Project Summary

"A thing is right when it tends to preserve the integrity, stability, and beauty of the biotic community. It is wrong when it tends otherwise."

Aldo Leopold, American forester, ecologist and conservationist.

Lily of the Valley Photo: Suzanne Gibeault

The goal of Nature Chelsea is to support the conservation of Chelsea's wild plants and animals, its biodiversity, through:

1) Science -- Gathering scientific information to support biodiversity-friendly community planning and decision-making;

2) Stewardship -- Helping landowners to manage their properties in ways that support biodiversity, and;

3) Education -- Increasing public understanding and appreciation of Chelsea's biodiversity.

Fisher

Science

The objective of the Science component of Nature Chelsea is to gather scientific information to support biodiversity-friendly community planning and decision-making. We do this through the following projects:

BioBlitz

Nature Chelsea is gathering data on the occurrence of wild plants and animals in Chelsea. In June 2009, Nature Chelsea held a BioBlitz, a rapid assessment of the biodiversity of four areas in Chelsea. For more information on the BioBlitz, click here.

Wildlife Corridors

In October 2009, Carolyn Callaghan and University of Ottawa student Chrystel Losier began a project to study how wild mammals move between Gatineau Park and the Gatineau River in Chelsea. We have identified several wildlife movement corridors, and are monitoring wildlife activity in these corridors. To do this, we have employed spy technology: remote cameras that record movement using infrared. Thus far we have captured images of white-tailed deer, black bear, coyote, red fox, weasel, fisher, and raccoon.

Fisher travelling through a wildlife movement corridor near Larrimac golf course

Blanding's Turtle Habitat

University of Ottawa student Luba Reshitnyk studied habitat loss for the Blanding's Turtle in Chelsea, using satellite remote sensing imagery. The Blanding's Turtle is a threatened species that relies on wetlands and connected terrestrial habitat and are susceptible to the effects of roads. The results of Luba's study demonstrate a 10% decline in suitable habitat availability between 1994 and 2007. Continuing urban development within the municipality may be responsible for this decline. Neighbouring Municipality of Cantley, where more intensive urbanization has occurred, experienced a greater decline in Blanding's turtle habitat during the same time period.

Blanding's turtle

Conservation Planning

Conservation planning is a process of land-use planning that incorporates the conservation of biodiversity. Conservation planning has several stages, including measuring and mapping biodiversity, identifying conservation goals for the planning region, implementing conservation actions on the ground, and managing and monitoring the conservation actions. Nature Chelsea is in the first stage of conservation planning; gathering data on species occurrence and quality and quantity of habitat. Over the next two years we will work in collaboration with the Municipality of Chelsea and landowners to identify opportunities for conserving biodiversity in Chelsea.

Stewardship

"Stewardship means passing the land and resources--including intact, functioning forest ecosystems--to the next generation in better condition than they were found."

Anonymous

Nature Chelsea has launched a new land stewardship project, with funding support from Environment Canada's Ecoaction program. The project will engage landowners in stewardship actions that will protect and enhance biodiversity on their properties, with a particular focus on lands that are of highest conservation value. We will do this by conducting voluntary biodiversity assessments for 30 landowners over two years and providing information on best practices to maintain biodiversity. Participating landowners will be encouraged to become certified land stewards in Chelsea. To obtain more information on the project, contact naturechelsea@gmail.com or call 819 827-6222.

Check back at this site for specific information on how you can help elevate the value of your land for biodiversity.

Education

"In the end, we will protect only what we love. We will love only what we understand. We will understand only what we are taught"

Senegalese poet and naturalist Baba Dioum

The Nature Chelsea education program focuses on bringing an awareness of biodiversity through habitats to the elementary schools of Chelsea. In collaboration with the science teachers of Chelsea Elementary School, we developed and implemented a wetlands teaching unit in spring 2009 to the grades 5 and 6 students. The participating students learned about different types of wetlands, how to identify species of plants and animals that live in wetlands, the ecology of wetlands, and conducted a wetland survey near the school.

In spring 2009 Nature Chelsea organized a BioBlitz for Chelsea Elementary School and Ecole du Grand Boise. With the help of many parent volunteers and teachers, students from the two schools participated in a BioBlitz of the natural habitats surrounding their school. Teams of students recorded as many species of plants and animals as they were able to find. The BioBlitz was a huge success. Enthusiastic cries of excitement rang through the forests as students discovered a spider, a new plant or a prized salamander. The day was a celebration of the rich diversity of life in Chelsea.

During fall and winter 2009, grade five students from Ecole du Grand Boise and grade five and six students from Chelsea Elementary School are participating in a pilot forest teaching unit. Students are learning to identify species of trees, how to calculate the age of a tree, and the habits of forest animals during winter. Volunteer Forester Vincent Barrette is providing his expertise on forests and leading workshops for the students.

Nature Chelsea has also developed and led workshops for children and adults on black bear ecology and how to be bearwise in Chelsea.