



Newsletter of the
Adopt-A-Pond Wetland
Conservation
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Canada



www.torontozoo.com/adoptapond

Amphibian Voice

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WETLAND GUARDIANS

Habitat at Risk

By: Lisa Sealock

Wetlands are one of the most valuable and fragile components of a watershed, but for many years were regarded as wastelands or were drained or filled for agriculture and development. Wetlands are now starting to be recognized as important features that provide many beneficial services for people and wildlife. These wetland functions include water quality improvement, floodwater storage, erosion control, wildlife habitat, aesthetics, and biological productivity.

The adverse effects of urban sprawl on our communities and watersheds are causing many individuals to challenge how and when their municipality grows. Protecting and restoring wetlands with

smart growth initiatives is one approach to curb the effects of urban sprawl. Developers, city planners, elected officials and the public can work together in local and regional efforts to incorporate wetlands into watershed planning.

The mission of the Adopt-A-Pond Programme is to conserve wetland habitat through education and stewardship. In keeping with this mission, Adopt-A-Pond is proud to announce our Wetland Guardians Registry.



A local wetland before and after development.



The registry is a cumulative account of restoration and conservation resources and is ideal for landowners, schools and community groups. The registry will house information on why people became involved, how they obtained funding, what they learned and other key pieces of information that only those who have been through the process could provide.

This registry will be an on-line resource and a starting point for landowners and communities to become involved with restoration or protection of wetland habitat.

If you have ever taken action and fought for the protection of a local wetland, we encourage you to take the time to visit our website and enter your account on our Wetland Guardians registry. If you know of a good wetland stewardship example send us the details. We hope the information and resources entered will inspire others to take action and to make a difference.

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Cloud Bay: Local Efforts Save Prime Wetland from Development

*By: Glen Dale, President, Shoreline Stewardship
Association of Cloud Bay & Little Trout Bay*

Residents on Cloud Bay have always loved the abundance of wildlife where two forested peninsulas encircle the bay with a narrow outlet to Lake Superior. It is here that a peaceful wetland invites 146 identified bird species, from songbirds to blue herons. Osprey hover over the bay; bald eagles and peregrine falcons are frequent foragers; swans and pelicans stop over during migration. Ducks including frenzied mergansers with their young flit about; geese glide by in convoy formation. Frequently deer and fox roam through the area. Occasionally a moose can be spotted swimming across the mile long bay, or an otter playing. All this is pretty special with your morning coffee.

The small population in Cloud Bay's tiny hamlet was about to learn that there is an environmental significance well beyond local importance. The sudden plan to rezone land for a commercial venture in this diverse marshland habitat was to be a startling wake up call; it would lead to area wide attention.

Cloud Bay's Lake Superior coastal wetland is a unique wildlife habitat located 24 miles south of Thunder Bay. It's in the geographically large, yet minimally populated, municipality of Neebing, which is located between the city and the highway 61 Minnesota border crossing at Pigeon River. The marshland is in a small, enclosed, relatively warm-water bay protected from the ravages of Superior's raw, cold winds and threatening waves. Cloud Bay is a cozy place to live as well as a shelter for nature's young. Only 1% of Lake Superior's Canadian shoreline is like it. Ontario Natural Resources has designated it "Provincially significant." Environment Canada's Sensitivity Atlas recognizes its importance for fisheries and migratory fowl. The Lakewide Management Plan 2000 Report (LaMP 2000) of the Lake Superior Binational Forum affords it international recognition based on elaborate scientific studies.

In the summer of 1999, folks at Cloud Bay had been horrified to see the careless clearing of the shoreline at the Cloud River estuary. The soon to be landowners were oblivious to resident's concerns; they seemed completely unaware of the sensitivity of the wetland as they pulled out what they called "weeds". Residents were incensed when informed an electrical

contractor's estimates were being considered for the development of 600 campsites.

Neighbors sounded the alarm; a few met and formed a committee. At their request, Neebing Municipal Council and the investors met with the committee for an informal meeting. Here concerns for the wetland were aired and in a heated dialogue the committee learned that there was already an agreement to proceed with the development. The Neebing Council fully supported the trailer camp and announced that new zoning by-laws would be enacted within two months, by November 1999. Council would re-zone the area, from rural residential to commercial, for phase 1 of this huge project, which they envisioned to be "a village of stationary cottages on wheels." At the time of this meeting, the deal to buy the site had not even been closed.

The committee decided to take the issue to the scattered settlements of Cloud Bay and Little Trout Bay on the other side of the marsh. At a community hall, local families banded together to form the Shoreline Stewardship Association. The Association approved a committee and elected an executive. The families involved included a mix of working people and retirees from all walks of life; it was not particularly a settlement based on wealth.

A contingent of residents conducted vigils at all council meetings. Petitioning received the opposition support of 99% of households. A required public meeting was held in January 2001, where the investors' planner minimized the trailer camp's detriments and exaggerated its benefits to the community. The halls overflowed with ratepayers in opposition. In February 2001, by-laws were passed to accommodate the commercial enterprise in spite of over 100 written protests. The council became openly and unanimously entrenched against the residents.

To the delight and surprise of the opponents, the province's Municipal Affairs deliberated about the approval well past the normal 90-day period. Delay of approval for a local municipal zoning change is unusual. Persistent lobbying and flow of new information had apparently led Ontario officials to a year of postponement. Calling it "red tape" and impatient at government delay, the investors and Neebing Council jointly appealed to the Ontario Municipal Board (OMB); they shared one lawyer. Residents parallel-appealed in the president of the Association's name because it was necessary to have a voice in the process if opponents were to defeat the commercial zoning.

The Environmental Impact Study commissioned by the

Investors had stated, "no rare habitats will be eliminated." Dr. Patricia Chow-Fraser (Wetland Research Director of the McMaster Wetland Research team) wrote the following to me: "First, I would argue that [the author] did not have sufficient information to make this conclusion, because he had not yet sampled the wetland for aquatic biota, and could not evaluate their 'rare' quality."

In summer 2001, Dr. Patricia Chow-Fraser and McMaster University's Wetland Research team came from Hamilton, to Cloud Bay's tiny hamlet. At issue was the need to respond to the claim that

environmental damage by this project could be minimized. Her research teams, including PhD candidate Botanist Sheila McNair, would conclude that the abundant fishery in Cloud Bay is the result of interdependent plant and crustacean life and the flow of Cloud River nutrients. The team of four biologists netted exceptional numbers of small fish and tested submergent vegetation, verifying that Cloud Bay hosts major feeding and fish spawning grounds. Dr. Dennis Albert, renowned University of Michigan wetland botanist, joined the team from McMaster and observed thriving marsh vegetation, with some very uncommon species.

Dr. Chow-Fraser's eventual OMB testimony became vital to our victory. Only after knowing Dr. Patricia Chow-Fraser did I become aware of this item on the Binational Forum LaMP 2000 Report (Chapter 6.1.7.2): "The greatest threats to Lake Superior's wetlands are water level regulation and site specific stresses such as shoreline development (Chow-Fraser and Albert, 1998)." It was the investors' biologist who had been the author of LaMP 2000's Chapter 6; ironically it was he who had included this very quotation in the chapter!

The costs to fight our case were high, higher than we dreamed. Residents began contributing dollars generously and volunteers endured endless hours at various tasks. As the professional legal wrangling continued, we were excited to receive grants from the Great Lakes Habitat and Network Fund. We had not counted on that boost, or the grants of the Richard Ivey and the Peacock Foundations in Ontario; this meant we could commit to full services of a professional planner to

critique the trailer camp plan in the wetland setting, and to testify on our behalf. We were able to step up our public information campaign (mailings and newsletters) and we waged a fierce editorial letters campaign.

All along we appreciated the moral support of organizations all around Ontario and the Lake Superior states of Michigan, Wisconsin and Minnesota. Email networking spread the word. Visits and encouragement came from Lake Superior Alliance, National Wildlife Federation (Michigan and Minnesota), Ducks Unlimited Canada, Ontario Federation of Naturalists, Thunder Bay Field Naturalists and the Wildlands League. Our group felt verification. The local grassroots were learning that our local treasure was of *global* significance.



An aerial photograph of Cloud Bay. Photo submitted by: Glen Dale.

Credibility at the two week OMB hearing came, in part, by the testimony of these international environmentalists. Wisconsinite witness, Bob Olsgard (Lake Superior Alliance and the current Lake Superior Waterkeeper), characterized the wetland as

"a jewel in the crown of Lake Superior." Dr. Chow-Fraser succinctly identified the threats to the interdependence of aquatic and upland life. A crucial point in the case dealt with the danger of boating to the wetland's life chain. In the end, a Ministry of Natural Resources official withstood withering questioning over her concern that boating and damage to habitat could not be policed. Neighbors attended daily proceedings in large numbers; a few testified under excruciating cross-examination; a selfish "NIMBY" motive was attributed to some.

As part of his final decision, OMB chair C.A. Beach wrote, "Persuasive to the Board was the fact that the proposal was not compatible with what was acknowledged as a pristine environment. An environment that is unique to the north shores of Lake Superior. An environment that must be protected from harm. An environment that must not be put at risk."

In July 2003, we achieved a second legal victory when the investors and the municipality took joint legal action again. Naming the appellant (the Association president) and the Government of

Ontario, they sought leave to appeal the OMB decision; they also sought personal costs. The Superior Court of Ontario dismissed their request, granting us a small part of our costs. The new year of debts brought our costs to just under \$90,000, in spite of much pro bono professional work.

During all of this the Ontario Government did not appear. We had been left to defend the decision alone in court; we had to present a full account of the OMB deliberations. Once again we wondered why it is that citizens have to carry the burden for what the province identifies as significant natural heritage. Currently, new directions in Ontario planning policy appear to extend the protection of coastal wetlands to Lake Superior, but it will have to be citizens who guard against municipal carelessness.

Our statistical chances at OMB were one in twenty. What had led to our success? It arose out of many factors in the long, exasperating struggle. We had kept careful records of the council activity; we kept on file copies of all correspondence with the council and provincial agencies; we communicated regularly with government ministries and elected officials. Council hostility and discouraging municipal setbacks were a transparent injustice; our justifiable irritation was a factor in keeping us united. New heart came with two dedicated individuals who entered halfway into our standoff. Professional competence and commitment came from Toronto-based planner, Paul Stagl, expert in OMB procedures, and Thunder Bay lawyer, Bob Edwards, who worked with us in tying our paper trail together and presenting a winning case.

Perhaps the crowning success was in the November 2003 municipal elections. Our "Clean Slate candidates" unseated the mayor and majority of Council. Representing our ward in the municipality of Neening is Bev Dale, a founding member in our Association.

Awareness for some of us has progressed beyond local concern. We came to appreciate that we are part of a much greater picture. Land use carelessness in each locally sensitive area creates a cumulative impact in damaging the water quality and the aquatic habitats of all of the Great Lakes. We network with others who work for the watershed's good health in trouble spots around the basin. We must all think globally and act locally.

Editor's Note- Glen Dale has been the President of the Shoreline Stewardship Association since 1999. He has since become one of 12 Canadians, that along with 12 Americans, forms the Lake Superior Binational Forum. He is also Canadian Vice President of the Lake Superior Alliance/Lake Superior Waterkeeper.

Wetland Guardians: YOU Can Help!

By: *Christine Baptista, Wetland Conservation Assistant*

So you've taken an interest in wetlands. Perhaps you have constructed an amphibian friendly pond in your backyard, you have identified a local wetland in need of protection, or you have just finished lobbying to protect a wetland. Whatever your efforts, we would like to share them with others that share your passion for wetlands.

So what can you do to spread the word? Well how about becoming a Wetland Guardian? Follow this step by step guide to help you become a Wetland Guardian:

STEP 1

Go to www.torontozoo.com/adoptapond.

Once at the Adopt-A-Pond website, simply go to Habitat icon at the top of the page and then go to Wetland Registry. While on the Wetland Registry page click on the appropriate location to register.

Step 2

Register your personal information. We ask that you provide us with your name, email address, address and phone number. You may also set up a user name and password, so that you may return and update your information at any time. Any information on the website will remain confidential, but if your information or experience strikes a chord with us, Adopt-A-Pond may contact you for more information, or to ask you to write an article highlighting your efforts for the Amphibian Voice newsletter.

Step 3

Register your wetland information. The database requires the following basic information on your wetland: the City and Province in which it is located, the wetland size, type and state. The registry also asks for a wetland description and an explanation as to why you have decided to adopt the wetland. The registry then asks more specific questions, some, or all, of which may not be applicable to your particular situation.

We are looking to obtain information on whether your wetland was saved from development, if you received funding for the project, if you hired lawyers, did you need to acquire permits, did you have partners, any

innovative approaches you took and any advice you would like to provide.

Step 4

Provide details. While our website indicates that details are optional, we encourage you to take the time to fill out any relevant details in the fields provided. It is these details that are crucial pieces of information to those individuals who are looking to start this process. Any information you can provide can help others save time and take a more direct approach to their restoration or conservation efforts. **Here is your chance to be heard and to let the world know how you made a difference!** Take your time and write as much as you like. You can even include a picture of your wetland.

Step 5

Keep monitoring and protecting your wetland. Although not an essential part of registration, we encourage you to keep a watchful eye on your newly registered wetland, and update your entry in the wetland registry with any changes. Always be on the lookout for new animal species living in your wetland or species that are no longer found.

Step 6

Participate in Frogwatch and Turtle Tally.

Chances are you will want to enjoy the wonders of nature that you have fought so hard to preserve. Adopt-A-Pond encourages you to become a Frogwatcher and register any frog or toad sightings. Simply visit our website, learn your frog calls, pick a location and look and listen for evidence of frog or toad activity. We also have a Turtle Tally programme that encourages people to report turtle sightings and turtle activity. Both programs provide valuable information that allows scientists to identify positive and negative population trends, learn about the range and distribution of species, and in some cases trends may even be used to detect measurable climatic changes!

Preserving Ontario's wetlands is crucial to sustaining all forms of life, including human life. With Wetland Guardians, we hope to not only preserve the wetlands



we have now, but to restore more wetlands in our own ecosystem. We cannot achieve this on our own; we need your help and support. Become a Wetland Guardian and help protect and restore these unique and valuable ecosystems.

LILY PADS & CATTAILS

Goodbye to a Toadally Awesome Coordinator

By: Lisa Sealock

The month of June brought big changes to the Adopt-A-Pond Programme, with the departure of Sarah Ingwersen. Sarah was the enthusiastic Adopt-A-Pond Coordinator for the past 3 ½ years. While I only had the opportunity to get to know Sarah for two weeks, I quickly saw her passion and dedication to the programme and amphibians. Sarah has accomplished many things while employed at Toronto Zoo, and she will surely be missed by all.

To say farewell co-workers threw an emotional lunch that even saw Sarah's good friend the Giant Toad stop by to say goodbye and wish her well.

Goodluck Sarah in all your future endeavors.

Hello from the Turtle-riffic New Coordinator

By: Lisa Sealock

I would like to take this opportunity to introduce myself as the new Adopt-A-Pond coordinator. I am proud to represent Toronto Zoo's wetland conservation efforts, and I feel that my background in environmental science and my passion for environmental protection will serve me well in this position.

My first few weeks saw me rising in the wee hours of the morning (anything before 7am is what I consider to be wee hours) to go turtle tracking. While turtle tracking I have been fortunate enough to see additional wildlife including deer, raccoons, frogs, and numerous birds. I even helped put out a trash can fire with muffin tins I happened to have in the trunk of my car.

Aside from enjoying my turtle tracking adventures, I hope to bring many new and exciting aspects to the Adopt-A-Pond programme.

I am glad to be the new Adopt-A-Pond coordinator and look forward to corresponding with many of you.

Update: Turtle Pond

A Boost for Wetland and Turtle Conservation on Toronto Island

By: Laurie Kryshka

In the Fall 2002 issue of *Amphibian Voice*, we introduced the Franklin Children's Garden project, located on Toronto's Center Island. The project is being developed by Toronto Parks and Recreation, under the creative direction of Leslie Coates, and is inspired by Franklin the Turtle; the storybook character published by Kids Can Press.

The project was initiated in 2001 to give children an exciting place to play and learn. The Garden will include a storytelling stage, a hands-on gardening area, and a pond designed to be a habitat for turtles, amphibians and other wetland species. The use of storytelling, in combination with gardens and an abundance of wetland wildlife will help children learn about the beauty and importance of nature.

What began as a well-manicured picnic field beside the Island Public and Natural Science School, has been transformed into a beautiful 1.92 acre pond called Turtle Pond. The pond was designed by Schollen and Company Landscape Architects and was publicly launched on Earth Day 2003. The pond design incorporated amphibian breeding ponds, turtle basking logs, and turtle nesting beaches and platforms. In addition, Toronto Parks and Recreation introduced stone substrate along the degraded shoreline, which improved fish habitat. Within the pond

and surrounding area, native plants were reintroduced and habitat structures were created to help increase and diversify wildlife populations in the area.

There are three different turtle species (painted turtle, map turtle and snapping turtle) in the Toronto Island area. This spring students visiting the Natural Science School discovered six adult painted turtles basking on various logs throughout the pond. This was the first year that anyone had seen adult turtles using the pond!

During the fall the Natural Science School uses Turtle Pond as a resource for their Diversity of Living Things

lessons. These lessons are part of a 2.5-day outdoor education program. Down at the pond, students collect samples of pond organisms by dipping nets into the water. During a typical netting expedition they find a variety of creatures such as water boatmen, water striders, dragonfly and damselfly nymphs, caddisfly larva, tadpoles and diving beetles. The variety of creatures found at Turtle Pond actually exceeds the number of organisms that are found along the exposed edges of the Toronto Island Lagoon.

By all accounts the creation of Turtle Pond has been a huge success. Everyone who has participated in the development of Turtle Pond is thrilled about how well the pond is doing and feels extraordinarily lucky to have been involved in such a rewarding project. Now they are eagerly awaiting the 2005 Public Grand Opening of the Franklin Children's Garden.

Turtle Pond, in the Franklin Children's Garden, is a wonderful example of how it is possible to achieve success in wetland reclamation projects in the Greater Toronto Area. We hope this inspires many similar restoration efforts in the years to come.



One of the first adult turtles seen this year using the Turtle Pond in the Franklin Children's Garden on Toronto Island. Photo submitted by: Leslie Coates.



Turtle Pond, the new home to a variety of Toronto Island species. Photo submitted by: Leslie Coates

I Want to Save a Wetland, Now What?

By: Lisa Sealock

Wetlands are increasingly the subject of controversy as the land base decreases and we covet these last few wild life habitats. To ensure healthy water supplies for our communities and downstream users, we must challenge the old methods of clearing wetlands or isolating them from the surrounding landuse and ground water sources. Just as each wetland is unique and provides different functions for different communities, so does the diversity of land environments adjacent to each wetland. We now realize that we can incorporate the elements of wetland habitats into the design of developments, and both needs can be met. This is the challenge to communities, developing innovative ways to satisfy industry, community and individual needs.

Growth and development is inevitable, but it is becoming much easier for individuals and community members to get their voices heard, and to have input in these development issues. There are also many organizations that provide funding to assist individuals who are working to protect and restore natural habitats. Highlighted below are some resources that may provide great assistance to your conservation efforts by way of knowledge or project funding.

Ontario Wetland Habitat Fund (OWHF)

Created to provide financial assistance and sound technical advice to landowners that conserve wetland habitats. Since 1997, OWHF has collaborated with over 650 landowners that are restoring, enhancing and protecting wetlands through habitat projects. To find out more information visit www.wetlandfund.com.

Great Lakes Aquatic Habitat Network & Fund (GLAHNF)

Developed in 1996 to provide information and financial support to grassroots citizen initiatives working to protect and restore Great Lakes shorelines, inland lakes, rivers, wetlands and other aquatic habitats in the Great Lakes Basin. For more information visit GLAHNF's website at www.glahnf.org

Ontario Nature Trust Alliance

A coalition of non-governmental conservation groups that share an interest in acquiring and managing natural lands. Established in 1997, it currently has 20 member land trusts. Land trusts are non-governmental organizations that protect significant natural lands through ownership, legal restrictions, or informal agreements with land owners. This group will accept

conservation easements, property and monetary donations and may also raise funds to protect local priority sites. For more information visit:

www.ontariolandtrustalliance.org

Environment Canada – EcoAction

Since 1995, Environment Canada's EcoAction Community Funding Program has provided financial support to community groups for projects that have measurable, positive impacts on the environment. EcoAction encourages project submissions that will protect, rehabilitate and enhance the natural environment. For more information visit www.ec.gc.ca/ecoaction.

TD Friends of the Environment Foundation

Since 1990, this foundation has supported the efforts of Canadians who are dedicated to the well-being of our environment. For more information visit www.td.com/fe

Shell Environmental Fund

This program funds local, grass roots, and community driven projects that improve or protect the Canadian Environment. For more information visit www.shell.ca

Mountain Equipment Co-op Environmental Fund

Since 1997 this fund has contributed over \$5 million to Canadian-based environmental conservation and wilderness protection projects, research and education. Go to www.mec.ca and look under social and environmental responsibility.

Canadian Environmental Grantmakers' Network

The goals of the network include contributing to a better understanding of the context of environmental grantmaking in Canada, promoting and increasing environmental giving in Canada, and increasing collaboration among grantmakers and grantseekers. The website has a grants database and a Canadian environmental grantmaking sector profile. (www.cegn.org)

The Greenpages

This website provides a resources section that enables you to search for funding and financial assistance. For more information visit www.thegreenpages.ca

Stewardship Canada

This website provides principles and key elements for engaging Canadians in stewardship. The site contains a funders guide which allows users to search for funding sources. Visit www.stewardshipcanada.ca, and go to the stewardship directory icon for more information.

Editors Note - It is also useful to contact your local conservation authority and stewardship council, as they may also be able to provide assistance.

By: Laurie Kryshka

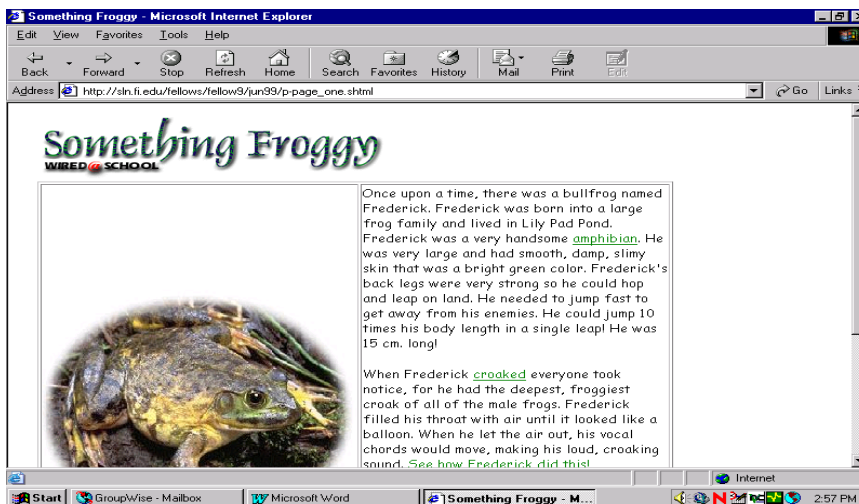
Something Froggy – Franklin Institute's Online Wired@School

http://sln.fi.edu/fellows/fellow9/jun99/p-page_one.shtml
Hazel Jobe, Karen Walkowiak and Robert Owen

When I was a small child, I would look forward to going to my cottage to catch tadpoles and frogs along the shoreline. When I found tadpoles, I would scoop them up into a bucket and show them to my parents. I would ask how do tadpoles turn into frogs? My parents have never been nature people, so they could never answer any of my questions about amphibians.

Throughout my years in school, many of my childhood questions have been answered, and eventually I was able to explain the fascinating life cycle of a frog to my parents.

For the parents and teachers out there that have inquisitive children like I was, the Franklin Institute's Online Museum Educator program (Wired@School) has an amazing website.



This website explores the life cycle of a frog, in detail, by following Frederick the Bullfrog as he grows up. Throughout Frederick's story there are interesting frog facts, games, and activities to help emphasize the concepts that are introduced in the story.

One activity that I found especially fun and interesting, was the Pond Mystery Search: Where is Frederick? The purpose of this exercise is to locate Frederick's hibernation site in a pond. The reader click's on Frederick's pond friends who give clues to help locate Frederick the frog.

I believe this website is great for primary and junior age groups. With both indoor and outdoor activities, this website will make learning about frogs interesting and enjoyable.

Amphibian Voice 8

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Amphibian Voice is distributed to schools and communities participating in the Adopt-A-Pond programme. The purpose of this newsletter is to provide information on amphibian, turtle and wetland conservation issues and efforts in Ontario.

Send in your stories, drawings and photographs to the address below and we will "hoppily" include them in future issues.

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We welcome support of our programme! Please make cheques payable to "Toronto Zoo" and send them to the following address. Thank you!

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