

# **International Day for Biological Diversity, May 22, 2008**

## **Theme: Biodiversity and Agriculture**

### **Canadian Activities Report**

The following report is a summary of initiatives that were undertaken across Canada to celebrate the International Day for Biological Diversity (IBD), May 22, 2008. This report responds to notifications (2008-039 and 2008-096) from the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity which invites Parties to share information about activities organized in their countries to celebrate IBD.

#### **ACTIVITIES**

##### **NATIONAL**

###### **1. National IBD Website**

The Biodiversity Convention Office of Environment Canada developed an [IBD 2008 website](#) as a component of the national biodiversity clearing-house mechanism. The website presents background information about biodiversity and focuses on 'Biodiversity and Agriculture' as the 2008 theme. The website includes thematic pages and fact sheets on 'Citizen Action', 'Ecosystem Services', and 'Genetic Diversity'. Links were made available to a 'Biodiversity Event Planning Guide' to encourage others to undertake IBD activities and celebrations.

BCO partnered with the Canadian Environmental Network (CEN) to develop a Biodiversity Day outreach strategy to engage Canadians in IBD 2008 activities in seven cities across Canada. Through this partnership CEN selected seven environmental non-government organizations in each city to promote IBD 2008. This partnership resulted in a number of activities, events and the dissemination of educational materials on the "biodiversity and agriculture" theme.

###### **2. [The Canadian Environmental Network \(RCEN\)](#)**

RCEN created an [IBD web page](#) offering information on IBD 2008 and promoting activities in seven cities across Canada. A special page was devoted to information on events taking place in Montreal, Québec, home of the UN Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity. The web page also featured a report "[Biological Diversity and the Convention, from a Canadian Environmental Perspective](#)". The web page was promoted through the RCEN [May 14<sup>th</sup> E-Bulletin](#).

##### **BRITISH COLUMBIA**

###### **3. [Sierra Club of Canada](#) - Biodiversi-Tea-Party**

The Sierra Club of Canada launched a 'Biodiversi-Tea-Party' program to facilitate individual biodiversity initiatives. The tea parties are intended to encourage biodiversity 'reflection, learning and acting' through discussions and educational resources. The Sierra Club helps in the planning process of 'biodiversi-Tea parties' by providing a [guide](#) and [invitation template](#), and a BC Endangered Species Toolkit. The tea parties are excellent opportunities for individuals to share knowledge and ideas about biodiversity and related environmental issues.

###### **4. [Sierra Club of Canada](#) - Letter to Premier of British Columbia**

The British Columbian chapter of the Sierra Club of Canada took a faith-based approach to biodiversity outreach for International Biological Diversity Day. The organization partnered with prominent faith leaders in the province and prepared a letter addressed to the Premier of British Columbia. The faith leaders involved are requesting the development of a provincial 'Species and Ecosystems Protection' law. The letter drew connections between the natural environment and spiritually and therefore the importance of nature to human well-being.

## ALBERTA

### 5. [The Land Stewardship Centre of Canada](#), Alberta

The Land Stewardship Centre of Canada is a resource centre geared to land stewards everywhere. It contains a wealth of information about user-friendly, land-use conservation practices, programs, agencies and referrals for hundreds of resources – from books and videos to websites. The Land Stewardship Centre promoted IBD 2008 in their E-News bulletin which is sent to 552 contacts including over 160 grassroots stewardship group. The Land Stewardship Centre also updated its website information on biodiversity, including 12 ways individuals can support biodiversity:

## MANITOBA

### 6. [The Coalition to Save the Elms](#), Winnipeg, MB

The Coalition to Save the Elms is a non-profit charitable community based conservation organization. The vision of the Coalition to Save the Elms is to protect, preserve and promote the health of the urban forest and the urban environment through public awareness and education. In honour of IBD 2008, the Coalition to Save the Elms launched a new [biodiversity web page](#) profiling information on the importance of biodiversity and links to related resources including relevant legislation in the Province of Manitoba.

### 7. [FortWhyte Alive](#), Winnipeg, MB

With a wetlands-based theme, FortWhyte Alive offered an educational event for youth. FortWhyte Alive is an environmental education centre located outside Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada. This organization is dedicated to providing programming, natural settings and facilities for environmental education and outdoor education. Dough Collicut from Nature North visited the centre to lead children through the wetland ecosystem. He explained that wetland species- particularly amphibians- are important indicator species, and play an important foundational role in the wetland's food web. This event, which took place on IBD 2008, was free to all youth visiting the centre.

### 8. The Manitoba Museum, Winnipeg, ON

In celebration of 'The Year of the Frog' and IBD 2008, [the Manitoba Museum](#) offered a weekend educational program to youth and families. Frog-related activities took place May 24<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup>, for visiting families to learn about Canadian frogs and toads.

## ONTARIO

### 9. [Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources](#), Educational Displays

Ontario's Ministry of Natural Resources (MNR) was active in a public education activity in response to IBD 2008. Several displays were set up in the lobby of the MNR building in Peterborough, ON, to highlight various programs and initiatives that the ministry is involved in regarding biodiversity conservation.

These visual displays presented information on Ontario's Biodiversity Strategy; Ontario Stewardship; 50 Million Tree Program; Ontario Parks; forest fires; Cervid Ecological Framework; Ontario Forests & Forest Management Guidelines; Natural Heritage System- Peterborough District; the Invasive Species Program; American Eel Rehabilitation; Species At Risk; renewable energy; wetlands; enforcement; Ontario's Natural Heritage Information Centre; Ontario Breeding Bird Atlas; the Environmental Flows Poster, and finally, State of the Resources reporting. All of these displays were made available to the public to enjoy and learn about biodiversity-related programs and initiatives.

10. Ontario Biodiversity Education and Awareness Network, Ontario

The Ontario Biodiversity Education and Awareness Network (BEAN) created a flyer on biodiversity and agriculture for IBD 2008 (attachment 1). The flyer features information on ecosystem services provided by biodiversity and actions that can help protect agricultural biodiversity. BEAN also profiled and distributed a [Biodiversity Activity Poster](#) created by [AgCare](#). Almost 10,000 flyers and posters were distributed through a number of agents: [Ontario Parks](#); [Community Fisheries and Wildlife Involvement Program](#); [Ontario Stewardship](#); [Conservation Ontario](#); [Royal Botanical Gardens](#); [Trent University](#); [Toronto Zoo](#); [Environment Canada](#); [EMMA](#); [MNR Biodiversity](#).

11. [First Annual Bioblitz](#), Royal Botanical Gardens, Ontario

To celebrate IBD 2008, Royal Botanical Gardens (RBG) held its first annual BioBlitz. Within a 24-hour period, groups of botanists, birders, entomologists and other naturalists travelled within RBG's nature sanctuaries to identify as many different species of plants animals and fungi as they could find.

12. [Protect Our Water and Environmental Resources \(P.O.W.E.R.\)](#), Ontario

P.O.W.E.R. is a not-for-profit community based organization committed to protecting the environment and the quality of life in the North Halton region of Ontario and beyond. P.O.W.E.R. works to develop proactive projects, programs, directions and policies that recognize the necessity, importance, value and role of natural spaces, native species and ecosystem function and flows for sustainable communities. To promote IBD 2008, P.O.W.E.R. launched a [biodiversity web page](#) as part of its website, featuring background information about the International Day for Biological Diversity and the Convention on Biological Diversity from a Canadian environmental perspective.

13. [Heschel School](#), Toronto, Ontario

Although many schools in and area Toronto participated in biodiversity-related activities, Toronto's Heschel School was especially dedicated to celebrating IBD 2008. This elementary school is proud to show its environmentalism as it is lead in environmental activism in the Toronto community. In terms of IBD 2008, the students participated in planting heritage bean seeds and studied concepts of agricultural biodiversity. The school garden offered a hands-on learning experience to engage the elementary school students in applied biodiversity learning. The Toronto Heschel School also featured IBD 2008 in the school's weekly electronic newsletter and on the Centre for Enhancement of Jewish Education website to raise public awareness of the day and its importance and purpose.

14. Garden and Food Curriculum Working Group, Toronto, Ontario

The Garden and Food Curriculum Working Group in Toronto, Ontario organized an educational event geared towards grade 6 students. The event included presentations throughout the day and during the lunch hour. The material presented was focused on food and the environment as well as gardening. This event was organized in collaboration with several organizations including: [Evergreen](#), [FoodShare](#), [Green Thumbs Growing Kids](#), [The Stop - Community Food Centre](#), and [Alan Gardens Children's Conservatory](#) in Toronto.

15. Biodiversity Day Concert, Ottawa, Ontario

A Biodiversity Day concert "*Giving Our Children a Voice*" was held in Ottawa to raise funds for the [2009 World Biodiversity Youth Symposium](#). The concert was held at Beechwood National Memorial Centre on May 22, 2008, and featured various musicians and presentations. Students and faculty members of St-Laurent Academy were active in organizing the concert as students performed various ensembles.

16. [Canadian Biotechnology Action Network](#), Ottawa, Ontario

In Ottawa, Ontario, a “Movie Night for Diversity!” was held to celebrate IBD 2008. Supported by the Canadian Biotechnology Action Network, this event included presentations by Kate Green from [USC Canada](#) and Moe Garahan from [Just Food Ottawa](#). Both speakers addressed biodiversity as a major ecological component that needs to be recognized in agricultural practices. These presentations were followed by a screening by the environmental documentary *Gardens of Destiny* by Jocelyn Demers. The documentary is focused on the dangers of conventional agriculture and presents organic farming as a better alternative for the future of food safety.

17. [Unitarian Service Committee of Canada \(USC Canada\)](#), Radio Interview, Ottawa, Ontario

On Friday, May 30<sup>th</sup>, 2008, Kate Green spoke about USC Canada, biodiversity and local food initiatives on the local CKCU radio station in Ottawa, Ontario, Canada.

USC Canada is a not-for-profit organization that supports programs, training, and policies that strengthen biodiversity, food sovereignty and human rights. USC not only supports local efforts towards change, but also strives to create linkages between people in the south and Canadians. As Canada’s oldest international development NGO, USC Canada has successfully gained recognition in sustainable development projects- with emphasize on agricultural biodiversity and food security. This radio interview was important to International Biological Diversity Day in Canada because it directly addressed the 2008 theme: Biodiversity and Agriculture.

18. Ontario Biodiversity Council and Ministry of Natural Resources

The [Ontario Biodiversity Council](#) in partnership with the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources were responsible for the creation and distribution of a Biodiversity poster on IBD 2008. The council, comprised of members of both government and non-government organizations within Ontario distributed the poster as a biodiversity outreach project. The poster itself is bilingual and is intended to raise awareness about biodiversity and its importance and also inform readers about Ontario’s efforts to protect biodiversity. The poster includes helpful hints on what readers can do to help protect Ontario’s biodiversity.

## QUÉBEC

19. City of Montreal’s Nature Museums, Montreal, QC

The Nature Museums in Montreal, Québec developed a [program of events](#) to commemorate IBD 2008. Films, shows, guided tours, presentations, birdwatching, exhibitions and other activities took place on May 22<sup>nd</sup>, as well as the weekend of May 23-25<sup>th</sup>. All events shared a common biodiversity theme: forest biodiversity; tomatoes, potatoes, agriculture and biodiversity; invasive species; the City of Montreal’s biodiversity initiatives; rural biodiversity; and biodiversity in province of Quebec. This program of events coincided with the Montreal Botanical Garden’s Great Gardening Weekend. These events were open to the public and were attended and enjoyed by children and adults alike.

20. City of Montreal, QC- Biodiversity Website

The City of Montreal took measures to celebrate IBD 2008 by incorporating biodiversity into the city’s webportal. The newly developed webpage, ‘[Biodiversity](#)’, offers an electronic source of information, news and events related to Biodiversity, the City of Montreal and Canada on a broad scale. The site provides information on the city’s commitment to biodiversity and subsequent actions; along with what citizens can do and links to biodiversity policies and reports. Biodiversity-related events and news items have been posted on the website to inform interested stakeholders.

21. [Gaia Presse](#), Québec

Gaia Presse launched a [biodiversity website](#) to promote IBD 2008 and the 9<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity.

## NEW BRUNSWICK

### 22. New Brunswick Partners in Agriculture

The New Brunswick Partners in Agriculture was also active in IBD 2008 by producing several fact sheets and distributing posters. A fact sheet containing information on IBD 2008 and “Biodiversity and Agriculture” specifically, was produced and presented on the organization’s website. This illustrative creation was geared towards public audiences and incorporated applicable information on what can be done to preserve and conserve biodiversity in New Brunswick.

A second fact sheet recognized 2008 as the *International Year of the Potato* and gave useful information about how to enjoy New Brunswick potatoes. As New Brunswick’s largest crop, the potato has significant economic, social and environmental importance. As related to the IBD 2008 theme, the potato is an excellent example of how agriculture affects biodiversity and adversely how biodiversity affects agriculture.

## NEWFOUNDLAND

### 23. [Memorial University of Newfoundland Botanical Garden](#)

On May 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2008, The Memorial University of Newfoundland Botanical Garden hosted an *International Day for Biological Diversity Lunch-time Lecture: Goods From Our Woods*. The short lunch-time lecture was delivered by Susan Squires, a research assistant with the Memorial University of Newfoundland’s Biology Department and expert on timber alternatives. She spoke about how non-timber products can be a catalyst for forest conservation and subsequently forest biodiversity in Newfoundland, Canada.

## Environment Canada Activities

### 24. Canadian Wildlife Service – Ontario Region

In May 2008 the Canadian Wildlife Service released a biodiversity poster ‘[The Connected Planet](#)’. This poster is a colourful and informative resource serving both a decorative and educational purpose. The poster provides information on threats to biodiversity, the ecosystem approach, Canadian ecozones, the importance of biodiversity in Canada and actions that support biodiversity protection.

### 25. Place Vincent Massey Celebration – Gatineau, Québec

Throughout the week of IBD 2008, biodiversity posters prepared by CWS and the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity were available to Environment Canada employees at Place Vincent Massey to display and celebrate biodiversity! Approximately 50 English and 270 French posters were distributed to employees.

### 26. Environment Canada- Atlantic Region Green Team

Environment Canada’s Atlantic Region Green Team was active in celebrating IBD 2008. Environment Canada Green Teams are voluntary positions taken by employees to facilitate environmental learning in the workplace. On May 22, 2008, the Green Team for the Atlantic Region hosted a Nature Walk through Sullivan’s Pond. With guidance from Environment Canada’s Canadian Wildlife Service staff, employees were able to learn about ducks and geese in their natural habitat and the importance and relevance of their conservation and protection work at Environment Canada through direct interaction with the natural environment.

### 27. Environment Canada – Burlington, Ontario Region Green Team

A notification was sent to all EC and DFO employees at CCIW about IBD 2008 and the biodiversity and agriculture theme. On IBD 2008 biodiversity posters prepared by the Ontario Biodiversity Education and Awareness Network were made available to Environment Canada (EC) and Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO) employees at the Canada Centre for Inland Waters (CCIW) facility in Burlington, ON.

### **JOINT MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS**

28. Canada's Environment Minister John Baird, and Canada's Agriculture and Agri-Food Minister Gerry Ritz released a [joint ministerial statement](#) to mark IBD 2008. The Statement highlights Canada's achievements in protecting the diversity of life and using biological resources sustainably.
29. The Province of Manitoba released a [joint ministerial statement](#) in recognition of IBD 2008. The province's Conservation Minister, Stan Struthers and Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives Minister, Rosann Wowchuk, encouraged Manitobans to recognize the significance of biodiversity to the agricultural industry in the province. The statement also outlined Manitoba's commitment to conservation efforts of threatened species such as the polar bear.

### **REPORTS RELEASED FOR BIODIVERSITY DAY 2008**

30. In May 2008, the Ontario Biodiversity Council released an [Interim Report on Ontario's Biodiversity](#). This report is an important milestone towards reporting on the state of Ontario's biodiversity in 2010. The Interim Report provides an overview of the state of biodiversity in Ontario including a discussion of biodiversity threats and examples of conservation actions being undertaken across the province.
31. The Canadian Forest Service released a report "[Implementing ecosystem-based management approaches in Canada's forests. A science-policy dialogue](#)" to coincide with IBD 2008. This publication reports on the discussions at a Science-Policy Dialogue where participants from governments, industry, and non-governmental organizations shared their experiences with implementation of integrated solutions for managing natural resource and environmental issues. These discussions are supplemented with articles and case studies that can serve as a baseline for an assessment of the extent of progress on implementation of ecosystem-based approaches in Canada's forests.
32. The Department of Agriculture Canada was involved in the preparation of a special edition of "[Biodiversity: Journal of Life on Earth](#)" on "the Value of Biodiversity to Food and Agriculture".
33. A joint publication by the Centre for International Sustainable Development Law (CISDL), the Minister of Development, and l'Environnement et des Parcs du Québec entitled, '[A Practical Tool for Decision-Makers and Users of Genetic Resources](#)' was released in June 2008. The publication introduces the concept of 'access and benefit sharing of genetic resources' (ABS) as an important international implication of utilizing biological diversity. This document is a relevant resource for decision-makers since it offers the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) provisions on ABS; the importance of ABS; as well as how ABS is governed at both the national and international levels.