

Park to Focus on Conservation

By John Cameron

The new Master Plan for the Gatineau Park was approved May 6 during a meeting held in the Park Visitors Centre in Chelsea with park employees, media and members of the Friends Board.



Lake Taylor

Source: NCC

NCC chairman Marcel Beaudry reiterated that the contribution of the park to the capital is to be its Conservation Park. "It has been an integral and defining element of the capital since the idea of a park in the Gatineau Hills was first introduced in the 1900s. The NCC takes pride in its protection and management of Gatineau Park for future decades."

The plan's emphasis on conservation has important implications for Friends of Gatineau Park. Interpretation and education programs will play a significant role in achieving the objectives of the Natural Resources Conservation Plan to be completed within the next three years.

There will be consultation with knowledgeable and interested parties to assist in the plan's development.

"Public participation during the consultation process (in developing the 2005 plan) showed us how concerned people are about the park and its preservation," said Jean-René Doyon, Director of Gatineau Park. "We intend to continue this dialogue in implementing the new plan." ☼

Frog Chorus Receives Standing Ovation

By Andrea Gage

Peep! Peep! Peep! Quack, quack. Jug-o-rum. With the music of the frogs on my mind, I went to the Gatineau Park Visitor Centre for **Frog Chorus**, the latest program offered in the Dusk Series. It was a full house for the evening program on May 20th. Along with others, I hoped to come away from the event with a greater understanding of amphibians and their calls and having had a unique night experience in the Park.

Rob Alvo, a herpetologist (amphibian and reptile specialist), was the presenter for the evening. Rob is a conservation biologist who has helped monitor frog populations in the region for several years.

In a slide show, Rob introduced us to the ten frog species and seven salamander species that live in Gatineau Park. As amphibians, frogs and salamanders are dependant on both land and water at different times. Due to this double dependency, they are very susceptible to changes in the environment and weather. This makes them particularly interesting to biologists, who can use them as indicators of environmental health.

From early April until late summer, an evening chorus of frog calls can be heard. As time progresses, the music changes from the calls of the



Spring Peeper

Source: Suzanne L. Collins, Center for North American Herpetology

early breeding species to those that breed later. The frogs create a wonderful, self-conducted concert that we can all enjoy. But they don't create the music for our enjoyment, and Rob outlined the real reasons for it.

Male frogs call to attract a mate or to define their territory. A frog can call at a different tone, volume or pattern in order to differentiate itself from a nearby frog; and each species has a unique vocalization that can be used for identification. Seeing frogs in a pond or wet area at night is difficult, but hearing them is not.

Many of us are familiar with the loud 'Peep! Peep! Peep!' of Spring Peepers (*Pseudacris crucifer*), but it is easy to mistake the noisy quack of the Wood Frog (*Rana sylvatica*) for a duck. Spring Peepers, Wood Frogs, and Western Chorus Frogs (*Pseudacris triseriata*) are the earliest breeding species in the Park. The Wood Frog is actually equipped with anti-freeze in its system in order to survive the cold temperatures of very early spring. These species use temporary ponds for breeding which are advantageous in two ways; they open early in the season and provide a habitat free of many swimming predators. The disadvantage with these ponds is that they will dry up with warm weather. The amphibians using them need to reproduce and the larva must develop to the terrestrial phase all before the water evaporates!



Bullfrog at Warner Lake

Source: Rob Alvo

The American Toad (*Bufo americanus*), Leopard Frog (*Rana pipiens*), Pickerel Frog (*Rana palustris*), and Gray Treefrog (*Hyla versicolor*) are species that breed from late spring to early summer. The Mink Frog (*Rana septentrionalis*), Green Frog (*Rana clamitans*), and Bullfrog (*Rana catesbeiana*) are the last to breed. These last three species use big bodies of water such as marshes, bogs, lakes, and deep ponds for breeding. They are less pressed for time than the early breeding species and tadpoles can actually spend 1-3 winters in their immature stage before transforming into adult frogs. In larger aquatic environments eggs, tadpoles, and adult frogs have many predators. These include fish, snakes, turtles, other frogs, birds and raccoons.

After the slide presentation and an introduction to frog calls, each participant received a FrogWatch CD. This CD, provided by the Ecological Monitoring and Assessment Network (EMAN) of Environment Canada, gives information on frog species in Canada as

well as how to become involved in a citizen science data collection program.

Ready to try our ears at identification, the group headed outside for the evening field experience. Our first site was a large beaver pond. As we approached the pond, the chorus of Spring Peepers grew louder and louder until it surrounded us. It was a beautiful evening with a sharp, silver moon and the light was just leaving the sky. We had only listened at this site for a few minutes when our group was visited by two other nocturnal animals. A beaver, unbothered by us, swam close to the edge of the pond and a bat seemed to dance to the song of the frogs, as it flew back and forth above the water enjoying an insect breakfast.

Rob's promise of salamander eggs drew us to the second site, a temporary woodland pond. Again, we enjoyed the song of the Spring Peepers but this time it was accompanied by the trill of the American Toad. Near the edge of the pond we peered into the shallow water with lights to see a jelly-like mass attached to an underwater stick. This, Rob informed us, was the egg mass of a Spotted Salamander (*Ambystoma maculatum*).

With the forest as a stage and the frogs as the chorus, Rob received a standing ovation for his wonderful amphibian program. I definitely came away from the evening with my expectations fulfilled. It was an excellent way to celebrate the music of frogs, spring, and another amazing aspect of dusk in the Park. ☾

The Dusk Series

Dusk, the time when day becomes night, when so many animals wake, when the sun gives way to the moon and stars... Come and explore with The Friends the following upcoming programs:

- **July 22** - Nocturnal Insects
- **September 2** - Astronomy

Day Workshops

- Late Summer Blooms and Berries, Saturday, September 10th
- Tree Identification Workshop (Full day), Saturday, September 17th (English Session) and Saturday, September 24th (French Session)

Member discounts! For more information call (819) 827-3113 and check our web site for upcoming events. www.rezoe.com/amicigatineau/

Fish of the Month: *Margined Madtom*

By Jean-Philippe Rbeault

One of the 40 kinds of fish in the Gatineau Park is unfortunately found on the list of species at risk in Québec. The Margined Madtom is a small 10 cm fish in the catfish family.



Source: Ontario Parks

Curiously, the discovery of the first specimen in Québec happened in the Park in 1971 when one was captured in a creek between Otter Lake and lake la Pêche. Since then, the inventory shows too few areas where we can find him so there is uncertainty if the *Noturus insignis* is in decline or not.

Like all the other members of his family, the Madtom has four pairs of barb at the end of the snout. His oblong body varies from grey to yellow, but the fin extremities offer a dark strip.

This fish is normally found 200 km south of the Park, in Eastern USA. Possible explanation: American fishermen may have introduced the Madtom when coming in our area using them as baits, unless the Madtom is a relic of the glaciations era.

The Madtom is sensitive to changes occurring in his habitat. He might become more rare if levels of creeks and lakes go lower in the Park or if muddy waters are caused by beaver dams.

The protection of this specie is evidently not only linked to the Park. In 2003, for example a project from *Action Chelsea pour le respect de l'environnement* (ACRE) got financing from Eco-Action (Environment Canada) to renaturalize a land of 2,3 acres on the West side of the Gatineau River. This group will help stem the soil erosion on the west bank that is damaging the fish habitat.

Finally, COSEPAC and *Centre de données sur le patrimoine naturel du Québec* will monitor the Madtom to see whether its status changes over time. ☼

Jean-Baptiste Lauriault and his Trail

In a ceremony on the picnic grounds beside the Lauriault Trail entrance, June 16, NCC vice president Michelle Comeau announced that “Lauriault” would be the official name of this trail. The decision was symbolized by the unveiling of a new sign at the parking lot entrance. The event was witnessed by members of the Lauriault family, other NCC officials and Friends of Gatineau Park.

A new trail guide, *The Waterfall and Lauriault Trails*, produced by the Friends of Gatineau Park, was launched on this occasion. It describes the history of Jean-Baptiste Lauriault and much else of interest along these two trails. John Cameron, Friends president, presented a copy to Céline Lauriault, a fourth generation family member from the Outaouais region.

“The existence of the trail and the way it was spelled led us to research our family history,” said Ms Lauriault. “It was an interesting adventure for my family and the naming of this trail helps preserve our family heritage.”

Based on historical records available in the 1980s when the trail was created, the name of the pioneer farmer who lived at the foot of King Mountain was spelled “Larriault”. Thus it was so spelled on all signs and in literature about the trail. Gérard Lauriault, Céline’s father, knew that the old road (now closed) that went past the farm from Mountain Road to Ridge Road was named *Côte à Lauriault* after his great-great-grandfather, Jean-Baptiste Lauriault (1799-1869). This pioneer lived at the foot of King Mountain from 1836 to 1860. Research by his son-in-law, Louis Carrière, (referenced in the new guide) later provided NCC with confirmation of the name. The NCC began by changing the spelling in publications and maps.



Source: NellyWorld's Birding Ottawa Website

The National Capital Commission has re-furbished some of the signage and information about the trail. The Friends of Gatineau Park in collaboration with park staff have written and published a new brochure, *The Waterfall and Lauriault Trails* is on sale for \$2.50 at the Visitors Centre in Chelsea. ☼

Something of interest to tell us, show us?

Perhaps the behavior of ravens you watched soaring above the escarpment. What were those aerobatics all about? Or that beautiful flower you photographed and want to identify. We could share in this interest in a couple of ways. Write to us by e-mail or post (see addresses below) One of our naturalist friends will get in touch with you.

This could lead to a little collaboration on an article, for example about ravens, which are truly interesting birds and quite marvellous flyers. Or your knowledge may already quite good of this or some other species of plant, fish or fowl and would like to report on what you saw one day.

There are, of course, a number of other attractive subjects besides natural history. There is much human history in the park: lives of early settlers, of residents, origins of some of the chalets like Herridge Lodge.

There is also great interest in reporting on present life in the park and the companionship it has brought, perhaps as a member of a group of friends who have skied and hiked together for many years. Or it could be about your volunteer work with the ski or foot patrols.

If you would like to contribute to our news bulletin, drop us a line outlining your ideas for an article. The preferred length for such articles is 500 words; but there is some editorial flexibility (up to 1000 words) if the subject and its treatment seem to justify this kind of space in a limited publication. By e-mail address your note to the Editor, Amis/Friends:

amicigatineau@myexcel.ca, or by letter, The Editor, Amis/Friends, P.O. Box 1817, Chelsea, QC, J9B 1A1.

Support your Friends!

The summer fundraiser is a donated canoe with paddles and life jackets. Tickets are: one for \$2; three for \$5, available at the Gatineau Park Visitor Centre, lac Philippe, lac La Pêche, and Donderosa & Larimac Golf Courses. Or, simply write to the Friends at the Gatineau Park Visitor Centre and four other locations in the area.



This Prospector Canoe made in Kevlar is 16' long, weight is 30 kg and comes with 2 paddles and 2 life-vests. Value of \$1,900. Draw: September 2005.

The Friends of the Gatineau Park is a registered charity dedicated to offering activities and literature that enhance public appreciation and enjoyment of the heritage of the Park.

Comments, suggestions, testimonies:
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