



TORONTO FIELD NATURALIST

Number 587, April 2012



Female cardinal photographed by Augusta Takeda during TFN outing at High Park, February 11

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IT'S YOUR NEWSLETTER!

We welcome contributions of original writing, up to 500 words, of observations on nature in and around Toronto, reviews, poems, sketches, paintings, and photographs of TFN outings (digital or print, include date and place). Include your name, address and phone number so submissions can be acknowledged. Send by mail or email. **Deadline for submissions for May issue: April 6.**

NEWSLETTER COMMITTEE

Jenny Bull (co-editor), Karin Fawthrop, Nancy Fredenburg, Elisabeth Gladstone, Mary Lieberman, Judy Marshall, Ruth Munson, Toshi Oikawa, Wendy Rothwell (co-editor).

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MEMBERSHIP FEES

\$20 YOUTH (under 26)
 \$30 SENIOR SINGLE (65+)
 \$40 SINGLE, SENIOR FAMILY (2 adults, 65+)
 \$50 FAMILY (2 adults – same address, children included)
 No HST. Tax receipts issued for donations. Send membership fees and address changes to the TFN office. *Please note: TFN does not give out its membership list.*

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Sunday, April 22 is Earth Day

Mayor Rob Ford's Community Clean Up Day is Saturday, April 21 (rain date: April 22). See <http://www.toronto.ca/litter/> for details.

The Toronto Zoo is hosting a Party for the Planet, April 21 and 22. Free with Zoo admission.

Ontario Nature's Youth Council is co-hosting five concurrent environmental events with Ontario Power Generation on Saturday, April 30, including tree planting in Rathwood Park, Mississauga (10 am - noon), and Bob Hunter Memorial Park, Rouge Valley, Markham (9:30 am - 3 pm).

Ontario Nature in partnership with Earth Day Canada's EcoMentors and the Royal Ontario Museum is presenting a series of environmental workshops for youth ages 15 to 24 at the ROM. Each session will feature interactive workshops related to the core themes of the ROM's Life in Crisis: Schad Gallery of Biodiversity on: April 7, 10 am – 3 pm; April 14, 10 am – 3 pm; April 21 10 am – 3 pm; April 28, 1 - 3 pm (speaker's panel presentation focusing on environmental youth leadership). Free with ROM admission. Pre-registration recommended but not necessary. www.ecomentors.ca, email ecomentors@earthday.ca, or phone 416-599-1991 ext 101.

TFN MEETING

Sunday, April 1, 2012

2:30 pm

Gardening is for the Birds

*Cynthia Brown, Stewardship Co-ordinator, Healthy Yards,
Toronto and Region Conservation Authority,
will demonstrate how to blend gardening and bird-watching,
creating well-designed gardens with year-round beauty and songbird interest*

VISITORS WELCOME!

SOCIAL: 2:00 – 2:30 pm

Room 001, Emmanuel College, University of Toronto, 75 Queen's Park Cres E

Emmanuel College is just south of the Museum subway station exit on the east side of Queen's Park. Enter via the second door south on Queen's Park, which is wheelchair accessible. There is an elevator inside to the right. Room 001 is one floor below street level.

For information: call 416-593-2656 up to noon on the Friday preceding the lecture.

Upcoming Lecture

May 6 *The Urban Coyote*, Lesley Sampson, Co-Founder, Coyote Watch Canada.
A closer look at the conflict surrounding this magnificent and misrepresented North American canid

ROUGE VALLEY CONSERVATION CENTRE
Open House – Sunday, April 22, 1 – 2 pm
Optional hike, 2 – 3:30 pm

Last year, TFN made a grant to the RVCC to assist in refurbishing the Living Room at Pearce House, including interpretive displays of Rouge Park's plants, animals and ecosystems. In appreciation, they have invited TFN members to see the new space.

If you wish to come, RSVP to info@rvcc.ca or leave a message at 416-282-8265

Pearce House is at 1749 Meadowvale Road. (Take Meadowvale Rd exit from 401, drive north past Sheppard Ave E, take the ramp towards the Toronto Zoo and turn right at the top of the ramp. By TTC, #86A bus from Kennedy subway station.)

Ontario Nature thanks TFN

Last year, TFN made a donation to Ontario Nature's Youth Summit.

In gratitude, Ontario Nature has made a video for TFN and posted it on You Tube.

You can see it at
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yJ6cv7pFf68>

TFN OUTINGS

- TFN events are conducted by unpaid volunteers.
- The club assumes no responsibility for injuries sustained by anyone participating in our activities.
- Children and visitors are welcome at all TFN events. Children must be accompanied by an adult.
- If you plan to bring children in a stroller, be aware that there may be steps or other unsuitable terrain.
- Please do not bring pets.
- To get to outings on time, check TTC routes and schedules (www.ttc.ca or 416-393-4636).
- Outings go rain or shine: check the weather by calling 416-661-0123 so you will know what to wear.
- Wear appropriate footwear for walking on trails which may be muddy, steep or uneven.

- Sun
Apr 7
2:30 pm **LECTURE – Gardening is for the Birds**
Speaker: Cynthia Brown, Stewardship Coordinator, Healthy Yards, Toronto and Region Conservation Authority
Emmanuel College, 75 Queen’s Park Cres E. See page 3.
- Wed
Apr 4
10:30 am **HISTORY AND WATER – Swansea, Humber and High Park**
Leader: Ed Freeman
Meet at Runnymede subway station, Kennedy Ave exit/entrance. We will walk to the Old Mill and down the Humber to the lakeshore and back up through High Park to the High Park subway station. Bring lunch. The walk will focus on human and natural history with a bit of architectural information.
- Sat
Apr 7
10:30 am **TODMORDEN MILLS – Nature Arts**
Leader: Charles Bruce-Thompson
Meet at the base of the Todmorden chimney at the entrance to the Papermill Gallery at 67 Pottery Rd, down the hill from Broadview Ave. We will walk the Wildflower Preserve Trail for early spring signs, and enjoy the historic and art gallery features of the site. Bring what you wish for photography, drawing, writing, etc. Bring anything you wish to share after lunch at a nearby eatery.
- Wed
Apr 11
10:00 am **SCARBOROUGH AND CATHEDRAL BLUFFS – Birds and Plants**
Leader: Miles Hearn
Meet at the northwest corner of Bellamy Rd and Kingston Rd by Bliss Carmen School (Bellamy Rd changes to Ravine Dr south of Kingston Rd). TTC bus 86. Circular walk. Morning only. Bring binoculars.
- Sat
Apr 14
1:00 pm **ASHBRIDGE’S CREEK – Natural and Built Heritage**
Leader: Joanne Doucette
Meet outside the Greenwood subway station (Linsmore and Danforth Ave). Some stairs, hills, washrooms along the way. We will end the walk around 3:30 pm at Queen St where streetcars and buses are available.
- Sun
Apr 15
2:00 pm **WATER AND ENERGY – Lost Rivers**
Leader: Helen Mills and friends
Meet at the southwest corner of Richmond St and Yonge St. Explore the Market Creeks and Russell Creek in downtown Toronto, and find out about the connections between water and energy in Toronto's urban ecosystem. This walk incorporates parts of the Thirsty City Water and Energy walk but adds a few new sites. A joint walk with the Toronto Green Community.
- Tues
Apr 17
9:45 am **TORONTO ISLANDS – Birds**
Leader: Doug Paton
Meet at the ferry docks at the foot of Bay St for the 10:00 am ferry to Hanlan’s Point. Bring lunch and binoculars.
- Thurs
Apr 19
10:00 am **COLONEL SAMUEL SMITH PARK – Nature Walk**
Leader: Kerry Adams
Meet in front of Father Redmond Catholic School near the bus loop on Col Sam Smith Park Dr, south of Lake Shore Blvd W at Kipling Ave. Bring binoculars. Morning only.

- Sat **SCARBOROUGH BLUFFS – Birds**
 Apr 21 Leader: Bob Kortright
 10:00 am Meet at the southwest corner of Chine Dr and Kingston Rd for a circular walk. Bring binoculars and lunch.
- Sun **TAYLOR MASSEY CREEK – Nature and Water Issues**
 Apr 22 Leader: Margaret McRae
 1:30 pm Meet on Victoria Park Ave outside the Victoria Park subway station. We will follow one of TRCA's "Walk the Don" series of walks, to the Forks of the Don, ending at Overlea Blvd and Don Mills Rd.
- Tues **HUMBER BAY PARK EAST – Birds**
 Apr 24 Leader: Doug Paton
 10:00 am Meet at the southwest corner of Lake Shore Blvd W and Park Lawn Rd. Bring binoculars. Morning only.
- Sat **HUMBER RIVER – Heritage**
 Apr 28 Leader: Mary Louise Ashbourne
 10:30 am Meet at the northwest corner of St Phillips Rd and Weston Rd. Walk ends at the Raymore Bridge. Duration: about 2 hours.
- Sun **TODMORDEN MILLS WILDFLOWER PRESERVE – Spring Wildflowers**
 Apr 29 Leader: Paula Davies
 1:00 pm Meet at the entrance to the Wildflower Preserve near the pedestrian bridge at 67 Pottery Rd, down the hill from Broadview Ave.

TFN PUBLICATIONS

Toronto Field Naturalists Club: Its History And Constitution, 1965	\$2.00
Checklist Of Plants In Four Toronto Parks: Wilket Creek, High Park, Humber Valley, Lambton Woods, 1972	\$2.00
Toronto The Green, 1976: Metropolitan Toronto's Important Natural Areas Are Described And Recommendations Given For Their Conservation And Management; Includes Maps, Bibliography and Index	\$10.00
Toronto Field Naturalists Ravine Surveys	each \$2.00
Survey No. 1 -- Chatsworth Ravine, 1973	
Survey No. 2 -- Brookbanks Ravine, 1974	
Survey No. 3 -- Chapman Creek Ravine, 1975	
Survey No. 4 -- Wigmore Ravine, 1975	
Survey No. 5 -- Park Drive Ravine, 1976	
Survey No. 6 -- Burke Ravine, 1976	
Survey No. 7 -- Taylor Creek - Woodbine Bridge Ravines, 1977	
Survey No. 8 -- West Don Valley, 1978	
Toronto Region Bird Chart, 1983	\$ 3.00
A Graphic Guide To Ontario Mosses, 1985	\$ 5.00
Guide To Toronto Field Naturalists' Nature Reserves, 2001	\$ 5.00
Toronto Islands: Plant Communities And Noteworthy Species, 1987	\$ 5.00
Todmorden Mills, 1987	\$ 4.00
Vascular Plants Of Metropolitan Toronto, 1994	\$10.00
Toronto Checklists (birds*, other vertebrates, invertebrates, mosses, vascular plants)	each \$0.50
Humber Forks At Thistletown, 2000	\$ 5.00
Toronto's Geology, including history, biota and High Park, 2012 ** NEW **	\$1.00

Add \$2.00 *per item* for postage and handling; no GST. Order from TFN office, see address page 2.

* Toronto Region Bird Sightings checklist can be downloaded from TFN website

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

I am pleased to report that Alexandra Johnstone has taken on our bookkeeping. Alex has a wealth of experience in financial administration for charities, is familiar with the software we use, has brought our books up-to-date and already made suggestions for improvements. Together with the efforts of our Treasurer and Audit and Finance committee of the Board, I believe our financial administration is being well cared for. Thanks too to others who volunteered in response to the notice in the March newsletter.

On Feb 21 the David Suzuki Foundation, Ontario Nature and the Kawartha Turtle Trauma Centre released *The Road to Extinction: A Call to End the Snapping Turtle Hunt*. It documents the plight of Ontario's snapping turtles, prehistoric creatures that have been around for 40 million years but are being pushed to the brink of extinction. The petition with over 11,000 signatures to ban hunting of snapping turtles in Ontario was also submitted to the government in February, to support the call to end the hunt. For the full report see the Ontario Nature website.

Our website (torontofieldnaturalists.org) also has a wealth of topical material on it, including an invitation for applications to our grant program, opportunities to volunteer for nature, important reports on the state of our environment, and events for naturalists to enjoy in and around Toronto, including Ontario Nature's 3rd annual youth summit in September, supported by the TFN. If you have not visited our website in some time you will find lots of new material, including more gorgeous photos. Thank you Lynn Miller for all the work you put into the website.

The Rouge Park bioblitz will take place from 1 pm June 15 to 1 pm June 16. Many volunteers will be needed, either as an expert in a particular group of organisms, as a guide familiar with the park, or as an assistant. Please let me know if you would like to participate, indicating your area of expertise or interest.

There will be volunteer opportunities to support our outreach program in the spring – details next month.

Information from real estate and flood control experts was presented to the Stakeholders' Advisory Committee (SAC) for the Port Lands Acceleration Initiative February 29. The work of experts is still underway and there will be another SAC meeting March 21 before a public meeting at the end of March. So far I see scant evidence that a way will be found for development on the floodplain without prior large infrastructure investment (approximately \$1.5 billion), which no government appears ready to provide anytime soon. Developers seem ready to provide some of the investment but only when they are certain of a substantial return on investment, which would provide less value to Toronto than public funding. In the meantime, only temporary structures can be built in the floodplain (the Port Lands from the ship channel north to Eastern Ave and from the harbour to around Leslie St). I will keep you informed as the study progresses.

Thanks to member Michael DePencier, we have tickets for the Green Living show, April 13-15 at the Direct Energy Centre, which we are distributing at the March and April lectures. You can also register for tickets on the Green Living website and pick them up at the Will-Call ticket booth, or by bringing used electronics that need recycling. There is a list of accepted e-waste on the website. We will be posting links to the Green Living site on our website.

As I write this in early March, there have been numerous reports of birds arriving from the south at record early dates as befits the mild weather we have had: grackles, red-winged blackbirds, cowbirds, bluebirds, robins (in addition to the many that overwintered here), woodcock, tundra swans and kinglets. Also, black vultures and fish crows have wintered along the Niagara river this winter. Previously rare visitors to Ontario, they appear now to be here to stay. Enjoy the onrush of spring.

Please let me know if you would like to discuss any of the above, have suggestions, or wish to get involved.

Bob Kortright

TFN BOARD NOMINATIONS INVITED

TFN is looking for people with initiative who are willing to devote time to working as members of the Board of Directors. Please send your suggestions to the Chairman of the Nominating Committee c/o the TFN office (see contact information on page 2). The Committee's report will be published in the May newsletter.

MONTHLY MEETING REPORT

Operation Migration: Safeguarding an Endangered Species

Sunday, March 4. Joe Duff, Co-Founder & CEO, Operation Migration

What a story Joe told us about the greatest species re-introduction in the history of conservation! Joe joined Bill Lishman in 1993 and the two 'artists turned naturalists' conducted the first human-led bird migration with Canada Geese, culminating in the film "Fly Away Home".

The whooping crane project began in 2001. As migration is a learned process passed on from one generation to the next, when the last whooping crane vanished from eastern North America, their once traditional route was lost forever. The goal became to establish another eastern flock along a primeval migration route between central Wisconsin and the Gulf coast of Florida.

Operation Migration (OM) uses captive-hatched birds from North American breeding centres and raises the chicks in isolation from humans. The humans wear large white costumes with a puppet arm resembling the crane head and emitting a call. They never talk around the birds and the birds are hidden whenever any maintenance must be conducted in their pen areas.

Imprinting begins when the chicks are still in their eggs by exposing them to ultralight aircraft sounds. The new chicks must be worked with individually as they are unable to socialize. By circling a chick's pen in a modified light aircraft and dispensing meal worms from a puppet arm, the chick is taught to follow the aircraft. At the age of 40-60 days, the chicks, in individual containers, are airlifted to a large pen in Wisconsin. Once the juvenile birds fledge, flight training is begun to build their strength and loyalty to the aircraft.

The migratory route of 1300 miles passes through seven states. Wild whooping cranes soar with the thermals and can make 400-500 miles a day. However, flap flying is tiring for these young cranes, so their flying must take place in the still of the early morning. They require 25 days of flying at between 50-100 miles

a day; last year, it took 97 days to find the right flying conditions. Two camouflaged panel pens are used to contain the birds at each stop. One is transported to the next stop during the cranes' flight while the other is being taken down. Private citizens along the route, who generously allow the team to move onto their property and use their resources for an undetermined period of time, are extremely important to the success of the trip.



Costumed handlers spend time with Whooping crane colts to acclimate them to the aircraft.

The whooping cranes fly along the vortices off the aircraft's wingtips. Three to four aircraft are used; one is the lead and the others chase the strays that may drop out from the end of the line. It can take up to an hour to round up these birds in what Joe describes as an 'aerial rodeo'. If a crane attempts to return to the pen, it is met by the terrifying 'swamp monster', another human in costume.

The end of the journey comes when the birds reach the salt marshes in Florida and the human team must, sadly, let them

go. Ideally, they use a 'gentle release' method. The pen containing the birds has no top; eventually they notice and take off to explore their surroundings. At night, when called, they return to feed and roost, until one day they do not return.

Whooping cranes begin to breed at five years of age. In 2006, the project had its first family. Chick W1-06 learned the eastern migration route from its parents - for the first time since 1878! Sadly, we heard that the mother of this first family was shot and killed, a common threat to the cranes. After the lecture, I learned that W1-06 is now a mother herself and her chick is W1-10. According to the Field Journal on OM's website, W1-10 arrived back in Wisconsin on February 28th, 2012! Warning - following this project can be addictive.

Aside from the success of the project, I was struck by the arduous and time-consuming work involved. Check out the website at www.operationmigration.org to watch this labour of love unfold and help out in any way you can.

Corinne McDonald

TORONTO'S MILKWEEDS AND RELATIVES

“Milkweeds” belong to subfamily Asclepiadoideae (about 180 genera and 3000 species), family Apocynaceae. Toronto currently has three native species of *Asclepias*, *A. syriaca* (common milkweed), *A. incarnata* (swamp milkweed), and *A. exaltata* (poke milkweed). A fourth species, *A. tuberosa* (butterflyweed), formerly occurred on Lambton Prairie but was extirpated (see the TFN’s *Vascular Plants of Metropolitan Toronto*, 2nd ed.). Attempts to introduce this species in Wilket Creek Park and High Park apparently have failed. In the “Wildflower Meadow” near Humber Bay East introduced flowers were present in 2011. Two examples of related genera will also be discussed, one each of *Cynanchum* and *Calotropis*.

Asclepias is from *Asklepios*, the Greek god of medicine and healing. Linnaeus chose it because of many folk medicinal uses for milkweeds. The common name milkweed refers to the milky sap of many but not all species. Linnaeus named *A. syriaca* in 1753, *syriaca* (from Syria) suggests he did not know the provenance of his specimens. Seeds of this and probably of *A. incarnata* were among the first North American seeds sent to France by Louis Hébert, Quebec City resident in 1617 and considered the first Canadian pharmacist. A treatise by the French botanist Cornut, 1635, included these species in probably the first published record of North American plants. Approximately 110 species of *Asclepias* are now known in North America. There are even more tropical species. Most *Asclepias* species contain toxins, cardiac glycosides, which monarch caterpillars ingest and sequester, as adults, in their wings and exoskeletons. Monarchs use this acquired toxicity for protection from vertebrate predators. In North America their caterpillars seem to feed exclusively on *Asclepias* species and/or species of related genera. Considering the toxins, the “many folk medicinal uses” noted by Linnaeus for milkweeds is distinctly surprising!

Space restricts description of the unusual *Asclepias* flowers (see the *ROM Field Guide to Wildflowers of Ontario*, p. 135 for description/illustration). Suffice to say pollen masses (pollinia) are situated so that pollination depends on an insect picking up a pollen mass by sliding its leg into a slit, between the anthers, in one flower and repeating this in a second (see TFN #579 p.11, April 2011, for an article on milkweed pollination). The odds are low, resulting in few fruits, but each fruit contains hundreds of seeds. Silky hairs attached to the seeds promote wind-blown transportation.

A. syriaca is widespread in Toronto in disturbed areas. Its globular umbels of brownish to pinkish-purple flowers and broad leaves distinguish it from *A. incarnata*. It blooms any time from June to August. *A. incarnata*, uncommon in Toronto, is in wet areas along the Humber, the Don, and the Rouge, on the Toronto Islands and the Leslie Street Spit. *Incarnata*, referring to the flowers, comes from the Latin *incarnatus* (red or flesh-coloured). Its deeper coloured flowers, erect flat-topped umbels, and narrowly oblong to lance-shaped leaves distinguish it from *A. syriaca*. I’ve seen it bloom in July and August.



From top:
common milkweed, *Asclepias syriaca*;
swamp milkweed, *A. incarnata*
Photos: Peter Money



The distinctive *A. exaltata* is rare in Toronto, only reported from the Rouge and High Park, in dry open forests. The image, from a forested ridge between the Rouge and Little Rouge, was taken in late June. *A. tuberosa* is a plant of dry tallgrass prairies and savannas. All four species have restricted ranges in Ontario. *A. tuberosa* is only in eastern Ontario in and south of the Lake Simcoe-Rideau ecoregion. *A. syriaca* and *A. incarnata* in the east are as far north as the Lake Temagami ecoregion (*A. syriaca*) or the Georgian Bay ecoregion (*A. incarnata*) and, in the west, as far north as the Lake Wabigoon and Pigeon River ecoregions. *A. exaltata*, in Ontario, is restricted to the southeast. All four species are widespread in the eastern U.S.



Cynanchum rossicum (dog-strangling vine or pale swallow-wort) is well known to all local naturalists, a particularly obnoxious invasive species that chokes out other vegetation in all but dense forests. The scientific name was proposed in 1929 by Kleopow. Others subsequently proposed four other classifications before this nomenclature was accepted. *Cynanchum* comes from the Greek *kuon* (dog) and *agchein* (to strangle). This species, native to the Ukraine and adjacent Russia, neither dominates the ecosystem there nor is invasive. Recorded in Connecticut in 1881, it now is widespread in the eastern US and in southeastern Ontario as far north as the Lake Simcoe-Rideau ecoregion. Control will be extremely difficult as it is a deep-rooted perennial that has numerous plumed seeds and no apparent natural enemies in North America.



Calotropis procera, widespread in the tropics, is a woody shrub up to about four metres tall. Its fruits look like apples but are hollow except for a small central pod, containing seeds with silky fibres. Called “pillow cotton” in Jamaica, the fibres being used in pillows; it is King’s Crown in Australia from its flowers; in the Near East, the Sodom apple, linking that infamous city with this plant’s poisonous fruits (containing aglycones, heart poisons); and widely called giant milkweed. The perils of common names!

The milkweeds deserve many more words but perhaps I should stop! Do go out to enjoy our native species and to take part in efforts to remove dog-strangling vine.

Peter Money



From top: poke milkweed, *A. exaltata*;
butterfly weed, *A. tuberosa*;
dog-strangling vine, *Cynanchum rossicum*;
Sodom apple, *Calotropis procera*
Photos: Peter Money

A CALL DOWN THE PATH: TRAIL MARKER TREES IN ONTARIO

By Paul O'Hara. Reprinted from Field Botanists of Ontario Newsletter, Volume 23(3): Fall 2011 with author's permission

It was a couple of years ago. I forget what I was searching for now. Something tree-related – dreams of discovering more grainy black and white shots of loggers enveloped in Southern Ontario old growth. I was scanning the Niagara Falls online digital library when I saw a photograph that has been burned into my brain to this day. It was labeled: *The Old Indian Trail - Marker Tree, Townline Rd. (at Thorold – Stamford)*.

Go check it out. It shows a mature, roadside White Elm on the Haldimand Clay Plain near Thorold with its side branches pulled down, the trunk and main branches drawing the shape of an 'M', the lateral branches forming the crown. Aboriginals had purposefully modified the tree at one time – early to mid 1800s I would guess - to point along an ancient footpath. The tree was well known in the community, ravaged by Dutch Elm Disease in the early 70s, but saved as a snag until a windstorm brought it down December 28, 1982.

Wow, I thought, dumbfounded and flooded with questions. Where do I find out more about Indian trail marker trees? Are there more photos of tree markers I could find? Are there marker trees standing on the landscape of Southern Ontario today?

My first couple of questions would be answered with a little more surfing. I came across two links about trail marker trees, both from the United States. The first one is run by the Mountain Stewards (mountainstewards.org) of the Southern Appalachians, the second, a link to the Great Lakes Trail Marker Tree Society (greatlakestrailtreesociety.org) run by artist and trail marker tree researcher, Dennis Downes from Illinois. Both sites show numerous photos of trail marker trees standing in the U.S. today, but most of them didn't look like the Old Indian Trail Marker Tree in Thorold. Most were modified to point in one direction and, not surprisingly in the U.S., most of them were oak.

Downes' site dug deeper into the background on how marker trees were formed and provided tips on what constitutes a trail marker tree. (Apparently, there is some debate over what constitutes a true marker as there are a lot of bad examples out there – folks calling any old misshapen tree a trail marker.) True markers were modified near the ground. A sapling was bent over and its leader was tied down with rawhide, grapevine or secured with heavy rocks. The lateral branch pointing directly upwards was retained while the rest were

removed. Over time the tree settled into the bend, the rawhide was removed or withered away, and a 'nose' was often left to point the way. As the tree grew, the diameter of the main trunk remained larger than the lateral branch forming the crown. Other trees, like the branches on the Thorold marker, were just pulled down and secured. Either way, marker trees were meant to look very purposeful, distinguishing them from naturally bent trees.

I learned that marker trees were used by aboriginals to point to all kinds of things: villages and camps, water sources and river fords, or to mark boundaries between aboriginal tribes. It is thought that the practice of marking trees was taught to the first Europeans, and it is plausible that they and not the First Nations formed some of the markers remaining on today's landscape. Apparently, trail marker trees were common in pre-settlement times, most now lost to habitat destruction and the practice of removing ill-formed trees in woodlots.

My quest to find marker trees in Southern Ontario led me to spend a winter revisiting my old haunts in Hamilton, Halton and Niagara Regions to no avail. It was only when I started asking friends and fellow botanists that I started to get somewhere. None of them really knew about marker trees before. I just shared what little I had discovered and for some, a little light bulb went on above their heads as they recounted seeing a similar looking tree at such and such place. Some of the leads were dead ends, but some led me to the most magical trees I have ever seen.



Marker tree in the Kawarthas. Photo: K. Tortora

A friend told me about seeing markers at her partner’s cottage in the Kawarthas (see photo previous page). Another told me about a tree in a Caledonia hedgerow. I learned of a grafted, double-trunked Sugar Maple that stood in Binbrook along the Welland River, believed to be a boundary marker between Iroquoian tribes (that is, until some kids started a fire under it 10 years ago and burnt it to the ground). This past summer, my friend and tree colleague, Gerry Waldron, showed me a couple of amazing marker trees in Windsor-Essex (see photos below). One of them is the most impressive tree I have seen (on line or in person) to this day. And last fall I stumbled across a couple of Sugar Maple markers less than 100m apart (see photo below) in north Burlington pointing in the same direction along a path from the Niagara Escarpment to Lake Ontario - the only marker trees I have discovered on my own thus far.

Perhaps early colonists to Southern Ontario modified the smaller trees, but it is thought that, because of the bends, the growth on marker trees is slow and the trees are older than they look. What is clear is that marker trees exist in Southern Ontario, and that marking trees was an ingenious practice employed by the Anishinabe (Ojibway) and Haudenosaunee (Iroquois) Peoples of Southern Ontario.

There is something so beautiful, sophisticated, and poetic about trail marker trees. It is incredible to think in this age of frenzied, electronic communication, that living, natural messages so simple and practical are still standing on the landscape today – a centuries old tap on the shoulder pointing us the way home. Reaching back to a time before the car, before roads and traffic lights, when sticking to the forest trail was crucial to survival, and a wrong turn could spell danger or death. For these reasons, I would argue that our oldest trail marker trees

are the most historically important trees in Ontario today.

I am continuing my search to find and document more trees, seeing it as a project with a 10 or 20-year horizon. Yes, researching and walking old Aboriginal trails is helpful, but again, I have found the best way to find out more about these special trees is just to ask around. And so I am appealing to hikers and naturalists across Ontario: Do you know of a trail marker tree where you live? In your wanderings, do you remember seeing a tree like these? Do you know of a marker tree that once stood where you live, a document describing it, or someone who may know of a marker tree in your area? If so, I would be very pleased to talk to you by phone or email, please and thank you.

I just learned of a trail marker tree that was chopped down this year, unknowingly, by a property owner along the shoreline of Lake Erie at Port Dover. Once the trees are dead, or removed, we lose their untold stories, stories that tell us about who we are and where we come from, stories we can share with future generations about this very special land, and the incredible people that walked and marked its forest paths.

Paul O’Hara



*Dennis Downes’ new book *Native American Trail Marker Trees: Marking Paths Through the Wilderness* is available through the Great Lakes Trail Marker Tree Society website. As well, the Mountain Stewards just published their book, *Mystery of the Trees*, available through their website. Both books are good primers on trail marker trees in North America.



Left and middle: marker trees in Windsor-Essex

Right: marker tree in Burlington

Photos: Paul O’Hara. All photos used with permission.

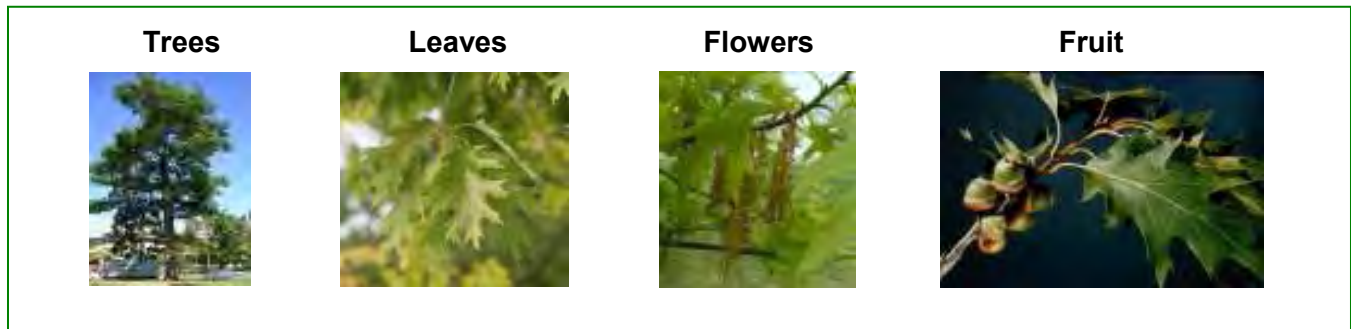
TREES FOR TORONTO WEB RESOURCES: TREE SPECIES PAGES AND TREE PLAQUE DATABASE

By Deborah Metsger, Jenny Bull and John Barker, Botany Section, Dept of Natural History, Royal Ontario Museum. Photos © ROM.

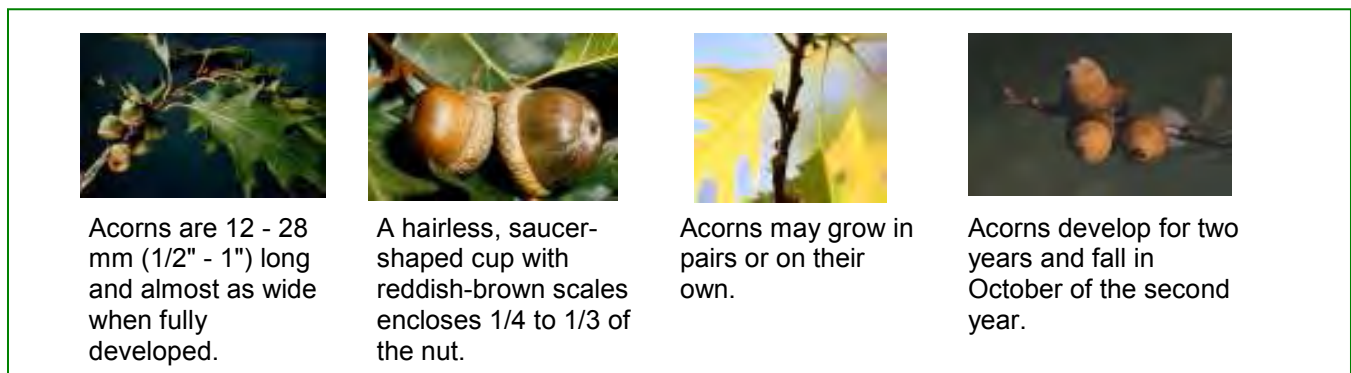
The November 2009 issue of the *Toronto Field Naturalist* reported on the first phase of “Trees for Toronto,” a joint initiative of the Royal Ontario Museum (ROM) and the City of Toronto. Trees for Toronto’s mandate was to plant trees in Queen’s Park and to develop a tree identification and awareness program for the city (www.rom.on.ca/collections/trees/index.php). In 2010 the tree identification plaques developed for Queen’s Park were used as a template and standard for the Toronto Islands Tree Tour (see article next page). Thanks to the generous support of the Toronto Field Naturalists Nature Grants in 2011, Trees for Toronto is now moving to the next level with the development of 100 tree species web pages and a database of tree plaque information for additional species in other Toronto locations.

Tree plaques provide their users with a tree’s name, origins, and an image of its leaf, but they don’t help them to distinguish that tree from other species that it may resemble. Traditionally, we have used field guides to identify trees. Increasingly, computers and digital hand-held devices offer access to a multitude of information from the web while standing in front of the tree in question. But can you trust that information? Unfortunately, not all web sources are vetted for accuracy, nor are they necessarily local.

The Trees for Toronto species pages are being developed for trees that comprise Toronto’s urban forest, beginning with those found in Queen’s Park and on the Toronto Islands. Each page provides accurate information and images cast in a local context. Well-illustrated species descriptions are divided amongst these key features, illustrated here for northern red oak, *Quercus rubra*:



Clicking on one of these key features will jump you to more detailed information such as this early draft for the fruit of northern red oak:




Continued on next page.

TORONTO ISLAND TREE TOUR

The Toronto Island Tree Tour began as an event during Toronto's annual Bike Week. It was organized by the park supervisor who is a keen cyclist. Participants rode their bicycles on a late May evening along the 5 kilometre road between Ward's Island ferry dock at the east end of Toronto Island to Hanlan's Point at the west end, stopping along the way to hear from City foresters and others about the trees in the park. Over time, this event became so popular that the evening Bike Tour was replaced in 2010 with a one-day Tree Festival that included the tree tour as well as other tree-related events.



Now you can take this tour on your own at any time. Fifty-seven trees situated along the road have been labelled with identification plaques similar to those used in Queen's Park (see report in TFN#567, Nov 2009). The plaques show the name, family and origin of the tree species. To help you find each labelled tree, a green tree icon has been painted on the road itself, pointing you in the direction of a nearby labelled tree. 



You can discover all the trees by walking or cycling on the road between Ward's Island and Hanlan's Point, with a loop around the Avenue of the Islands at Centre Island. Or take in just a few trees in one area of the park. A printed map will soon be available or you can download and print a map from the Canadian Tree Tours website at www.canadiantreetours.org (click on **Toronto Island Tree Tour**).

In addition to showing the location of the trees on the Toronto Island Tree Tour, the website gives links to a series of "species pages" which are currently being developed with generous help from TFN (see report, previous page). Each illustrated web page will provide further information about a particular tree species. If you have a smart phone you can access the website to see the map and the species pages as you go along.



It's still early days, but you can check out the website now, and visit it again as it is developed further. We welcome feedback. Also, watch for details of the 2012 Toronto Island Tree Festival in the City's calendar.

Jenny Bull

TREES FOR TORONTO WEB RESOURCES *continued*

Each page also includes sections on "Where can I find this species in Toronto" and "Fascinating Facts" including answers to commonly posed questions about Toronto trees, such as:

- What are those funny bumps or black spots on the leaves?
- When was this non-native species introduced to Toronto and why?
- Where does this tree grow naturally?
- Where can I get this tree and how can I use it on my property?

New species pages will be posted as they are completed so keep visiting! To access the pages go to (www.rom.on.ca/collections/trees/trees/ and click on "Species Pages" OR canadiantreetours.org and click on "Trees". A project like this must be dynamic. If our tree pages are to be useful to local visitors, we need feedback, so please send us your comments.

We are grateful to the Toronto Field Naturalists for the support of this project and for your initiative to move Natural History appreciation further into the 21st century!

INTRODUCING CANADA'S FOREST BIRDS AT RISK

Extracted from an article by Jon McCracken, *BirdWatch Canada*, Fall 2011, #57
See full article at www.bsc-eoc.org, click on *BirdWatch Canada*

As the United Nations' "International Year of Forests" draws to a close, one might wonder how Canada's forest birds are faring. As a collective group, there's an overall small decline across the country. Yet, they are still in far better shape than grassland birds. Only one (Passenger Pigeon) has gone extinct in Canada. And there are a number of forest birds that are happily expanding their populations. Pileated Woodpecker, Pine Warbler, Black-throated Blue Warbler, Common Raven, Indigo Bunting, and Merlin are good examples. So, we must be doing something right!

While the above statistics might offer comfort, we should still worry about the plight of the 28 forest species that are listed as being at some level of risk of extinction as determined by the Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada (COSEWIC). The list is likely to grow in the near future. Wood Thrush and Eastern Wood-Pewee are currently being assessed by COSEWIC, and concern is mounting about the status of some others, including Boreal Chickadee and Evening Grosbeak.

Although Canada's forest birds at risk occur across a broad spectrum of forest types, most are habitat specialists. Many are associated with 'older-growth' forest conditions. Cavity nesters also figure quite prominently. Most are landbirds, but the group also includes a few tree-nesting waterbirds. Some occupy breeding ranges that stretch across the country, but most are range-restricted, occurring in one of three main geographic regions – Canada's 'far west,' the 'deep south,' and the 'far east'.

[For 'far west' and 'far east' sections of this article, see *BirdWatch Canada* magazine, Fall 2011, #57, available at www.bsc-eoc.org.]

The Deep South

Because of their affinity to warmer climes in the United States, several species of forest birds at risk are restricted to Canada's 'deep south,' where they occur in relatively small numbers at the northern end of their ranges. Most are concentrated in southwestern Ontario. A few range as far north as southern Manitoba and southeastern Quebec. These "Carolinian" species include Acadian Flycatcher, Prothonotary Warbler, Cerulean Warbler, Hooded Warbler, and Louisiana Waterthrush, all of which are associated with older-growth deciduous forest. This habitat type once

dominated the region's landscape, but is now reduced to a tiny fraction of its presettlement extent. The group of 'southerners' also includes Golden-winged Warbler and Red-headed Woodpecker, which are associated with forest edges.

Other Forest Birds at Risk

With the exception of the Kirtland's Warbler, the global range of which is restricted to small pockets of Jack Pine habitat in Michigan, Wisconsin, and eastern Ontario, Canada's remaining forest birds at risk have large geographic ranges. This includes four species of forest-dwelling, aerial insectivores (Eastern Whippoorwill, Common Nighthawk, Chimney Swift, and Olive-sided Flycatcher), all of which are declining rapidly for unknown reasons. Two other widespread species (Canada Warbler and Rusty Blackbird) are associated with boreal forest wetlands, and may be facing problems due to habitat loss on their wintering grounds.

Getting to the Root of the Problem

Canada's forest industry has been making significant strides in recent decades to become environmentally sustainable – a truly laudable achievement. Still, as worldwide demand for forest products continues to rise, Canadian forest birds will face increasing threats.

Loss and fragmentation of some of the most specialized kinds of forest habitats, especially those that contain large, mature trees, is the most universal threat. For many long-distance neotropical migrants, this threat extends all the way to their wintering grounds in Latin America and the Caribbean. In winter, species that rely on particular kinds of forests, like coastal mangrove forest and montane forest, face some of the most intense pressures.

Industrial advancement into Canada's boreal forest is an increasing concern, as is urban development and the



Red-headed woodpecker,
Photo by Jean Iron

ever northward expansion of the road network. In southern Ontario, drainage of swamp forests continues. Climate change is an issue, especially across the boreal forest, where droughts create ideal conditions for immense fires. The continued spread of exotic forest insects (e.g., Mountain Pine Beetle in the west; Emerald Ash Borer in the east), and equally devastating tree pathogens, are critical threats to Canada's forests.

Finally, recent research suggests that the health of forest-bird communities in eastern Canada is negatively affected by subtle, long-term, cascading effects from acid precipitation. Acidification of forest soils is increasingly being implicated in the depletion of calcium supplies needed to sustain the kinds of invertebrate food resources that breeding birds rely on to maintain egg production.

The Argument for 'Keeping Common Birds Common'

As required under Canada's Species at Risk Act, a lot of effort is being invested in getting written recovery strategies in place for Canada's forest birds at risk. That's just the first step. Actually recovering a species is notoriously difficult and very expensive. It depends on the cooperation of plenty of private landowners and other stakeholders, and often requires international collaboration. Recovery can take years – even decades of work.

Just like a hospital patient in intensive care, species recovery requires an accurate diagnosis, professional care, teamwork, adaptive learning, consultation, time, money, commitment . . . and a little luck. Clearly, the very best time to help a species is long before it becomes threatened. Early assessment, prevention, and intervention are key.

What Can You Do?

- **Buy** forest-certified lumber, recycled paper products, and shade-grown, 'birdfriendly' coffee.
- **Encourage** government agencies to expand the protected areas system.
- **Donate** to nongovernmental conservation organizations that secure important forest landscapes.
- **Support and donate** to eco-tourism initiatives in Latin America and the Caribbean that directly engage local communities in stewardship and conservation activities in parks and forest reserves.
- If you own a woodlot and plan to harvest it, **seek professional advice** from a reputable forestry professional, one you can trust with carrying out your vision.
- If you own a precious forest gem and want to protect its natural heritage features long after you're gone, **consult a regional land trust**, the Nature Conservancy of Canada, or Environment Canada's 'EcoGifts' program for advice. Having species at risk in your forest can increase its market value.
- Rather than building a new house in a forest, **plant a forest** around your home.
- **Be aware** that moving forest products from one location to another can spread invasive species.
- **Participate** in a Bird Studies Canada monitoring program. Visit www.birdscanada.org for details.
- **Prevent** forest fires!

TORONTO ZOO'S ADOPT-A-POND PROGRAM	
<p style="text-align: center;">Help Ontario's Frogs and Toads</p> <p>Submit your sightings and receive a free Frog and Toad call CD! Every sighting you report helps to protect Ontario's frogs and toads and the places where they live.</p> <p>Submit your observations on-line at www.torontozoo.com/adoptapond/frogwatchontario.asp</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Join Ontario Turtle Tally</p> <p>Seven of Ontario's eight turtle species are at risk of becoming extinct. Every turtle sighting you report helps to protect Ontario's turtles and the places they live.</p> <p>Submit your observations on-line at www.torontozoo.com/adoptapond/turtletally.asp</p>
<p>Or contact Adopt-A-Pond at 361A Old Finch Ave., Toronto, ON, M1B 5K7 or fax 416-392-4979</p>	

EXTRACTS FROM OUTINGS LEADERS' REPORTS

Nature Arts at the Brick Works, Feb 4. Leader: Nola McConnan.

Plants: dormant around the ponds and highlands; invertebrates: every one asleep at the Brick Works; fish: hiding under the ice; amphibians: cozily tucked into the frozen mud; reptiles: no snake in its right mind would be out in February; birds: red-tailed hawk on a tree close to Mt Pleasant; mammals: the dog varieties are astonishing. Drawings (opposite) by Nora McConnan and Gail Gregory.

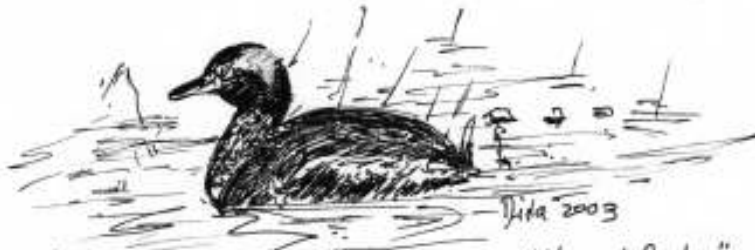


Humber Bay Park East, Feb 9. Leader: Wendy Rothwell. We got close-up views of the beautiful northern pintail and a northern mockingbird eating seeds from staghorn sumac; also two juvenile black-crowned night-herons in the pine trees.

Oak Savannah Plants in Winter: Indicator Species, High Park, Feb 11. Leader: Joanne Doucette. We found Indian grass, big bluestem, little bluestem, Canada wild rye, black-eyed Susan, hairy bush clover, and mullein, as well as fox tracks.

Woodbine and Ashbridge's Bay Parks, Feb 18. Leader: Bob Kortright. Woodbine Park offered an opportunity to point out native, Carolinian, exotic and invasive trees. In Ashbridge's Bay we saw several Iceland gulls and a few redhead as well as the expected winter waterfowl.

Col Samuel Smith Park, Feb 21. Leader: Doug Paton. The best sightings of the day were two coots and a horned grebe. In the large cove, we also saw a pair of redheads, many gadwalls and red-breasted mergansers.



Horned grebe, drawn by Diana Banville

Leaside Spur Line, Feb 25. Leader: Tom Atkinson. A cold day with a vicious northwest wind, into which we walked bravely, completing a 2-hour walk in an hour and 15 minutes. A rivulet (unnamed as far as we know) forms on the east side of the Leaside Spur Line about 300 metres from the south end of the trail. It passes under the trail via pipe and thence via deep valley and another pipe under Leslie Street into Wilket Creek Park. In spring and summer there are wildflower remnants in places; in the valley which contains the rivulet as it flows toward Leslie Street, the flora are more natural and less impoverished than along what was a mowed rail line. Purging buckthorn is rampant and here to stay, sadly, along parts of the trail.

Ashbridge's Bay, Feb 28. Leader: Anne Powell. We observed 22 bird species, including three Iceland gulls, all three merganser species, an American wigeon and a golden-crowned kinglet ... also a red squirrel.



FROM THE ARCHIVES

WILKET CREEK PARK; AN URBAN WILDLIFE AREA by Harold Taylor
From TFN newsletter 272, January 1973

Readily accessible by bus or car, Wilket Creek Park is a pleasant place in any season for a botanical hunt.

With only a few scattered picnic tables, the park is in sharp contrast to the carefully tended Edwards Gardens that adjoins it to the north. A paved path runs the length of the valley floor, crossing the creek several times. Walkers will notice that the meandering stream, which flows down from Edwards Gardens, has had its banks reinforced in a number of places against the eroding effect of the water.

In spite of heavy use by Torontonians, Wilket Creek Park and nearby Serena Gundy Park offer a wealth of material for the amateur botanist. Many club members have been introduced to the parks by Erna Lewis who is a familiar leader of botany walks. This is one of Erna's favourite areas which she describes for us:

"In spring the mixed beech – maple – hemlock woods covering the sides of the valleys are alive with the early flowers we know best: trilliums, spring beauties, Canada Mayflowers, May apples, foamflowers, blood-roots, starflowers, trout lilies and many others. Seven kinds of violets have been identified there and eleven different species of fern. In the upper woods louse-worts, carrionflowers and bellworts are still to be found despite the riding trails now crisscrossing the area.

Later on, plants like the three types of Eupatorium and the purple loosestrife take over. Of special interest are a few clumps of marsh mallow (*Altheaea officinalis*), horsebalm (*Collinsonia canadensis*) and marjoram (*Origanum vulgare*) that have been planted by the park staff. Contrasting with these are the rampart climbers like black swallow-wort, wild cucumber, hog peanut and dodder.

In fall, the composites – asters, goldenrods and bur marigolds – predominate. Seeds and fruits are there in abundance. Indeed, it would be difficult not to notice the burs, the stickseeds, or the devil's pitchforks. Also to be avoided are poison ivy, stinging nettles and ragweed.

Few other Toronto parks are as rich in shrubs and small trees. There is leatherwood with its dome-like buds, pale yellow flowers and supple twigs; bladdernut with its white flowers in spring and distinctive fruits in fall; ninebark with its scaling bark, viburnums, dogwoods, and honeysuckles. Pin, choke and black cherries are all to be found as well as staghorn sumach, buckthorn and ground yew."



Trout-lily drawn
by D. Andrew White

Erna suggests that, because of this wealth of flower, fruit and bud, it is worthwhile to visit Wilket Creek and Serena Gundy in all seasons. In this way the plants can be seen in each stage of their life-cycle and one can learn to identify them even if no flowers are visible.

In preserving Wilket Creek Park the parks authorities have saved a piece of history. In 1793 Paul Wilcot, Willcot or Wilket (various spellings appear to have been used) came from Pennsylvania to settle on North Yonge Street in Newtonbrook. The stream that powered a saw mill and crossed his property on its way to the east branch of the Don carried the name Wilket Creek for over 100 years. It is now known as Newtonbrook Creek.

About a mile south of it on Yonge Street another stream flows southeast eventually reaching Lawrence Avenue at Edwards Gardens. This is the present day Wilket Creek that gives the park its name and recalls a pioneer.

Remembering Laura Greer

Former TFN board member, Laura Greer, died recently at age 100. She received a degree in Chemical Engineering in 1934 and worked for a time at the Toronto Island Water Filtration Plant. She was an amateur botanist and was active in the TFN promoting the club.

COMING EVENTS

If you plan to attend any of these events, we recommend that you contact the organizing group beforehand to confirm time and place.

Jim Baillie Memorial Bird Walks – Toronto Ornithological Club

Aimed at the intermediate birder, but beginners also welcome. Free to the public; no advance registration required.

- Sat Apr 28, 8 am (all day) Leslie Street Spit – early migrants, warblers and sparrows. Leader: John Carley. Meet at the foot of Leslie St at Unwin Ave.
- Sun Apr 29, 8 am (‘til early afternoon). Oshawa Second Marsh – little gulls, shorebirds and warblers. Leader: Tyler Hoar. Meet at the parking lot of GM headquarters in Oshawa. Exit #419 from 401, south on Farewell St to Colonel Sam Drive, then east to GM parking lot.

High Park Walking Tours

1st and 3rd Sundays of each month, 10:30 am to noon. Meet at the benches across the road south of Grenadier Restaurant.

Information: 416-392-0729 ext 4 or walkingtours@highpark.org or www.highpark.org

- Apr 1. My Favourite Trails, Sarah Doucette, City Councillor
- Apr 15. Lost Waterways, Leo deSorcy.

Rouge Park Weekly Guided Nature Walks

Explore Rouge Park’s trails with a Hike Ontario certified volunteer leader. Information: visit www.rougepark.com/hike, e-mail hike@rougepark.com or phone 905-713-3184 Monday thru Thursday.

Green Living Show

April 13-15, Direct Energy Centre, Exhibition Place. Information: www.greenlivingonline.com/torontoshow

Show will include an interactive exhibition by the Royal Ontario Museum and the World Wildlife Fund allowing visitors “to experience the wonders of Canada’s three oceans”, including the diversity of creatures that live in and depend upon oceans, the challenges they face, and conservation solutions. (See President’s Report, page 6, re tickets.)

The Market Gallery

Mar 3 to Sept 8. South St Lawrence Market, 2nd floor, 95 Front St E. Free. Finding the Fallen: The Battle of York Remembered. Note: gallery closed Sun, Mon, and holidays. Information: 416-392-7604 or www.toronto.ca/culture/arts-services/pdf/events-classes-exhibits.pdf.

Lost Rivers Walk

Information: www.lostrivers.ca

Sat Apr 7, 2 pm Garrison Creek: First Nations route to Credit River and Beyond (War of 1812). Leader: Ian Wheal. Meet at northwest corner of Queen St W and Gore Vale Ave (Trinity-Bellwoods Park).

Ian Wheal Walk

- Sun Apr 8, 2 pm. Lost Fishing Villages of Ashbridge’s Bay: Toronto’s Forgotten Marine Heritage. Meet at southeast corner of Queen St E and Woodfield Ave.
- Sat Apr 21, 2 pm. Military Horsewomen of Garrison Common: Anne Gwynne and Susannah Robinson. Meet at the northeast corner of Gladstone Ave and Queen St W.
- Sat Apr 28, 2 pm. Dundas St: Military Post Road. Meet at northeast corner of Queen St W and Ossington Ave.
- Sun Apr 29, 6:30 pm. Memorial walk for Dr. Cyril Greenland, who was responsible for introducing many reforms at CAMH in the 1960s. Meet at southwest corner of Queen St W and Shaw St.

Crows gather at dawn

High in ancient trees they perch

Greet the rising sun

Elisabeth Gladstone

WEATHER (THIS TIME LAST YEAR)

April 2011

April continued unsettled and wet. The stormy North American pattern also brought the worst tornado outbreak on record, beating the super-cluster of April 3-4, 1974. This outbreak affected the south-central and southeastern U.S., notably Alabama, on the 25th-28th.

Toronto's weather, as is usually the case, was not so violent. But the weather systems did bring frequent changes and a good deal of rain. Monthly mean temperatures were actually very close to average, with temperatures rising to the low twenties several times

both early and late in the month (accompanied by a hint of Gulf of Mexico humidity), and falling a bit below freezing. From the 15th to the 22nd, there was a cool and blustery period accompanied by some flurries.

Total precipitation at Pearson was 96.6 mm, almost double the average but not as high as 2009's 133.6 mm. Toronto City had 93.9 mm.

Gavin Miller

Kudos to Gavin Miller, received from TFN member Nancy Anderson

There is an unsung hero who contributes to the newsletter faithfully every month. We don't know what he looks like. We don't know if he attends the monthly lectures. However, I look forward to Gavin Miller's weather report from the year before. His article also gives one some idea of what is in store for the next month. Others, including Anne Byzko, have also said they enjoy his articles. Thank you, Gavin, for a job well done!



Margaret McRae photographed this skunk-cabbage in bloom at Todmorden Mills Wildflower Preserve on February 19, 2012, a month earlier than she usually sees it.

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Pussy willow at Ashbridge's Bay, photographed by Lynn Pady April 2011