

Living by the Lake

LAKE ONTARIO INTEGRATED SHORELINE STRATEGY - NEWSLETTER - ISSUE SIX - JUNE 2014



Common terns make a comeback in Port Credit.
Photo courtesy of fishhawk
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A PLACE TO TERN: *New nest enclosures for common terns in Port Credit harbour*



If you take a summer stroll along the waterfront in Port Credit you may witness a stunning display of aerial acrobatics and the high-pitched “kee-arrrr” of the common tern (*Sterna hirundo*).

These waterbirds are a bit smaller than seagulls, have a bright orange-red beak and feet, and a black “cap” on the crest of their heads. Terns have nested successfully on the roof of the Port Credit harbour marina building since at least 2007. With 1,011 breeding pairs of terns in 2013, this represents one of the largest populations of nesting terns in the lower Great Lakes.

There are many reasons why the marina roof attracts terns each year.

In the wild, terns typically nest on the ground in sandy or gravelly beaches, laying eggs in small bowl-shaped depressions. The marina roof is covered with a layer of pea gravel, so it is like a beach without the danger of waves and high-water drowning the nests. Being elevated high above ground protects the nests from predators, such as raccoons and mink, looking to snatch vulnerable eggs and young. In addition, the sheer size of the roof (341m by 46m) and its flat profile make it an ideal nesting location.

Budding interest in redeveloping the port lands led to discussions about how best to manage and protect this huge concentration of chatty waterbirds. There are now efforts in place to dissuade terns from nesting at the marina, coupled with new man-made nest enclosures on the nearby Ridgetown – a large ship, sunk in 1973 to act as a breakwall for the Port Credit harbour.

The project, coordinated by Environment Canada and assisted by CVC’s restoration team, began on April 24, 2014. Four nest enclosures were built on top of cargo hatches in the centre of the ship. The enclosures are essentially sandboxes.

Wooden decoys placed in the enclosures and a recorded loop of tern calls playing continuously will encourage terns nest there. Similar projects have to been carried out successfully by Environment Canada in other areas.

As of May 21, two nests (each with a single egg) have been observed in the enclosures on the Ridgetown. Additional enclosures are being built to provide more nesting habitat for terns. CVC staff continue to work with Environment Canada to manage the Ridgetown with terns in mind. With so many terns aboard, it may be time to change its name from the Ridgetown to the Ridgetern!

YOUTH ON THE FRONTLINE OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION



Proud CVC Frontliners receiving their Eco-Ambassador certification.

Throughout 2013, Credit Valley Conservation (CVC) engaged high school students, drawing their attention to environmental issues facing Lake Ontario. Youth have shown an overwhelming interest in the environment and the health of our shoreline. Students worked towards becoming Eco-Ambassadors in CVC's Frontline program, helping to raise awareness for Great Lakes environmental issues within their communities.

CVC ECO-AMBASSADORS

Achieving Eco-Ambassador certification in CVC's Frontline program involves a training workshop, taking part in environmental restoration activities and delivering a presentation to their peers or community groups. Frontline students delivered 15 presentations, reaching over 300 event attendees at a number of public events. Their presentations covered topics from environmental challenges facing Lake Ontario to migratory songbirds.

One group of students transformed a standard CVC presentation into a catchy, youth-focused display complete with graphics and examples of activities everyone can do to improve the Lake Ontario shoreline.

JOB SHADOWING

Frontliners (frontline participants) gain hands-on experience shadowing CVC staff. In May, 20 students took a trip to Riverwood Conservancy for a tour of the salamander monitoring site. Led by CVC's Aaron Ptok-Byard, Frontliners got a chance to see salamanders up close, identify each distinct species and even hold salamanders. On July 17, Frontliners will visit a rural farm property with CVC's Mark Eastman to learn about important environmental improvements made on the farm..

In addition to job shadowing, Frontliners participate in environmental restoration activities such as the Great Canadian Shoreline Clean-up at Meadowvale Conservation Area, Uproot and Uprise invasive species

control at Rattray Marsh, and the Belfountain Garlic Mustard Pull.

Frontliners have contributed more than 219 hours of volunteer work in the community. We are proud to say that 23 outstanding students have achieved Eco-Ambassador certification.

Frontline is open to high school students aged 14 to 17 who have participated in CVC's Conservation Youth Corps (CYC) summer volunteer program. Frontliners are environmental leaders in their schools and communities. They are liaisons between their schools and CVC. Frontline students can also lead summer CYC groups, attend workshops and participate in other environmental activities throughout the school year.

For more information on the Frontline and CYC programs please contact CVC's Keren Bromberg at 905-670-1615 ext 394.

THE LAKE ONTARIO SHORELINE: FROM EXPLOITATION TO RESTORATION



Lakeview
Waterfront,
circa 1980

As settlements and communities developed, our society and the Lake Ontario shoreline have shaped each other, often in interesting ways that reflected priorities of the day.

The first major development here was the stonehooking industry that began in 1860 to harvest stones and boulders along the shoreline for use in constructing buildings and early infrastructure. This practice ended in 1920 with depletion of resources and development of more productive land-based quarries.

As the region grew economically, transportation modes shifted from the once thriving shipping industry to newly formed railway systems. In 1911, legislation empowered the Toronto Harbour Commission to manage shoreline properties as well as to acquire lands for redevelopment of the harbour to improve trade and recreation. Another comprehensive waterfront plan wasn't developed for more than 50 years.

WATERFRONT PLAN

In 1967, the Metro Toronto Waterfront Plan proposed shoreline development and redevelopment as its core vision, extending from Pickering in the east to Mississauga in the west. It acknowledged the need for open space, recreation and, importantly, protection of natural features. The Mississauga section of the plan called primarily for park lands and boating facilities.

In 1971, CVC was appointed to implement the plan around Mississauga. We quickly began to develop new park lands through shoreline filling and protection.

This included Waters Edge Park, J.C. Saddington Park, and the massive Lakefront Promenade Park. Methods to protect the shoreline from wave erosion were also identified. While creating sand beaches was preferred, steel and concrete walls and rock were used in shelter areas as well as areas of high wave action and erosion.

NATURAL FEATURES

Now, more than 100 years after the Harbour Commission vision to exploit the shoreline economically, the first comprehensive plan to protect and enhance its natural features is nearing completion.

Today, for the first time, the natural environment is becoming the primary focus of shoreline management. CVC and partners are conducting the Lake Ontario Integrated Shoreline Strategy (LOISS), recognizing and repairing the damaging effects of past industrial practices. While we can never go back to pre-settlement conditions, the goal is to enhance the existing shoreline by improving habitat for wildlife while maintaining necessary erosion protection for safety and protection of property.

Our aim is a more balanced, sustainable approach to natural areas protection, to maintain natural processes and functions and to improve human health.

OUR GREAT LAKES

The Great Lakes Fishery Commission is a joint Canada-U.S. organization that coordinates fisheries research, controls invasive species and assists with fisheries management. The commission takes a whole-system approach to ensure fishing opportunities for food, recreation, cultural heritage, employment, as well as an overall healthy lake. Their goal for Lake Ontario is a stable and sustainable fishery, supplemented with hatchery-reared fish.

CVC's Lake Ontario Integrated Shoreline Strategy (LOISS) contributes to the commission's goal by monitoring fish just off the shore and in tributaries. Monitoring information guides restoration efforts in the area. Nearshore warmwater fish (perch, bass and pike) benefit from habitat restoration projects at local marinas, at Lakefront Promenade Park and at the mouth of the Credit River.

This type of restoration helps smaller fish such as emerald shiner, alewife, and threespine stickleback, which sustain larger fish (salmon and trout) that live in deeper waters.

We can all help ensure Lake Ontario has a healthy fish population. You can keep hazardous materials from entering the water and conserve water wherever possible. Stopping the spread of invasive species and protecting fish habitat are also important. Together we can ensure that our great lakes stay great.

LAKEVIEW WATERFRONT CONNECTION: *update*



The Lakeview Waterfront Connection (LWC) project will transform a degraded and inaccessible area of our shoreline into an inviting naturalized green space with public access and wildlife habitat. This vision is one step closer to reality. The Region of Peel and Credit Valley Conservation (CVC) submitted their environmental assessment (EA) to the Ministry of the Environment for review on May 2, 2014.

The public can provide comments on the LWC EA before June 20, 2014.

**Please submit written comments to: Adam Sanzo, Project Officer
Ministry of the Environment
Environmental Assessment and Approvals Branch
2 St. Clair Avenue West,
Floor 12A, Toronto, ON M4V 1L5
416-314-8433
1-800-461-6290
Fax: 416-314-8452**

Environmental assessments are usually done to reduce a project's impact on the environment. While there are some effects, the LWC EA is for the most part doing the opposite by looking at a degraded property and planning ways to improve it. It will provide public access while improving natural habitat in a fiscally-responsible way by seeking efficiencies with existing and proposed infrastructure projects.

The LWC is a project of The Region of Peel and Credit Valley Conservation, with on-going review and support from Toronto and Region Conservation, the City of Mississauga, the City of Toronto and Ontario Power Generation.

NEXT STEPS:

The Minister of Environment is expected to provide a decision on the EA in late 2014.

For more information on the EA process, please visit:

www.ontario.ca/environment-and-energy/preparing-environmental-assessments

To learn more about the LWC EA, please visit:

www.creditvalleyca.ca/lwc.



For more information visit:
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