

Rewilding at our Cottage

Don Downer & Adrienne Perry

Waubashene, Ontario

2020 – 2022

What it was like before – an extensive lawn that took 8 hours to cut.



Another view. It was great for playing baseball or soccer.



This is the reason we had to do something in this area.
Even a moderate rainfall caused large puddles like this.



After a major rainfall, we had a not-so-small lake!





Step One:

Solve the water problem

- Rather than add a huge amount of fill to the low area, we decided to go with what was happening, not fight it.
- So, in January 2020, with the ground well frozen, we had a pond dug. All that excess water would now have a place to go. Or so we hoped!
- The pond is ~30 m (100 ft.) long by 9 m (30 ft.) wide in the shape of a figure 8.
- One end is 2 meters (6 ft.) deep; the other end is 4 meters (12 ft.) deep.



The deep end of the pond.

Fish will need this depth when they are eventually added to the pond.
We plan to put in Fathead Minnows – a native species.



The pond
after the
digging was
done.

Now we wait
for spring.



When the ice and snow melted in the spring, water filled the pond just as we had hoped.



Step Two: The Planting

- The next task was to plant trees and bushes on the side of the pond away from the cottage.
- Our initial planting was 120 native species of trees & bushes. More trees have since been planted. There are now some 300 native trees/bushes in that area.
- This work was expertly done by a local tree specialist who took great care to put everything in just the right location.



This is how things looked after the initial planting.

Now we had to patiently wait for everything to grow.



Another
view of the
initial
planting.



Step 3: Turtle Habitat

- We have a large number of turtles lay their eggs on our property, usually in the hard gravel road.
- So, we brought in sand and build a nesting area close to the water.
- We mostly have Northern Map turtles with a few Midland Painted and Snapping turtles nesting here as well.



Turtle nesting
area finished
and ready to
be used – we
hope!



Build it and they will
come.

And they did come!
We were delighted.



Step 4: Micro- environments

- We had to cut down a dying ash tree, so we used the branches to make a large brush pile.
- This created a safe refuge used by cottontail rabbits and other small animals.



We piled up the cut wood to create an environment for the Wood Frogs. We had seen them in that area already.



We used pieces of the tree trunk to make safe frog and turtle sunning places in the pond.

They are checking it out already!



The turtles
liked the logs a
lot!



These Northern Map turtles also enjoyed sunning themselves on the pond banks.



The frogs also
liked the logs.

And we soon had
a LOT of frogs!



That first summer,
we counted 32
frogs in one walk
around the pond.

This of course is a
Bull Frog, one of
many.



Wild areas need bird houses suited to different species.

This one is I intended for owls. (This past summer, it was used by a pair of Starlings.)



By the second spring, there is clear evidence of growth.

More trees have been planted.



Canada Geese were frequent visitors to the pond area. At times, we had up to 10 families and over 80 geese around the pond at the same time.



Another frequent visitor, the Great Blue Heron, walks the pond edge looking for frogs.



A pond needs
a bridge.

So, we built
one.



A bench and a shelter make a great place to sit and enjoy our wild area and take photos, no matter the weather.



Summer 2022.

Now it's
looking WILD!



Maybe a bit
too wild...

Where are
the flowers
we
planted?

Where is
the pond?

The Story will Continue...

- We have planted native wildflower seeds on the side of the pond towards the house. Hopefully, they will come up in the spring.
- We plan to add a bubbler system to the pond and add some minnows in the coming year.
- We will continue to monitor the birds, insects, and animals that make use of the wild area.
- We will update this presentation periodically to share our progress and observations.
- We hope you find this interesting and informative. If you would like to learn more or have question, you can contact us at DDowner9@gmail.com and we will get back to you. Thanks!