

## **Cootes Paradise Fact Sheet**

### **What is Cootes Paradise?**

- Cootes Paradise is a large wetland located on the western edge of Hamilton Harbour.
- A wetland is an area of land that is covered in water (this can be all year round or just during certain seasons). Wetlands are covered by unique plants that are suited to living in wet conditions. Sometimes a wetland is also called a marsh.

### **Why are wetlands so important?**

- Wetlands are home to many plants and animals. They are also excellent fish nurseries.
- Marsh plants help to remove pollutants from the water.
- Wetlands hold water like a sponge and help to prevent flooding.
- Wetland plants help to prevent erosion (the plants keep the soil from washing away).
- Wetlands are so good at cleaning the ecosystem that they are often compared to kidneys!

### **What's wrong with Cootes Paradise?**

- Most of the plants in the marsh have been destroyed. One big reason is because of fish called carp. Carp are not native to Ontario and they uproot plants while looking for insects to eat on the bottom of the marsh.
- Without plants the soils at the bottom of the marsh are stirred into the water. This can bury animal homes and cause them to choke.
- Nutrients (phosphorous and nitrogen) from streams are entering the marsh. The nutrients cause large blooms of algae (algae are tiny plants that can grow out of control). Algae blooms result in less oxygen and prevent sunlight from entering the water.

### **What's being done to make Cootes Paradise healthy again?**

- A fishway was built to keep carp out of the marsh. Classes can visit the fishway and see fish up close.
- Used Christmas trees have been used to build up old marsh channels that were lost.
- Other projects have helped to restore parts of the marsh. (visit [www.rbg.ca](http://www.rbg.ca) for more information).
- Native plants are being added back into Cootes Paradise.

### **What can YOU do?**

- Take a trip to the fishway and learn more about carp and other fish!

- Plan a trip to Cootes Paradise, and remember to stay on the trails. Marsh plants and animals are sensitive and can be easily trampled.
- Return your Classroom Mini Marsh to the Royal Botanical Gardens to be planted in Cootes Paradise!

## **The Benefits of Marsh Plants**

### **Food**

The stems, roots, leaves and seeds of aquatic plants are eaten by a variety of wildlife. Certain waterfowl will eat the leaves and stems, while other bird species will eat the seeds. Animals such as otter, beaver, turtles and deer will also graze on aquatic plants.

### **Shelter**

Aquatic plants provide cover from predators. This is especially important for young fish and amphibians.

### **Habitat**

Aquatic plants provide living quarters for many insects and small crustaceans. These organisms are an important food source for larger animals.

### **Material for Building Homes**

The strong stems of aquatic plants make excellent nest and den materials for a variety of wildlife such as birds and muskrat.

### **Erosion Control Aquatic**

Plants help to keep sediments in place. This prevents sediments from being stirred into the water column during wave action. Sediments can harm aquatic life and prevent sunlight from penetrating the water column.

### **Removal of Pollutants**

Aquatic plants are known to filter contaminants from wetlands and are often considered as an indicator of water quality conditions. Aquatic plants also absorb phosphorous (which would otherwise cause algae blooms) and other nutrients.