

“New initiative asks all Canadians to help grow the Network of Nature”

OTTAWA, October 14, 2022 — Canada’s once abundant natural biodiversity is in crisis, affecting the overall health of our planet and population for future generations. Together with our partners, Dougan & Associates and TD Ready Commitment, Canadian Geographic is thrilled to announce the launch of the Network of Nature initiative with our first planting day event at the Toronto Zoo. The Network of Nature is a new national program designed to strengthen our country’s biodiversity by providing Canadians with the inspiration, tools and knowledge to enhance existing greenspaces and naturalize developed areas with locally appropriate native plant species.

“Canadian wildlife populations have declined almost 70% over the last 50 years. Development has stressed and eliminated enormous tracts of native habitat, and we know habitat loss and degradation are the primary causes of decline for 82% of species at risk in Canada. With the help of individual Canadians, governments, and corporate landowners, we can reverse this trend.” John Geiger, CEO, Royal Canadian Geographical Society

Canadian Geographic is launching the Network of Nature with hundreds of backyard gardeners who will join together to plant a new, native-tree forest at the Toronto Zoo. Approximately 900 native trees will be planted in less than six hours, creating important new habitat for local and migratory animals, absorbing carbon, mitigating stormwater runoff and improving air quality.

This first planting event is just the beginning.

Working to engage all Canadians, the Network of Nature is a national movement to restore native plant biodiversity using balconies, backyards, and boulevards across Canada. In addition, the Network of Nature will coordinate numerous other planting activities in cities across the country, giving Canadians the opportunity to participate actively in critical restoration work. The program will also provide tools to individual Canadians to help them at home.

“We’re thrilled to be the first of many partners to provide a site for the Network of Nature. We’re committed to enhancing our existing greenspaces, turning them into healthy, productive habitat for the local and migratory species that depend on them. Our mission is to connect people, animals and conservation science to fight extinction, and being part of this event is a great example of our commitment to our community. I encourage every other Canadian to provide what land they can to help grow the Network of Nature.” Dolf DeJong, CEO, Toronto Zoo

In consultation with an Indigenous and Western science expert committee, the Network of Nature will also complete the first comprehensive Canadian collection of knowledge on native plants and trees in Canada. This tool will help individual Canadians, developers, corporate property managers and landscape architects select and source appropriate native plants, seeds and trees locally. The Network of Nature native plant species database is now available at networkofnature.org and will continue to be enhanced over time.

"We are honoured to be recognized as one of the founding partners of the Network of Nature. Planting the right plant in the right place is a simple act that can scale to have tremendous benefits for biodiversity. That's why we've built a free, public, native plant database – to connect people to plants and help anyone identify locally appropriate native plant species for restoration, gardening, or landscape design. In transitioning to the Network of Nature, we are committed to continuing to develop the most comprehensive and accessible knowledge base of plants native to Canada. This partnership will greatly expand our ability to reach Canadians and empower them to select and source locally appropriate native plants, seeds and trees for any planting project." Steven Hill, Ph.D., Principal Ecologist, Dougan & Associates

The loss of biodiversity is one of the largest environmental crises of our time – but there is much we can do. Underpinned by the large reach of Canadian Geographic readership and the active Canadian Geographic Education network, The Network of Nature initiative will create and disseminate important learning tools related to teaching Canadians of all ages about the biodiversity crisis and nature-based climate solutions, inspiring them to take action, in their own yards, balconies and communities.

By partnering with communities, municipalities, educators, corporations, and citizens to enhance urban greenspaces and naturalize developed areas, we can begin to repair and rebuild Canada's native landscape.

"We believe we have an obligation to future generations to take care of our planet - and it starts with our actions today. Through the TD Ready Commitment, the Bank's corporate citizenship strategy, we're committed to helping open doors to a more inclusive and sustainable future. That's why we're continuing to exercise our green leadership by supporting initiatives focused on preserving nature and increasing access to green spaces for all to enjoy." Carolyn Scotchmer, Executive Director, TD Friends of the Environment Foundation.

Rallying Canadians in every province and territory, the Network of Nature will help support the restoration of soil productivity and water resources, preserve biodiversity, strengthen habitats and help mitigate the build-up of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere, thereby improving the environment for future generations.

ABOUT THE ROYAL CANADIAN GEOGRAPHICAL SOCIETY

Publisher of *Canadian Geographic*, the RCGS is dedicated to imparting a broader knowledge and deeper appreciation of Canada — its people and places, its natural and cultural heritage and its environmental, social and economic opportunities. The Society is one of Canada's largest non-profit educational organizations, comprising more than 25,000 members from across the country. The RCGS is funded primarily by donations. The Society's Board of Governors and its program committees are composed entirely of volunteers.

ABOUT DOUGAN & ASSOCIATES

Dougan & Associates is an incorporated ecological consulting and design firm based in southern Ontario that has been providing services in terrestrial biology, ecological assessment and landscape architecture to the public and private sectors since 1981. For over 40 years, D&A's core focus has been to reimagine our role in nature through ecological interpretation and design, to realize the ecological potential of every place. Their science-based approach and use of innovative techniques allow them to balance the needs of their clients with the conservation and restoration of natural resources throughout the life cycle of every project.

ABOUT TORONTO ZOO

The Toronto Zoo's mission is to connect people, animals and conservation science to fight extinction and our vision is a world where wildlife and wild spaces thrive. An iconic tourist attraction and Conservation organization, the Toronto Zoo boasts a number of leading programs for helping wildlife and their natural habitats – from species reintroduction to reproductive research. A world-class educational centre for people of all ages, the Toronto Zoo is open every day including December 25 and attracts approximately 1.2 million guests each year. Toronto Zoo is accredited by Canada's Accredited Zoos and Aquariums (CAZA) and the Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA). The Zoo has also achieved the Canadian Council on Animal Care (CCAC) Certificate of Good Animal Practice® and is inspected by the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs (OMAFRA).

Social Media Handles

Twitter: @RCGS_SGRC @CanGeo @networkofnature @TheTorontoZoo

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