

Staff Liaison

Parks, Forestry & Recreation has reorganized somewhat, appointing Steven Parkes to act as a conduit/liaison with groups, communities and the general public on all items pertaining to “Natural Environment” parks (including High Park). He in turn will forward key questions/info to the right person in the City. Lisa McLean is continuing to carry out many of the duties previously performed by Jennifer Gibb, who is on maternity leave.

Prescribed Burn

A few areas will get a controlled burn this spring – see [Advance Notice](#). The areas include the tablelands (1E), an area west of West Rd. (1B), and the area north of Spring Rd. close to Bloor St. (in 10A). The City’s communications to the residents of the newly-built condo on Bloor St. will explain that this is an integral part of stewardship of the park’s natural heritage. The condo management team is obliged to help facilitate communication of such information to the condo owners.

Tree Removal

In preparation for the burn, thirteen trees will be removed in the tablelands areas (just north and northeast of the Grenadier Restaurant) during the next few winter months. These are considered invasive or otherwise inappropriate species within the oak savannah restoration site. The area will eventually be planted with savannah species in accordance with ongoing site management. City staff has been removing other species such as buckthorn from the proposed burn sites.

(Note: Tree removal often requires heavy equipment, which will compact the soil and damage the habitat. For this reason tree removal in natural areas is done in the winter when the ground is frozen and the risk is lower.)

Dredging Work at Wendigo and Howard/Ridout Ponds

There continue to be concerns about how little attention has been given to the ground surface after the dredging had been completed. Specifically, the number of plantings was lower than expected, the wide access road was left as is, covered by large amounts of gravel. It had been assumed that Toronto Region Conservation (who did the work) or

Toronto Water (who has overall accountability) would have addressed this. It had also been assumed that the City’s Ravine Protection Unit had been informed or involved at the earliest stages (but this was not the case).

Lower Duck Pond

A solar-powered ‘enhanced oxygen system’ for purifying water was piloted at Lower Duck Pond last summer/fall. Students at Ryerson University carried out a study, and reported positive results (20% reduction in organic sludge over 12 weeks). This could be a favourable alternative to conventional dredging.

Christmas Bird Count

The annual Christmas Bird Count took place in Toronto on December 20, 2015. A total of 84 species was recorded for Toronto. The High Park count, at 54 species, set a record for the sector and again topped the Toronto count, a reflection of the diversity of habitat in the sector. Detailed High Park results are posted [here](#).

ESA Official Plan Amendment

As part of its five-year Official Plan review, City Council recently amended its environmental policies. High Park’s Tablelands area was added to the map of Toronto’s Environmentally Significant Areas (ESAs), and policy wording was amended. Now site alteration (with some exceptions) is not permitted in ESAs. The policy covering provincially significant areas such as the High Park Woodlands, an Area of Natural and Scientific Interest, was also amended to bring it in line with recently modified provincial policy. Forestry will now be conducting a public education effort and developing site-specific management plans where needed (High Park already has one for the Oak Woodland and Savannah).

High Park Stewards

During the Fall, the group was busy with the removal of some Buckthorn and other invasives. Over the winter, some group educational events have been organized, to further enhance their understanding of restoration principles.

See the High Park Nature [website](#) for more details of upcoming events and volunteer opportunities.