

ALTONA FOREST



SPRING 2007 COMMUNITY NEWSLETTER

VOL. X NO.1

In the works — a new pond for Altona Forest

By Larry Noonan

In recent decades, the natural ponds that once existed in and around Altona Forest have been lost due to development and alterations to drainage patterns. This loss of wetland habitat has resulted in a dramatic reduction of the native amphibian species once present in the forest.

In 2003 work began to restore these species with the reestablishment of Lacey's pond. Now, the Altona Forest Stewardship Committee is happy to announce plans to construct a second wetland as part of the continuing efforts to increase the diversity and number of amphibians residing in Altona Forest.

Currently \$17,800 has been secured for the creation of this new pond, with construction expected to begin near the end of 2007. Thanks to the Toronto Zoo, Ontario Power Generation, TD Friends of the Environment Foundation and Toronto and Region Conservation, for providing the financial support and expertise needed to make this project possible.

Stay tuned for more information on this exciting project in future issues.





Now available — Flowers of Altona Forest CD-ROM

By Larry Noonan

Have you ever hiked through Altona Forest and wondered about all of the beautiful wildflowers growing in the understory?

For well over a decade I have been hiking in Altona Forest. Over the years I have taken hundreds of digital photos of the forest's trees, animals and small flowering plants. Three years ago, I began assembling some of these photos in a manner that would be useful to others.

The result is the **Flowers of Altona Forest CD-ROM**, which contains more than 170 of the most common flowering plants found in Altona Forest during spring, summer and fall. Most of the plants have photos to accompany the descriptions, along with histories, superstitions and traditional uses provided for some plants. Also provided are sections to test your plant knowledge and identification skills.



If you are interested in obtaining a copy of this CD, contact Larry Noonan at larrynoonan@rogers.com. Please note this DC-ROM requires MicroSoft®'s PowerPoint® software. Profits of sale of this CD will go toward improvement projects inside Altona Forest.



Trilliums like shade because it provides the cool temperatures and moist soil conditions this plant requires. They need to grow for 15 years before they flower.

Trillium reproduction

By Larry Noonan

Trillium reproduction is unique in the plant world. Understanding of this life cycle will hopefully convince the reader why these plants need to be protected and not picked or transplanted and why they need to be protected from grazing.

White trillium flowers produce nectar that attracts pollinators. The fruits are fleshy, berry-like capsules which are pale green in colour. On maturity, they open and slowly discharge their seeds that attract ants to the oily appendage (elaiosome), which covers half the seed and equals it in volume.

Experimentation has shown that these so called ant-snacks (elaiosomes) have a chemical which pushes ants to a feeding frenzy. Ants have been seen harvesting the seeds from the immature capsules before they ripen. The ants take the seeds to their nests, eat the "ant-snack" and then leave the seeds in their tunnels where many of them germinate. Because of the short distances that the ants travel, the trilliums do not spread very far. This also often results in trillium fields where many trilliums grow and mature.

Picking and grazing of trilliums by deer weakens the roots and delays the next blooming for up to seven years. Continued picking or grazing will kill the trilliums.





White-tailed deer browsing

By Larry Noonan

The glimpse of a white tail bounding away is often the only sighting of the white-tailed deer we get in Altona Forest. Some residents, who back onto the forest, get to observe the beautiful creatures more often past their back fences. The rest of us usually only see signs of the deer such as foot prints in the mud or snow.



Unfortunately, there are many more indicators of the white-tailed deer, which most people don't recognize. Around Lacey's Pond, the newly planted white pine, sugar maple, flowering dogwood, basswood and ash have had their tops chewed off by deer. You may also have noticed that, in the last few years, the numbers of columbine, lilies, Solomon's seal, buttercups and violets have decreased dramatically. These are all favoured food for the white-tailed deer.

The greatest effect can be seen in the drastic reduction in trilliums over the last few years. Trilliums take up to 15 years of development before they flower. (See the article "Trillium Reproduction," to find out why.) If the tops or flowers are eaten, they may take as long as 7 years to flower again. If the leaves are eaten over two or three consecutive years, the trilliums often die.



Years ago fields of trillium like this were commonly seen in Altona Forest. The continued browsing by deer has all but eliminated the trilliums from the forest.

So what can be done to save our trilliums?

The Altona Forest Stewardship Committee asks your help to locate trilliums during the spring. If you see a group of trilliums on a hike along one of the trails, let us know. (email Larry Noonan at larrynoonan@rogers.com and give the location in relation to the number of a close interpretative post)

When we locate the largest groupings, we will place protection around them which will keep the deer away and allow the trilliums to slowly recover. The protection can be as simple as chicken wire spread over the trilliums 30 cm above the ground. We will be investigating various techniques to protect the trilliums while not jeopardizing the safety of the deer.

Birds, bird feeders and you.

By Jeff Bowers

With the Altona Forest close to so many of us, the appearance of many bird varieties is a commonplace event. This is especially true for those of us with bird feeders. At my home we have two main feeders – one with suet and one with black sun flower seeds.

Suet is essentially a fat (lard) like mixture with seeds, nuts or fruits mixed in. The exact mix depends on the type

ALTONA FOREST
STEWARDSHIP
COMMITTEE





Bird feeders on a runner line.

Photography by Jeff Bowers

you buy. These are very popular and can be found in most home improvement stores and some department stores. As a word of advice, the going rate is usually \$1.99 per package. The package is a standard size and fits all standard suet feeders. These are easy to maintain and virtually hassle free. You can even recycle the plastic container the suet comes in once the birds have depleted it. We find woodpeckers are most drawn to the suet. We usually get visited by a number of Downy Woodpeckers every day who come for a fill of suet. This is especially nutritious for them at times of colder weather and provides needed energy, minerals and vitamins.

Black sunflower seeds have the broadest appeal to the most birds. You can buy bags of these seeds in many sizes, however buying a 20 kilogram (kg) bag provides the best overall value on a seeds per kg basis, plus you don't have to make so many trips to the store for more seeds. A large bag of this size can last weeks and weeks (depending on how many feeders you have and how many visitors you get). We find many birds visit our feeders and enjoy these seeds. We regularly see:

- ⇒ Black Capped Chickadees
- ⇒ Cardinals
- ⇒ Dark Eyed Juncos
- ⇒ Blue Jays
- ⇒ Nuthatches
- ⇒ Woodpeckers
- ⇒ House Finches
- ⇒ Goldfinches
- ⇒ Doves



Here is a shot taken in January 2007 while he was perched on our feeder.

If you don't have a bird feeder now, why not set one up? Setting up a feeder is simple, but keep in mind these two pieces of advice. First, place the feeder in the most protected area you can – essentially as far as possible from where people will be. The birds need to feel safe when feeding on an open feeder. If it is close to a tree line or something similar they will be more comfortable and likely to visit knowing they have a quick escape route if they ever feel threatened. Finally, you need to remember it may take time for birds to come - sometimes weeks. They first have to discover your feeder, but once enough birds do you'll start to get a regular flow of visitors – of course this means you need to keep the feeder topped up with seeds!

Encroachment alert

The fence around the Altona Forest was erected to restrict access and protect the sensitive forest habitats and wildlife populations. It is necessary to restrict public access into the forest to minimize human disturbances and cumulative negative impacts.

The Altona Forest provides many important environmental functions including:

- ⇒ Absorbing heavy rains and snow melt into the soil of the forest floor, which cleans the water entering Petticoat Creek and the Rosebank Tributary. It also helps to replenish the ground water storage areas.
- ⇒ Reducing the potential for damaging floods downstream.
- ⇒ Protecting fragile woodland slopes and stream banks from eroding;



- ⇒ Providing habitat and food supply for a variety of birds and wildlife species;
- ⇒ Improving air quality by producing oxygen.

As a neighbour and forest steward, you can help the TRCA protect the sensitive forest environment by adhering to and promoting the following guidelines:

- ⇒ Only enter the forest at designated access points, not from backyards.
- ⇒ Do not remove, prune, or cut trees shrubs and groundcover on TRCA property.
- ⇒ Encourage recycling of materials.
- ⇒ Dump grass clippings, compost, horticultural debris and garbage in the appropriate municipal location.
- ⇒ Use native plant species as much as possible and especially directly adjacent to the forest edge.
- ⇒ Discourage the spraying of pesticides or herbicides close to or into the forest.
- ⇒ Discourage the release of swimming pool water into the forest.
- ⇒ Do not place or direct spotlights into the forest.
- ⇒ Leash pets when walking in the forest to minimize disturbance to wildlife and promote "Poop and Scoop".
- ⇒ Promote the concept of volunteer stewards, who will report or deal with actions that positively or negatively impact the forest.

We hope that you will support the TRCA and our goal of protecting and enhancing the natural and cultural heritage resources of the Altona Forest.

Kudos to Altona Forest Stewardship Committee Members for honours received during 2006.

Bonnie Littley - congratulations on being elected to Regional Council; and for your Woman of Distinction Award from the Durham YWCA

Doug Lockrey - congratulations on receiving the Pickering Naturalists Environmental Award

Larry Noonan – congratulations on receiving the Honour Roll Award from Toronto and Region Conservation; the City of Pickering's Environmental Award; and the Ontario Forestry Association's Susan Wiecek Forestry Education Award

Rosemary Speirs – congratulations for your Woman of Distinction Award from the Toronto YWCA

Brief Reminder

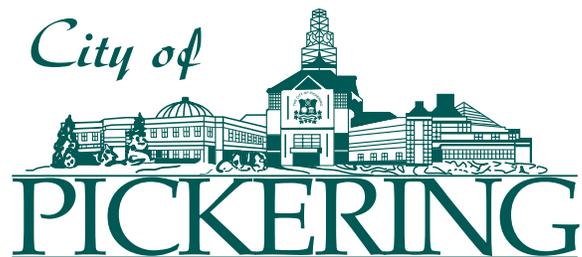
Visit the Altona Forest Internet Site at www.altonaforest.org

- ⇒ Trail guides are available for download on our internet site.
- ⇒ Share your Altona Forest photos by sending them in jpeg format to our site administrator via the website.

To Report

Fallen or hazardous trees on the trail, call TRCA at **416-661-6600** or email larrynoonan@rogers.com

Vandalism – If you observe the results of vandalism, report it to larrynoonan@rogers.com. If you witness vandals at work in the forest, call police at **911**.





Get Ready ... the judges are coming!

We are proud to announce that we will be participating in the 2007 Communities in Bloom provincial competition.

This program is an important step in our Sustainable Pickering journey.

Get involved and showcase our vibrant community. cityofpickering.com



Property green up: taking an integrated approach to lawn care.

Most of us take a lot of pride in having an attractive lawn around our home.

It is important to be knowledgeable about the various options to growing a healthy lawn so that as a homeowner you can make educated choices that are right for your property.

Things as simple as proper mowing, watering, fertilizing, overseeding, aerating, detaching and doing regular checks of your property are very important to growing a healthy lawn.

Visit the environmental awareness section of the City's website to learn about the importance of an integrated approach, how to prevent problems and the four R's of problem solving. The site also explains the importance of and how to maintain your lawn mower, wise pesticide use and disposal, alternatives to pesticides and what the City's approach is on community properties. You will also be able to find links to the seasonal lawn care articles produced by the Pest Management Regulatory Agency.

New environmental site launched!

In keeping with the City's commitment to sustainability and helping residents to become more aware; the City of Pickering recently launched a newly revised environmental section on its website.

Learn about

- ⇒ Energy efficiency, lawn & garden care, air quality, community beautification & waste diversion

Features

- ⇒ Free literature through the online Request for Information form
- ⇒ Energy Awareness Quiz
- ⇒ Upcoming events & previous event photographs
- ⇒ Links to other environmental agencies
- ⇒ Helpful Tips posted each month
- ⇒ Award-winning residents recognized

Log onto this new site from sustainablepickering.com today.

Animal Services

The City of Pickering, Animal Services section is responsible for providing the following animal related services to the residents of Pickering: reuniting lost pets back with their families, yearly cat and dog licensing, enforcement of current animal related by-laws and educating the public on the importance of being a responsible pet owner.

In 2006, Animal Services responded to close to 200 calls of dogs running at large and/or being walked off a leash. Dogs walked off a leash can cause a great deal of damage to our parks as well as put the animal at risk of injury and/or disease.

Responsible Pet Ownership By-law (6693/06) states that all dogs must be walked on a leash when the dog is off the premises of the owner. Any person who is found walking their dog without a leash is at risk of receiving a fine of \$200.00.



Pickering Animal Services urges residents to be responsible pet owners and abide by the laws.

Animal Services can be reached Monday to Friday from 8:30am - 6:30pm and on Saturdays from 8:30am - 3:30pm by calling 905.420.4666 or by visiting the website at cityofpickering.com/animals

Sustainable Pickering

The City of Pickering is on a path to becoming a leader in sustainable community development, with the launching of "Sustainable Pickering."

Sustainable Pickering is a better way of doing business requiring the City to integrate economic, social and environmental objectives to achieve a distinctive community that is a desired place to live, work, invest and raise a family. Sustainability will only be achieved through partnerships between all levels of government, our private sector and most importantly the community who see this as an investment for future generations.

The City is looking forward to continuing its Sustainable Pickering journey in 2007 and beyond.

sustainablepickering.com



Keep the momentum going...

Community support of this initiative has been terrific. For so many of you it is now second nature to stop, take action and report the graffiti, illegal dumping, litter and vandalism that you see in the community.



Your involvement results in positive change. By reporting these problems you are helping to prevent further instances of the same illegal behaviours and are reinforcing positive perceptions about the neighbourhood and City in general. You are also helping to keep the streets and parks safe and healthy for everyone to enjoy.

A Reminder to Dog Owners: Please Respect the Dog Leash Laws in the Altona Forest



Although it may be tempting to allow your dog to run free in the forest, there are several very good reasons to keep your dog leashed during visits to this area, which extend beyond the Pickering By-Law requirement.

- ⇒ **Respect Other Users:** The Altona forest is truly a unique facility which is available to local residents and should be shared by all users. As a pet owner, you may know that your pet is friendly and presents no danger to others, but be considerate and appreciate that the sudden appearance of an unfamiliar off-leash dog can be alarming to other users, particularly to small children.
- ⇒ **Help Protect Forest Wildlife:** The forest is home to small wildlife which can be harmed or have nesting areas damaged by pets on the loose. Additionally, there are also many wildflower species which are sensitive and can be damaged by off the path traffic.
- ⇒ **Protect Your Own Pet:** An encounter with a wild animal is something that pet owners obviously do not intend to occur, but consider that by responsibly handling your dog you could be potentially avoiding both injury to your pet and a possible expensive visit to the vet.
- ⇒ **Protect Your Family:** Be aware that during the summer season, there are several areas of the forest which have poison ivy spreads just off the path areas. Dogs can easily pick up and transfer this to unknowing owners and others when returning from an otherwise pleasant outing.

When in the forest, obeying the leash laws at all times is simply good common sense and demonstrates responsibility and consideration for all park users. So enjoy the beauty of the Altona Forest with your pet, but always remember to “Love ‘em and Leash ‘em.”

Be part of the solution

To report an incident: Call 1-877-420-4666. Report Online at cityofpickering.com/eyesonthestreet

**Email:
[customercare@city.pickering on.ca](mailto:customercare@city.pickering.on.ca)**



Altona Forest
Stewardship
Committee



www.altonaforest.org

TORONTO AND REGION
Conservation
for The Living City

Member of Conservation Ontario
www.trca.on.ca

