

RESTORING THE HUMBER'S RARE SAVANNA HABITATS

by Ken Towle

When most of us hear the word savanna (also spelled savannah), we probably think of giraffes and lions, and great herds of wildebeests roaming the Serengeti plains of Africa. But did you know that the Humber River watershed also once included this unusual habitat type, and that some remnants can still be found here?

Savannas are essentially a mixture of open grassland and trees. Before European settlement, oak and pine savannas were found in parts of Southern Ontario that had well-drained sandy soils. Savannas and tallgrass prairie were never common in Ontario, and fire prevention or conversion of land for agriculture and human settlement destroyed most of them. Now, they are among the rarest ecosystem types on the continent!

Fortunately, a few small remnants have survived, and restoration programs are underway to return them to their former glory. The lower Humber watershed contains at least three such sites. The largest of these is High Park. Two other sites, the small prairie at Lambton Park and the savanna remnant at South Humber Park, are less well known.

Working in partnership with the City of Toronto, the Association for Biodiversity Conservation initiated the Humber Savanna project in 1995 to restore the remnant in South Humber Park. Working with local volunteers, and with the support of Environment Canada, Toronto and Region Conservation (TRCA) and the TD Friends of the Environment Foundation, hundreds of native savanna wildflowers and grasses have since been planted, and other parts of the park are also being restored to native ecosystem types.

In the spring of 2002 the Humber Savanna site was burned by the City of Toronto, along with parts of High Park and Lambton Prairie. Prescribed burning is necessary to remove exotic species and stimulate the growth of savanna plants, which are adapted to, and often dependent upon, regular fires.

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▲ Remnant Black Oak Savanna, High Park, City of Toronto.

2003 PEEL CHILDREN'S WATER FESTIVAL

by Paul Willms

From May 29 until June 4, the six-day Peel Children's Water Festival will take place at Heart Lake Conservation Area in Brampton. Over 5,200 students from grades two through five, from Mississauga, Brampton and Caledon, will participate in interactive educational activities related to water. Over 1000 adult chaperones, several hundred members of the public, and over 500 volunteers will join students. Over 50 different interactive outdoor activity stations will help illustrate the five water themes: Water Conservation, Water Attitudes, Water Technology, Water Protection, and Water Science.

In addition to exercising their brains, students will have the opportunity to directly contribute to water quality, habitat, and biodiversity improvements at Heart Lake. Thousands of kids will plant 2,500 aquatic plants to create a sand dune garden and help increase the biodiversity of the shoreline. Participants will also plant 2,500 upland tree and shrub species around the woodland pond, providing a valuable buffer and interior habitat for amphibians, small mammals, and birds.

May 31 is a Public Day at the festival where you can visit from 12:00 pm to 5:00 pm. Admission is free! Extras include entertainment and music, a water conservation garden give-away, a sand dune garden planting event, and a public trout release. Thanks to the Region of Peel for choosing to host the Festival at Heart Lake Conservation Area again this year.

For more information, please contact Paul Willms at pwillms@trca.on.ca or 416-661-6600, ext. 5316.



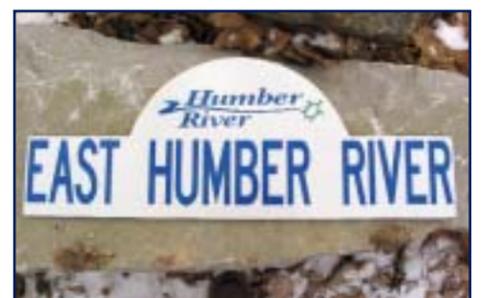
▲ Peel Children's Water Festival, 2002.

GET TO KNOW YOUR RIVERS

Coming soon, a total of 92 watercourse identification signs will be springing up on local roadways across the Town of Richmond Hill. This project will raise awareness of Richmond Hill's significant watercourses and the need to protect the natural environment. The signs will identify the three watersheds that fall within Richmond Hill's jurisdiction — the Don, Humber and Rouge Rivers.

The installation of watercourse signs throughout Richmond Hill is a unique initiative and will be the first widespread watercourse identification project of its kind in the Greater Toronto Area.

New watercourse identification sign, Town of Richmond Hill. ►



Photography by Rosemary Hasner © Toronto and Region Conservation (unless otherwise noted).



TOWARD A HEALTHY HUMBER

TROUT UNLIMITED — NEW HUMBER CHAPTER LAUNCHED

Trout Unlimited Canada (TUC) has launched the Humber River Chapter. TUC was founded in 1972 growing out of a response to challenges to freshwater. Over 30 years later, TUC has approximately 4000 members in 17 Chapters across the country. At the Chapter level, members volunteer their time and effort to preserve coldwater habitat within local watersheds.

The goals of the Humber River Chapter are to establish TUC's cold water conservation presence on the upper main Humber River and to work cooperatively with local groups and agencies concerned with the health of the watershed. From the start, TUC helps monitor the river. A Chapter action plan, being developed in consultation with Toronto and Region Conservation and the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources, works toward short-term and long-term enhancement of trout habitat. The action plan will include tree and shrub planting, the creation of in-stream cover, and the removal or mitigation of remaining barriers and on-line ponds. Volunteer labour, fund-raising in the public and private sectors, and opportunities for student employment will all be needed to accomplish the chapter mission.

An interim board is organizing Chapter meetings and fieldwork days to commence this spring. Anyone interested in protecting and rehabilitating habitat in the upper Humber River should contact Doug Nicholson, the interim chapter President, by e-mail at nicholson6407@rogers.com or 416-233-6407.

HUMBER'S RARE SAVANNA - continued from page 1

A month after the burn the savanna plants were thriving, and beginning to spread, while many of the invasive exotics such as garlic mustard and honey-suckle had been killed. It is such scenes that thrill a restoration ecologist, and make all of the effort worthwhile.

To learn more about Toronto's savannas and the Humber Savanna Project, contact Ken Towle, Association for Biodiversity Conservation, 538 Rogers Street, Peterborough, Ontario K9H 1X2, ktowle@nexicom.net.



Photo: C. Kingsley

▲ Savanna plant - Butterfly Weed.



Photo: C. Kingsley

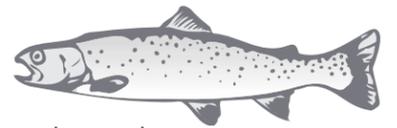
▲ Savanna plant - Black-eyed Susan.

THE KING OF FISH RETURNS TO BLACK CREEK

by Assuntino Romano

The muddler minnow swung from the eddy into the main current and was inhaled by a silver torpedo. After numerous heart-stopping runs, the silvery King of Fish, a.k.a the Atlantic Salmon was subdued and then gently released to swim again. A scene out of Northern Labrador? An Icelandic ice-cold stream? Actually, it occurred in Black Creek - close to downtown Toronto.

Atlantic Salmon are returning to Black Creek after a 150-year absence. Chaminade College School has raised 3000 Atlantic Salmon in their own fish hatchery and will release them into Black Creek on May 3, 2003.



Finally, the dream of having the extirpated Atlantic Salmon return to one of their home streams will become a reality. So remember, speed up and stop on both the forward and backcast, letting the muddler slowly drop to the surface in anticipation of all hell breaking loose!

For more information about the Chaminade Environmental Club, please contact Assuntino Ramona or Robert Giza at the Toronto Catholic District School Board, assuntino.romano@tcdsb.org and robert.giza@tcdsb.org.

GLASGOW, A GHOST HAMLET ON THE HUMBER

by Heather Broadbent

The Bolton Community Action Site Committee is currently working with Toronto and Region Conservation, the Town of Caledon and the Humber Valley Heritage Trail Association and has successfully arranged the installation of a footbridge trail link on the main Humber River, at the site of the former hamlet of Glasgow.

The winding Glasgow Road in Bolton follows the river and opens up to the Dick's Dam Park, a heritage designated steel truss bridge and then the soccer fields and tennis courts at Glasgow. The surrounding hills are now almost completely filled with new homes where in the 19th Century, Sunday strollers searched for native artifacts.

In 1854, John McIntosh built his Glasgow Woollen and Saw Mills at this site. At this time Bolton had 400 residents and within a few years 10 of them worked at the Mills. There was a dam and a pond built behind it. Subsequent owners were the Buists. In 1872, shortly after Bolton became separately incorporated, Glasgow was surveyed and set out in streets named after the Buist and Bolton children. Then Joshua Walshaw purchased the site and ran it with his son. They built a large manufacturing building, a fine house and two workers' homes. As was common in woollen milling, there were four disastrous fires over the years, and after the final one, which did \$250,000 worth of damage, the mill was closed and 40 people (and their families) were left with no income.

For the next 25 years, Glasgow was the site of the very popular Greenspoon Summer Social Club. Attendance dropped off during World War II, and after that, in 1954 came the devastation of Hurricane Hazel. From then on TRCA gradually acquired 600 hectares of valley land to construct a large dam and flood control reservoir that would reach eight kilometres up the valley to the north.

Fortunately, different flood control methods were adopted like reforestation, acquisition of flood susceptible areas and a flood warning system. The Bolton dam and flood control project was abandoned in the mid-1970s, thus leaving a large parcel of valley land to create wonderful valley trails, bird watching and nature appreciation opportunities.

The new footbridge will be officially opened this spring. Located at the site of the old woollen mill dam, the new bridge will help provide a link to the trails north of Bolton.



Photo: from Archives

▲ Bolton Woollen Mills, c. 1900, Town of Caledon.



▲ New pedestrian bridge at the site of the old Woollen Mill dam, 2003, Town of Caledon.

AROUND THE WATERSHEDS

NEW VOLUNTEER PROGRAM

The Environmental Volunteer Network Program (EVN) is a new partnership between the Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants (OCASI), Toronto and Region Conservation, the Ontario Trillium Foundation, several non-profit environmental groups, and municipal partners.

The goal of the EVN Program is:

- to provide group and individual volunteers with greater access to volunteer work experience;
- to provide environmental education, training and contacts in the field of conservation; and
- to provide environmental organizations with increased access to individual and group volunteers.

The EVN Program will train and mentor volunteers who are interested in becoming more involved in conservation activities and provide them with some of the skills required to work in the environmental field. Opportunities exist for short-term and long-term, indoor and outdoor, and in a wide variety of program areas, such as:

- habitat restoration, community planting, and river valley clean-ups;
- aquatic and terrestrial monitoring programs;
- conservation parks maintenance;
- outreach and participation in public education activities;
- representation on stewardship committees and volunteer task forces; and
- environmental advocacy activities.



▲ Aquatic Planting.

Please visit the Conservation Volunteers section of TRCA's Web site at www.trca.on.ca for volunteer position postings. If you have any questions, please contact Amy Maurer, Volunteer Network Coordinator, at volunteer@trca.on.ca or 416-661-6600, ext. 5360.

TEN YEARS ON THE DON

This year marks the tenth anniversary of the Don Watershed Task Force and the Don Watershed Regeneration Council. Over the past 10 years we have seen the beginnings of a concerted effort by watershed residents, governments and businesses to work together to take responsibility for the Don River watershed. We should be encouraged by the successes of everyone who shares this vision of a revitalized Don River and participates through dedicated efforts to make it better.

The first meeting of the Task Force was held in October 1992, and in May 1994, *Forty Steps to a New Don* was published. This internationally acclaimed report set out a vision for a cleaner, healthier watershed. In 1997 and 2000, the Council published two report cards that identified how well we are doing to achieve the vision set out in *Forty Steps to a New Don*.

The Council is encouraging everyone to celebrate 10 years on the Don at all events during 2003. There will be an open house celebration on Sunday, September 14, 2003 at the Don Valley Brick Works. Everyone is welcome.

If you wish to volunteer at the open house, host a display, or sponsor part of the celebration, please contact Amy Thurston at athurston@trca.on.ca or 416-661-6600, ext. 5283.



▲ World renowned Don Valley Brickworks, City of Toronto.

NEW FEATURES, NEW LOOK

Toronto and Region Conservation will officially launch our newly designed Web site www.trca.on.ca on Earth Day — April 22, 2003.

During Earth Week (April 21 - 25) you can **enter The Living City online contest** for a chance to **win** great prizes!

Visit us often to stay current on environmental news, local events, volunteer opportunities and more!



FALL HIGHLIGHTS



▲ Robert and Signe McMichael at bridge dedication, William Granger Greenway, Kleinburg, City of Vaughan.



▲ Hustle up the Humber Triathlon winners, City of Toronto.



▲ Community planting at Sunkist Woods, Bolton, Town of Caledon.

HAPPENINGS

STREAM WATCH PROGRAM IN ACTION

by Vince D'Elia

Join your community in a stream corridor clean-up and help improve the health of the Humber River watershed!

Removing and reducing human-made debris along the Humber River's valleys, streams and greenspaces is a fundamental step in the protection, restoration and celebration of the watershed. A healthy watershed, free of litter can help influence the attitudes, decisions, and actions of watershed residents.

Garbage and other contaminants in our streams and ravines contaminate the habitat of local fish and wildlife. It deteriorates the quality of the water that we depend on for our day-to-day activities. Add to this, salt, anti-freeze, oil, gas, pesticides, and fertilizers which end up in our storm sewers from rainwater and snowfall washing over our city. These storm sewers empty into local streams and eventually into Lake Ontario, the City of Toronto's source for drinking water.

The Humber Watershed Stream Watch Program focuses on involving members of the community in activities that improve the health of the watershed, such as the removal of human-made debris from watercourses and adjacent lands. This spring, the Humber Watershed Stream Watch Program will work with local schools, community groups, businesses, and residents to carry out clean-ups activities across the watershed. As residents and benefactors of the Humber River watershed, we share the responsibility of protecting and restoring it.

Show your support! Contact Vince D'Elia at vdelia@trca.on.ca or 416-661-6600, ext. 5367.

The Humber Watershed Stream Watch Program is generously supported by the following: Ontario Trillium Foundation, TD Friends of the Environment Foundation, Shell Environmental Fund, Humber Creek Restoration Group, Action to Restore a Clean Humber, and Toronto and Region Conservation.



▲ Park clean-up, City of Toronto.

SPRING CLEAN-UP EVENTS

CLEAN-UP WITH TROUT UNLIMITED - HUMBER RIVER CHAPTER

Date: April 12, 2003 Time: 9:30 am - 2:00 pm
Location: Humber Station Road and Castleberg Sideroad
Join Trout Unlimited - Humber River Chapter in their clean-up along selected reaches of the Upper Humber River.

CLEAN-UP AND PLANTING WITH DON BOSCO CATHOLIC SECONDARY SCHOOL

Date: April 22, 2003 Time: 10:00 am - 1:00 pm
Location: Alex Marchetti Park, Islington Avenue and Dixon Road
Join staff and students in a clean-up and planting event along Humber Creek.

CLEAN-UP WITH ST. BASIL'S - THE GREAT COLLEGE SCHOOL

Date: April 25, 2003 Time: 10:00 am - 1:00 pm
Location: Weston Road and Starview Lane
Join staff and students in a clean-up of the Humber River.

CLEAN-UP WITH COUNCILLOR SUZAN HALL

Date: April 26, 2003 Time: 10:00 am - 1:00 pm
Location: Albion Creek, Etobicoke

CLEAN-UP WITH THE WESTON RATEPAYERS AND RESIDENTS ASSOCIATION

Date: April 27, 2003 Time: 10:00 am - 2:00 pm
Location: Cruickshank Park, stairs at Church Street and Weston Road
Join the Weston Ratepayers and Residents Association in their 9th Annual Cruickshank Park Clean-up Event. Meet at the bottom of the park stairs at Church Street and Weston Road. Everyone welcome — free hot dogs and pop for our volunteers. Thanks to our supporters and sponsors: The Albright Family, Cruickshank Motors, Housing Rehabilitation Services, Kodak Canada, Toronto and Region Conservation and the Toronto Parks Department B West District. For more information, e-mail: wrra_weston@hotmail.com or send a fax to 416-248-8041.

COMMUNITY CLEAN-UP WITH COUNCILLOR VITO SPATAFORA

Date: May 3, 2003 (Rain date May 4, 2003) Time: 9:30 am - 3:30 pm
Location: Lake Wilcox, Richmond Hill

CLEAN-UP AND PLANTING WITH ROOTS AND SHOOTS — THE JANE GOODALL INSTITUTE

Date: May 24, 2003 Time: 10:00 am - 2:00 pm
Location: Windermere Avenue and Lake Shore Boulevard
Join Roots and Shoots - The Jane Goodall Institute in their 3rd Annual Humber Bay Clean-up Event. Get there early to register. All participants will enjoy a BBQ lunch and are eligible for raffle prizes.

For more information about spring clean-up events or the Humber Watershed Stream Watch Program, please contact Vince D'Elia at vdelia@trca.on.ca or 416-661-6600 ext. 5367.

SPRING EVENTS

YORKWOODS LIBRARY

Date: April 24, 2003 Time: 10:00 am - 11:00 am
Location: Yorkwoods Library, 1785 Finch Avenue West
Local students will hear educational presentations as part of Environment Week.

CLAIREVILLE COMMUNITY PLANTING

Date: April 26, 2003 Time: 10:00 am - 12:00 pm
Location: Claireville Conservation Area, Brampton
Join us for tree planting and fresh air. Follow the signs from Highway 7 and Goreway Drive.

EARTH DAY CANADA

Date: April 27, 2003 Time: 12:00 pm - 4:00 pm
Location: Downsview Park, Keele Street and Sheppard Avenue West
Come celebrate Earth Day by planting one of 1,000 trees, participating in interactive children's shows and activities, and viewing and learning more about local environmental solutions. For more information, please contact Lisa Ivaldi at 416-599-1991 ext. 101.

SPRING WILDFLOWER WALK

Date: April 27, 2003 Time: 1:30 pm - 2:30 pm
Location: Lambton House, 4066 Old Dundas Street
Join historian Madeleine McDowell for the annual wildflower walk and talk about Agnes Fitzgibbon, illustrator of Canadian Wildflowers, published in 1867. Presented by the Humber Heritage Committee.

HISTORIC WALK

Date: May 10, 2003 Time: 2:00 pm - 3:30 pm
Location: York Museum, Eglinton Avenue west of Keele Street
Starting at the York Museum, join historian Madeleine McDowell for a guided walk in the neighbourhood of Keele Street and Tretheway Drive.

PALGRAVE MILL POND PLANTING

Date: May 10, 2003 Time: 10:00 am - 12:00 pm
Location: Highway 50 upstream of Mill Pond, Palgrave
Join us for the annual community tree planting and BBQ.

LAMBTON MILLS WALK

Date: May 31, 2003 Time: 1:30 pm - 3:00 pm
Location: TTC loop at Runnymede Road and Dundas Street
Starting from the TTC loop, walk the historic Lambton Mills area ending at the Lambton House. Presented by Heritage Toronto.

5TH ANNUAL LAKE WILCOX FUN DAY

Date: June 22, 2003 Time: 9:00 am - 4:00 pm
Location: Sunset Beach Park, Richmond Hill
Come to the shores of Lake Wilcox and take part in Dragon Boat Races, see demonstrations and displays or just cheer for your favourite boat. Preregistration is required to race. Please visit the Richmond Hill Canoe Club Web site at www.rhcc.on.ca for more information.

SENSATIONAL SOUNDS OF SUMMER — NEW FOR 2003!

Date: July 5 - August 24 Time: 10:00 am - 4:00 pm, weekends
Location: Black Creek Pioneer Village, Murray Ross Parkway
Seven weekends of Music and Entertainment, Food and Activities! For more information, please visit www.blackcreek.ca or call 416-736-1733.



For more information, please visit our Web site at www.trca.on.ca or contact Connie Pinto at 416-661-6600, ext. 5291.