Educational Outreach in Nature

Targeting Special Youth Groups

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City of Charlottetown
Prince Edward Island
Outline

- Introduction to Charlottetown
- Victoria Park – A Case Study
  - History
  - Amenities
  - Nature – Environmental Projects
- Educational outreach
- Special interest groups
Prince Edward Island

- Red soil
- Great beaches
- Rural landscapes
- Beautiful fall colors
- Friendly people
Charlottetown

- Arts & Culture
- Entertainment
- Culinary Institute
- Historical significance
Charlottetown

- Settled in the early to mid 1700’s
- Birthplace of Confederation - 1864
- Capital of Prince Edward Island
- Population @ 60,000
- 158 parks and open spaces
- 546 acres of recreational land
- Rails to Trails
- 20 km of walking trails
Victoria Park

Approximately 60 acres
Designated as a forest park

very popular park
many different interest groups
passive and active recreation
Recreation, History, Nature

- Baseball field
- Softball diamonds
- Pool and splash pad
- Playground
- Horseshoe pits
- Skatepark
- Tennis courts
- Pottery Studio
- Prince Edward Battery cannons
- Dairy Bar
- Lt. Governors Residence
- Clubhouses
- Woodlands
- Pond
Victoria Park
Natures Classroom

- Pond Habitat
- Urban wildlife
- Native trees and shrubs
- Woodlands
- Invasive plant species
- Insects
Goals for Victoria Park

- Forest restoration
- Habitat conservation
- Control of invasive plant species
- Educational outreach
- Involvement of the community, local groups and schools
- Park pride and respect
- Foster a passion and respect for nature
Goals of the Forest Restoration Project

- Improve the health of the woodlands
- Increase biodiversity
- Reduce disease and insect pests
- Reduce forest fragmentation
- Improve habitat and food sources for urban wildlife
- Create a safe and pleasant walking experience
- Involve the community
- Engage youth
- Foster pride and respect through participation
Forest Restoration

- Plant native trees and shrubs
- Prune for tree health
- Remove invasive species
- Designate main trails
- Protect habitat
- Communicate with Park users

http://www.macphailwoods.org/victoriapark-plan.html
Habitat Conservation
Invasive Alien Plant Species
Invasive Alien Species

- Aggressive growth habits
- Very successful to the detriment of the habitat
- Can be plants, animals, insects, diseases, etc
- Take over and eliminate native species
- Reduce recreational opportunities in some cases
- Economic impact
- Reduce the quality of habitat and food sources for wildlife
- Environmental concern
Educational Outreach

Nature Tours and Events

- K to University, Seniors, General public
- Community events
- Special events – Arbor Day, International Biodiversity Day and more
- School events – curriculum tie in
- Participations Days in ongoing biological projects
- Strength of programs lies in the use of nature found in the Park
Urban Wildlife

Hairy woodpecker
Urban Wildlife
Native Tree and Shrub Arboretum

Educational Opportunities
Salamander-shaped Perennial Bed

- fun, tie-in to amphibian education
School Based Initiatives

Target Groups

Special Education
Language Education
Leadership
Special Education Classes
Passport to Nature

- Passports
- Life-like puppets
- Woodland quest
- Clues
- Puppet story teller
- Stickers
Love those stickers!
Tree Planting

- Doing
- Learning
- Revisit for years
Goals - Special Education

- Variety of Activities
- Engaging
- Active
- Fun
- Something to take home
- Something to revisit in the Park
Leadership Classes

External group involvement
Partnership with Eastern School District
Involve High School Leadership classes

International Biodiversity Day
Passport to Nature events
Invasive Species Scavenger Hunts
Environmental Games

Involve Summer students at different levels of the project
Colonel Gray Senior High School
- Over 10% EAL students
- @ 15% immigrant students
- 28 different nationalities represented

PEI
- 66 countries represented on PEI in 36 different schools
- Varying English language abilities
English as Additional Language (EAL)

Goals

- Experience nature – may be their first
- Have fun while learning
- Relate learning to nature
- Variety of activities
- Engaging
- Hands-on
Activities

Word quests
Scavenger hunts
Leaf shape search
Activity

Word Quest

- Liaise with teacher to create relevant word list
- Word list is studied in class
- Scavenger hunt through Park to find nature subjects from word list
- Provide biological information about subject
Example from Word Quest

Amphibians

- Parks staff facilitate finding a salamander near Dead Man’s Pond
- Students have the opportunity to view close-up
- Relate to word list
- Provide information about salamanders and cool facts such as they have no ears etc.
- Provide information to maximize students experience and minimize impact on wildlife and Park

i.e. Salamanders breath and absorb moisture through their skin so things like insect repellant and sunscreen from your hands can make them sick or even be fatal
Dead Man’s Pond
The most popular learning area!
- Complex ecosystem
- Vibrant amphibian population
- Wildlife – birds, mammals, insects
- Native trees, shrubs, herbaceous plants
- Invasive plant species – i.e. water lily
- Legend
Amphibians

Green frog

And more!

Beth Hoar – Green Thumb Photography
Dragonflies

See the entire life cycle!
Educational Materials

Aimed at Children, Youth and Adults

- Amphibian info sheet
- Amphibian bookmark
- Amphibian booklet
- City website pages
- VP newsletter
- Forest Restoration booklet
- Nature factsheets
Our Projects and Programs

Grew out of Environmental Biological Projects
Grass Roots
Implemented with very little to no budget
Not highly structured
Flexible
Resource for Structured Programs
Possible Partner
Possible Partnerships

• Many nature groups would like to involve youth in their groups – they often don’t know how
• These nature groups have expertise in many different biological areas
• There are nature groups nearby!

A Few Examples from PEI

• Island Nature Trust – protects ecologically unique land and offers educational outreach
• Natural History Society – focuses on nature in general but has many expert birders; are always trying to get youth involved in the organization with varied success
• Invasive Species Working Groups – focus on environmental issues; groups exist across Canada
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http://www.city.charlottetown.pe.ca/parksandgreenspaces.php