



2002/2003 Annual Report

Facilitating ongoing public input and assistance in the stewardship of High Park for present and future generations of park users

High Park Citizens' Advisory Committee, Box 108, 95 Lavinia Ave., Toronto, ON M6S 3H9 Email: highparknc@yahoo.ca
For more information about the Committee's activities and events, call the Volunteer Hotline: (416) 392-1748
Visit our Websites at www.toronto.ca/involved/outreach.htm and www.highpark.org

The Year in Review

A high level of Committee activity took place during 2002/2003 including the following:

- We obtained charitable status;
- Volunteers organized and hosted 22 Park walks involving some 450 participants;
- Over 5200 native plants were placed as part of the program to restore vegetation to pre-settlement condition in one third of the Park;
- Volunteers sold hundreds of native plants to residents in neighborhoods near High Park as a means of expanding the native vegetation boundaries of the Park;
- The Nature Centre accommodated over 3700 school students in hands-on nature learning activities. Another 900 students were involved in an activity-based nature education program in the summer;
- HYPE, a new volunteer program connecting youth to the environment, enjoyed an excellent initial season with 18 Saturday morning workshops, each involving 10-15 high school students;
- Volunteers in the Park Watch program spent 492 hours in efforts aimed at keeping the Park a safe and friendly place and made over 416 park user contacts;
- The Adventure Playground was re-named the Jamie Bell Adventure Playground;
- Our Archives have been moved from the Runnymede Public Library to the High Park Library.

Natural Environment Subcommittee

We met regularly with City staff to review proposed projects and restoration efforts within the Park. These included improvement in the operation of the Howard and Ridout Settling Ponds in the northeast corner of the Park and a review of the Spring Creek water course issuing from the Ponds. We were consulted on initial plans for the configuration of the Upper Duck Pond into a wetland. We were also pleased to work with Urban Forestry in the development of the "High Park Vegetation Management Plan" and to assist in the prescribed burn program.

Following meetings with our members, City staff and the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority, a new protocol was developed for adjusting water levels on Grenadier Pond in order to improve habitat. The reports that follow describe our various volunteer programs in detail.

Walking Tours

Our Walking Tour Program continued throughout the year on alternate Sunday afternoons in the fall and winter seasons and every second Tuesday evening in the spring and summer with a total of 22 walks. Some 450 people participated. This turnout was less than in previous years, partly due to inclement weather in the winter and spring, normally a popular period. Donations at the walks helped to support this and other volunteer programs.

The walking tours covered a range of natural and historical topics designed to interest both "regulars" and newcomers alike. We very much appreciate the interest and enthusiasm of both walk leaders and hosts, many of whom give their time year after year. Thanks are also due to the staff of Colborne Lodge, where the Sunday afternoon walks usually finish for a refreshing drink (warm or cold depending on the time of year) and an introduction to the Lodge/Museum. We thank City staff, too, for their continuing support in printing walking tour flyers and others for their help in publicizing these walks.

Volunteer Stewardship Program

The biggest achievement by Volunteer Stewards (VSPs) in 2002/3 was the Boulevard Beds, around the car park east of the Grenadier Café and Teahouse. The VSPs took these bare earth Beds over in 2000. Planting was done in 2001 and 2002. In the springs of 2002 and 2003 serviceberry trees bloomed white and smooth roses pink. In summer there were white smooth beardtongue, blue hairy beardtongue and orange butterfly weed. In fall there were yellow golden rod and purple and white asters. North of this area, the Tablelands, many species were planted, increasing diversity, colour and wildlife habitat. Elsewhere in the Park plantings included around 1200 plants on Site 10, a wooded area to the north of the Park, on June 9th. On October 9th around 130 trees and shrubs were planted along Spring Creek. Species included swamp rose, trembling aspen, elderberry, white birch, purple flowering raspberry, pussy willow and witch hazel. Spring 2003 has been cold, with native plants reluctant to grow,

while weeds like garlic mustard and dandelions enjoy the rain. Lupines are coming into bud and should be blooming blue masses by June. The total number of plants planted in 2002 was 3743 which included 25 tree and shrub species, 15 species of grass and sedge, and 34 forbs species. The 2003 total number of plants to date is 122 which includes 2 tree species, 2 species of grass and 14 forbs species.

Our goal is restoration of the natural areas in High Park (roughly 135 acres (54 hectares)) to presettlement conditions, along with spreading use and knowledge of native plants. Over the past year VSPs spent 1650 hours working in the park.

The net total VSPs raised from plant sales in fall 2002 and spring 2003 was \$1300. This is being used to purchase tools, hoses, etc. On occasion we provide pizza at the end of an extra-long planting session.

Sub-groups of the VSP include Adopt-a-Plot Holders and Buckthorn Busters. Eighteen people monitor and care for 13 specific areas (adopted plots) on the Tablelands, pruning an invasive white poplar, pulling garlic mustard and dandelions, and planting columbines, lupines, penstemons, sunflowers and other natives. A group of six or so tree cutters and pruners have a long-term plan to control the invasive buckthorn tree.

The web site arranged by Rigmae Lee of Works & Emergency Services continues to attract new volunteers.

Thanks to all VSPs for their charm, suggestions, humour and toil over the years.

Among City staff, thanks to Arthur Beaugard, Manager of Natural Environment and Horticulture; High Park Greenhouse staff including Sue Clarke and Jocie Bilodeau; Carol Guy, High Park Supervisor; Beth McEwen and Vojka Miladinovic of Urban Forestry; and Cara Webster of the City Parks Restoration Crew.

High Park Nature Centre

The High Park Nature Centre has achieved its first full year of continuous operating. Among other milestones, we have established relationships with new funders and extended our programs to more groups and schools.

- In May/June 2002, our oak savannah restoration program accommodated 54 school groups (1500 children). Local school groups learned about High Park's black oak savannah by actively planting over 1500 native grasses, sedges and wildflowers in this globally rare ecosystem. In July and August, over 900 children and adults participated in our activity-based environmental education summer program. Each week in the summer we hosted a different nature theme in addition to 12 family events that were offered free of charge to the community in the afternoon every Wednesday and every second Saturday.
- From mid-September to the end of November, we offered our first Fall Planting Program to 2200 local children from 95 Toronto area schools. The children actively participated in restoration activities that included the planting of close to 8000 acorns and 3500 wildflower seed balls in the oak savannahs. We conducted our first annual March Break Adventure Camp, in conjunction

with Colborne Lodge, in March 2003 (15 children attended).

- We maintained our public outreach activities in the park community by offering interpretive displays and activities at High Park's Earth Day Event, the High Park Harvest Festival, and the Children's Garden Lizzy's Lounging Ladybug Family Picnic.
- We secured two computers from ReBoot Canada to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the Nature Centre. As a result, the Nature Centre was able to obtain internet access and set up an e-mail account.
- We obtained additional funding from the TD Friends of the Environment Foundation to purchase equipment for the Nature Centre. Noteworthy purchases include a telescope tripod, digital camera, pond-dipping nets, and new gardening trowels. In addition to the submission of over 20 funding proposals to various organizations, we established new funding partnerships with the Etobicoke Rotary Club and Environment Canada's Eco-Action Community Fund in order to sustain the operations of the Nature Centre.
- Finally, we strengthened our cooperative relationship with other programs operating in High Park (Children's Garden, Colborne Lodge) and established new working relationships with educational programs operating in the City of Toronto.

HYPE

High Park Youth connecting People and the Environment (HYPE) is a new program this year. It aims to help youth gain an awareness of the ecological balance of High Park, while forming friendships and strengthening ties with the community through active involvement. This vision was made a reality by our steering committee of students and adult advisors which was formed in April 2002. Five months of intensive planning culminated in the hosting of our first workshop in September 2002, an introduction to park ecosystems with Tony Jovan and a Hawk Hill talk with Don Barnett.

Over the course of the year we hosted approximately 18 Saturday morning workshops each involving 10-15 high school students. Through these workshops, many young people had an opportunity to learn about High Park ecosystems and contribute to their restoration. Some of these hands-on educational events included:

- Native seed collection, both gathering and labeling seeds at the Boulevard Beds.
- Water quality testing by catching benthic organisms with environmental science students from University of Toronto
- Composting and winter maintenance of the children's garden with Keely Forth
- Invasive species control, including cutting Buckthorn and researching the effectiveness of inhibiting regrowth with mineral oil
- Tree inventory and data collection in management plot 7C with forester, Stephen Smith

- Tree planting as part of a naturalization project at the corner of Keele and Bloor

Some 330 cumulative hours of work compiled by the students are eligible for credit as community service.

Our steering committee included: Ray Bielaskie, Catherine Raven, Anna Keefe, Jessica Rode, Nicholas Rolfe, Tara Muzamdar and Emma Davey. Throughout the year we received support and guidance from many different volunteers including Scott Laver, Cheryl Hart, Sarah Kear, Tony Jovan, Eva Kurgan and Don Barnett.

We are very excited about continuing the program next September with new executive members and a grant of \$700 from Bell United Way. We are hopeful that HYPE will continue to make a lasting positive impression on High Park.

Contact with Other Groups

We continue to participate in the Humber Watershed Alliance, Tall Grass Ontario, Society for Ecological Restoration, Federation of Ontario Naturalists, Green Tourism, Evergreen and the Stewardship Forum/Network.

Transportation Subcommittee

The Transportation Subcommittee deals with traffic and parking in High Park and all matters concerning movement of park users and their vehicles in and around the Park.

The Road realignment project for Centre Rd, Spring Rd and Deer Pen Road was completed in early 2003.

Safety & Recreation Subcommittee

Our purpose is to promote the diverse cultural and recreational activities that High Park offers in a manner compatible with the natural environment and character of the Park; to ensure personal safety needs of High Park users are met; and to promote safe use of the Park.

High Park Adventure

The High Park Adventure is a community-built playground on the east side of the Park. Our focus is to provide a safe and exciting play experience for children.

On Tues, May 20th a Public meeting was held to discuss the renaming of the Adventure Playground to the “Jamie Bell Adventure Playground” in honour of Jamie, a community leader and former HPCAC chair who passed away in fall 2002.

On Saturday, May 24th the HPCAC and the Toronto Parks & Recreation Dept held a commemoration in memory of Jamie Bell in conjunction with our 5th annual maintenance day event.

In-kind support was received from Starbucks Coffee and the Grenadier Restaurant.

Park Watch

Park Watch volunteers keep High Park a safe and friendly place by maintaining a visible, trustworthy and welcoming presence in High Park. We provide information and assistance to park users and promote responsible behaviour in the Park.

Park Watch spent 492 volunteer-hours in the Park during 2002-03, with over 416 contacts or incidents recorded. Park Watch Headquarters operates out of the Chess Club located at the north end of High Park.

On Sunday, April 20th, Park Watch volunteers were successful in reuniting a lost child with the parents near the Adventure Playground.

In-kind support was received from the Grenadier Restaurant.

Annual Events & Joint Programming

Approximately 1,041 children and adults enjoyed the various programs and events jointly offered by the High Park Citizens’ Advisory Committee and Colborne Lodge. Some of the highlights were:

- **6th Annual Pumpkin Float** (Sunday, Oct. 27th) - Over 100 children carved pumpkins that were lit with candles and placed in the Sunken Gardens to float like sailboats set afire. The setting sun, the darkening park and shadowy trees all formed a glimmering background to a sea of jack-o-lanterns. In-kind support was received from Fresh & Wild Fruit Market.
- **6th Annual Winter Fun Day** (Sunday, Jan. 19th) - Over 400 children participated in games, horse and wagon rides, pony rides and roasting marshmallows over a bonfire. In-kind support was received from Rennie’s No Frills.
- **6th Annual Spring Egg Hunt** (Sunday, April 13th) – Over 216 children hunted for Easter eggs, dyed eggs and participated in egg races. In-kind support was received from Johnvince Foods and local Shoppers Drug Marts (Bloor and Dundas St).

Proceeds from these events assist in the maintenance of the Jamie Bell High Park Adventure Playground and other programs in the Park.

High Park Dog Community

On Thursday, April 10th, a Q&A flyer was discussed for the dog community. The goal is to provide interesting information for off-leash users as to why they need to respect and understand the Code of Conduct. The Q&A’s would help to promote changes and provide facts and concerns (i.e. why are the trails fenced etc) in a kind and informative way.

Dog Hill Poop & Scoop Clean-Up day was held on Saturday, April 26th. In-kind support was received from The Kennel Café, Dog Lounge, Pet Value and Global Pet Food.

1947-97 Bloor St. W.

We have continued to express concern with this project. It is located immediately adjacent to the western boundary of High Park and very close to Wendigo Creek that flows into Grenadier Pond.

During excavation in late 2002, the site was found to be contaminated by the previous use of the site as a gasoline service centre. An MOE directors order has been issued requiring the owner, Context Inc., to remediate the site. That is now underway and will continue, we understand, until late 2003. HPCAC is concerned that the contamination may have moved off the site and into the Park. It is also concerned with the effects of the remediation process.

HPCAC has written to the Commissioner of Economic Development, Culture and Tourism requesting that the Department take a strong leadership role in protecting the current and future interests of the Park with respect to the

clean up processes and conduct an assessment about whether or not the contamination may have migrated into the Park.

Colborne Lodge Report

Colborne Lodge is the 19th century home of park founders, John and Jemima Howard. Now a museum, the Lodge provides public programs on the Howards' contributions to the development of Toronto, and in particular their role in the development of High Park.

The Lodge's mandate in promoting the Howards' interest in protecting the park in its natural state in perpetuity for the use of the citizens of Toronto is shared by the HPCAC and consistent with their goals. Over the years, the Lodge and the HPCAC have expanded their cooperative public programs and further developed their support for each other's initiatives.

In addition to our on-going event and programming relationship, this year Colborne Lodge supported the development of the HYPE youth group and assisted with fundraising efforts for the Nature Centre. The HPCAC has provided valuable support to the Lodge in the development of an oral history project. This project was a collaboration between the Lodge, Parkdale Collegiate Institute and park users, past and present. The students researched the park and interviewed some of the approximately 100 park users who responded to the call for park memories. This project resulted in a travelling exhibit featuring student artwork, written expressions interspersed with memories and reflections from park users about the significance of High Park in their lives.

For information about HPCAC volunteer activities and programs, please call:

Volunteer Hotline 416 392-1748

or visit our websites at:

www.toronto.ca/involved/outreach.htm

www.highpark.org

Treasurer's Report

Financial Statement June 1, 2002 to May 31, 2003

Walking Tours and General Programs

Opening Balance at June 1, 2001	\$1,613.00
Income from Walking Tour Donations	\$1,068.71
Expenses in Support of Volunteer Programs	<u>(\$1,604.80)</u>
Closing Balance at May 31, 2002	\$1,076.91

Volunteer Stewardship Program

Opening Balance at June 1, 2001	\$2,075.00
Income from Donations and Sales	\$1,736.00
Expenses	<u>(\$1,369.44)</u>
Closing Balance at May 31, 2002	\$2,441.56

Adventure Playground

Opening Balance at June 1, 2001	\$1,195.95
Income from Donations and Sales	\$2,068.13
Expenses	<u>(\$1,937.50)</u>
Closing Balance at May 31, 2002	\$1,326.58

Nature Centre

Opening Balance at June 1, 2001	\$8,788.00
Income from Donations and Fees	\$70,347.26
Expenses	<u>(\$66,188.90)</u>
Closing Balance at May 31, 2002	\$12,946.36

CONSOLIDATED ACCOUNTS

Opening Balance at June 1, 2001	\$13,671.95
Income	\$75,220.10
Expenses	<u>(\$71,100.64)</u>
Closing Balance at May 31, 2002	\$17,791.41

NOTE: This financial report is unaudited.

The High Park Citizens' Advisory Committee

The High Park Citizens' Advisory Committee is a volunteer group made up of a broad range of park users, including individuals and organized groups. The Advisory Committee provides public input on park policies, goals and objectives; helps facilitate volunteer involvement in park initiatives; and promotes public awareness and responsible stewardship of the Park. Meetings are open to the general public.

The HPCAC voting membership includes local ratepayer/ residents associations, recreational stakeholders, long-term interest groups, business/park entrepreneurs and eleven members-at-large from the community.

Our meetings are open to the general public. Meetings are usually held at the Howard Park Tennis Club at 6.30 p.m. on the third Wednesday of September, November, January, March and May. The Annual General Meeting is usually held at the Grenadier Café and Tea House on the third Wednesday in June.

Archival information about the HPCAC and the natural restoration of High Park is maintained at the High Park Public Library at 228 Roncesvalles Ave.

The HPCAC operates in partnership with the Toronto Parks and Recreation Division and Colborne Lodge.

The executive members of the HPCAC for 2002/03 were:

Robin Sorys (Chair)
Ray Bielaskie (treasurer)
Ken Sharratt (secretary)

plus the chairs of the subcommittees and program groups

The HPCAC is supported by three subcommittees:

Safety & Recreation (Robin Sorys, chair);
Transportation (Susan Flanagan, chair); and
Natural Environment (Ron Allan & Karen Yukich, co-chairs).

In turn, these subcommittees sponsor a number of volunteer programs including:

Park Watch (Gloria Worth, chair);
HP Adventure (Robin Sorys, chair);
HP K-9 Committee (Klara Latif, chair);
Volunteer Stewardship Program (Gillian Smith & Jean Vesik, co-chairs);
Adopt-a Plot Program (Ron Luft, coordinator);
Nature Centre (Karen Yukich & Karyn Morris, co-chairs);
HYPE (Ray Bielekieskie & Catherine Raven, advisors); and
Walking Tours (Ron Allan & Cheryl Hart, co-chairs).
