



# Bringing Nature to our Youth

## AT THE SCARBOROUGH OUTDOOR EDUCATION SCHOOL

Article & Photos by Kristy Wakelin, 2007 Jack Kimmel Grant Research Recipient

The grant we received from the Canadian Tree Fund was applied to purchase trees and native vascular plant species to assist in the restoration of a pond at the Scarborough Outdoor Education School. Currently the pond is used as an outdoor interactive classroom space and has become degraded heavily due to the overuse of certain areas. This restoration project is designed to replant a riparian zone around the north end of the pond to create greater potential for learning and recreation while enhancing natural habitat space for fauna.

### **The Restoration**

During the restoration process, the bank was stabilized by setting large rocks into the bank. The bank was then planted to create aquatic habitat for herptiles and other aquatic invertebrates. An area was created where lawn maintenance of any kind would be stopped to allow for natural regeneration of native species. The north end of the

pond was then fenced off using dead wood and tree tops collected from slash piles on the property to border the planting area. Native plant and tree species were then planted to allow for both dense native habitat to grow as well as provide open areas for students to explore the pond and surrounding area. In addition, mulch was laid to create a path where students can explore

the area without damaging new and early growth plantings. Paths will be lined with trees that were cut previously on the property. Logs will be left to rot and create habitat for herptiles and insects.

### **Planting List**

The following species were planted this May to enhance the already occurring na-

tive plant diversity as well as enhance habitat for birds, terrestrial and aquatic species. Plants were chosen according to their rate of occurrence on the property as well as for their ability to attract hummingbirds and butterflies to the area.

- Yellow Giant Hyssop (*Agastache nepetoides*)
- Butterfly Milkweed (*Asclepias tuberosa*)
- New England Aster (*Aster novae-angliae*)
- Hairy Aster (*Aster pilosus*)
- Canada Bluejoint (*Calamagrostis canadensis*)
- Bottlebrush Sedge (*Carex comosa*)
- Canada Pondweed (*Elodea Canadensis*)
- Turtlehead (*Chelone glabra*)
- Canada Wild Rye (*Elymus canadensis*)
- Sneezeweed (*Helenium autumnale*)
- Canada Rush (*Juncus Canadensis*)
- Soft Rush (*Juncus effuses*)
- Little Duck Weed (*Lemna minor*)
- Floating Leafed Pond Weed (*Potamogeton natans*)
- Joe Pye Weed (*Eupatorium maculatum*)
- Wool-grass Bullrush (*Sparganium eurycarpum*)
- Cup Plant (*Siphilium perfoliatum*)
- Blue Eyed Grass (*Sisyrinchium montanum*)
- Giant Bur-reed (*Sparganium eurycarpum*)
- Blue Vervain (*Verbena hastata*)
- Culvers Root (*Veronicastrum virginicum*)
- Speckled Alder (*Alnus rugosa*)
- Red-osier Dogwood (*Cornus stolonifera*)
- Black Elderberry (*Sambucus Canadensis*)
- White Cedar (*Thuja occidentalis*)



Monarch caterpillar on milkweed (istock)



The Pond, May 2008

### Progress to Date

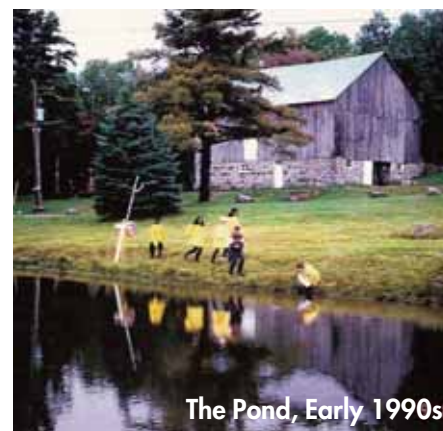
As of June, the bank retention rocks have been implemented and backfilled with topsoil and clay that has recently been planted with the new species thanks to the Canadian Tree Fund grant. A fence made of tree tops and slash was built in April in preparation of planting. The fence will temporarily restrict access to the planted areas as the plants are establishing themselves. Once the plantings have been established, the fence structure will be opened to allow students to access and explore the area. Students will be planting the remaining plants arriving for this restoration as well as seeding one area of the pond bank. It has been important to the staff of the Scarborough Outdoor Education School to include and educate visiting students on the need for the restoration and the benefits a restoration of this nature will serve in the future.

To date, all but the remaining order of white cedars (*Thuja occidentalis*) have been planted (we are still waiting for one order to arrive) and the remainder of the plants seem to be adjusting well and are doing nicely in their new environment.

### Further Information on SOES

Written by Site Supervisor Len Elphick. Located 2-1/2 hours north of Toronto, the Scarborough Outdoor Education School (SOES) has been operating as an outdoor

school for 30 years, originally for the Scarborough Board of Education and now as a Toronto District School Board facility. Staffed by 22 people, there are three lakes contained within 700 forested acres of Canadian Shield. The Scarborough Outdoor Education School operates seven days a week, 24 hours a day. There are two grade 6 classes visiting at all times pro-



The Pond, Early 1990s

viding close to 6,000 students with residential visits lasting from three to five days. Housing, meals and programming are provided in the Lodge building, three student residences (one of which was originally constructed in 1885) and 20 related buildings. Some of the programs the site provides are: 20 km of skiing and hiking trails; high and low ropes challenge courses; a waterfront for swimming and canoeing programs; an Aboriginal area



The Pond, September 2008

with teepee and archery range; wetlands, swamps, marshes and a pond; orienteering courses; a commercial style maple sugar bush; and canoe trips for secondary schools.

The pond at the front of the school is a focal point both aesthetically and as a teaching tool. Many of the students who come to SOES have never had the chance to visit a natural wetland and are fascinated by it. The lure of the frogs, insects and other critters is magnetic for many of the children. Beyond the Pond Study unit that many classes do at SOES, the pond is also used as a skating rink in the winter, somewhere to play, and of course, as somewhere

to simply get their feet wet. The students' interactions with the pond are fascinating and fun and the learning that happens around it is invaluable. The on-going restoration of the pond will create new habitats, provide more teaching opportunities, and ensure the survival of the pond as a focal point of the students' experiences. SOES would like to thank the Canadian Tree Fund for their financial support of the restoration; the *Ontario Arborist* for publicizing the work done on the pond; and most importantly, Kristy Wakeling (and the staff at SOES) for her many hours of volunteer work and her continuing enthusiasm for this project. ♦