

High Park Nature Centre

SPRING/SUMMER 2011
NEWSLETTER

RESPECT.
APPRECIATION.
STEWARDSHIP.



Memories of Spring

The 2011 Spring season was a busy and exciting one at the Nature Centre, with over 1800 participants in our programs for schools and scouting groups, and over 250 in our nature clubs and family walks.

April sparked off with tours of the prescribed burn in the black oak savannah, a management practice that is key to the restoration of this nationally rare ecosystem. Savannah plants, with their deep roots, respond vigorously after a fire, and our tour participants got the thrill of seeing the bright green buds pushing out of the ashes.

The abundance of April and May showers did not dampen the spirits of close to 400 students who participated in our Project Webfoot Pond Study program. Sponsored by Ducks Unlimited, these students explored the health of Grenadier pond through a wildlife scavenger hunt and dipping for benthic invertebrates.

A later than usual start to migration season this year meant that many of the over 250 species of migrating birds were passing through the park at the same time. Our Migration Celebration program introduced students from grade 1 through 7 to the thrill of bird-watching, the challenges birds face along migration, and the importance of safe habitat like High Park for stopover sites along route. We were treated to the sight and songs of Baltimore orioles, scarlet tanagers, wood ducks, buffleheads, shovelers, a common moorhen, warblers of every stripe, and much more.

Other popular spring programs included “Down in the Dirt”, “Signs of Spring”, “Orienteering” and “Zoo Tour”. We also piloted a new full day workshop called “High Park Through the Ages”, run in partnership with Colborne Lodge, the Children’s Garden and the Aboriginal Education Outreach Program. Classes rotated through hands-on workshops to learn about the human and natural history of High Park and the importance of land-stewardship.

Our ever-popular planting program is one very dear to our hearts here at the Nature Centre. Over 600 native savannah plants were planted this spring in our restoration plot south of the TTC loop by students, families and club members. We are very proud of the difference our participants are making in increasing biodiversity and the health of the savannah. We are now seeing the result of our spring work in new summer blooms—so get out to the park to smell (but don’t pick!) the flowers.

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Jane's Walk

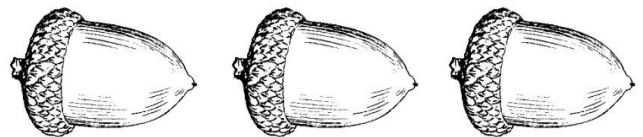
On May 7th, the High Park Nature Centre led our first Jane's Walk. Jane's Walk celebrates the ideas and legacy of urbanist Jane Jacobs by getting people out exploring their neighbourhoods and meeting their neighbours. Free walking tours held on the first weekend of May each year are led by locals who want to create a space for residents to talk about what matters to them in the places they live and work.

Our walk focused on the Prescribed Burn that took place in High Park in spring 2011 and the group hiked through the areas of the park that were burned. Participants explored spring flora and fauna as they rambled through woodlands, wetlands and the rare fire-dependent black oak savannah ecosystem. They also learned how fire can be a life-giving force to the native plants and trees in the savannah, and participated in a group stewardship activity – making and throwing seed balls chock full of native savannah plant seeds!

Nature Nuts in a Nutshell

Is it a bird? Is it a plane? No, it's Superheroes of High Park Week at Nature Nuts!

I had the incredible opportunity to experience Nature Nuts for the first time ever last week, and let me tell you...it was a blast! It was amazing to be in the company of so many young nature enthusiasts as we learned about the different superheroes that reside in our very own High Park. From Aerator Girl to Decomposer Dude all the way to Mimicry Girl, I have never seen so many High Park celebrities in one place! Meeting them wasn't even the best part; we got to help the superheroes to save the different creatures that live in the park. Aerator Girl tasked us with creating wormeries for her favourite aerator, the noble earthworm. We performed skits and leapt across lily pads to learn about Transformer Girl's favourite transforming creatures. We made hummingbird feeders and bee boxes for Pollinator Boy. Decomposer Dude took us on a hunt for...you guessed it, our friends the decomposers! Finally, Mimicry Girl taught us how to camouflage and we celebrated our week by decorating cupcakes with edible delights from the park to make them look like tiny fruit clusters. I can't wait to see what happens next!



Funding Announcements

We are so pleased to announce the generous support of:

The Toronto Field Naturalists www.torontofieldnaturalists.org

Our friends at the TFN have donated \$20,000 to the Nature Centre in 2011/12 in support of our Family Nature Programs, including our bi-weekly Family Nature Walks and our Naturalist Clubs for Kids!

The Metcalf Foundation www.metcalffoundation.com

Thank you to the Metcalf Foundation for your donation of \$7,000 for staff training and development. A special thank you to Metcalf Board member Pamela Robinson!

City of Toronto Community Recreation Funding

Our Youth Mentorship Program will pilot this summer, thanks to a \$4,500 grant from the City of Toronto.

Tuesdays on the Pond

Afterschool on Tuesdays are amazing when they are spent exploring nature on the pond. Our *Tuesdays at the Pond* program was a big hit this Spring with kids aged 8-12. During our bird watching adventure we saw 15 different species and 67 individual birds in under one hour! We fished and caught sunfish. We dip-netted for invertebrates to assess the health of the water. We even went on a journey to find the elusive white squirrel of High Park.

Perhaps our favourite day was when we brought our cameras along and took some awesome photos of the nature we saw. Check out some of our best ones taken by the kids.

If this sounds like fun to you, register for the fall session of *Tuesdays on the Pond*. Registration is in-person and takes place on August 29th



Garlic Mustard, by Odessa



Innovative binocular-steadying technique!



Ducks on a Log, by Jasmine

BOARD CORNER

The High Park Initiatives Board of Directors is pleased to announce its upcoming **Annual General Meeting** will take place on **October 27, 2011**. Additional information, including the location, agenda and any resolutions will be provided to all members in good standing.

Are you interested in becoming a member? If so, please check out our membership webpage at www.highpark.org and click on the "Friends of High Park" link to learn more.

The board would also like to officially extend, in accordance with section 7.2 of the HPI bylaws, a call for nominations of Directors for the AGM. These prospective Directors must be nominated by two (2) current members and meet all the eligibility requirements as laid out in the current HPI bylaws. Based on our call for nominations last year, we have had a successful year in recruiting board members and have been able to add directors responsible for Governance, Marketing & Communications, Programming as well as a general director-at-large. Based on our Strategic Planning Initiative and our current complement of board members, we are seeking prospective Directors with demonstrated experience in fundraising who also meet the following general criteria: work experience and expertise outside High Park; a forward vision for the HPI; and extensive non-profit and board of director experience. If you or someone you know has the necessary experience and is interesting in serving on the HPI/Nature Centre Board of Directors, please contact us via email at HPI.secretary@highpark.org.

Strategic Planning Public Discussion Meeting

Please join us at 7pm on September 22, 2011 at the High Park Nature Centre for a discussion of our 2011-2013 Strategic Plan.

SNEAK PEAK: Fall Programs at the Nature Centre

Registration Day for our fall 2011 is **Monday, August 29th**

All of our Naturalist Clubs for Kids 3-12 years of age, including the Knee-High Naturalists Parent and Child Tuesday Club, the Saturday Morning Naturalist Club, the Ramblers Hiking Club and the Afterschool Naturalist Club will have registration on this day.

Please visit our website in early August and click on the Nature Programs tab for registration forms plus date, time and cost details for each program. Thank you to fall 2011 Naturalist Club sponsors, the Toronto Field Naturalists!

Staff Corner

This spring, we said farewell to Rebecca Lee, our Office Administrator extraordinaire. Rebecca has moved on to a full-time position with the June Callwood Centre and we wish her all the best of luck in her new position.

We are so pleased to welcome three new staff to the Nature Centre team. Our new Office Administrator, Leah Girardo, joins us with many years of experience in non-profit administration and youth programming.

Recent graduates from the U of T/OISE Bachelor of Education program, Sarah Covey and Katrina Maurer have also joined the Nature Centre team as Summer Naturalists. Their experience at the Nature Centre as OISE interns this spring, plus their extensive past experience working with children make them a valuable addition to our camp programming.



Mute Swan, by Lily

To the Tune of "Land Down Under" by: Men at Work
Lyrics re-written Chipmunk Style by: Jon Hayes

Eating nuts in a den in High Park
Under ground it is so dark
Gotta couple of secret escape holes
In this perfect hiding spot that i chose

Chorus:

I come from the land down under
where worms crawl and snakes plunder
Can you hear, can you hear the thunder?
you'd better run, you'd better dig a shelter

Above the ground it is so bright and hot
But in down in my burrow it is not
And Red-Tailed Hawks can not catch me
Nor the foxes, dogs or coyotes