood
<i>Hammamelis virginiana</i>	Witch Hazel
<i>Larix laricina</i>	Tamarak
<i>Platanus occidentalis</i>	Sycamore
<i>Rubus odoratus</i>	Purple Flowering Raspberry
<i>Salix discolor</i>	Pussy Willow
<i>Sambucus canadensis</i>	Common Elderberry
<i>Spirea alba</i>	Meadowsweet
<i>Tilia americana</i>	Basswood
<i>Thuja occidentalis</i>	Eastern White Cedar
<i>Viburnum trilobum</i>	Highbush Cranberry

Mixed Swamp Herbaceous Plantings

Upland and Lowland

<i>Aster novae-angliae</i>	New England Aster
<i>Aster pumiceus</i>	Swamp Aster
<i>Calamagrostis canadensis</i>	Canada Bluejoint
<i>Caltha palustris</i>	Marsh Marigold
<i>Carex crinita</i>	Fringed Sedge
<i>Eupatorium maculatum</i>	Spotted Joe-Pye Weed
<i>Glyceria grandis</i>	Tall Manna Grass
<i>Liatris spicata</i>	Dense Blazing Star
<i>Lobelia siphilitica</i>	Great Blue Lobelia
<i>Monarda fistulosa</i>	Bergamot
<i>Onoclea sensibilis</i>	Sensitive Fern
<i>Rudbeckia hirta</i>	Black Eyed Susan

Edge

<i>Asclepias incarnata</i>	Swamp Milkweed
<i>Carex bebbii</i>	Bebb's Sedge
<i>Carex vulpinoidea</i>	Fox Sedge
<i>Eupatorium perfoliatum</i>	Boneset
<i>Iris versicolor</i>	Blue Flag Iris
<i>Juncus effusus</i>	Soft Rush
<i>Juncus torreyi</i>	Torrey's Rush
<i>Solidago patula</i>	Rough Leaved Goldenrod
<i>Verbena hastata</i>	Blue Vervain

Aquatic

<i>Nymphaea odorata</i>	Fragrant White Water Lily
<i>Sagittaria latifolia</i>	Common Arrowhead
<i>Scirpus acutus</i>	Hardstem Bulrush

Thank you to Tanya Lewinberg for her work on the Beechwood Wetland Planting Plan.

The Uniqueness of the Carolinian Life Zone

Paul Leggett, Task Force Volunteer

Crothers' Woods and the Beechwood forest are part of the "Carolinian Life Zone". This term refers to the eastern North American deciduous forest that reaches its northern limit here in southern Ontario, in the area bounded by highway 401, between Grand Bend and Toronto.

This portion of our province (one per cent of Canada's total land mass) is home to more nationally and provincially rare and endangered species than any other life zone in the country. This, combined with declines of these species in regions further south, makes the area a very important and sensitive environment.

Here are some numbers to consider:

- 2,200 species of herbaceous plants, including 64 ferns, at least 110 grasses, and over 130 different sedge species;
- Close to 400 bird species;
- Over 70 species of trees;
- More than 50 species of insects and spiders;
- 25 per cent of Canada's human population live in this area. As a result, forest cover has been reduced from 80 to 11.3 per cent and wetlands have been reduced from 28.3 to 5.1 per cent.

It is well known that where human populations choose to concentrate is where other species are most endangered. The proper stewardship of Crothers' Woods, the Don River Valley, and indeed the entire Carolinian Life Zone should be a priority of the people of Toronto and southern Ontario. Understanding and respecting this unique and precious environment is the first step toward saving (and hopefully, one day, expanding) it and the hundreds of rare and endangered inhabitants.

Web site sources:

Parks Canada, www.parkscanada.gc.ca/nature/eep-sar/species-especies_15_e.asp
University of Waterloo, http://www.science.uwaterloo.ca/course_notes/biology/biol499/carol.html
Carolinian Canada, www.carolinian.org
Niagara College, www.niagarac.on.ca/gis/carolinian_zone.htm
Royal Ontario Museum, <http://roml6.rom.on.ca/ontario/risk.php>

Serendipity in Sherwood Park

Janice Palmer, Member, Task Force and Sherwood Park Advisory Committee

Sherwood Park is a 16.2 hectare ravine park near Mount Pleasant Road and Eglinton Avenue East within the Don watershed. Burke Brook flows through the park and into the West Don River. Red oaks seem to be the oldest trees in the park, but although they produce abundant acorns, young oaks have been hard to find.

In 2001, volunteers planted a variety of trees and shrubs on a sandy hillside under a giant red oak. A few months later a major storm split the oak. The half that fell crushed many of the new plants. City forestry staff determined that the remaining part of the oak was likely to fall soon and thus removed both fallen and standing parts of the oak during 2002. Early in 2003, volunteers planted more trees and shrubs to replace those lost. Two months later a volunteer leader went to the site to flag locations for herbaceous perennials and grasses. Wonder of wonders, the whole hillside was covered in red oak seedlings most of which had come from the doomed tree. After consultation with forestry staff, volunteers have been very busy, cutting many of the small plants immediately surrounding these seedlings to reduce competition for space, moisture, sun, and nutrients. A thick 'doughnut' of woodchip mulch is placed around each seedling. This work was completed on August 10 with a total of 639 red oak seedlings discovered and protected. Discussions are taking place as to what will be done with these natural miracles in spring 2004.

Farewell and Thanks to Katie MacDonald

After eight years of working in the Don Watershed, Katie MacDonald is leaving Toronto for teachers' college and focusing on a career in outdoor education. Just about every volunteer that participated in a Bring Back the Don planting event, interpretive walk or stewardship activity over the years has likely met Katie. From her beginnings with the Task Force to Bring Back the Don in a high school co-op placement, to a full-time position with Parks and Recreation co-ordinating community stewardship initiatives city-wide, Katie has been a consistent, friendly face in the Don. Her enthusiasm for educational environmental restoration projects, dedication to ecological integrity and wonderful way with young people will be missed tremendously.

Thank you, Katie, for all you've done for the Don and good luck with your future endeavours!



Brewery – Fundraising for the Task Force

The Mill Street Brewery has begun to support the work of the Task Force. The brewery's partners have a keen interest in the history of the Don River and its preservation.

The Mill Street Brewery is located just blocks from the Don at the Gooderham & Worts Distillery site. Veteran Brewmaster Michael Duggan, along with chef Jeffery Cooper, and financial analyst Steve Abrams are following in the footsteps of the many local breweries that were set up along the river at the turn of the last century.

So if you are interested in history and like beer, take a tour of the brewery and donate to the Task Force when you get a free sampling at the counter. Give them a call at 416-681-0338 and visit them at 55 Mill St. Building 63.



Purple Flowering Raspberry at Beechwood Wetland

THANKS TO OUR 2003 FUNDING PARTNERS!

So far this year, funding for Task Force projects has come from: City of Toronto, Environment Canada, EcoAction Community Funding Program, Unilever Canada, Toronto and Region Conservation Authority, The Pat and John McCutcheon Charitable Trust, Federation of Ontario Naturalists, Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources, The First Narayav Congregation, The Beer Store, The Mill St. Brewery 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.

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 St. (John at King). Call 416-397-7241 for more information.

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 St.
Toronto ON M5V 3C6

For information about events or activities, please call 416-392-0401, or e-mail us at driver@toronto.ca.

Bring Back the Don events are also posted on the City of Toronto's Web site: www.toronto.ca/don

