



The Pin Oak

"Giving Nature a Helping Hand"

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In This Issue:

News

Earth Day 2010

Origin of Park Name

Native Plant Sale

Kasia Zgurzynski: Frogs and Toads: Our Sensitive Companions

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News

The 2010 year was another busy year at Malcolmson Eco-Park and we are proud of our accomplishments. Earth Day was once again a great success with over 100 volunteers participating in various activities such as garbage clean-up, mulching, and planting over 1000 native plants and trees in the park. This Earth Day was particularly significant as we celebrated the 100th anniversary of Guiding in Canada (1910-2010). The Native Plant Sale continues to be popular with residents and the revenue from this sale allows us to raise money for park projects. One such project was the new Malcolmson Eco-Park pergola that can be found in the Outdoor Learning Area. The pergola would not have been possible without the support of Kiera Newman and Bruce Glancy of Kiva Landscaping. This pergola is now the centrepiece of the Outdoor Learning Area and provides a seating area for park visitors. Make sure you check it out.

As the Friends look forward to 2011, the Friends Advisory Committee is intending to update the concept plan for the park. The original concept plan was completed in the mid-90s and most of the major works of this plan have been implemented. An update will be very helpful in directing the Friends on future projects in the park.

There are some volunteer opportunities that will be available this winter as work in the park continues. We will be removing vines that are choking out the trees in the forest. This is a big job and any extra help would be appreciated. Please contact Mike Anderson at the City of St.Catharines or check www.malcolmsonecopark.com for dates.

We hope to see you at Malcolmson Eco-Park!!!

History Lesson

Before Malcolmson Eco-Park, there was McCalla Park

The land where Malcolmson Eco-Park sits was part of an early grant to the loyalist Andrew Jones. It was mainly used for agricultural purposes but a small portion of what is now Malcolmson Eco-Park was once named McCalla Park. According to Fred Parnell, McCalla park was very popular in the 1890s and early 1900s. About 1875, St. Catharines businessmen, the McCallas, purchased land in the area which is now the entrance to the Port Weller Harbour. The McCallas removed many undesirable trees, but they left several large chestnut and maple trees. It became known as "Chestnut Beach" to local residents. Parnell also reported that the ground in the area was leveled and the perimeter of the park was lined with a white picket fence and flower beds. The park was also used for camping as city dwellers migrated to the park with their tents. However, everything changed in 1919 when the Dominion Government decided to build the 4th Welland Canal. The land containing McCalla Park was expropriated with most of the park giving way to canal construction.

Earth Day 2010



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O'Hara Trucking & Excavating, the C.A.W., Starbucks, the City of St. Catharines, Kiva Landscaping (Bruce Glancy & Kiera Newman), & all the volunteers!!!

Frogs and Toads: Our Sensitive Companions

By Kasia Zgurzynski

Malcolmson Eco-Park is not only a special place for us, but it is an incredibly valuable habitat for many other species that need this type of refuge. One of the things that make it so valuable is the wetland ecosystem present there. Life needs water to flourish, and any wildlife refuge is incomplete without at least a semi permanent source of water. I don't know about you, but when I am near a wetland I am immediately looking for frogs and toads, collectively referred to by their order name as Anurans.



Figure 1: Green frogs are common visitors to backyard ponds.

Source: Kasia Zgurzynski

These creatures can tell you a lot about the health of a system, whether the area is as large as a major wetland, or as small as a water feature in a backyard. Due to their sensitive and porous skin, they are an important indicator species. They indicate to us, very early on, if their habitat is polluted. They are sensitive to pesticides and herbicides, such as the pesticide Atrazine, which is one of the most commonly used in the world, and has been shown to largely influence hormone levels. This influence can skew reproductive ability enough to wipe out populations. Other pesticide use has been related to severe deformities in frogs, such as the growth of extra limbs. Natural habitats are disappearing, and being replaced by areas that are prone to the use of these chemicals, such as agricultural fields and golf courses.

A habitat that isn't in contact with these dangerous substances is of great value to these creatures. Malcolmson Eco-Park is quite isolated from agricultural runoff, and there is enough vegetation here to clean the water of many impurities, making it an ideal home for our little friends. The Anurans themselves bring with them a variety of birds and mammals, all benefiting from these healthy populations, and creating a diverse ecosystem that everyone can benefit from.

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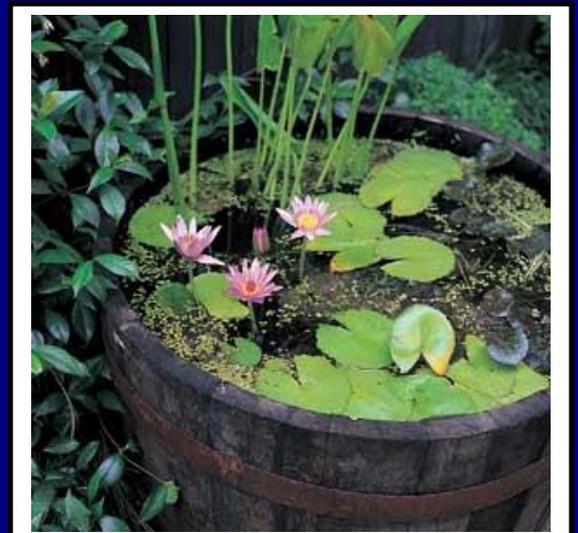


Figure 2: Half-barrel pond

Source: water-garden-blog.com

The species of Anuran found in our general area include the following:

Grey treefrog, midland chorus frog, spring peeper, pickerel frog, wood frog, green frog (Figure 1), bullfrog, mink frog, northern leopard frog, American toad, and Fowler's toad (found along the shores of Lake Erie).

Frog and toad populations are in trouble, and we can all do our part to assist them. A water feature is a simple and effective way to attract Anurans. Something as small as a half-barrel pond can bring a few critters to your yard (Figure 2), but any size water feature is bound to enable life.

Another way to help Anurans is to take part in FrogWatch. This is a program that uses the work of citizen scientists to monitor frog populations, and anyone can contribute. You can find more information at naturewatch.ca.

In the Tao Te Ching, it says, "When you know nature as part of yourself, you will act in harmony. When you feel yourself a part of nature, you will live in harmony." Helping Anuran populations can certainly bring us closer to this ideal.

References

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2010 Malcolmson Eco-Park Advisory Committee

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