When a tree falls, it is still very much a part of life in the pond. Its submerged branches break up water currents, reducing shoreline erosion and allowing silt to settle. Aquatic plants become established in the accumulating muck and further reduce the effect of currents along the shoreline.

Wildlife benefit from both the fallen tree and the plants that grow around it. The trunk offers a ramp for small animals to access the pond, as well as a basking area for turtles. Ducks find shelter and protect their young here, feeding off the algae that cling to submerged branches. Fish find a shady refuge and may spawn in the shallows. Insects such as dragonflies perch on exposed branches while hunting, and deposit eggs among the floating debris where their aquatic larvae can prey on other water insects.

Whether trees are toppled by a beaver or a strong wind or need to be cut down for safety reasons, leaving them where they fall is a simple way to help improve and restore Grenadier Pond.

To learn more about the ecology and restoration of High Park, visit www.highparknature.org
Nature’s Engineer

No other animal – except humans – quite compares to the beaver (*Castor canadensis*) when it comes to modifying the landscape. They cut down trees to build dams, raising water levels and creating ponds where they can feed and build their lodges.

The beavers’ activities may result in new wetlands, more regulated water flow and improved habitat for fish and other wildlife – but they are not always welcomed by people. That’s why you may notice some trees wrapped in wire to protect them from gnawing teeth, as well as others that are now just a stump with a pointy end. Fortunately, beavers prefer to eat trees like willows and poplars that grow back quickly.

Beavers are North America’s largest rodent. They have two different kinds of feet: small front paws with sharp claws to grasp twigs and dig mud, and bigger webbed hind-feet to use as flippers for swimming. Their large flat paddle-shaped tail serves as a support for standing on land, a rudder for swimming, an alarm when slapped on the water, and a reserve of fat for the winter.

To learn more about beavers and other High Park wildlife, visit [www.highparknature.org](http://www.highparknature.org)
The Fish with a Ferocious Grin

Usually solitary and highly territorial, the Northern Pike (Esox lucius) lurks at the edge of weed beds, lying in wait for unwary prey. It can stay amazingly still for long periods, then strike with remarkable speed, using its mouth lined with sharp, inward-slanting teeth to grasp and devour its catch.

Pike typically live 10 to 12 years, grow up to 75 cm and weigh up to 4.5 kg, although some may live more than 20 years and reach twice this size. This voracious predator feeds on whatever is most readily available and will hunt almost any fish smaller than itself. Besides fish, crayfish and frogs, large pike sometimes devour mice, shrews, muskrats and young waterfowl. Even their own offspring need places to hide between plants to avoid being eaten!

There are currently 12 species of fish found in Grenadier Pond. Top predators such as pike and Largemouth Bass keep Grenadier Pond’s fish population in balance by feeding on the more abundant smaller fish such as Pumpkinseed and Bluegill. As a conscientious angler, you can help maintain this balance by following sport fishing regulations and learning how to properly catch and release fish.

To learn more about fish and other High Park wildlife, visit www.highparknature.org
Weighing up to 30 kg with a shell up to half a metre long, the Snapping Turtle (*Chelydra serpentina*) is Canada’s largest freshwater turtle. These omnivores feed on aquatic plants and invertebrates as well as fish, frogs, birds and small mammals. They also eat dead animals, helping to keep our waterways clean. Despite their size they are seldom seen as they often spend the day buried in mud or sand. Over the winter they burrow into the bottom of the pond and become dormant.

Pond visitors are more likely to see the non-native Red-eared Slider and maybe even the native Midland Painted Turtle basking on a log in the sun.

Snapping turtles are declining in Canada. While they may live up to 90 years or more, very few survive to adulthood. If you see one on land – an adult female on its way to lay eggs in the sand or a baby hatchling trying to reach the pond – be careful not to disturb it. Also, please help preserve habitat for native turtles by not releasing pet turtles into the wild.

To learn more about turtles and other High Park wildlife, visit www.highparknature.org