

West Ottawa Wetlands

A Publication Celebrating One of Ottawa's Most Significant Wetlands

Spring 2004

Wonderful Wetlands

What's Inside:

Wonderful Wetlands

What is a Wetland?

The Bay to Bay Wetlands

The Ontario Wetland
Habitat Fund

38 Years of Conservation
Going Strong!

The Wetland Ecosystem

Wetlands Make a
Healthy Environment

Thinking Globally,
Acting Locally

Wetlands are among the most distinct and productive ecosystems on the earth. They are nature's version of a water purification plant, filtering chemical and biological components from ground and surface water. Wetlands are also home to diverse communities of plant, animal and fish species, and provide vast recreation and economic opportunities for people.

It was not that long ago that wetlands were considered swampy wastelands. In areas of competing land-use, wetlands were often drained and filled in to make room for urban, industrial or agricultural development. But we now understand that wetlands are an essential part of Ontario's landscape and play a critical role in the water cycle. Thankfully, the rate of wetland destruction has been reduced to some extent.

Although southern Ontario has seen a great deal of wetland loss, we are fortunate in Ottawa because wetland destruction has not been extensive here historically. However, as our network of roads and highways expands and as housing and other forms of development extend further into the Ottawa Valley, we are seeing wetlands disappear from the landscape. This is cause for concern.

The landscape suffers when wetlands are removed or degraded. Wetland loss can lead to:

- ◆ flooding
- ◆ erosion
- ◆ reduced water quality
- ◆ lower groundwater tables
- ◆ groundwater contamination
- ◆ more costly water treatment programs
- ◆ loss of wildlife habitat and populations
- ◆ decline in fish and baitfish populations
- ◆ lost recreational opportunities

Wetlands play an important role in the environmental health of Ottawa, and contribute greatly to the strength of our resource-based economy and to the quality of our lives. As individuals, organizations and businesses, we all need to do our part in learning about the importance of wetlands and in helping to protect them.

