

2016 Year in Review

A MESSAGE FROM PARKS CANADA

Happy New Year and best wishes for 2017 from Parks Canada and Rouge National Urban Park.

Over the course of this past year, Parks Canada has been working diligently in the Rouge completing various restoration projects, providing quality visitor experiences for guests, partnering with our communities on exciting new initiatives, and making progress on land assembly for Canada's first national urban park.

Our success in 2016 would not have been possible without collaboration with our First Nations Advisory Circle, park farmers, volunteers and conservation groups, as well as other levels of government, countless individuals and numerous community organizations. We sincerely look forward to continuing to work with all of our valued partners and stakeholders in the year ahead.

As we look back and reflect on our achievements, we're also busy planning and preparing for 2017, which is the 150th anniversary of Canadian Confederation. During this year's Canada 150 celebrations, Rouge National Urban Park and the GTA will host many outstanding special events and programs to commemorate Canada's sesquicentennial year.

To find out more about Rouge National Urban Park, including upcoming Canada 150 events in the park and around the GTA, please check out our social media channels or our website parksCanada.ca/rouge

We look forward to welcoming you to the park and celebrating Canada's 150th birthday with you in 2017!

-Pamela L. Veinotte Field Unit Superintendent, Rouge National Urban Park

2016 MILESTONES: ROUGE NATIONAL URBAN PARK

- On **Feb. 9, 2016**, Canada's Minister of Environment and Climate Change and Minister responsible for Parks Canada, the Honourable Catherine McKenna, announced Parks Canada was contributing \$150,000 to the Toronto Zoo to help re-establish a healthy, local population of Blanding's turtles in Rouge National Urban Park.
- On **June 9, 2016**, the Government of Canada tabled Bill C-18, which includes amendments to the Rouge National Urban Park Act that will protect the Rouge's important ecosystems and heritage, as well as ensure that the ecological integrity of the park is the first priority in the park's management. The amendments also provide greater certainty for park farmers.
- On **June 18, 2016**, the Ontario Government reaffirmed its commitment to transfer its

owned or controlled lands to Parks Canada for Rouge National Urban Park.

- On **June 21, 2016**, Parks Canada and the Toronto Zoo partnered, for the third year in a row, on the release of 36 more baby Blanding's turtles – a nationally and provincially-threatened species. To date, 67 baby Blanding's turtles have been released in Rouge National Urban Park. More releases are to come.
- On **Oct. 22, 2016**, in collaboration with the Toronto & Region Conservation Authority, City of Markham, York Region and Province of Ontario, Parks Canada celebrated the official opening of Bob Hunter Memorial Park, named after the well-known Canadian environmentalist and Greenpeace co-founder.
- Second Reading of Bill C-18 concluded on **Nov. 25, 2016**. The Bill was referred to the Standing Committee on Environmental and Sustainable Development, which reviewed the Bill and reported it back to the House of Commons on **Dec. 14, 2016**, without amendment.
- In **2016**, the online presence of Rouge National Urban Park significantly increased, achieving close to 1 million impressions with our various online audiences!
- In **2016**, Parks Canada offered more than 300 free educational programs and public events inside the park, and attended more than 50 community events and festivals, including the CNE and Markham Fair.

CONSERVATION SUCCESS STORIES

In 2016, 16 new aquatic habitat restoration projects were completed in the Rouge, primarily concentrating on Katabokokonk Creek, a tributary of the Little Rouge River. Projects included restoration of important wetlands and swamps, enhancement of fish habitat and aquatic connectivity, planting of native species, and removal of invasive species.

The goal of these projects is to improve water quality and aquatic habitat, including the reduction of soil erosion and ultimately the restoration of habitat suitable for important cool and cold water fish species that historically existed in the park. The work also helped to enhance the function of farmland in the park, including improving farm drainage and reducing the loss of valuable agricultural soils.

In 2016, 14.03 hectares of wetland and riparian habitat, 15.9 hectares of forest habitat and 1,160 metres of stream bank were restored and rehabilitated. We also installed two new culverts to improve fish movement and aquatic habitat, and planted almost 19,000 native trees and shrubs in the park with the help of our Indigenous partners and hundreds of elementary and high school students from across the GTA. In partnership with tenant farmers, we installed four new tile treatment wetlands to enhance the quality of water flowing off farmland, removed hundreds of invasive trees and planted native tree windbreaks.

Early results show that biodiversity is increasing at these restored habitat sites, with more than

34 bird species and seven amphibian species moving in to newly restored wetland habitats from surrounding areas, and native plants thriving and growing rapidly throughout this past season.

This brings the total number of restoration projects completed in the park to 31 in just two years. Working in collaboration with the TRCA, farmers, municipalities, Indigenous partners, schools and volunteers, we have already restored more than 32 hectares of wetland and riparian habitat, 20 hectares of forest, and have planted more than 38,000 native plants in Rouge National Urban Park.

VISITOR EXPERIENCE HIGHLIGHTS

This past year was an exceptional second operational season for Parks Canada's Visitor Experience team in Rouge National Urban Park. In addition to having two welcome areas open throughout this year's summer season to serve our guests, Parks Canada collaborated with community and Indigenous partners to host more than 300 free in-park events throughout 2016. These events enabled thousands of Canadians, GTA residents and visitors to explore, connect with and celebrate the diversity of the Rouge's unique natural, cultural and agricultural landscapes.

Highlights from this past season were a very rainy (yet well attended!) Winter Bird Count in January, our popular summer Learn to Camp events at Glen Rouge Campground, and our festive holiday-themed walks in December. Other notable events in 2016 included Hoot and Howl, Taste of the Trail, Frog Watch, Learn to Fish, Jane's Walk, Moth Night and Butterfly Day, and the very first Art Day in the Rouge, just to name a few.

Parks Canada also partnered with Ontario Power Generation, the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority, Toronto Zoo and others to host this past year's Fall Walk Festival in the Rouge. The event, which features fun and fascinating outings with our award-winning walk leaders, also included special guest educators from the Royal Ontario Museum, Bird Studies Canada and the City of Markham. Parks Canada was also delighted to once again work with the non-profit Parkbus service to provide a free shuttle from downtown Toronto for the Fall Walk Festival for hundreds of first-time visitors to Rouge National Urban Park.

PARKS DAY 2016: LIVE FROM THE ROUGE!

In the very early morning hours of July 15, 2016, Parks Canada welcomed CBC Radio Toronto's Metro Morning show to Rouge National Urban Park. Metro Morning broadcast the day's entire 3-hour radio show live from the park, sharing lots of great stories about conservation, Indigenous connections to the park, farming, volunteering, camping, mental health, photography and so much more.

The radio coverage also resulted in a TV spot about Canada's first national urban park that aired on CBC Toronto's 6 p.m. newscast that evening, as well as several web stories related to the park, including "A hidden gem in this new Torontonians' backyard," "Up your camp cuisine with this Chinese hot pot recipe," "Ditch your map: UTSC students developing app for Rouge National Urban Park," and "Digging up First Nations history in Rouge Park."

PARKS CANADA IN THE COMMUNITY

This year was a busy one for Parks Canada's participation in community events.

In 2016, the Agency collaborated with more than 30 partners from across the GTA on more than 50 events inside and outside the Rouge.

These community collaborations resulted in the delivery of exciting initiatives for Rouge National Urban Park visitors and area residents.

A few events from early 2016 include participating in the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority's 60th anniversary celebrations, as well as having a presence at the City of Pickering's Environmental Discovery Day, the Durham District School Board's Sustainability Conference, and the Markham Environmental Advisory Committee's Earth Month Celebrations.

As the season transitioned to warmer weather, Parks Canada opened its main office, located in the historic Cornell-Campbell House in Scarborough, for Doors Open Toronto and Bluffs Gates Open Home & Garden Tour. Then, as spring turned to summer, Parks Canada provided programming for the Markham Public Library's Summer Reading Club, showed up with Parka in tow at the Kids' CBC Days festival in downtown Toronto, and spent two weeks at the CNE (Canadian National Exhibition).

As summer gave way to fall, Parks Canada was on hand at the East Scarborough Storefront's annual WaterWise event, and also participated in bus tours for City of Pickering residents. The Agency also had outreach displays at one of Canada's oldest country fairs, the Markham Fair, as well as at the binational Great Lakes Public Forum in Toronto, which occurs once every three years.

Toward the end of the year, Parks Canada held the "Reclaiming the City" photography exhibition in downtown Toronto in collaboration with OCAD University, featuring the work of Heike Reuse, Rouge National Urban Park's very first photographer-in-residence (her work is featured throughout this newsletter). Additionally, staff from Rouge National Urban Park also attended the Eco Fair at the Artscape Wychwood Barns, delivered a presentation to the Rexdale Community Hub's STEM Club, and braved the icy cold temperatures, along with Parka, to walk in the 2016 Toronto Santa Claus Parade.

And that's just the tip of the iceberg! 2017 is set to be an even bigger year for Rouge National Urban Park in the community and we're very excited that the year is now underway