

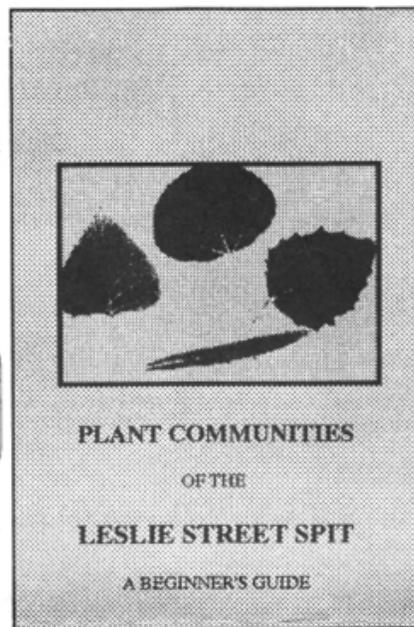
Friends of the Spit

P.O. Box 51518
2060 Queen St. East
Toronto, ON M4E 3V7

Inside:
- Habitat creation
- Membership Meeting
- Thank you!

Please send me _____ plant books at \$5.00 each plus \$1.00 per book for postage and handling.

Phone number: _____ (in case of problem)



A MUST ON THE SPIT

This handy guide has colour plates to help you identify some of the species of plants on the Spit. It also makes a nice, inexpensive present for your environmentalist friends (only 265 days to Christmas!). Fill the form on the left and mail this slip to us.

NEWSLETTER March, 1996

AS AN EDITORIAL

A lot happened, but not much happened. No huge rallies, but much advocacy work with small groups. No spectacular events, but a large number of little things occurred as nature continued Her work on the Spit.

There are some dark clouds on the horizon, however. Most worrisome are a number of events affecting the Metro Toronto and Region Conservation Authority (MTRCA). First, was the withdrawal of provincial appointees on the MTRCA Board. By and large, these individuals brought a much-needed broader, non-parochial perspective to the MTRCA. Then, there are the major provincial cuts to the MTRCA budget, which will affect the Spit quite severely (staffing, nature walks, even perhaps hours of opening). We have offered suggestions to the MTRCA as to measures that could be implemented to offset some of these cuts.

Down the road, we also worry about the devastating effects of the horrible Omnibus Bill, which among other things will allow conservation authorities to sell land.

As you see, the struggle is never over. It just shifts its focus.

HABITAT CREATION TO INCREASE SPECIES DIVERSITY

The construction work you will have noticed at Embayment B has the potential of being constructive, contrary to many of the loony schemes hatched for the Spit by a generation of bureaucrats

Coordinated by the MTRCA, the \$100,000 project is funded equally by the Great Lakes 2000 Clean-Up Fund of Environment Canada and the Municipality of Metropolitan Toronto — Metro RAP. By altering the configuration of the embayment floor, creating sand bars and inlets, the Conservation Authority hopes to improve the environment for aquatic and terrestrial species. Varying the vegetation and water depth and creating protected areas would provide spawning grounds for pike and habitats for turtles and amphibians. Species diversity would also increase.

The MTRCA has consulted with the Steering Committee of Friends of the Spit throughout the planning of this project. We will keep you informed of progress since there may be an opportunity for volunteer participation for the planting of native species in the area.

Friends of the Spit feels it is important that the Conservation Authority tries these projects on a small scale and study their actual results in the field. Embayment B was selected because it offers the most opportunities with the least possible disruption to existing forms of wildlife. (We had suggested that the north end of Embayment C was a most suitable spot, but...)



Mark your calendar...

MEMBERSHIP MEETING

Date: Tuesday, April 23, 1996

Time: 7:30 p.m.

Place: Education Centre (Toronto Board of Education), 155 College Street, in Room 253

AGENDA

- Juice and socializing (BYOG – Bring your own glass if possible)
- Report from the Steering Committee
- "URBAN WILDERNESS". This delightful video, part of the popular and widely acclaimed series Profiles of Nature, features the Spit in all its beauty. You won't want to miss seeing it.
- Open discussion: Friends of the Spit — What does the future hold?
- Questions from the membership

The Education Centre is located half a block west of University Avenue. It is easily accessible by public transit (506 Streetcar or subway – Queen's Park Station). There is a bicycle rack at the door. Free parking is available in the Board of Education garage on McCaul Street (west side, just south of College Street.).

Looking forward to seeing you there!

MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL FOR 1996

Memberships for 1996 are now due and still remain at :

\$5.00 — Individual

Donations are welcome

\$8.00 — Household/group

Please fill this form and mail it with your cheque to:

Friends of the Spit

P.O. Box 51518, 2060 Queen St. East

Toronto, ON M4E 3V7

Yes, I want to renew my membership in Friends of the Spit

Name _____ Phone _____

(Please print)

John and Jane Eider
123 Teal Street
Toronto, ON M4M 4M4

REN 96

Check your label. If your membership is up-to-date for 1996, you will see "REN 96". Please inform us of any change of address.

ADDRESS CORRECTIONS. Please indicate address/name corrections on the label on the reverse.

IMPORTANT NOTE: Friends of the Spit does not sell or trade its mailing lists

NOW THE COUNTS...

Wildlife counts provide numbers for comparisons to previous years, giving a general sense of the seasonal movement of species and how populations are faring.

71st Annual Christmas Bird Count

The 1995 Christmas Bird Count, organised as in prior years by the Toronto Ornithological Club, was held on December 26. On the Spit route (which includes the sewage treatment plant, the allotment gardens and Cherry Beach), 38 species were recorded. Highlights of the count at the Spit were an adult Peregrine Falcon, seen perched on the rubble on the endikement, an immature Bald Eagle, a Snowy Owl, and six Great Horned Owls. A Gyrfalcon was spotted by one counter, while others saw a Winter Wren and Snow Buntings. One red fox was also seen!

50th Annual Mid-Winter Waterfowl Inventory Count

This inventory took place on January 7. It counts all birds on the shoreline of Lake Ontario from Niagara to Kingston. On this very cold windy day, six species of duck were counted at the Spit, the high count for individuals being 794 Oldsquaw and 746 Greater Scaup. Overall in the Toronto Region, record high numbers of both species and individuals were noted.

1st Toronto Centre Butterfly Count

On July 15, one of the hottest (35 °C) days of the summer, the Inaugural Toronto Centre Butterfly Count took place. Twenty species were noted on the Spit — by binoculars, or by netting and release: no specimens were taken. Notable among the species sighted were 13 Acadian Hairstreaks, 1 American Painted Lady, 1 Little Sulphur, 1 Dun Skipper, 3 Painted Lady butterflies, and only 17 Monarchs.

The 1995 count will take place in July. If you have some knowledge of butterflies and wish to take part, there are routes available through parks and ravines in Toronto. Contact John Carley at 766-1330.

... and a new visitor at the Spit

First ever Great Grey Owl recorded at the Spit.

It was found on the baselands on February 17, in a small tree to the east of one of the rock piles and the next day, near the cut. Many birders saw the bird and were very pleased! This sighting is one of many such throughout the province. This has been a banner winter in Ontario for Great Grey Owls sightings.

Walk the Spit with an expert

Join Friends of the Spit's John Carley who will be leading a joint Toronto Field Naturalist/ Citizens for a Lakeshore Greenway walk on the theme "The Spit in Spring". Meet on Saturday, April 13 at 10:30 a.m. at the base of the Spit, corner Unwin Avenue. Bring lunch.

HEARTFELT THANKS!

Out of the blue, a few months ago, Friends of the Spit received a phone call from a representative of the North York Environmental Advisory Group (NYEAG), a voluntary committee of employees at the head office of Centra Gas Ontario Inc.

— Would Friends of the Spit be interested in a donation?

— Most certainly! we answered.

So we received a sizeable cheque representing money collected through the activities of the Committee.

What we liked very much also was the way the money was raised. On Earth Day, the committee held a vegetarian barbecue and sold Earth Day Canada lapel pins; it also obtained outdated topographic maps and sold them to employee to use as Christmas wrapping. All proceeds were donated to Friends of the Spit.

"The NYEAG is pleased to support the efforts of Friends of the Spit to keep the Leslie Street Spit free of development, and we wish your group success in your endeavours," wrote the representative of the Committee



MORE GOOD NEWS!!!

Friends of the Spit has not been affected by government funding cuts...

...for the simple reason that Friends of the Spit is 100% funded by membership and donations! You have been extremely generous through the years and we take this opportunity to thank our members for their commitment, their overwhelming response to calls for action, and their continuing support.

Of course, there is a bit of a downside to a grassroots, volunteer group in that response to your requests can be a little slow at times. Please bear with us and feel free to drop us a line at our P.O. Box address, or phone us at 699-3143. We'll get back to you as soon as we can.



WHAAAT... A WINDOW ENVELOPE!

Blame Canada Post for the loss of our neat (or so we thought), environmentally friendly self-mailer.

Continuing to use the self-mailer would have required us to pay double the postage (90¢). So we're back to inserting (ouch, the paper cuts!). We are using a window envelope so that we can continue to use a label on the renewal slip portion of the newsletter. This makes record-keeping much easier.

There is a small compensation in the fact that envelopes are now part of most municipal recycling programs.