

Caring for Your Land and Water

WILDLIFE POND MANAGEMENT

FACTSHEET 2



If you want to manage your pond for wildlife and improve the health of your pond, the best things you can do are to let a natural vegetated buffer grow around your pond, and protect and enhance existing habitat.

How does a vegetated buffer help improve your pond?

Buffers or buffer strips are areas of land where there is permanent vegetation adjacent to a watercourse (or pond). Planting, maintaining, and widening vegetation buffer strips around your pond will filter, store, and break down contaminants in water run-off (water that washes off the land). This can carry sediments and pollutants that could have a negative effect on your pond.

Contamination could come from local agriculture, roads, septic systems, households, lawns, gardens, and is often indicated by excessive algae growth, especially due to a high input of nutrients.

Buffer strips also provide habitat for various birds and animals. By simply not mowing the area around your pond, vegetation will grow up naturally and attract wildlife. Another option is planting in order to diversify the vegetation.

See Factsheet # 1: Buffer Strips and Swales for more detailed information on natural buffer strips.

Action Steps

- ◆ Allow a buffer of natural vegetation to grow up around your pond, or maintain and widen existing buffer strips
- ◆ Add logs and brush to the shallow water
- ◆ Create tree overhangs, submerged logs and branches along the pond's edge
- ◆ Protect snags (dead trees where wildlife can build their homes)
- ◆ Stock your pond as an option for diversifying the fish community
- ◆ Maintain culverts, bridges, boardwalks and trails to reduce human-caused erosion
- ◆ Add pond vegetation using a variety of native species. Include aquatic-emergent plants (half-in, half-out of the water), submerged plants, and floating plants



Why and how should you diversify pond vegetation?

If you do decide to plant vegetation in and around your pond, a variety of native vegetation types will help to create a healthy pond and attract fish and wildlife with the diverse structure and food they provide. Trees by the pond and vegetation in the shallow water along the shoreline will shade and cool the water, filter runoff, and provide food and spawning areas for wildlife. It is also visually pleasing!

Types of plants include aquatic-emergent plants (plants that are half-in and half-out of the water), like Cattails, Bulrushes and Arrowhead, submerged plants, like Canada Waterweed and Wild Celery and floating plants, such as Water Lilies.

Why and how should you enhance wildlife habitat?

Brush piles can be placed in shallow water (up to 60cm (2ft) deep) to provide sites where frogs, toads and salamanders can lay their eggs.

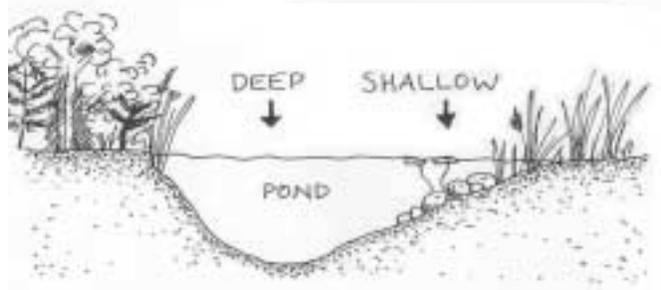
Floating or partially submerged logs provide sun-basking areas for turtles and also attract waterfowl. These can be anchored in place during the winter by cabling the log to a concrete block left on the ice. When the ice breaks up in the spring, the block will settle into place and provide habitat.

Ideally, ponds should have an irregular shoreline and at least one-third of the bank sloping gently towards the deep centre. This creates a productive zone where sunlight can penetrate through the water to promote an abundance of plants, as well as the animals that depend on them (see the diagram). It is best to incorporate

these things at the design stage of your pond, but you *can* rework the shoreline of an existing pond (this may however require a permit). Before proceeding with any pond construction or reshaping contact your Conservation Authority for permit requirements.

How should you improve fish habitat?

Stocking your pond can diversify the fish community (see Factsheet # 4: Stocking Your Pond for more information). Adding logs and brush to the shallow water will help provide cover from predators for juvenile fish. Logs and brush in the deep water can be used by the adults. The decaying wood also provides habitat for the aquatic insects that feed the fish.

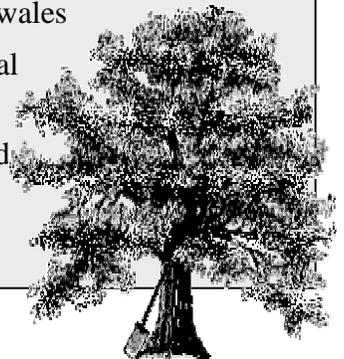


Who can you contact for assistance?

- ◆ Conservation Authority Biologist or Forester
- ◆ Ministry of Natural Resources
- ◆ Wetland Habitat Fund

Other relevant factsheets in this series include:

- ◆ Buffer Strips and Swales
- ◆ Wetlands and Vernal Pools
- ◆ Stocking Your Pond
- ◆ Management of Online Ponds



Scientific references available upon request



C.L.A.W.S.

Centre for Land and Water Stewardship
University of Guelph
Guelph, ON N1G 2W1
(519) 824-4120 x 8382
www.uoguelph.ca/~claws



Credit Valley Conservation Authority
1255 Old Derry Road
Mississauga, ON L5N 6R4
1-800-668-5557
www.creditvalleycons.com