



# High Park Initiatives

Annual Report

2011



## Message from the Chair

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2011 was a tremendous year of growth for the High Park Nature Centre’s outdoor environmental education and park stewardship programs. Participation in programs rose to an all time high at 7,196, revenue earned from program fees increased by 9% and we were able to hire additional staff to support this growth.

Children, youth and families are engaged in outdoor nature education or stewardship programs with the Centre’s talented and knowledgeable staff on almost every day of the year.

Coordinators Katie Krellove, Sarah Halonen and Jonathan Hayes continued to surpass all expectations with their dedication, creative teaching and fascination with nature in High Park. In January 2011, we were delighted to welcome Diana Teal back to our organization as our part-time Executive Director.

This spring, the High Park Initiatives Board of Directors grew to a full complement of eight directors. Board and staff spent a significant part of this year focused on Strategic Planning, which included facilitated sessions with Alexandra McDonough, Engagement and Research Associate at the Canadian Urban Institute. Board members also hosted a number of successful fundraising events like our 12th Annual Open House, 15th Pumpkin Float, Harry's Spring Run-off Pancake Breakfast and “The Legend of Pale Male” screening at the Revue Cinema.

Through the generous support of our program participants, volunteers, members, private donors and our funding partners, including the City of Toronto, the Toronto Field Naturalists, Pratt and Whitney Canada and the TD Friends of the Environment Foundation, we continued to engage children, youth and families in park stewardship through hands-on environmental education and inspire park visitors to develop closer connections with nature in High Park.

**Robin Sorys**  
*Chair and Director of Human Resources*

### High Park Nature Centre Staff

- Diana Teal, *Executive Director*
- Katie Krellove, *Coordinator*
- Sarah Halonen, *Coordinator*
- Jon Hayes, *Coordinator*
- Emily Leslie, *Summer Naturalist*
- Zak Smith, *Naturalist*
- Christianna Facey-Crowther, *Naturalist*
- Navreet Rana, *Summer Naturalist and Welcome Centre Intern*
- Rebecca Lee, *Administrative Assistant*

### Board Members

- Angie Begitsch  
*Treasurer*
- Lisa Clarkson  
*Director of Policies and Practices*
- John Cleary  
*Secretary*
- Jerry Hodge  
*Director of Programs*
- Kara Lysne-Paris  
*Director of Marketing and Communications*
- Neil Morfitt  
*Director*
- Robin Sorys  
*Board Chair, HR Director*
- Helen Sousa  
*High Park Supervisor*  
*ex-officio Board Member*



In 2010/11, children, youth and families spent over 1,000 hours with the Centre's naturalists exploring High Park's wetland, woodland and oak savannah ecosystems. Through the delivery of 444 programs, 7,196 visitors learned about the unique ecology of High Park and were involved in park stewardship activities that ensure a healthy future for the park's natural areas.





## School Programs

During the 2010/11 school year, 3,859 students participated in the Centre's 29 different seasonally-based, curriculum-linked nature education and park stewardship programs for elementary, intermediate, secondary and post-secondary schools. Our hands-on programming reconnects students and teachers to the natural world around them and brings curriculum to life!



### Secondary School Programs

The popularity of our educational programs for secondary school students continued to increase by 10% in 2011, thanks to increased marketing and outreach. Experiential and active programs like Buckthorn Busters and Orienteering remain the most popular with this age group. In winter 2011, Coordinator Katie

Krelove led a power point presentation on ecology in High Park and the Nature Centre's educational programs for 25 Science teachers at the TDSB secondary teachers "Eureka Conference". Program flyers were handed out, a programming needs survey was distributed with excellent feedback and email addresses were collected for our mailing list from interested teachers.

### High Park Through the Ages

"High Park Through the Ages" is a cross-curricular, hands-on program that explores aspects of aboriginal and early settler connections to High Park, with a focus on past, present and future human relationships with land, water and plants. In this new full-day program, piloted in spring 2011, students rotated through four different workshops developed and delivered by program partners the High Park Nature Centre, Colborne Lodge, the High Park Children's Garden, the TDSB Aboriginal Education Centre and the Native Canadian Centre of Toronto.

### Supported Programs

In 2010/11, 526 children from high-priority schools across the Greater Toronto Area participated in a Nature Centre program free of charge. Thanks to our programming partners, Ducks Unlimited, 14 classes were selected to explore the diversity of aquatic and terrestrial life in and around Grenadier Pond with the Centre's naturalists. Pratt and Whitney Canada continued to show their support for the Nature Centre's "Nearer to Nature Adopt-A-Class" program, enabling 141 students to participate in our spring planting programs that focus on the stewardship of the park's black oak savannah.

## Club and Camp Programs



### Naturalist Clubs

Three-season Naturalist Clubs for Kids include the Knee-High Naturalists Parent and Child program (3-5 years), the Saturday Morning Naturalist Club (6-8 years), the Rambler's Hiking Club (8-12 years) and the After-School Naturalist Club (8-12 years). Each program aims to inspire and engage the next generation of naturalists. Programs build on each other so young naturalists have time to hone their observation, identification and environmental stewardship skills over time. In 2010/11, 240 children were immersed in the ecology of High Park and mentored by the Nature Centre's skilled staff.

### Summer Nature Camp

2010 was another busy summer at the Nature Centre. Every camp session was booked solid by the end of registration day and all sessions had waiting lists. Thanks to generous support from Canada Summer Jobs/Service Canada, the staff was able to grow from three to six full-time staff in July and August 2010.

*"My son has been going to camp at the Nature Centre for over 6 years now. He loves the staff, other campers and High Park is a such special place!"*

Parent

### March Break Camp

For the 7th year in a row, the Nature Centre teamed up with our programming partners at Colborne Lodge to deliver a successful week of March Break camp. As usual, camp sessions sold out quickly and had an extensive waiting list.



## Family Drop-In Programs

Given our key goal of increasing accessibility, the Nature Centre's family drop-in programs are offered free of charge or on a donate-what-you-can basis.



### Family Nature Walks

Family Nature Walks are designed to reconnect urban dwellers with nature and increase public understanding of the critical importance of the stewardship of biodiversity in Toronto. 702 people attended 24 Family Nature Walks coordinated and led by Naturalist Jon Hayes throughout the year, representing a 53% increase in attendance! Thank you to the Toronto Field Naturalists for funds that enabled further expansion of this program and allowed us to continue offering all walks free of charge.

### New Family Nature Workshops

#### Family Day “All about Birds” Workshop

On February 21, 2011, the Nature Centre participated in the 2011 Great Backyard Bird Count, with the help of 40 children and adults! Participants made bird feeders, learned about winter bird adaptations, hand fed chickadees and went on a Backyard Bird Count bird watching hike!

#### Pollinators and Plants

35 adults and children came out to celebrate International Pollinator Week at the Nature Centre on June 24, 2011. Participants helped to plant native species in our pollinator garden and made pollinator crafts. Special guest Maria Kasstan of Pollination Canada instilled the importance of pollinators. Scott MacIvor, a PhD candidate at York University studying solitary bees in Toronto, shared his research and led participants to the nest boxes he monitors in High Park.

#### Prescribed Burn Tour – 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 share what matters to them in the places they live and work. On May 7, 2011, the High Park Nature Centre led our first ever Jane’s Walk. 50 people of all ages attended to learn about High Park’s rare fire-dependent savannah ecosystem and to tour areas of the park that had recently undergone a prescribed burn.

## Community Groups



### **Guiding and Scouting Programs**

Attendance in after-school and evening programs for Girl Guides of Canada and Scouts Canada troops increased by 22% in 2010/11. With 15 badge-related programs, groups can visit time and time again to discover nature in High Park.

### **Birthday Parties**

P-A-R-T-whY? Because kids love nature! Demand for birthday party programs at the Nature Centre continued to grow in 2010/11. 836 children attended a total of 57 parties throughout the fall, winter and spring, representing a 43% increase in the number of parties booked! We are currently making plans to expand our line-up of parties for the coming year.

*"Thanks for a great bug birthday party. The High Park Nature Centre does not disappoint! My son and guests really enjoyed themselves... the Nature Centre has new fans!"*

Parent

*"Thank you for helping make my daughter's 5th birthday an absolutely wonderful experience. Having thrown too many kid birthday parties over the years, I can honestly say this was the easiest, most fun, and best run party! The other parents were very impressed with the space and the experience their kids had. I have a feeling my daughter will be attending a few more parties at your Centre in the months to come."*

Parent

## Stewardship and Ecological Restoration Work

One of the Nature Centre's main goals is to give people the chance to do something positive to help the earth. As such, we guide our participants in their exploration of the park's nationally rare black oak savannah, examine effects of stress on the ecosystem and encourage them to get their hands dirty, planting seedlings that are indigenous to the park and removing invasive species that threaten the savannah's health.



### Highlights:

- ✿ Through our fall "Buckthorn Busters" program, 280 students learned about invasive plants that threaten the health of High Park's woodland and savannah ecosystems, and "busted" buckthorn in park management unit 7B.
- ✿ Over 1,000 native grass, wildflower and sedge seedlings were planted by students participating in the Centre's 2011 Spring Planting program.
- ✿ A prescribed burn is a deliberately set and controlled fire designed to mimic the natural fires that once occurred naturally in prairie and savannah ecosystems. Following the burn in High Park on April 14, 2011, Nature Centre staff led a series of "Prescribed Burn Tours". Secondary students learned how fire is a life-giving force for plants in the savannah, toured a burn site and made seed balls full of native plant seeds to toss on the fertile ashes.

## Outreach

### Cherry Blossoms 2011

The blooming of High Park's Sakura or Cherry Blossom trees are a rite of spring in Toronto. Each year, the Nature Centre's phone line, email account and social media accounts get busier and busier with messages from cherry blossom enthusiasts requesting reports on the state of the blooms. To meet this demand, the Nature Centre monitored the trees from April 4 through peak bloom on May 13, 2011. Frequent posts on our Wordpress blog, Facebook and Twitter accounts kept the public updated. For those not wired, the Nature Centre created the "Cherry Blossom Hotline", a phone line dedicated to weekly cherry blossom updates.

*"Thanks for keeping us updated. I am heading to High Park this weekend to enjoy the cherry blossoms and the beauty throughout the park. Keep up your great work!"*  
Website Visitor

*"Sakura is right around the corner! Follow @HighParkNC to find out when the cherry blossoms are in full bloom"*  
Twitter Follower



### Royal Ontario Museum: Partners in Protection Fridays

The ROM's Schad Gallery of Biodiversity runs "Partners in Protection Fridays", a program that gives organizations involved with biodiversity-related issues the opportunity to connect with ROM visitors via an information booth in the gallery. The Nature Centre was invited to participate on January 7, 2011. Coordinators Katie Krelove and Jon Hayes (plus several amazing museum specimens!) promoted the significance of High Park as a natural area, and passed on information about the Nature Centre's programs and our contribution to the stewardship of the park.

### Social Media

With over 1,000 "Likes" on Facebook and 460 followers on Twitter, the Nature Centre's on-line profile continued to grow in 2010/11! Both websites have provided the Nature Centre with an excellent method of outreach and marketing as well as a way to network with Toronto non-profits and media outlets.

### High Park Welcome Centre

During its second summer in operation, the High Park Welcome Centre served 2,850 visitors on weekends and holidays from July 1 through September 7, 2010. 14 volunteers donated over 300 hours of time to promote awareness of the park's natural environment and provide park information to the general public. The most common request was for directions to attractions in the park and over 550 park maps were distributed. Thank you to HPI Board members Jerry Hodge and Robin Sorys for their dedication to this project and to Navreet Rana, Welcome Centre Intern, for her hard work. The Welcome Centre was run in partnership with Service Canada, the Grenadier Group and the City of Toronto Parks, Forestry and Recreation department.



## Fundraising Highlights

In 2011, HPI raised \$65,000 through foundation grants, governmental grants, charitable donations and “Friends of High Park” membership dues.

Thank you to all for your generous support!

### “Legend of Pale Male” Movie Fundraiser

At the Revue Cinema on March 19 and 26, 2011, HPI hosted two screenings of “The Legend of Pale Male”, a documentary about an urban red-tailed hawk who chose to build his nest and raise his family with a view of Central Park on the facade of one of New York’s most exclusive co-ops. A total of 220 bird-lovers of all ages enjoyed the screenings and over \$1,200 was collected in donations.

High Park Nature Centre PRESENTS

a hawk. a city. a love story.

**Legend of Pale Male**  
1 PM SATURDAY  
MARCH 19 & 26  
AT  
THE REVUE CINEMA

All proceeds support nature education and park stewardship programs at the High Park Nature Centre

highparknaturecentre.com

55 DONATED

supported by Toronto

### Toronto Field Naturalists

The High Park Nature Centre was honoured to be the recipient of a \$25,000 donation from the Toronto Field Naturalists (TFN) in 2010. As a result of the TFN’s generous donation in support of youth education programs, the Nature Centre was able to develop and deliver a year-round series of Family Nature Walks, the Wild in the City Awareness Lecture Series in fall 2010 and an After-School Naturalist program for kids in fall 2010 and spring 2011. The TFN’s donation also supported research and development for the Youth Naturalist Mentorship Program.

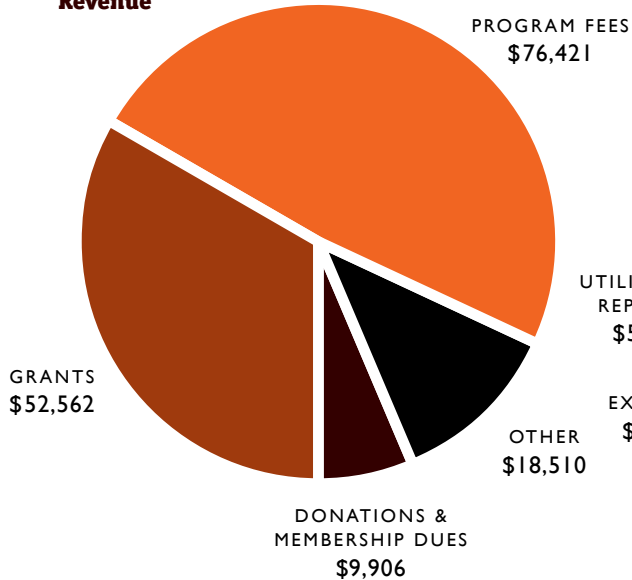
### Canada Running Series Pancake Breakfast

On April 1, 2011, the HPI Board of Directors served a post-race pancake breakfast and promoted the Nature Centre to runners and walkers in the 8km and 5km Harry’s Spring Run-Off marathon in High Park. 1,926 pancakes were served to 963 people and \$2,890 was raised!

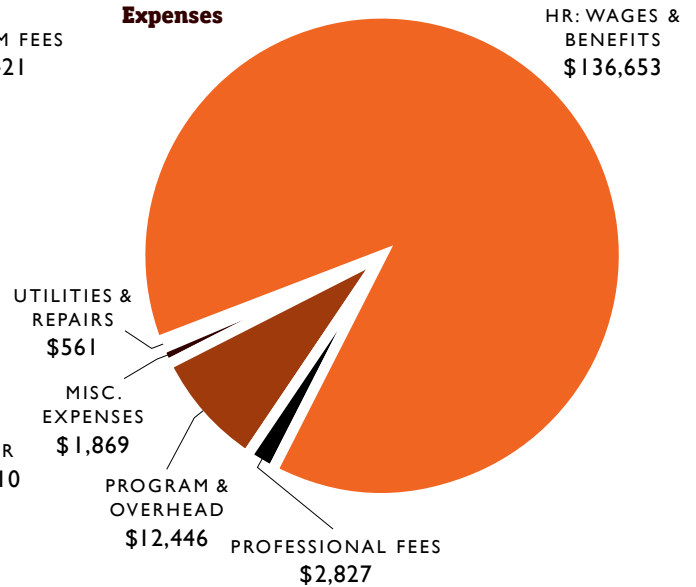


## Financials

### Revenue



### Expenses



### Revenue

Grants	\$55,062
Donations & Membership Dues	\$9,906
Program Fees	\$76,421
Other	\$18,510
	<b>\$159,895</b>

### Expenses

HR: wages & benefits	\$136,653
Program & Overhead	\$12,446
Professional Fees, Consultant	\$2,827
Utilities & Repairs	\$561
Misc. Expenses	\$1,869
	<b>\$154,356</b>

### Statement of Financial Position

(unaudited) May 31	2011	2010
<b>CURRENT ASSETS</b>		
Cash	\$107,980	\$78,272
Accounts receivable	942	359
Prepaid expenses	1,554	1,554
	<b>\$110,476</b>	<b>\$80,185</b>
<b>CURRENT LIABILITIES</b>		
Accounts payable and accrued liabilities	\$4,328	\$2,840
Deferred program fees	33,609	29,955
Deferred contributions	24,500	4,890
	<b>62,437</b>	<b>37,685</b>
<b>NET ASSETS</b>		
Internally restricted	11,412	10,277
Unrestricted net surplus	34,127	32,223
	<b>45,539</b>	<b>42,500</b>
	<b>\$110,476</b>	<b>\$80,185</b>

The complete unaudited financial statements can be obtained through HPI. The unaudited financial statements contain notes and additional information relevant to the financial information in the annual report.



## **Donors, Supporters and Partners**

High Park Initiatives and the High Park Nature Centre extend an extra special thanks to our generous donors, supporters and partners who make it possible to carry out our mission.



### **Donors**

Bobechko Foundation  
Canada Running Series  
City of Toronto  
EJLB Foundation  
McLean Foundation  
Pratt and Whitney Canada  
Service Canada / Canada Summer Jobs  
TD Friends of the Environment Foundation  
Toronto Field Naturalists  
Toronto Parks and Trees Foundation

### **In-Kind Supporters**

City of Toronto, Parks, Forestry and Recreation  
City of Toronto, Natural Environment and Horticulture  
High Park Nutrition  
Mountain Equipment Co-op  
No Frills  
Sweet Potato Market  
Wild Birds Unlimited

### **Community Partners**

CNIB  
Canada Running Series  
City of Toronto  
Grenadier Group  
High Park Children's Garden  
High Park Resource Group  
The Little Paper

### **Programming Partners**

Toronto and Region Conservation Authority  
City of Toronto, Parks, Forestry and Recreation  
Colborne Lodge  
Dr. Brock Fenton, University of Western Ontario  
Ducks Unlimited  
Greater Toronto Hawk Watch  
Pollination Canada / Seeds of Diversity Canada  
Toronto Entomologists Association  
Toronto Wildlife Centre  
Wild Bees Toronto

## **Volunteers and Interns**

Each season, we actively recruit and train volunteers as Nature Interpreters and working committee members. We strive to provide a valuable working and learning experience to volunteers, students and interns engaged in the field of environmental studies, ecological stewardship/restoration, education and child care. Thank you to all of our amazing volunteers, who donated over 2,000 hours of time to the Nature Centre!

### **Interns and Co-Op Students**

Trevor Horvatin, *Humber College Co-Op*  
Katrina Maurer, *University of Toronto Teacher Candidate*  
Sarah Covey, *University of Toronto Teacher Candidate*  
Christina Tucker, *York University Teacher Candidate*  
Michael Bugeja, *York University Teacher Candidate*  
Amanda Cunha, *York University Teacher Candidate*  
Sarah Shujah, *University of Toronto Masters of Information Studies Placement*  
Lorraine Guevara, *University of Toronto Environmental Studies Work Placement*

### **Volunteers**

Viviana Astudillo  
Roman Balaz  
Jen Barratt  
Emily Bennett  
Diane Buckell  
Jaqueline Capule  
Steven Favier  
Jack Groombridge  
Alain Heese-Boutin  
Maria Kasstan  
Kelvin Lee  
Cori Linetsky  
Darin Luscher  
Oscar MacDonald  
Scott McIvor  
Megan Merrick  
Baxter Naday  
Shelley O'Brien  
Katie Paveley  
Alexa Pompilio  
Sarah Rafols  
Neil Shore  
Alec Subero  
Alex Tufford  
Frances Tufford  
Bob Yukich  
Nataliya Zlotnikov





**High Park  
Nature Centre**

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