



Rouge
National
Urban Park



Rouge National Urban Park

ROUGE REVIEW

2018 Year in Review



Parks
Canada

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ANOTHER HISTORIC YEAR FOR THE ROUGE

Rouge National Urban Park moved closer to completion with two more transfers of land – from the City of Pickering and the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority (TRCA).

- **May 4, 2018** – The City of Pickering transferred 10 parcels of land totalling 8.22 hectares (20.3 acres) to Parks Canada for Rouge National Urban Park.
- **November 1, 2018** – TRCA transferred more than 190 hectares (470 acres) of land in Bob Hunter Memorial Park to Parks Canada to help complete the park.

The Rouge also added some exciting new visitor offers last year:

- In September, the Rouge National Urban Park First Nations Advisory Circle and Parks Canada partnered to host the park’s inaugural Earth Run in the Rouge and Indigenous Arts Celebration, which featured trail races, cultural performances, workshops and Indigenous art.
- In October, one year after a successful launch of the Rouge app in English and French, a Simplified Chinese version of the app was released to celebrate the 2018 Canada-China Year of Tourism. The app is available to download on iOS and Android devices.
- In 2018, new park signs were installed at trailheads, throughout the park and on local highways.





MORE TO COME IN 2019

As the park continues to grow, look forward to more things to come in 2019:

- The restoration of an additional 10 hectares of wildlife habitat throughout the park to support the recovery of species-at-risk in Rouge National Urban Park.
- The opening of a brand new 19th Avenue welcome area in Markham south of Whitchurch-Stouffville, and the unveiling of major improvements to the Reesor day-use area in spring/summer 2019.
- A new 4.3 km trail between the 19th Avenue welcome area and the Reesor day-use area in Markham.
- Continued work on the remaining land transfers from the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority, the Regional Municipality of York, and the cities of Toronto and Markham.





CONSERVATION SUCCESS STORIES

Parks Canada continued to partner with the Toronto Zoo on the Blanding's turtle head-start and reintroduction program. In June 2018, 49 more juvenile turtles were released into the Rouge, bringing the total number released since 2014 to 165 turtles. Parks Canada also worked with the Toronto Zoo and Indigenous partners from the Rouge National Urban Park First Nations Advisory Circle to monitor species-at-risk, including chorus frogs, milksnakes and three species of bats. Habitat restoration projects continued in 2018 and resulted in the restoration of 14.8 hectares of wetlands, streams, riparian habitat and forests. More than 10,000 native plants and 64 kg of seeds were planted in the park as part of this work.

The Rouge is also home to 127 heritage properties. Last year, the Parks Canada cultural heritage team worked with municipal staff to complete evaluations of all 81 heritage properties in the Markham area of the park. These evaluations define the heritage value of each property and will inform future work to conserve these important cultural resources. The cultural heritage team also completed a condition assessment and developed a conservation strategy for the Bentley-Carruthers House, a recognized Federal Heritage Building in the Pickering area of the park.





A VIBRANT FARMING COMMUNITY

The Rouge is home to some of the last remaining working farms in the GTA and is unique among national parks in Canada in protecting agriculture alongside natural and cultural heritage. Much of the farmland in the Rouge is comprised of Class 1 soil – the richest, rarest, most fertile and most endangered soil in Canada.

The local farming community took part in several marquee events in the park last year. At Taste of the Trail in August, visitors sampled local treats and farm produce, including fresh sweet corn, maple syrup and honey. To wrap up the season, Sweet Ridge Farms created a picture-perfect pumpkin patch at the Fall Walks Festival in October. Hundreds of people stopped by to snap photos and purchase pumpkins over the festival weekend.



PARK WARDENS

Rouge National Urban Park's wardens were hard at work in 2018 patrolling Parks Canada-managed lands and engaging with the local community at events such as the Canadian National Exhibition, the Markham Fair and the Whitchurch-Stouffville Remembrance Day Ceremony. The Rouge now has its very own set of rules that will contribute to stronger protections for the park's unique natural, cultural and agricultural heritage.





VISITOR EXPERIENCE HIGHLIGHTS

The Parks Canada Visitor Experience team had another successful season in 2018. Visitor Services staff interacted with more than 18,500 visitors at our welcome areas between May and October and more than 7,300 people participated in our in-park events throughout the year. 2018 saw the return of several signature events such as WinterRouge, Taste of the Trail and the Fall Walks Festival, as well as the addition of some new offers.

In June, the park hosted Rouge After Dark, a special nighttime event that included a campfire, traditional storytelling with our Indigenous partners and interactive family-friendly activities focused on learning all about the nocturnal creatures of the Rouge.

In September, the Rouge National Urban Park First Nations Advisory Circle and Parks Canada organized the park's inaugural Earth Run in the Rouge and Indigenous Arts Celebration. The event included trail races as well as a post-race celebration of the arts, culture, knowledge and histories of the traditional peoples who share a historic connection to the Rouge. The Advisory Circle consists of 10 First Nations with an expressed interest and historic and cultural connection to the park. Parks Canada works collaboratively with the Advisory Circle on park establishment and operations, including many park events.





PARKS CANADA IN THE COMMUNITY

Community Outreach: Parks Canada staff made more than 27,000 contacts at 90 different community events, festivals and presentations throughout the GTA in 2018.

Learn-to Camp: Close to 300 visitors learned skills like how to pitch a tent and build a campfire at our eight in-park overnight Learn-to Camp events last year. Almost 30,000 people took part in Learn-to Camp workshops and drop-in sessions across the GTA.

Rouge Express: Parkbus, TD, MEC and Parks Canada continued a partnership to provide free shuttle service from downtown Toronto to the Rouge on weekends throughout the summer and fall. Over 1,250 visitors rode the TD Rouge Express to the park in 2018, including 378 people participating in NatureLink, a program that aims to connect new Canadians to nature.

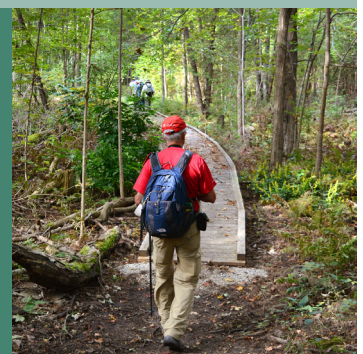
Photographer-in-Residence: Ishkhan Ghazarian joined the Rouge as the park's third OCAD University photographer-in-residence. He staged a photo exhibition in December 2018 titled *Memories of the Rouge* and his photos are featured throughout this newsletter.

Mood Walks: Parks Canada continues to partner with the Scarborough Health Network to offer guided nature walks aimed at improving physical and mental health for youth experiencing mental health challenges.

Volunteers: Fifty-one new volunteers joined Rouge National Urban Park's team of dedicated guided walk leaders, outreach and event volunteers, and photographers. This new cohort represents the largest intake of volunteers since the park's establishment.



In loving memory of
Bruce Grubbe,
dedicated and beloved
Rouge National Urban Park volunteer.



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