

Friends of the Spit

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*Inside:
- Another
prestigious
award!!!
- Requiem for a
meadow*

Oops!

In an unfortunate mishap, a few letters were lost after pick-up from our P.O. Box.

If you mailed us a letter between April 6 and 16, please call us to verify whether it was received.

We apologize for the trouble.

Membership support renewal

1999 memberships due

Your ongoing, enthusiastic support is very much appreciated.

Many Friends have already renewed for 1999. If this is your case, you will find **REN99** at the bottom right hand corner of your mailing label. We thank you for your support.

If your membership as not yet been received, according to our records, you will find a slip to mail with your cheque. Basic membership is \$5.00 (individual) and \$8.00 (household or group). These dues mostly pay for the newsletter. Thank you in advance for renewing.

NEWSLETTER

April 1999

AS AN EDITORIAL

This is a bittersweet issue. It was not intended to be, but events sometimes have a way of putting a damper of the most joyful occasions.

On the bright side, we received a great honour from Ontario's most senior naturalist and environmental group, the Federation of Ontario Naturalists. The Federation has always been keenly supportive of Friends of the Spit's mandate, helping us from the very beginning — more than two decades ago — in our efforts to give Toronto a public urban wilderness.

The beautiful open meadow south of the sewage plant is now a pock-marked, toxic moonscape, the victim of expediency by Toronto Public Works during the clearing up of the snow from the heavy fall last January. See the story on the reverse, and weep!

Friend and colleague honoured by the Federation of Ontario Naturalists

Well done, Jean!

Jean Macdonald, member of the Toronto Field Naturalists and long-time Friend, was recognized with A FON Appreciation Award for her many volunteering achievements.

Jean has been our contact and resource person at the Toronto Field Naturalists for many years. During that time, we have appreciated her savvy, her knowledge, her cheerfulness and her selfless devotion to the cause.

We are looking forward to many more years of pleasant cooperation with her.

A toast to you too, Jean!

Federation of Ontario Naturalists honour Friends of the Spit with the W.E. Saunders Natural History Award

On October 22, 1998, at a ceremony held at the FON's office, Friends of the Spit was the proud recipient of the W.E. Saunders Natural History Award.

The award is named for W.E. Saunders (1861-1943), who was a keen naturalist in the London, Ontario, area. Saunders was the first Canadian President of the Wilson Ornithological Society, and one of the seven first Fellows of the American Ornithological Society.

The citation read during the award ceremony is a very appropriate summary of your achievements as Friends of the Spit:

W.E. SAUNDERS NATURAL HISTORY AWARD



Presented to
Friends of the Spit

In recognition of an outstanding contribution to the cause of conservation
in Ontario.

Jane M. Topping 22 Oct 1998

"Friends of the Spit believed that although man-made from construction rubble and harbour dredgeate, the Leslie Street Spit in Toronto was a special natural resource deserving protection.

They demonstrated that the area had special significance environmentally because it was a model for the naturalisation process of a grossly disturbed piece of land. Further, Friends of the Spit showed that there was great public support for the concept of a public urban wilderness on the Toronto Waterfront."

Several past and current members of Friends of the Spit Steering Committee were present at the ceremony, where other groups and individuals were also recognized.

Congratulations once more to all of you Friends of the Spit. Your enthusiasm, dedication, continuing support, and hard work during the past two decades has made possible this prestigious recognition by one of Ontario's best-known environmental group.

A toast to all of you!



Friends of the Spit Co-chair, John Carley, receiving the W.E. Saunders Award from Jane Topping, President, Federation of Ontario Naturalists. He is surrounded by, from left, Steve Price, one of the past Co-chairs of Friends; Mark Dorfman, Vice-president, Federation of Ontario Naturalists; and Sheila DeZwaan, a member of Friends of the Spit Steering Committee.

Snow dumped after the big storm creates a toxic wasteland

Meadow at the Spit destroyed

At 4:00 p.m. on Friday, January 15, The Toronto and Region Conservation Authority (TRCA) received a call from the Toronto Harbour Commission (THC) telling them that they were allowing the City of Toronto to dump snow at the Spit. The dumping would start immediately, without any consultation with the interested parties.

Having "a gun to their head" and trying to make the best of a bad thing, the TRCA, after hurried discussion with Friends of the Spit, would monitor the dumping and attempt to minimize damage to the park. Despite their efforts, which included requesting that the snow be dumped in areas not yet rehabilitated, the city dumped in the beautiful meadow south of the sewage plant.

Members of your Steering Committee went to the Spit to inspect the damage. They were upset and appalled at the destruction. What was once thriving meadows and wetlands are no more. It is very discouraging to encounter once again total ignorance and disregard on the part of bureaucrats and politicians for the concept of a public urban wilderness. We wrote to the Toronto Commissioner of Works requesting immediate attention to clean up and a remedial plan for the site and assurances that the Spit would not be part of any future "disaster planning" for snow emergencies.

Recently, the city Works Department met with the TRCA to discuss the issue. In a subsequent letter to us, they stated their readiness to proceed with site mitigation. "Ultimately, it is hoped that this may even enhance the habitat in the area," they wrote. Can we say "Amen" to that?

Christmas Bird Count and Mid-winter Waterfowl Inventory

Volunteers make yearly trek to the Spit

Both of these censuses are part of larger overall yearly studies, and each provides an interesting "snapshot" of these species present on a specific date every year.

1998 CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT

As part of the Annual Christmas Bird count on December 27, 1998, a small team of volunteers censused the birds on the Spit. In total, 32 species were counted, with numbers ranging from single sightings of American Wigeon, Thayers Gull, Lesser Scaup, Long-eared Owl, and Eastern Starling (!!!), to a maximum of 1,812 Oldsquaws. Notable by their absence were Snowy Owls! Astonishing was the sight of 3 Killdeers on the mudflats at Embayment D (and another 2 at Ashbridge's Bay).

53rd ANNUAL MID-WINTER WATERFOWL INVENTORY ON LAKE ONTARIO

On January 10, another team of volunteers participated in this census. The day started sunny but cold, then got overcast snowy and colder in the afternoon. Fourteen species of waterfowl were seen at the Spit, including 1 Black Scoter and 1 Lesser Scaup. Again this year, the greatest number was 415 Oldsquaws. In contrast to the Christmas Bird Count, the Eastern Gap was frozen almost as far south as Peninsula B, and all three cells on the eastern side were frozen. A red fox was spotted near the "blue box" on the endikement.

A first for Friends: cybermembers!

New Friends join via website

Several new Friends joined by filling our web membership form. We are tickled pink by this "first" for our group. Welcome to all new members.

Come, explore

The objectives of our web site are to make the Spit and Friends more widely known and to keep members and allies informed. It has links to interesting sites and contains articles too long to publish in this newsletter.

<http://www.interlog.com/~fos>

Attention birders

Birds of
Tommy Thompson Park
Lakeshore Spit Checklist
1998

This list has been produced by Toronto and Region Conservation Authority and Friends of the Spit. Funding provided by Conservation Canada's Great Lakes Action Program Fund and the City of Toronto. Reprinted with permission. Additional copies may be obtained by contacting:

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10 Broadview Avenue, Toronto, ON M4E 1W1

Friends of the Spit
110 Don Mills, 10000 Sheppard Ave. East, Toronto, ON M2L 2P7
For more information on Lakeshore, Toronto Park, or the Spit, contact:

Get your new checklist

The new checklist of the birds at the Spit is still available, free

Produced jointly by Friends of the Spit and The Toronto and Region Conservation Authority (TRCA), you can get it at the Spit from the TRCA attendant, or by mail (send a stamped self-addressed business size envelope to our address overleaf). For more than one copy, put 92¢ postage.

The wind turbine saga continues

What gall!

Our name is being taken in vain! At a recent meeting, The Toronto Renewable Energy Co-op (TREC) stated that it had "consulted" with Friends of the Spit, even after we made it abundantly clear that we would not participate in their project.

We wrote TREC a strongly worded letter requesting them to cease using our name without our permission.

Electricity generated by wind turbines is carried by the overall grid. Therefore, proximity to the end-user is not a consideration. We wonder why TREC is so relentlessly pushing for wind turbines in an urban area and bird fly-way?

TOWER ERECTED AT THE BASE OF THE SPIT
We were startled to see that the city's Public Works Department allowed the erection of a tower with guy wires at the base of the Spit. While it is on the sewage plant property, we are appalled at the insensitivity of this siting, at the base of a wildlife park, and of the timing, at the start of Spring migration.

This construction, intended to check the winds, is a possible forerunner of wind turbines that could overshadow the Spit.

In a letter to the General Manager, we requested public discussion on this issue.

Danger for wildlife, and people

Dogs not allowed on Spit

Despite signage informing that dogs are not allowed, many people still regard it as their god-given right to walk their animal on the Spit.

To a bird or small mammal, a dog – even on a leash and 'under control' – appears as a predator, putting it under great stress.

If you witness dogs being walked on the Spit, DO NOT confront their owners, as some are rude and very aggressive. Instead, inform the TRCA attendant at the gate.

Tern nest destruction follow up

No investigation

Last June, the Toronto Harbour Commission (THC) bulldozed Common Tern nests at the Spit, prompting the Sierra Legal Defence Fund (SLDF), on behalf of naturalist groups, including Friends, to file a formal request for an investigation with the Provincial Environment Commissioner.

Late last year, a terse letter informed the SLDF that no investigation was going to be undertaken.