

In Wildness is the Preservation of the World: For the Preservation of the Entire Wet Meadows Nature Area of West Pierrefonds.  
(Starting with documentary video about the area we're trying to preserve: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VuffDEvsOyk> )

One of the greatest truths has only eight words: "In wildness is the preservation of the world." This is what Henry David Thoreau wrote in his essay "Walking." "In wildness is the preservation of the world."

We usually act as though we are totally separated from the earth, as though our continuity as a species is unrelated to that of the earth and all its living beings.

This is relevant to the future of the Pierrefonds nature area about which we're talking. I am advocating, contrary to monied interests and the Cordere administration, that this entire area and its biodiversity be totally preserved, that none of its pristine wetlands, trees and plants, migratory bird and other animal habitat be destroyed. It should acquire legal status as a park, dedicated to nature conservation, bought from the real estate companies by the city of Montreal with financial help from Quebec and the federal government.

The Pierrefonds nature area is one of several areas of important biodiversity under threat on our island including the proposed destruction of more than half the wetlands and migratory bird habitat in the St. Laurent "Technoparc" area, the destruction of over half of a large area of rich biodiversity in Sainte-Ann-de-Belevue, the clear cutting of trees and bird habitat in part of the Falaise St-Jacques.

Let's look at it from a different angle. It might surprise Montrealers that Hiroshima and our city are twin cities. In fact, there is a citizen initiative to plant seeds of trees in Montreal that survived the Hiroshima atomic bomb, to honour the rejuvenation of Hiroshima and its survivor trees and to emphasize the need to preserve our island's remaining biodiversity.

In a different way, the remaining areas of rich biodiversity in Montreal, including in Pierrefonds, can also be seen as survivors -- survivors of the onslaught on the natural world of our island. These sensitive areas deserve our respect, yet many citizens take this for granted without realizing that what we still have is a remnant of what once existed.

If we could see a documentary film of Montreal as it was a thousand years ago, we would see beautiful forests, grasslands, rivers and wetlands that no longer exist, as well as many species of birds, mammals and fish, many now wiped out through the human-caused extinction.

In 2015, the Montreal City and Agglomeration Councils committed to protecting 10 percent of Montreal Island as natural space. No timetable, budget or location was given for that 10 percent. In fact, only 5.34 percent of the island is protected and of this only 2.2 percent was contributed during the last 25 years.

But it isn't only a matter of percentages. Today, most of our island's nature is highly fragmented, the connectivity among its ecosystems having been largely eliminated. The majority of our wetlands, which once provided homes to so many species, have been destroyed.

And yet the Corderre administration supports the proposed massive housing project in the Pierrefonds l'Anse-a-l'Orme area, despite its pristine wetlands, wooded areas, grasslands, bird and other animal habitats.

The nearby Riviere-a-l'Orme has fish populations and wetlands. The proposed development stands to effect the purity of the river with increasing chemical runoff and debris. At the mouth of the river, close to the Lake of Two Mounains are wetlands important to amphibians and the Northern Map Turtle, a threatened species.

Destroying this pristine ecosystem for the sake of thousands of condos, etc., really the creation of a new city inside Pierrefonds, with its new infrastructure, including roads, electrical lines, water pipes, etc., plus accompanying auto exhaust, noise and light pollution, will destroy much of the island's habitat for more than 200 species of birds. Many of these are migratory birds which together with their nesting sites are protected under the Canada-U.S. Convention on Migratory Birds and include species receiving special Quebec and federal protection for threatened species.

We have been given the privilege to preserve this large area of rich biodiversity, part of a region which reaches as far as the Senneville Bird Sanctuary and which forms the natural link between Riviere-a-l'Orme to the west, Angell Woods to the south and Cap Saint-Jacques to the north.

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In 1853, Henry David Thoreau wrote: "Few come to the woods to see how the pine lives and grows and spires, living its evergreen arms to the light, to see its perfect success. Most are content to behold it in the shape of many broad boards brought to market and deem that its true success. . . . A pine cut down, a dead pine is no more a pine than a human carcass is a man. . . .

Every creature is better alive than dead, both men and moose and pine-trees,  
as life is more beautiful than death."

Let's not destroy life.

Shloime Perel