

Bring Back the Don

SEASONAL UPDATE

SPRING UPDATE 2003



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Crothers' Woods and Beechwood Wetlands - An Urban Oasis

Gregor G. Beck, Task Force Member

One of Toronto's most important natural areas is also one of its best kept secrets. Crothers' Woods and the adjacent Beechwood forests are nestled in the lower Don River valley, between the "Forks" of the Don and Pottery Road. This is one of the best remnant woodlands left in the southern watershed, and has been designated an "Environmentally Significant Area" (ESA) because of its spectacular diversity of native flora and fauna.

The Crothers' - Beechwood area is an oasis for wildlife and for flora - from local resident rarities to abundant migrant birds and insects. The woodlands contain a healthy diversity of native trees and shrubs, including butternut, bitternut and shagbark hickory, white and red oak, sugar and black maple, and witch hazel, with relatively few invasive exotic species. This part of the valley also serves as a critically important core natural area within the network of a "green corridor" in the Don watershed. Crothers' Woods is home to foxes, rabbits, beaver, and white-tailed deer, as well as great blue herons, belted kingfishers, and raptors, such as red-tailed hawk, American kestrel and sharp-shinned hawks, to name just a few. Brightly coloured warblers, orioles and monarch butterflies are seen regularly during migration and in summer.



Walking amongst the majestic trees in Crothers' Woods

Located within a short walking or cycling distance of several mid-town neighbourhoods, Crothers' Woods is a surprisingly tranquil refuge for wildlife and people despite its proximity to Bayview Avenue and the Don Valley Parkway. The area is located between south Leaside, Thornecliffe Park, Pape Village and Bennington Heights; a walk from Bayview and Nesbitt (or Moore) to Pape and O'Connor can be completed almost entirely as a leisurely ramble through woodlands, regenerating fields and riverside.

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Adopt a Naturalization Site

Participate in the Community Stewardship Program!

The City of Toronto, in conjunction with Bring Back the Don and other community environmental groups, invites you to join the Community Stewardship Program. The program involves volunteers in on-going maintenance and monitoring activities at a naturalization site of their choice.

Participants work in a team that is guided by a more experienced volunteer (team leader). Each team visits their site 2-4 times a month throughout the spring and summer, and once or twice in the fall.

Teams are involved in activities such as weeding invasive non-native plant species, watering planted vegetation, collecting litter, building and maintaining bird boxes, building habitat brush bundles, and monitoring specific conditions of the site. Monitoring activities may include the monitoring of water chemistry, water levels, benthic invertebrates, birds, butterflies and vegetation.

Stewardship teams will be working at the following sites in 2003:

Lower Don Watershed: Beechwood Wetland (new restoration project), Chester Springs Marsh, Don Valley Brick Works, Don Narrows (Lower Don Trail between the Riverdale Park Footbridge and Queen Street), Riverdale Park East Wetland, Riverdale Farm Ponds, and Roycroft Park (Glen Edyth and Roycroft Wetlands)

West Don Watershed: Earl Bales Park, and Glendon Forest

Waterfront: Humber Bay Butterfly Habitat, and the Toronto Island Sand Dunes

Humber Watershed: Humberwood, and Eglinton Flats Park

If you are interested in participating in the Community Stewardship Program, please call Katie MacDonald at 416-392-1948 or email kmacdon@toronto.ca.



Stewards weeding at the Riverdale Farm Ponds

Mountain Biking: A Growing Concern for Crothers' Woods

Neiland Brissenden, Task Force Member

Crothers' Woods, behind the Loblaws store near Millwood Road, is a favourite location for mountain bikers, especially for those searching to break new trail and have a more challenging ride. New paths continually emerge, thus creating an intricate web of trails of varying widths for off-roaders to enjoy. Unfortunately, these trails lead to topsoil erosion and degrade the delicate ecosystem of Crothers' Woods, a rare remnant Carolinian forest.

We need to monitor the effects of mountain biking to ensure that it does not cause significant damage. Some bikers have cut down trees to build ramps and jumps, while others repeatedly make new trails.

This summer, the Task Force plans to recruit mountain bikers for a trail stewardship team. Once trained, these volunteers will work to improve existing trail conditions and limit the growth of new trails in sensitive areas. Please check our website: www.toronto.ca/don for information about how you can participate.

Issues Update

John Wilson, Task Force Chair

Our urban forest is under threat. Dry, hot summers have compounded the effects of the disturbed, urban hydrological cycle, and many trees are dying. They need water. City Council should be commended for passing a by-law requiring new developments in former Toronto and East York to install underground watering systems for street trees. Let's extend that throughout the city.

Over the long term, we need to restore a more natural hydrological cycle - not only for our trees, but also for our rivers and waterfront. The Wet Weather Flow Management Master Plan has been approved in principle by Council. It provides a thirty year blueprint for healing our polluted waters. But it's only a blueprint. It needs ongoing support and money. Keep your councillor aware that the public wants to treat wet weather as a valuable resource.

The federal government is conducting a National Road Salts Consultation Round Table prior to a final decision on declaring road salts to be toxic under the Canadian Environmental Protection Act. One Task Force member, Kevin Mercer, sits on the round table, as do stakeholders from the salt industry, road authorities and environmental groups. The Environment Minister and the cabinet need to know that the public wants responsible, firm reductions of chloride releases to the environment. The Task Force to Bring Back the Don is promoting this message - and the threat of chlorides to those few vulnerable natural areas that are left in cities.

As politicians start campaigning for the Fall municipal elections, ask them questions about the environment, sustainable transportation, water management and public investment in parks. Help to make the urban environment an election issue.



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.



Look for the silver "Bring Back the Don" truck at our planting events.

Plantings

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.-noon, rain or shine. For a weekday event schedule, contact Keri at 416-392-0373 or visit driver@toronto.ca. Please note that we ask groups of ten or more to register with us in advance.

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 e-mail driver@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 10 a.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

Saturday, April 26

Learn about the Greening the Narrows initiative along the Lower Don Trail. Activities include tree and shrub planting between Queen and Dundas Streets, children's games and interpretive tours. Meet on the Lower Don Trail at the base of the Queen Street stairs.

Beechwood Wetland Tree and Shrub Planting

Sunday, April 27 - 1:30 - 3:30 p.m.

Located along the Lower Don Trail, north of Pottery Road and south of the Beechwood Drive access. There is limited parking at the end of Beechwood Drive near the Police K-9 training unit. This is a partnership project with the Federation of Ontario Naturalists and the TRCA.

Don Valley Brick Works Tree and Shrub Planting

Saturday, May 3

Planting in the park behind the brick buildings. Located on the west side of Bayview Avenue, just south of Pottery Road. Look for the brick buildings. Parking available. Call for directions by TTC, foot or bike.

Lower Don Trail Tree and Shrub Planting

Sunday, May 4

Plant trees and shrubs along the channelized section of the Don, between Queen and Dundas Streets. Meet on the trail at the base of the Queen Street stairs.

Beechwood Wetland Tree and Shrub Planting

Saturday, May 24

Located along the Lower Don Trail north of Pottery Road and south of the Beechwood Drive access. There is limited parking at the end of Beechwood Drive near the Police K-9 training unit. This is a partnership project with the Federation of Ontario Naturalists and the TRCA.

Beltline Oak Woodland Planting

Sunday, May 25

Located on the south side of Moore Ave. just east of the Beltline Trail between Mount Pleasant and Bayview Ave. Limited parking may be found on the north side of Moore Ave outside of the Mount Pleasant Cemetery.

Chester Springs Marsh Tree and Shrub Planting

Saturday, May 31

Located along the Lower Don Trail, north of the Riverdale Footbridge. Meet at the base of the stairs from the Riverdale Footbridge at 9:45.

Riverdale Park East Planting

Sunday, June 1

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 Planting

Saturday, June 14

Located along the Lower Don Trail north of Pottery Road and south of the Beechwood Drive access. There is limited parking at the end of Beechwood Drive near the Police K-9 training unit. This is a partnership project with the Federation of Ontario Naturalists and the TRCA.

Tours of the Valley

18th Annual Don River Walk

Saturday, May 3, 11 a.m. - 1 p.m.

Join Task Force member Dalton Shipway for a look at visionary plans for the Lower Don Lands. Meet at Queen and River Streets, in front of the Humane Society building.

Crothers' Woods Walk

Saturday, June 21, 10 a.m. - 12 p.m.

Join Bring Back the Don and the Friends of the Don East (FODE) for an interpretive tour of Crothers' Woods, an Environmentally Significant Area (ESA). Crothers' Woods is a high quality hardwood forest, located in the heart of Toronto. Meet in the parking lot of the Loblaws at Redway Road, near the North Toronto Treatment Plant access road. Please wear sturdy footwear as the trails are slippery when wet. No dogs, please. Call Keri at 416-392-0373 for more information. For other FODE events and information, visit www.web.ca/~fode



Bring Back the Don

UPCOMING EVENTS

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Other People's Events

Riverdale Farm North Slope Planting

Saturday, April 26, 9:30 - 11:30 a.m.

Plant trees and shrubs with the Green Thumbs Growing Things Program in partnership with the Riverdale Farm Advisory Committee and the City of Toronto. Meet at the end of Winchester Street. Children welcome. For more info call 416-876-1480.

The Don Watershed Council's 10th Anniversary Paddle the Don Event

Sunday, May 4, 9 a.m. - noon

Please call 416-661-6600 X. 5397 to register or X. 5283 for more information.

Toronto Island Events

- Saturday, May 3 - Tree and Shrub Planting
- Sunday, June 1 - Sand Dune Planting

Call 416-392-7842 to register. Events start at 10 a.m. Meet outside the ferry terminal gates, city side (located immediately west of the Weston Harbour Castle at Queen's Quay and Bay Street). Ferry ride to Hanlan's Point is free for volunteers.

Partners: City of Toronto, Toronto Bay Initiative, Evergreen

Spadina Quay Wetland Planting Event

Saturday, June 7, 10 a.m. - noon

Help plant and take a guided tour of the project site at the base of Spadina at Queen's Quay. Partners: City of Toronto, Toronto Bay Initiative

East and West Don Events

East Don Parklands Tree and Shrub Planting

Saturday, April 26, 10 a.m. - noon

Located in the East Don Watershed, take the walking trail off of Pineway Road, north of Finch Avenue. Meet where the trails cross near the river. Partners: City of Toronto, East Don Parkland Partners, Evergreen

Earl Bales Park Tree and Shrub Planting

Sunday, May 4, 1:30 - 4:30 p.m.

Plant trees and shrubs in association with

the Earl Bales Earth Day Festival. Park entrance is located off Bathurst Street, just south of Sheppard Avenue. Follow park road, staying to the right, and meet in the furthest back parking lot. Partners: City of Toronto, Evergreen

Glendon Forest Tree and Shrub Planting

Saturday, May 10, 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: City of Toronto, Friends of Glendon Forest, Evergreen

Alamosa Park Wetland Planting

Saturday, June 7, 10 a.m. - noon

Plant wetland and herbaceous species at the 'Beaver Pond' in the East Don Watershed. Located south of the Alamosa Park tennis courts, off Alamosa Drive, south of Finch Avenue. Partners: City of Toronto, East Don Parkland Partners

Lost Rivers Walks

Sunday, May 18, 2 p.m.

Ashbridge's Bay Creeks with John Wilson.

Meet at Broadview and Hogarth Avenues. We will explore at least 11 lost creeks in four distinct sub-watersheds that once flowed into Ashbridge's Bay.

Sunday, June 15, 1:45 p.m.

Landscape, Nature and Natural Resources

with Ed Freeman. Meet at the Ontario Science Centre (front door) We will end at Chorley Park, via the Brick Works.

Sunday, August 17, 2 p.m.

Gardens and Nature in St James Town and

South Rosedale with Sarah Brierley and Helen Mills. Meet at Sherbourne and Bloor Street East, outside Sherbourne subway station. A joint walk with Evergreen to see St. James Town West Park's native plant habitat gardens, and gardens and forest restoration in Rosedale.

Water in the City Walks with RiverSides Stewardship Alliance

Learn about the water flowing through the city's underground sewer system, the effects of stormwater on our lake and rivers, and Toronto's water heritage.

- Sunday, May 18th - May 2/4 Walk
- Sunday, June 8th - Canadian National Rivers Day
- Sunday, July 6th - Toronto Heritage Walk

All walks begin at Chester subway station at 10 a.m. and end at approximately noon. Call 416-392-1983 or email riversides@riversides.org for more information.



Steward monitoring water chemistry at the Glen Edyth Wetland

Saving Toronto's Trees

Michelle Reid, Task Force Member

Thousands of Toronto trees have died due to summer conditions in the last five years. Drought like conditions, resulting from 18 per cent less moisture and a 2°C jump in temperatures have stressed trees beyond their capacity to recover. Healthy trees are able to withstand drought, but those stressed by poor soil, root constriction, and pollution are dying in record numbers.

The best way to stop tree loss from drought is through preventative strategies and appropriate care. Preventative strategies reduce the possibility of damage from drought, pollution and pests. It entails selecting appropriate tree species, and providing the right soil, light and moisture.

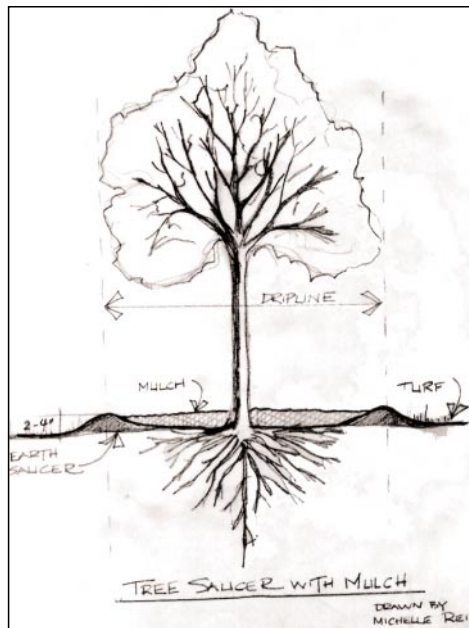
Preventative Strategies:

1. Select native tree species. Native trees are naturally resistant to pests and able to thrive in the local climate.
2. Healthy soil is the basis for a healthy tree. Add compost to the soil to improve porosity, reduce runoff and provides important nutrients.
3. Watering is critical to the production of nutrients essential to tree health. Deep watering is the best defense against drought stress and the best method of water conservation. It applies water directly to the roots and reduces water loss to evaporation and runoff.
4. Apply environmental design practices to your property. Disconnect your downspout and re-direct that water into the garden or under a tree. Apply mulches of crushed stone or bark to bare soil, which will retain moisture, reduce evaporation and cut down on weeds.

Trees in the Toronto area are dying from the effects of drought and pollution. We can save trees by watering them during periods of drought, by ensuring that newly planted trees are chosen wisely and properly established. Most importantly, we can conserve water by designing our properties in an environmentally sensitive manner.



Brick Works stewardship team watering young trees and shrubs.



Tree Saucer: a moisture retention strategy.

Seasonal Tip: Watering your Garden

Michelle Reid, Task Force Member

Water use doubles in the summer, due to lawn and garden watering. Much of this water is wasted through over-watering, evaporation and runoff. The actual amount of water needed depends on the type of plant, the soil and the rainfall received.

Plants require twice as much water in the spring than in all other seasons of the year. Over-watering in the late summer & fall encourages the growth of tender plant parts easily damaged by the cold of winter. Plants also need less water as they mature. During their first year, trees need 2 - 3 cm of water, once a week. In the second to fifth years, they require 2 - 3 cm of water every two to three weeks; mature trees need 2 - 3 cm once a month.

When watering:

1. Avoid watering in the middle of the day as water is lost to evaporation.
2. Water during periods of little precipitation or following high temperatures.
3. Water close to the trunk or stem.
4. Leave a garden hose on at a slow trickle for two to three hours.
5. Remove sod around the tree to create a saucer and fill with mulch to prevent evaporation.

Lawn watering:

1. Established lawns only need 2.5 cm of water per week.
2. During periods of drought, grass may yellow indicating dormancy. When rainfall returns it will quickly turn green again.
3. Over-watering causes fungus and root rot, while infrequent, deep watering encourages healthy roots.
4. Longer grass (6 cm) provides shade to the roots, increases water absorption and reduces erosion.

Crothers' Woods

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Yet the Crothers' Woods - Beechwood area is not without its threats. From time to time, proposals for new road construction or expansions (e.g. Redway Road extension or Don Valley Parkway widening) continue to pose a risk to the region's long-term survival and ecological health. Other threats include damage to vegetation and soils from intensive mountain bike use in some areas, tree removal and excessive pruning along the Hydro corridor, as well as pollution of the river itself from road salts, stormwater and other sources.



Beechwood wetland: construction of the wetland and removal of invasive exotic Japanese knotweed occurred in February - March 2003 .

On the east side of the Don River, near the base of Beechwood Drive, a major terrestrial and aquatic habitat restoration project is underway. The project will help restore a wildlife corridor and demonstrate how wetlands and woodlands provide habitat and improve water quality. The project includes the creation of a large new wetland complex and the restoration of a diversity of native trees, shrubs and herbaceous plants. The wetland was dug in February - March 2003, and planting and habitat stewardship events are planned for 2003 and beyond. The project is a collaborative effort of Bring Back the Don, Federation of Ontario Naturalists, City of Toronto Natural Environment and Horticulture, and Toronto and Region Conservation Authority. For more information, please contact Keri McMahon at 416-392-0373.

Bring Back the Don and The Beer Store Partnership

Bring Back the Don is pleased to report on its recent partnership with The Beer Store and participation in the Grand Opening of their newest store at 1580 Avenue Rd. on March 28th. Bring Back the Don recognizes The Beer Store as a leader in environmental responsibility and community involvement and shares these core values. Funds raised during the bottle drive on March 29th will be used to continue efforts to bring back a clean, green, and accessible Don River Watershed. The Beer Store staff will also be participating in planting events this spring.

THANKS TO OUR 2003 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, The Pat and John McCutcheon Charitable Trust, Federation of Ontario Naturalists, Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources, The Beer Store, 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

