

Friends of the Spit

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SEASON'S GREETINGS & HAPPY NEW YEAR !

WINTER is a wonderful season at The Spit: The ice and snow, the solitude, the quiet: but do dress accordingly, and if there is any ice, wear crampons or cleats.



Visitor Experience Plan now underway!

As you all know, the Visitor Experience Plan (VEP) is underway: for those of you who attended the "Engagement pop-up" experiences over the Thanksgiving weekend or during the following week: **thank you very much** for registering your opinions.

As you can see from the photograph of the consultants' tabulation of friends' and visitors' comments, nearly all state that they love and treasure The Spit as it is. And, if you examine some of the stickers closely, you may see a few odd and inappropriate wishes: we certainly don't endorse those!



Engagement Pop-up Panel display, Wednesday October 15th

This exercise was held to give the consultants an initial insight into how people love, adore, and cherish The Spit. These pop-ups were also important for the consultants to understand how visitors and friends might see changes for the better in operations and maintenance take place. With this exercise, we have been reassured by the consultants that the existing Master Plan still rules, and the VEP is being planned within the parameters established by the Master Plan.

We all look forward to a busy 2026, as the consultants indicate they will be embarking on public meetings and consultations. Stay tuned !!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

101st Toronto Christmas Bird Count

In 1900, an American - Frank Chapman - established Christmas bird counts. He was reacting to the annual Christmas Day slaughter of birds that had been occurring, and wished to bring the public's attention to living birds.

That first year, a Toronto woman, E. Fannie Jones, participated and submitted her tally, and since then, while missing a number of years through intermittent participation in the first decades, the Toronto count has recently concluded its 101st count.

This year's count, coordinated by the Toronto Ornithological Club, took place on Sunday, December 14th, and tallied 99 species, a new count high! The count is conducted within a 24 km diameter circle, centred on the ROM, and volunteer counters are assigned predefined routes. Two of the count's routes include The Spit: one route censuses the peninsula itself, while the other route covers the Baselands, the Outer Harbour Marina, and other Portland lands, including the new Biidaasige Park.

On The Spit itself, the volunteers tallied 37 species, including a flyover flock of 53 Sandhill Cranes, only the second time Sandhill Cranes have been recorded in the 101 years!!! Another beautiful bird was the male King Eider seen close to Peninsula A. On the Toplands, a young male Northern Goshawk was observed.



Sandhill Cranes over Spine Road. Photo by Ed O'Connor



King Eider, in waters off Peninsula A

Christmas bird counts will be occurring throughout North America over the next three weeks. Over the years, these counts have provided, and continue to supply, tremendous data for the monitoring of bird populations.

Police activities on The Spit

Of continuing concern is the use of The Spit, by Toronto Police Services, as a training exercise area and even for “take your child to work day”. These operations and amusements have generally occurred without any prior notice to the public, have involved automobile access, and, on two occasions, involved the flying of drones, something that is not permitted in the park.

We have contacted the appropriate people at Toronto Police Services and have received their assurances that they will notify the TRCA and the City prior to future activities and that they will indeed place signage and protective barriers so the general public does not inadvertently wander into a training exercise.

Nevertheless, as the Park moves forward and will soon (we hope) be officially open seven days a week, we have gone on record that these are totally inappropriate activities for a public urban wilderness. We have requested that the Police Services initiate (if they’ve not already done so) their search for alternate training locations. The Spit is a park, not a police training ground!

Should you, in the coming months, witness any further police activity, please document it and the signage – photographs would help - and submit your observations to us via email or to our Facebook page. Police training activities are serious exercises: obey all signage, do not place yourself at risk.

Encampment at Wet Woods in Baselands

Once again, an encampment has been constructed in the centre of the wet woods in the Baselands. The TRCA and the City are both well aware of this and, we are told, are taking measures to meet with the occupants and to encourage them to vacate the site.

Homelessness is a big problem in our city, particularly with sites being established in parkland. This site at The Spit is highly problematic, as habitat has been destroyed, trees are being cut, and fires lit. We are reminded of the large fire at the encampment late last winter as it was abandoned. Further, the site itself is prone to flooding.

Until the City and TRCA have resolved the issue, we advise that our friends and visitors to The Spit avoid this particular area for the time being.



Friends appear on Youtube!

Toronto Field Naturalists invited Friends of the Spit to present a lecture in October. We were pleased to accept this invitation from Toronto's important century-old pioneering nature group, and the hour-long talk is featured on the TFN's Youtube page. Our talk – *The Leslie Street Spit – Toronto's Accidental Wilderness – NOT by Accident* addressed both the historical advocacy and continuing efforts to protect The Spit, and in doing so, celebrates The Spit.

The link is:

[October 2025 Lecture: The Leslie Street Spit – Toronto's Accidental Wilderness – NOT by Accident!](#)

Enjoy all the beauty of Winter on The Spit – and dress for the conditions! 😊 😊 😊

Season's Greetings!