

Tommy Thompson park

Toronto's Urban Wilderness
Master Plan Implementation Project Community Newsletter

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Summer 2008

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Lake Ontario Park Update

Waterfront Toronto is currently in the final stages of preparing a Master Plan for the area known as Lake Ontario Park. This new park will span from Cherry Beach in the west to Ashbridges Bay Park in the east and will include Tommy Thompson Park. Working with Waterfront Toronto on this project is Field Operations, a leading-edge landscape architecture and urban design practice based out of New York City. The goal of the Master Plan is to foster the creation of a new waterfront park that is beautiful, sustainable and that serves as a special place for Toronto, analogous to Vancouver's Stanley Park. With an estimated 20 year construction timeline for full build out, the Master Plan objectives for this 925 acre park are consistent with TRCA's goals for the future management of Tommy Thompson Park.

Park Hours

Tommy Thompson Park is open to the public year-round on weekends and holidays, except Christmas Day, Boxing Day and New Year's Day. Operating hours are from 9:00 am to 4:30 pm from November to March and 9:00 am to 6:00 pm from April to October.

Please note that the last day of Shuttle Van service at Tommy Thompson Park for this season will be Monday October 13. This service will resume in April 2009.

Public Safety

During the implementation of the Project, the use of some areas of the Park may be limited. Signage will be posted to clearly delineate areas where access is temporarily restricted.

For further information regarding Tommy Thompson Park, please visit www.trca.on.ca/ttp

If you have specific questions regarding the project or if you would like to be placed on the project mailing list, please contact:

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Shorebird wetland small basin.

Background

This newsletter provides an update on current and future activities associated with the Tommy Thompson Park Master Plan Implementation Project.

The Project

In 1989, TRCA completed an extensive provincial environmental assessment and planning process which resulted in the creation of the Tommy Thompson Park Master Plan. In 1992, an Addendum was prepared and later approved by the Minister of the Environment. This planning process became the foundation for the creation of a unique urban wilderness feature on Toronto's waterfront.

Until recently, limited funds have been available to implement the Master Plan with the City of Toronto contributing funding for interim management. A funding partnership between TRCA and Waterfront Toronto for \$8 million will realize key components of the Master Plan including natural area enhancements and the installation of park infrastructure.

Natural Area Enhancement Plan Update!

Shorebird wetland is ready for migration!

Earlier this spring topsoil was added to the shorebird wetland to provide habitat for benthic invertebrates. Small amounts of woody material and stones were also installed for habitat diversity. Vegetation growth in the dry wetland was good in many locations, which will improve growing conditions for benthic invertebrates. Finally in early July water was pumped into the wetland with immediate results! Within days dragonflies and damselflies were seen flying about, hopefully looking for areas to reproduce. Water striders and water beetles were also taking advantage of the new habitat and the resident killdeer and spotted sandpipers appear thrilled! We are looking forward to fall shorebird migration...

Project objectives

- Preserve significant species;
- Protect environmentally significant areas;
- Enhance aquatic and terrestrial habitat; and
- Enhance public recreational opportunities.



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Embayment C aquatic wetlands

Aquatic habitat enhancement

During the winter TRCA staff began enhancement of the western edge of Embayment C. Rock shoals, anchored logs and woody stumps were added to improve the structural diversity of the nearshore area and shoreline. Staff fenced off areas in the south west cove to exclude carp and waterfowl. Aquatic plants were installed this summer to help create emergent marsh habitat.

Spring plantings

Over 300 deciduous trees and shrubs were installed this spring in various areas around the park. The western end of Cell One was the focus of most of the new plantings, as well as the rehabilitation area on Peninsula D. This area is targeted for native shrub plantings as the sub-canopy is dominated by non-native honeysuckle. As the native shrubs mature and can provide food and cover for wildlife, the honeysuckle will be removed. Selected Cell One riparian areas were also planted with native wet meadow species, which will add to the health and diversity of the area. All of the new plants are performing well thanks to the wetter than usual summer.



Cell One deciduous planting node

Peninsula D dune restoration

The sandy area on Peninsula D that resulted from hydraulic dredging in the 1970s resembles a dune type habitat in the latter stages of succession; however, because it is not a natural system it has never been significantly colonized by typical dune species. Early this summer, TRCA staff fenced off areas of this sand habitat to protect it from trampling and predation by herbivores and installed marram grass. Marram, or American beach grass, is a pioneer species that dominates dune systems. Colonization by this species stabilizes and increases the organic content of the soil, eventually making it suitable for a more diverse range of plant species. Restoration of this habitat will also directly benefit wildlife by providing additional cover and an improved food source. Resident cottontails already approve.



Peninsula D dune restoration

Park Trails

Trail maintenance work was undertaken this spring and most of the trail edges have been re-vegetated. Additional work is needed in some areas and will be completed this summer and fall. The Nature Viewing Trail was mowed in the late spring, however, the unprecedented amount of rain – and vegetation growth – means that the trail requires extra mowing. In fact, one section of the trail that is routinely closed each spring to protect significant species was so overgrown when it was reopened that it was difficult to locate!

TRCA has started planning for the trail's signage. This will include maps and trail markers, as well as interpretive signage. Temporary signs have been installed to mark non-permitted uses on the Primary Pedestrian and Nature Viewing Trails. Bicycles are not permitted on these trails due to problems with trail rutting, increased erosion and conflicts with pedestrians. Cyclists are requested to use the Multi-Use Trail, which is paved and runs the full length of the park.

Park Infrastructure

Montgomery Sisam Architects have been retained to design the park's infrastructure including the new staff booth, environmental shelter, washrooms and ecological research station. Conceptual designs have already been presented to the Waterfront Design Review Panel.

The remaining light standards around the park are scheduled to be removed this summer and fall. Other clean-up details include the removal of old posts and faded signs. The elimination of these items will add to the urban wilderness atmosphere of TTP.

TTP Interesting Stories and Tidbits

Foxes make a return to TTP!

After at least a decade without any fox sightings, red foxes are back at TTP again. Foxes compete directly with coyotes for both shelter and food, and with the park's healthy coyote population it is no surprise that foxes have not been around, but this changed late last fall when a volunteer was "pretty sure" she saw a red fox. This was confirmed by several more people with additional sightings and someone even saw two! It will be interesting to see what become of the foxes – if they will call TTP home for the next little while, or leave it for the coyotes. Speaking of coyotes



Young coyote, Photo courtesy of A. Gray, TTP Volunteer Naturalist.

A new TTP alpha coyote ...

Unfortunately, last year the male radio-collared coyote that was part of the joint TRCA-MNR urban coyote study, was struck and killed by a vehicle near Hamilton. Early this year the radio-collared female coyote was seen in the same vicinity as another (non-collared) coyote, presumably a male. While we cannot confirm that this "new" male mated with the collared female, six coyote pups were observed multiple times with the female this season, so she has definitely paired up with a male coyote somewhere in the area... The female study coyote has been observed relatively frequent this year compared to other years, but still seems to be quite "wild" and stays away from people.

She was originally collared in 2003 and the radio-collar continues to emit a signal providing data on her location.

Blanding's turtles

After 5 years of Blanding's turtle sightings (designated threatened in Ontario), we finally have confirmation that there are at least three individuals that call TTP home – or at least stop by to visit. Photographs of a Blanding's turtle were regularly taken, however no one could verify if this was the same turtle being photographed over and over ... until now. New photos were taken of two individuals (in the same location at the same time) and a third individual was observed some distance away on the same day. Perhaps we will be seeing baby Blanding's turtles soon?



New Blanding's turtle, Photo courtesy of A. Gray, TTP Volunteer Naturalist.

White-tailed deer

Park visitors were surprised earlier this summer when they happened upon a white-tailed deer. Deer are very rare at TTP, in fact there has been only one other instance of a deer at the park. In 2003, Lake Ontario officials "rescued" a deer they found swimming about a kilometer offshore and delivered her to TTP. In both cases the deer only stayed at the park for a few weeks before venturing off to explore other green spaces. The park likely provides suitable habitat for deer in the spring and summer months when vegetation is lush; however the rather severe winter weather, deep snow drifts and lack of mature conifer stands limit year-round occupation. As the vegetation at the park matures, deer may become residents or at least regular visitors.