



TORONTO FIELD NATURALIST

Number 600 December 2013



Sharp-shinned Hawk at Oshawa Second Marsh, photographed by Skip Shand

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Toronto Field Naturalist is published by the Toronto Field Naturalists, a charitable, non-profit organization, the aims of which are to stimulate public interest in natural history and to encourage the preservation of our natural heritage. Issued monthly September to December and February to May. Views expressed in the Newsletter are not necessarily those of the editor or Toronto Field Naturalists. The Newsletter is printed on 100% recycled paper.

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IT'S YOUR NEWSLETTER!

We welcome contributions of original writing of observations on nature in and around Toronto (up to 500 words). We also welcome reports, reviews, poems, sketches, paintings and digital photographs. Please include "Newsletter" in the subject line when sending by email, or on the envelope if sent by mail. Please re-name digital photographs with the subject and your name (abbreviations ok); scale your photos *to less than 200KB each*. In the accompanying email include location, date and any interesting story or other information associated with the photograph.

Deadline for submissions for February issue: Jan 2

NEWSLETTER COMMITTEE

Jenny Bull (co-editor), Vivienne Denton, Karin Fawthrop, Nancy Fredenburg, Elisabeth Gladstone, 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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A Perfect Holiday Gift

Consider sharing the benefits of TFN membership with your friends!

We are confident that, once they discover the pleasures of our outings, lectures, newsletters and the companionship of other nature-lovers, they will want to renew.

So we are offering a Holiday Special – half the normal membership fee when you, a TFN member, give a gift membership to someone who was not previously a member. This covers newsletters for December thru May, which include outings lists to the end of August.

Tax Deductible Donations

TFN is dependent for funding on membership dues and donations. We rely on the generosity of our members for special projects and extraordinary expenses.

If you wish to make a donation to TFN this may be done by sending a cheque to the TFN office (see above), or go to our web site, www.torontofieldnaturalists.org and click on Donate On-line through CanadaHelps.org

As a charitable non-profit organization we issue receipts for use as deductions on your income tax return.

TFN MEETING

Sunday, December 1, 2013

2:30 pm

The Don River

*John Wilson, long-time veteran and former chair
of the Task Force to Bring Back the Don,
will share his extensive knowledge about and passion for the Don River.*

VISITORS WELCOME!

*** * * * BOOK SALE AND SILENT AUCTION: 1:45 pm * * * ***

SOCIAL: 2:00 – 2:30 pm

Room 003, Northrop Frye Bldg, 73 Queen's Park East

Immediately southeast of Emmanuel College, south of the Museum subway station exit on the east side of Queen's Park. Enter on either the west or north side of the building. The west entrance is wheelchair accessible.

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

Upcoming TFN Lectures

- Feb 2 **The Sky Above: Another Aspect of Our Natural World**, Paul Delaney, popular lecturer and astronomy professor at York University
- Mar 2 **In the Eye of the Beholder: A Study of Beauty in the Natural World**, Kyle Horner, wildlife photographer, birder and naturalist
- Apr 6 **The Reluctant Twitcher**, Richard Pope, a relatively normal birdwatcher who became a reluctant twitcher in 2007 and wrote a book by the same name.
- May 4 **Sand Dune Conservation**, Geoff Peach, co-founder of the Lake Huron Centre for Coastal Conservation

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 Dec 1 2:30 pm	LECTURE: The Don River Speaker: John Wilson Northrop Frye Building, Room 003. See page 3. Book sale & silent auction at 1:45 pm
Tues Dec 3 1:00 pm	EXPLORING NEW BIKE PATHS Leader: Roger Powley Meet at the corner of The Donway E and Mallow Rd. Bicycles optional. Duration 2-3 hours, ending near Leslie St and Eglinton Ave W.
Sat Dec 7 11:00 am	PATH WALK – Nature Arts Leaders: Yoshie Nagata and Joe Bernaske Meet at the food court on the concourse level of Atrium on Bay (Dundas & Bay). We will walk slowly through PATH (underground walkway) to Maple Leaf Square (south of Union Station) viewing or photographing seasonal decorations in the malls. Bring any work you wish to share with the group after lunch at Maple Leaf Square. For those who wish to breathe fresh air, we will walk to Harbourfront after lunch.
Thurs Dec 12 10:00 am	COLONEL SAMUEL SMITH PARK – Birds Leader: Doug Paton Meet at the southwest corner of Kipling Ave and Lake Shore Blvd W. Bring binoculars. Morning only.
Sat Dec 14 10:30 am	LOST RIVERS AND SOME HISTORY Leader: Ed Freeman Meet at Davisville subway station and end at Evergreen Brickworks for warmth and goodies. Bring icers if needed for Moore Park Ravine portion.
Sun Dec 15 2:00 pm	RUSSELL CREEK, KENSINGTON MARKET – Lost Rivers Leader: Helen Mills and friends Meet at the southeast corner of Harbord St and Bathurst St. A joint outing with Toronto Green Community.
Tues Dec 17 10:00 am	SMALL'S CREEK – Lost River and Heritage Leader: Linda McCaffrey Meet at Woodbine subway station for a 2-3 hour linear walk to trace Small's Creek from East Lynn Park to Woodbine Park. Return by Queen streetcar or Woodbine bus to subway.
Sat Dec 21 1:00 pm	BIRKDALE AND THOMSON MEMORIAL PARKS – Nature Walk Leader: Orval White Meet at the Birkdale Community Centre, 1299 Ellesmere Rd, for a walk on mostly paved trails including a visit to the Scarborough Historical Museum (voluntary donation requested). Approximately 4 km, 2 1/2 hour loop walk.

Thurs Dec 26 1:00 pm	LOWER DON VALLEY – Nature Walk Leader: Margaret McRae Meet at the northeast corner of O'Connor Dr and Beechwood Dr. Bring binoculars.
Sat Dec 28 1:30 pm	ASHBRIDGE'S BAY – Birds Leader: Bob Kortright Meet at the northwest corner of Northern Dancer Blvd and Lake Shore Blvd E. Bring binoculars.
Sat Jan 4 10:00 am	ALLAN GARDENS – Nature Arts Leader: Nancy Anderson Meet at the main entrance to Allan Gardens. Bring what you need for sketching, photography or writing. Lunch at a nearby food court. Bring any work you would like to share with the group.
Tues Jan 7 1:15 pm	NATURE IN THE CITY – Flora and Fauna in Sculpture and Architecture Leader: Ed Freeman Meet at the northwest corner of University Ave and College St for a 2-hour walk ending near the Royal York Hotel.
Sat Jan 11 1:00 pm	HIGH PARK – Birds and Trees Leader: Bob Kortright Meet at the park entrance on Bloor St W at High Park Ave for a loop walk. Bring binoculars.
Tues Jan 14 10:00 am	ASHBRIDGE'S BAY – Birds Leader: Anne Powell Meet at the southwest corner of Lake Shore Blvd E and Coxwell Ave for a circular walk of about 2 hours. Bring binoculars.
Sat Jan 18 10:00 am	CASTLE FRANK AND CASTLE FRANK BROOK – Nature Walk Leader: Alexander Cappell Meet at the entrance to Castle Frank subway station. We'll circumnavigate the promontory where Castle Frank once stood, walk the forested Rosedale Valley where Castle Frank Brook once flowed and where an expressway was once planned, passing a hillside cemetery, a private school's playing fields, the formal gardens of a Bloor Street insurance company and the studio where Group of Seven artists once painted, as we head to a coffee shop near Yonge and Bloor. About 2.5 hours.
Sun Jan 19 2:00 pm	ON THE WATERFRONT, WESTERN EDITION – Lost Rivers Leaders: Helen Mills, John Wilson, Richard Anderson and Ian Wheal Meet at Bathurst and Front to explore the west-central waterfront. A joint outing with Toronto Green Community.
Wed Jan 22 10:00 am	HUMBER BAY PARK EAST – Birds Leader: Anne Powell Meet at the southwest corner of Lake Shore Blvd W and Park Lawn Rd. Bring binoculars. Morning only.



FOR ENJOYMENT OF WINTER OUTINGS

- Long underwear
- Warm hat
- TTC Ride Guide
- Layered clothing
- Mittens over gloves
- Snack
- Waterproof boots
- Binoculars
- Thermos for hot drink
- Thick socks
- Camera
- Icers to prevent falls
- Sunglasses

Sat Jan 25 10:00 am	ALLAN GARDENS – Botany of tropical plants Leader: Nancy Dengler Meet inside the east entrance to the Allan Gardens Conservatory (TTC Carlton streetcar at Jarvis) to tour the collection of tropical edible plants (banana, papaya, tamarind, akee, coffee), as well as other plants of cultural importance (sacred fig, mahogany, papyrus, agave, cardamom, etc). Dress in layers for the tropical heat and humidity. About 1 1/2 hours.
Tues Jan 28 10:00 am	TAYLOR MASSEY CREEK – Nature walk Leader: Charles Bruce-Thompson Meet at the northeast corner of Bertrand Ave and Warden Ave for a circular walk. Bring binoculars. Morning only.

NATURE IMAGES EVENT

Digital Photography Show and Art Exhibit Opening

Saturday, February 1, 2014

1:30 - 4:00 pm



Wood duck, drawing and digital painting by Joanne Doucette

Light Refreshments

Auditorium - S. Walter Stewart Library
170 Memorial Park Ave

1 block north of Mortimer,
2 blocks west of Coxwell Ave,
TTC bus north from
Coxwell subway station

Note: Framed works by TFN members will be on display from February 1 to 28.
To ensure your access to the exhibit after February 1, phone the library at 416-396-3975 for hours and program information.

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

The 90th anniversary show is over and it went well. We had a good crowd with just a few empty seats here and there. Everyone performed well and the audience seemed to enjoy it. There was a nice half page write up in the East Yorker, a new community paper in the neighbourhood. We all enjoyed the reception and the wonderful, beautifully decorated cake.

Thank you to all the people who worked to make it happen so smoothly: Richard Partington our director and co-emcee, Jennifer Smith, Ed Freeman for the background powerpoint presentation which provided information and scenery throughout, the musicians, singers, presenters and performers, as well as those who helped with ticket sales, ushering and refreshments. Nathan Cohen did an excellent job creating a video of the show which is on our YouTube page. Go to www.Youtube.com/user/TorontoNaturalists.

After a year working on this, I am pleased to move on to other things. We are planning a big book sale before the lecture on Sunday, December 1st. Books will be on display around 1:45 and some will be sold by silent auction. We have some great nature books in excellent condition, so bring your money or cheque book to the meeting. A list of some of the books will be published on our website.

We also have a digital images show planned for the afternoon of February 1st. Members are invited to bring

up to 20 digital images each to project to the group, and the Nature Arts group will show their art work throughout the month of February. See page 6 for details.

The following Saturday, we are planning an Outings Leaders Workshop (see notice below). We haven't had a workshop for a few years, and have added quite a few new leaders in the last year, so we thought it was time to hold one. Everyone is welcome to attend, to review our policies and suggest improvements. Members of the Outreach Committee are welcome to attend this workshop, as we are offering a number of walks for other organizations. Please let us know if you plan to attend and if there are any topics you would like discussed.

You are welcome to join our work party at the Jim Baillie Nature Reserve on November 26 (see details below). Please contact Charles Bruce-Thompson if you would like to help.

I am applying to the Ministry of Natural Resources for TFN to be registered to raise monarch and swallowtail butterflies in 2014. We have to provide a list of people who will be participating and provide a report at the end of the year with numbers, etc. Please register with the office or contact me if you are interested in taking part.

Margaret McRae

Work Party

Jim Baillie Nature Reserve
near Uxbridge

Tuesday November 26

We will car-pool, leaving at 9 am for a 10:30 start. We will carry in wood, build boardwalks and bridges, and possibly remove invasive plants

If you're interested and for more details contact Charles Bruce-Thompson, [REDACTED]

Outings Leaders' Workshop

Saturday February 8, 10 am to 12 noon

Walter Stewart Library Auditorium, 170 Memorial Park Ave

Leaders, Want-to-be Leaders and Interested Members are all invited

to a program of discussion, questions and ideas on:
Planning * Resources * Safety * Routes * Group Dynamics
Input from leaders AND walkers welcome

Plan ahead and register early

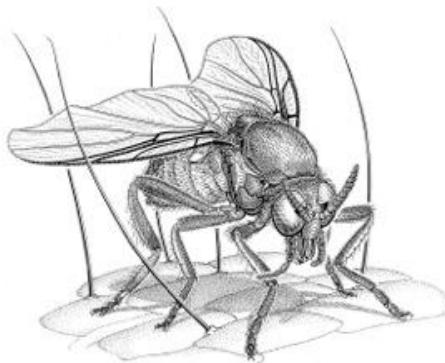
By phone: 416-593-2656 or email:
office@torontofieldnaturalists.org

Workshop Committee: Theresa Moore, Charles Bruce-Thompson, Margaret McRae

MONTHLY MEETING REPORT

The Flies We Despise: Reflections on the Wonderful World of Black Flies

Sunday, November 3, Doug Curry, Senior Curator, Entomology, ROM, & Associate Professor, U of T



Doug has been studying black flies since 1980. His intentionally paradoxical title is intended to reflect the good, the bad and the ugly as well as point out that black flies are barometers of environmental change in Northern Canada.

Black flies are part of the family of true flies, key players in Canada along with mosquitoes, biting midges, horse and deer flies. There are 2200 described species of black fly in Canada.

Any unpolluted water provides a breeding ground. Using silk and hooks in the abdomen, larvae attach themselves to clean substrate, either stony surfaces or trailing vegetation. They filter feed by extending their fan rays. Once loaded with particles, the fans transfer the food into the mouth.

Adults are small and stocky with hunched back and broad wings. In



spite of the name, Doug described them as varied with many shapes, colours, dots and stripes. Some, he opined, are beautiful.

Although all black flies require sugar in the form of honeydew or nectar, not all blood feed on warm-blooded hosts. Those that bite birds have bifid claws, enabling them to navigate through the bird's feathers. Those that prefer mammals have a simpler claw structure. In the past, northern Alberta ranchers have lost cattle through toxic shock or exsanguinations by black flies. This is no longer a problem, perhaps due to the effect on black fly populations of mineral extraction and pollution control programs. Humans attract only 16% of the species that feed on mammals. Only 5% of these are major pests. As Doug described the situation, it is a case where a few bad apples spoil it for the rest.

The black fly bite is initially painless and leaves an oozing wound because of anti-coagulants. It raises an angry wheal, which can result in a secondary infection from scratching. Black fly fever can result. Black flies are also vectors of parasitic disease such as River Fever, of which there are 18 million cases in the world.

In spite of all the negative publicity, black flies shine as ecosystem engineers. They extract only 20% of the nutrient from their food. The other 80% is expelled as fecal pellets, which feed other communities in our streams and rivers, keeping them healthy.

Doug is a member of the Northern Biodiversity Program (NBP) whose goal is to complete the most comprehensive biodiversity study in Canada and assess the change

compared to 50-60 years ago. This is possible because of the wealth of data collected from the DEW line during the Cold War. The northern insect survey of that time provided 2 million specimens, which are still in Ottawa. Today's program used this goldmine of data as a baseline. In terms of black flies, back then 7 species were recorded, all Arctic-adapted and non-biters. In 2011, NBP data added 4 new species, all biters. In 2012, Doug's team counted another 4 biters on Victoria Island. It appears that the biters from the south are making their way north and will continue to do so as the temperature rises. This immigration increases stress on local mammals, which have no place to go, and on tired migratory birds. You can find more on this program at www.insectecology.mcgill.ca/NBP.

Corinne McDonald



Left: adult black fly (drawing: Ralph Idema) and head of larva (photo: Doug Currie). **Above:** loon with black flies (photo: Neil K. Dawe, CWS). Illustrations from *The Black Flies (Simuliidae) of North America* by Peter Adler, Douglas Currie and Monty Wood; Comstock Publishing Associates, 2004, in association with Royal Ontario Museum

EXTRACTS FROM OUTINGS LEADERS REPORTS

Burnett Creek, Oct 12. Leader: Alexander Cappell. In linear Stafford Park, signs of buried Burnett Creek are a shallow ditch, a line of weeping willows and some sewer breather grates. Heading to York Cemetery, the creek bed is visible only as dips in the roads. It's a neighborhood of gardeners and tree growers – one front lawn is a mini-arboretum: tulip tree, white pine, basswood, red maple, sugar maple, shagbark hickory and a larch (which may have been a tamarack [our native larch]). We could see the ridge separating our valley from the Upper Wilket Creek valley. We met a group of 22 Canada geese, about five of whom were having a really hard time smashing their beaks into fallen apples, trying to gouge out pieces small enough to swallow. The creek here is a tree-lined ditch, muddy-bottomed, but with no water flowing on the day of our visit. We continued on to Burnett Ravine, a steep-sided, treed erosion gully. The gully was in shade, but the tree tops were red and gold in the sunlight and there was a slow, silent rain of falling autumn leaves.

Guildwood Park, Oct 19. Leader: Bob Kortright. In the Guild Inn gardens and woods, our enthusiastic group managed to find a surprising 25 plant species in flower, including 2 kinds of goldenrod, 5 kinds of aster, red-osier dogwood, galinsoga, and lady's thumb. We also found almost as many kinds of mushrooms of which we were able to identify 17, including chicken of the woods, a large clump of pear-shaped puffballs, 6 kinds of brackets including lacquered polypore, velvet foot, inky cap, and shaggy mane. The large number of musclewood (American hornbeam) included some large ones.

Mount Pleasant Cemetery, Oct 24. Leader: Pleasance Crawford. The eastern portion of the cemetery was developed mainly after completion of Mount Pleasant Rd in 1917-1919. The glory of some sections is an overstory



of mature red and white oaks. There is also a fine collection of ornamentals, both native and exotic. Among those we admired were: a Katsura tree entirely covered with small podlike fruits; pin oaks with brilliant red foliage; a strikingly tall white poplar; a blooming native witch-hazel; a small stand of bottlebrush buckeye; two American chestnuts; a hornbeam maple apparently so-named for its simple, toothed leaves and dangling clusters of keys; a pretty grove of Japanese larch; and a row of Chinese walnuts. Although the larches, ginkgos, and dawn redwoods we passed were still green, the air was crisp and cedar waxwings, white-throated sparrows, yellow-rumped warblers, golden-crowned kinglets, robins and bluebirds were active. Before we started, a red-tailed hawk soared overhead.

Humber Bay Park East, Oct 29. Leader: Anne Powell. Birds noted included: red-necked grebe, great blue heron, gadwall, American black duck, mallard, green-winged teal, long-tailed duck, goldeneye, hooded merganser, red-breasted merganser, ruddy duck, American coot, killdeer, hermit thrush, northern mockingbird, song sparrow, dark-eyed junco.



Left: Lacquered polypore. Photo: Ken Sproule

Above:

Red-breasted mergansers at Harbourfront
Photo: Augusta Takeda

Right: Empty Katsura fruits.
Photo: Jenny Bull



TORONTO'S LAME RESPONSE TO 2013 FLOODS

The media was gripped this year by the sensational images of the flooding of Edmonton and Toronto. This proved to be a typical time of rejoicing in the strengths of Toronto the Good since, unlike in Alberta, nobody was killed. The news on commercial media stressed how Toronto, unlike the Calgary region, had learnt the lessons of Hurricane Hazel and acquired flood plain lands.

While impressive, the response of Toronto to Hurricane Hazel is less stellar than has appeared in the mass media. Although 32,000 acres of flood plain lands were acquired, not all were reforested. Many became golf courses, were disrupted by expressways, or turned into buried sewers. There were many defeats and missed opportunities.

Most of the land acquired around Raymore Drive, where the heaviest death toll of Hurricane Hazel hit, is still mowed grass. The wasted potential a half century later can be seen by the impact of just 100 mature trees. Such a grove of less than an acre of trees can intercept about 100,000 gallons of rainfall annually. Trees catch precipitation before reaching the ground, allowing it to reduce the force of storms and reduce runoff and erosion. On a TFN walk this summer to commemorate the disaster shortly after the July 6 floods, walking through former Raymore Drive was difficult. The sun roasted us where, had trees been planted after the calamity of Hazel, we would have been strolling through a mature forest.

Continuing earlier practice, streams were buried underground into the 1990s – almost half a century after Hazel. In the floods of 2013, some buried streams burst forth in revenge, exploding through manhole covers. The most notable was Garrison Creek with one of the most dramatic resurrections of a buried river by the July 6 flood. Flooding appeared along the route of the buried stream in locations such as Bickford and Trinity Bellwoods parks.

This temporary resurrection of Garrison Creek led to an eruption of tweets by neighbourhood residents who have supported a “day-lighting” plan developed in 1994 through the Waterfront Regeneration Trust. It commissioned architects Kim Storey and James Brown to restore Garrison Creek through a series of surface ponds to collect and filter storm water. Despite strong local support the plan has been mothballed while Toronto has a plan to spend over \$600 million on underground separation of storm and sanitary sewers.

The most notorious bad response to Hurricane Hazel was the 1965 “Black Creek Scheme.” This resulted in the

encasing of 5 km of Black Creek in an open concrete channel. Despite the Herculean efforts of the Black Creek Project, this blight endures.

One of the most thoughtful commentators on the July 6 floods has been Michael Cook, a distinguished photographer and landscape architecture graduate student. His website, *The Vanishing Point*, has striven to counter claims by apologists who dismiss day-lighting as too expensive by pointing out that there are eight buried streams in southern Ontario whose resurrection would be quite economical and practical to undertake.

The first priority for Cook is Parsons Creek in North York, a tributary of Black Creek. The increased rush created by turning Parsons Creek into an underground sewer is one of the reasons that much of Black Creek was converted into an open concrete channel. Nothing was built along the 1.2 km top of Parsons Creek, which is now a sterile mowed grass park. Eroding bitumen used in the construction of the underground sewer is now contributing to the pollution of Black Creek.

The 1.2 km of mowed grass, according to Cook, has “never been formalized as a City Park and may be owned by the TRCA.” Cook believes that, “With an effective system of wetland facilities and naturalized streambed, day-lighting this stream would make an important contribution to water quality in Black Creek, improvements that could make it easier to remove the concrete channel from the Black Creek lower reach as it runs through South Weston and Symes on its way to the Humber River.”

Continued on next page



Raymore Drive Hurricane Hazel memorial
photographed by John Bacher

A WHITE-FOOTED MOUSE TALE

The volunteer stewardship team at Todmorden Mills Nature Preserve works a couple of days a week for much of the year weeding invasive species from this Don Valley site, and planting native plants which provide forage and cover for native birds, insects and other animals. Recently the team managed to secure a sturdy shed to provide onsite housing for tools and supplies. One day soon after setting up the shed, we were startled by a sudden movement as we opened up the door and saw a scurry of brown and white as a white-footed mouse rushed out the door.

Native white-footed mice are very attractive, light reddish brown on their backs with white underneath and white paws. They like shrubby areas and woodland and often occupy farm buildings and storage sheds. They may look sweet and delicate but my field guide notes that they are strong swimmers and excellent tree climbers. They can be distinguished from the deer mouse which is also native by their shorter tail, although ours got hers out the door too quickly for measurement. Tucked in an empty plant



White-footed mouse.
Photo by Lynn Pady,

pot we found an exquisite, round, white nest made of the down of thistles and milkweeds a little bigger than a large clenched fist. In it were several baby mice.

White-footed mice keep their nests neat and clean, and her housekeeping was impeccable, but I can't say the same of her table manners. Scattered about the floor of the shed were the remains of some of our store of seeds and nuts collected for planting. While she built her nest and raised her family she was dining on the convenient food store we had provided. We decided to let her raise her young before we closed up the gap in the door to deter further visitors. The red-tailed hawks that wheel over the preserve and the owls that hide in its forest would also appreciate that.

Vivienne Denton

The Todmorden Mills Wildflower Preserve stewardship team welcomes new volunteers. If you are interested, contact Paula Davies at [REDACTED]

Continued from previous page

Another buried sewer that Cook has targeted as a high priority for day-lighting is Wilson Brook. This stream is quite symbolic of the need to use the 2013 floods to complete the mission to rescue Toronto's ravines launched by Charles Sauriol in response to Hurricane Hazel in 1954. Much of the burial of Wilson Brook was through the deep woods of the Charles Sauriol Nature Reserve, which was the rural retreat of Charles Sauriol. It is one of the wildest places in Toronto and an excellent location to view deer. The land created above the buried brook is now used by the City of Toronto for snow dumping and the storage of steel drums and rusting litter bins.

One reason for the non-response to the 2013 floods is the looming debate over an attempt by the Executive Committee of Toronto City Council, led by Mayor Robert

Ford, to have a major reduction in the water rates paid in 2015. Environmentally-minded councillors such as Gord Perks are gearing up to defeat such an initiative, understanding that such a reduction would rob the city of an effort to invest in the green infrastructure necessitated by the greater flood risks created by climate change.

While the July 6 floods have generated some significant debate there has so far been no positive response by government to change policy. Although the buried streams erupted like underground geysers, no policy change has been announced and no approvals given for day-lighting or naturalizing concrete-lined channels. In this slow response we can take some comfort that Charles Sauriol, until Hurricane Hazel erupted, despaired of ever achieving anything.

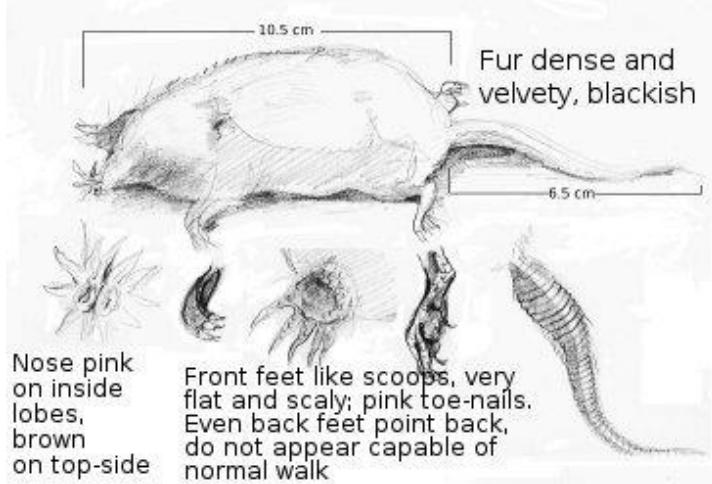
John Bacher

KEEPING IN TOUCH

Just want to report on a star-nosed mole I saw this summer. Unfortunately it was dead – on one of the lawns at the Lawrence Park Lawn Bowling and Croquet Club. A pesticide had been applied by the Parks Department earlier that week. I hadn't seen one, dead or alive, for many years. Such an interesting looking animal! On checking its status in Toronto, I found that Diana Banville had included it in the TFN checklist of vertebrates in 1993 but the new book about Toronto mammals does not mention such a small animal. At least one had survived until the summer of 2013. No doubt others are still around.

Helen Juhola

Star-nosed mole drawn by Diana Banville



* * * * *

I just added two new birds to my “life list.” On a trip along the Otonabee River south of Peterborough in early October I saw a small flock of mallards, two of which were quacking loudly and attempting to fly. When I saw the hunters’ duck blind partially hidden in the nearby shrubs, I realized the ducks were decoys or “false mallards.” Later I saw several small flocks of Canada geese. They were not calling, nor were they going anywhere. Another kind of bird – the false Canada goose! My only previous experience with decoys was discovering a “false common eider” on a sewage pond in Muskoka.

Helen Juhola

The Carolina wrens we had staying on our porch last winter (TFN issue 594) found somewhere more private to

raise their family of three young. After they were fledged we would hear the male cajoling the family around sundown. Pumping up and down on his little legs in the shrubbery near the porch, he called out to them to assemble for the night. Then, the mother and young flew in under the porch and settled down *on top of* the little fibre bird-house that they'd found so cozy in the winter. They came every night for a while, but we disturbed them once too often and they found somewhere else for the rest of the summer. Then, as soon as the nights dipped below freezing, the pair was back – snuggling up *inside*. We're now tip-toeing around these new empty-nesters hoping they'll stay for the winter!

Jenny Bull



* * * * *

Remembering Bob Taylor

Some of you may remember Robert Taylor, who died recently. Bob was a member of the TFN Junior Club who went on to become a nature photographer and author, with a particular interest in owls. Jack and Mary Gingrich have a memory of going on a TFN outing Bob led to Centre Island in October 1963. They saw 39 saw-whet owls and a short-eared, but the highlight was a boreal owl. Bob was so excited by this sighting that he carried the owl home in a bag, weighed, measured and photographed it before releasing it. Jack and Mary still have the photo. An extensive article about Bob Taylor by Susan Smith in the Globe & Mail (October 23) describes how Bob was mentored by Robert Bateman through Junior Club meetings held at the ROM.

TORONTO WILDFLOWERS: NATIVE CURRANTS AND GOOSEBERRIES

In TFN's *Vascular Plants of Metropolitan Toronto* (2nd ed., 1994), currants and gooseberries are listed in the family Saxifragaceae with a note that this family includes the previously separate family Grossulariaceae. In the more current Flora of North America (FNA), the Grossulariaceae is treated as a separate family, with a single genus in North America: *Ribes* - the currants and gooseberries - that includes about 160 species worldwide.

Vascular Plants reported five native *Ribes* species in Toronto, two in a supplement added since the first edition, three locally uncommon and two rare. I have found two of the uncommon species and one rare species, two of these in areas not reported in *Vascular Plants*.

Ribes species are of concern as they are alternate hosts for the destructive white pine blister rust.

Ribes americanum (wild black currant) is locally uncommon but reported from the Etobicoke Creek, Humber, Don, Highland Creek, and Rouge drainages and High Park. I found it in Lambton Woods (Humber), a new locality, in a moist to wet thicket. This shrubby species has racemes of white to pale yellow flowers. The flowers are longer (10mm) than wide (5mm). It probably barely ranges into southeastern Ontario but occurs from

Alberta to Nova Scotia and is widespread in the central to eastern US. This is the commercially important "black currant" in North America.

R. triste (swamp red currant), locally rare, was only reported in *Vascular Plants* in the Rouge valley. I found it in a wet thicket in the western part of Lambton Woods. This shrub has an open raceme of pinkish flowers wider (5mm) than long. It has a widespread range in cold woods and swamps across Canada and from the northern US to at least as far south as West Virginia and, to the west, across the northern US to Oregon.

R. cynosbati (prickly gooseberry), locally uncommon, was reported in *Vascular Plants* in Centennial Park Etobicoke and the Humber, Don, Highland Creek, and Rouge valleys. Its local habitat appears to be dry thickets. It has tubular flowers about 8 or 9 mm long and 5 mm wide, either solitary or in small clusters. It also occurs in Quebec and most of the eastern US.

That native *Ribes* species are uncommon or rare here must be regarded as positive given their potential role in hosting white pine blister rust. However, the picture is clouded by the presence of three introduced species, including *R. sativum* (garden red currant) which is widespread. If you see any *Ribes* species "in the wild" pass on pertinent data to the TFN. This could be valuable information in protecting our white pines from this serious disease.

Peter Money

Wild black currant, *R. americanum* (top left)

Swamp red currant, *R. triste* (below)

Prickly gooseberry, *R. cynosbati* (bottom left)



FOR READING



Rocks at Dorset, Ontario.
Drawing by Joyce Cave

Road Rocks Ontario: over 250 geological wonders to discover

by Nick Eyles
Published by Fitzhenry and Whiteside, 2013,
\$35.00

This is a book I'm really glad I bought! It is large (570 pages); it contains photographs of all the sites, a glossary, lots of maps and an index. All sites described include GPS locations; *many* of the sites I have seen. Now that I have read the book (as well as having bought it) I know a lot more about the geology and history of Ontario. And best of all, the author, with his usual sense of humour, suggests that if you read the book and visit all the sites illustrated, you are on your way to becoming a geologist.

Helen Juhola
and Aarne Juhola (who *also* read the
book from cover to cover)

Ed: Nick is a former TFN board member

New Trees and Shrubs Arboretum Guide for Mount Pleasant Cemetery

Mount Pleasant Cemetery's new, 32-page *Arboretum Guide with Location Index, Common Name Index, Key Plan [and] Arboretum Plan* (Nov 2011) replaces the 25-page Dec. 1995 revision. In the new guide, compiled by Jack Radecki and Olivera Korunovic, the arboretum plan is limited to the two sides of a stapled-in 11" by 17" sheet. Although considerably easier to use in the field than the old 18" by 48" plan, the new one necessarily includes fewer specimens. Helping to make up for this, though, is the fact that more of the cemetery's trees are now individually labeled. The new guide can be purchased at the cemetery office east of Mount Pleasant Rd for \$20.

Pleasance Crawford

Urban Explorations: Environmental Histories of the Toronto Region

Edited by L. Anders Sandberg, Stephen Bocking, Colin Coates, Ken Cruikshank

Published by McMaster University, 2013

Price: \$29.95 + HST + Shipping & handling

"invites readers to look for nature in the built environment, and the built environment in the natural world."

To order: McMaster University Campus Store, 280 Main St W, Gilmour Hall B101, Hamilton, L8S 4L8
or: <http://bit.ly/1hfUkdO>
or: (800) 238-1623
or: campusstore@mcmaster.ca

Ed: Thanks to Madeleine McDowell for this information.

* * * * *

Into Nature: A Guide to Teaching in Nearby Nature

Ontario's Back to Nature Network has released this exciting new teaching tool – a manual that helps teachers create an outdoor learning space for their students and use it on a regular basis to teach all Ontario school curriculum subjects outdoors in nature on a regular basis.

A wide group of partners including RBG Education staff and local teachers contributed to the guide.

Download the free pdf file on the Back to Nature Network website at www.back2nature.ca/resources-research/education.

Ed: from websites of Royal Botanical Garden, Burlington and Back to Nature Network

CELEBRATING OUR 600th ISSUE!

This is the 600th issue of *Toronto Field Naturalist*, so it seems appropriate to look back and see how our newsletter has evolved. Although the club began in 1923, it was not until September 1938 that Newsletter #1 was published. It consisted of just two typed pages reporting members' sightings of birds, insects, mammals and plants in the Toronto area, and proffered 'a recipe for "chickadee pudding" to be used in feeding trays in winter.'



Jumping forward to **Issue #100** dated April 1951, we find a 15-page newsletter with a beautiful engraved banner on the cover which had been designed by club president, Dr. E.M. Walker in 1926. In recognition of it being the 100th issue, editor R.M. Saunders "thought it appropriate to devote this number to a historical appraisal of the Club." There follows a detailed history of the club, including the following insights into the origins and development of the newsletter:

Always connected with going afield has been the Newsletter which came into the Club's life in 1938. ...[It] met with an enthusiastic reception at once. It was clear that a real need was being met. It has been gratifying to the editor, and, no doubt, to the members of the club to see the Newsletter grow in size and circulation even though that has meant increasing labour and the placing of the mechanical part of its production on a commercial basis. Many members of the club may not know that the Newsletter now reaches far beyond the membership of the club by reception in libraries, by exchange with other clubs, and by the good old method of "handing it on." It goes as far afield as the United States, Great Britain, South Africa and Australia. Possibly the clearest indication that the Newsletter

filled a real need is to be found in the fact that other Nature Clubs in the Province have, since the start of this club's publication, commenced similar newsletters of their own. Inasmuch as club publications were planned for in the first year, here again, in the creation of the Newsletter one of the hopes of the Club's founders has been realized.

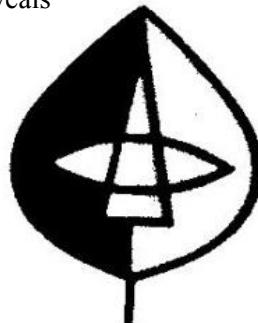
Issue #200, published in December 1963, contained "highlights from recent T.F.N.C. hikes."

On September 8, approximately 40 persons went to the Island, where, with Jack Gingrich in the lead, they saw 36 kinds of birds. A good number of accipiters – sharpshins and Cooper's – were migrating along the lake, and bay-breasted warblers were numerous. A yellow-throated vireo and a ruddy duck were the outstanding birds of the trip. Many Monarch butterflies were also migrating, and at one point a good stand of ladies' tresses orchids was seen.

A botany trip led by Miss Erna Lewis and Dr. Sharp along the west branch of the Don River (Wilket Creek Park) saw some twenty-five enthusiasts out on the hunt. They turned up a good assortment of asters, goldenrods, white snakeroot, turtlehead, ditch stonecrop and others in bloom, gray dogwood, bittersweet and black swallowwort in fruit.

Rattray's Marsh was the scene on October 27th of a trip led by E.F. Damude. Forty-nine observers appeared and again amassed a count of 42 species of birds seen. This time a long-eared owl occupied top place in interest, strongly assisted by pine siskins, white-crowned sparrows and fox sparrow.

Issue #300, dated May 1976, reveals differences in appearance and content. The engraved banner is replaced by the club's logo, designed by Eric Nasmith, which had been adopted in 1970 – a stylized leaf, bird, tree and fish representing the club's flora and fauna interests.



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Ilmari Talvila had taken over as Editor in 1966, and most of the content is now contributed by club members. A report by retiring President, Bill Andrews, gives an indication of how the club was thriving:

It is most gratifying to see so many people involved in the study and appreciation of nature. Attendance at our monthly meetings has been consistently high. The group and committee meetings have been better attended than ever. Volunteers have always stepped forward when an appeal for help was made. Involvement of this type is the life-blood of a club. Judging from all appearances, our Club is in a healthy state indeed.

There is a long article by the Club's Environmental Group vigorously opposing use of the Toronto Island Airport as a major commercial airport. Does this sound familiar?!

Issue #400 dated December 1988 looks more like our current newsletter. On the cover is a drawing of Serena Gundy Park by Leslie Mirylees and an index of topics, and the issue is liberally illustrated with nature drawings by Diana Banville, Owen Fisher and Mary Cumming. Sections familiar to us include *Keeping in Touch, For Reading, In the News, Coming Events* and Gavin Miller's *The Weather this time last year*. Clearly we must thank Helen Juhola, who took

over as editor in 1976, for many of the features we still enjoy. The issue includes reports on Nature Arts Group activities and the Jim Baillie Nature Reserve. There is an article entitled "Beginnings" (one of a series in which members describe how they



Drawing by Mary Cumming during Nature Arts outing in High Park, June 1988.

became interested in nature). The contributor in this issue is Diana Banville "well-known to our members from her frequent drawings and articles in the newsletter, as well as having been a member of the Editorial Committee since 1978."

Letters from Provincial and Municipal representatives reveal TFN's active involvement in environmental issues. In an article about High Park Master Planning Study, Park Planner Jerry Belan says:

"I cannot express enough our gratitude to the Toronto Field Naturalists and its editor, Helen Juhola, for such willing support and input that will certainly contribute to the development of the most appropriate management recommendations for High Park's sensitive and important natural features."

Issue #500, dated May 2001, has a new look, with a stylized title on the cover and no logo. A significant addition is the *President's Report* in which Phoebe Cleverley emphasizes our responsibility as naturalists:

As we enjoy the budding trees and spring ephemerals, as we spot our departing winter ducks and our returning migrants, let us remember that we need to undertake a coordinated effort to protect biodiversity. If, through indifference or a haphazard approach, we allow our woodlands and wetlands to continue fragmenting and deteriorating, we will have fewer and fewer birds and we or our children may truly experience Rachel Carson's "silent spring."

Issue #600 very much follows the previous format, but with the benefit of computers, digital photography, colour printing and an electronic mailing list, we have been able to produce a colourful and professional-looking newsletter since 2005. Thanks to the faithful support of our Editorial Committee and the valuable contributions of articles, letters, poems, photos and artwork from members, *Toronto Field Naturalist* continues to keep us abreast of club activities, educate us about fascinating aspects of flora and fauna, stimulate our appreciation of nature and challenge us to play our part in preserving it.

Wendy Rothwell

Ed. For more about the history of the Newsletter, published on the occasion of its 70th Anniversary, see the February, March, April and May 2008 issues

Forest birds improve coffee yields

Extracted from a news item at Bird Studies Canada, 11 September, www.bsc-eoc.org/organization/

A study recently published in *Ecology Letters* indicates that protecting forest patches alongside farmlands is a win-win-not only for biodiversity, but also for coffee farmers. Experiments conducted in Costa Rica demonstrated that by feeding on the coffee berry borer beetle (coffee's most damaging insect pest), native forest birds can reduce infestation by roughly 50%. Conserving farmland forest cover, and associated biodiversity, provides significant pest control services and financial benefits. The abstract of the article "Forest bolsters bird abundance, pest control and coffee yield" is available on the *Ecology Letters* website.

Coffee certification that helps birds

Coffee grows naturally in the understory of forest trees, but new strains of coffee that grow in full sun were developed to produce more, cheaper coffee. This has resulted in massive deforestation and destruction of bird habitat. But while shade coffee retains bird habitat, there is no "shade-grown" certification. So how do we know if the coffee we are drinking is shade-grown and therefore bird-friendly? An article in *Birdwatching* magazine by contributing editor Julie Craves explains and discusses the various certifications that may be applied to coffee:

Bird-Friendly, developed at the Smithsonian's Migratory Bird Center (see nationalzoo.si.edu/scbi/migratorybirds/coffee), is the "most stringent" certification, with rules that include the density of the canopy and organically grown.

USDA Organic (www.ams.usda.gov/AMSV1.0/nop) certification requires that coffee is grown with no agrochemicals and is verified by a certifying agent. [Note: Since 2009 "Canada Organic" certification has been equivalent to US certification. See CFIA website.]

Rainforest Alliance (www.rainforest-alliance.org/agriculture/crops/coffee) certifies sustainable agriculture for many crops, including coffee. Craves points out that this broader certification is valuable for situations such as high elevations where cloud, rather than forest, provides shade for growing coffee.

Fair Trade (www.fairtrade.net/coffee0.html) is concerned with alleviating poverty through fairness in international trade, with no criteria related to shade-grown.

To read the discussion and full descriptions of these certifications, visit www.birdwatchingdaily.com, click on Special Features, Conservation, and then "The True Cost of Coffee." You will also find a list of "birds that like the shade" that are familiar to us as migrants or breeding birds here in the north, but which spend much more time in the south.

Where to buy shade-grown coffee? Coffee from what Julie Craves calls the "big four" (Nestle, Smucker's, Kraft, Massimo Zanetti) are unlikely to have any certification – only Kraft has started some sustainable coffee (less than 10%, mostly sold in Europe).

In Toronto, Birds and Beans (2413 Lake Shore Blvd West, Etobicoke, 416 913 9221) is one company dedicated to selling only Bird-Friendly and Rainforest Alliance coffees. Their website www.birdsandbeans.ca lists stores throughout Toronto where their coffee is sold.

Wild Birds Unlimited (5468 Dundas Street West, Etobicoke, 416-233-3558) sells coffees from The Creemore Coffee Company, some of which are Bird-Friendly and/or Rainforest Alliance certified.

Check the certification logos and help the birds!

James L. Baillie Memorial Fund for Bird Research and Preservation (the Baillie Fund)

Bird Studies Canada is accepting applications to the Baillie Fund for 2014.

Priority is given to projects that engage the skills and enthusiasm of amateur naturalists and volunteers to help us understand, appreciate, and conserve Canadian birds in their natural environments.

Application deadlines:

Regular Grants	December 15, 2013
Small Grants	January 15, 2014
Student Award for Field Research	February 15, 2014

For more information
visit www.bsc-eoc.org or contact the Baillie Fund
Secretary at acoughlan@birdscanada.org
or 1-866-518-0212.

WEATHER (THIS TIME LAST

YEAR)

DECEMBER 2012

After a bit of a cooler spell in the fall, December was yet another mild, uneventful month with no serious weather stories aside from the persistent warmth. That is, until Christmas.

The long-term warmth began to lose its grip after the 20th as temperatures dropped close to freezing; it was still a bit milder than normal but the pattern was starting to change. But generally only rain affected Toronto. Only 1.8 cm of snow fell up to Christmas Day, which had a dusting on the ground. The cold air over Alaska began to seep south into the Plains. In response, a major storm spun up over Texas. As it moved northeast from the southern US, it spawned a number of tornadoes (the highest number ever recorded on Christmas Day itself; admittedly this is not really severe thunderstorm season, though outbreaks are not unprecedented). The northwest sector of the system had significant snowfall, which eventually affected Toronto on Boxing Day evening. Though it was far from a major storm in Toronto, it was in fact the heaviest snow-fall in almost two years: 10 cm at Pearson Airport and 16 cm downtown. The previous over-10 cm storm was way back on 23rd March 2011 with 12.6 cm at Pearson.

Overall, the month averaged 1.9 downtown and 0.8 at Pearson, about 3 above

normal. It was about the same as last year and tied for the third warmest on record at Pearson. Snowfall was 23.9 cm downtown and 16.2 at Pearson, still below normal but not absurdly. Rainfall was slightly above normal, so total precipitation (in the 55-80 mm range) was close to normal.

It was wearingly cloudy on this month of least daylight: 44.1 hours of sunshine were recorded (normal is 77.3 hours). It was the cloudiest month since December 1996, which had 31.2 hours.

JANUARY 2013

The first half or just more than half of the month continued the warm trend from 2012; we just could not seem to shake it. The New Year began with snow on the ground and below freezing temperatures. It steadily

warmed up as a summer-like Bermuda high developed over the western Atlantic and southeastern United States until we hit a record 14.8° on the 12th and 15.0° on the 13th. Thereafter, a battle zone set up with Arctic air oozing south from west-central Canada and things yo-yoed for a few days. A cold front knocked temperatures down close to normal but then the southwest winds would pick up again almost immediately and back up above freezing it would go.

The real pattern change came when the arctic trough brought a serious cold front in the early hours of January 20th. High winds rose, and there was even thundersnow associated with a squall line. This bizarre feature looked like a summer squall line on the radar returns and even had some derecho or downburst characteristics. Winds gusted up to 90 km/h.

Monthly mean temperatures were running above-freezing and record warm as late as January 19th. With the Arctic outbreak, we got our first -20° reading in two years: -20.9° on the 23rd. So, unlike 2011-12, we cannot say that winter gave us a complete pass this year.

The final week saw another short but intense

warm-up, with snow and ice pellets on the 28th, fog and thunder on the

29th and temperatures rising to 14.0° on the 30th. The weather system associated with this influx of deep tropical air produced tornadoes in Georgia and Mississippi. And it was followed by another strong cold front.

The warm weather dominated the month but not overwhelmingly, with a mean of -1.0° downtown and -2.1° at Pearson Airport, about 3° above normal but 0.4° colder than last year. Snowfall was near normal downtown with 29.3cm downtown but below-normal at Pearson with 14.4 cm. Rainfall was generally above normal with showers associated with the warm influxes from the Gulf of Mexico. Total precipitation was in the 65-95 mm range. Pearson Airport's 66.4 mm was the wettest since 2006.

Gavin Miller



Mallard on the ice at Ashbridge's Bay in 2010,
photographed by Lynn Pady

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.

Information: www.torontobirding.ca

Sun Jan 19, 1:30 pm. Sunnyside and Humber Bay – Gulls and Waterfowl. Leader: David Purcell. Meet in the Sunnyside parking lot at the foot of Windermere Ave south off Lake Shore Ave W. Dress warmly.

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: 416-392-6916 or walkingtours@highpark.org or www.highpark.org.

- Dec 1. High Park through the Ages, Dave Berndorff
- Dec 15. Holiday Hike to Colborne Lodge, Walking Tours Committee

Science on Sundays

Dec 1, 3 – 4 pm. Cogito ergo sum socius: I think therefore I am social. Speaker: Donald T. Stuss, Ph.D., FRSC, FCAHS, President and Scientific Director, Ontario Brain Institute. Macleod Auditorium, Medical Sciences Bldg, University of Toronto, 1 King's College Circle. Information: www.royalcanadianinstitute.org.

Ontario Science Centre, Omnimax Theatre

Flight of the Butterflies, a short IMAX film about the monarchs' journey, starring and narrated by Gordon Pinsent.

Information: <http://www.ontariosciencecentre.ca>

The Market Gallery

To January 25. South St. Lawrence Market, 2nd floor, 95 Front St E. Free. Art Deco, Style Moderne & their contemporaries in Toronto. Note: gallery closed Sun, Mon and holidays. Information: www.toronto.ca/culture/the_market_gallery.

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 to Thursday.

Lost Rivers Walks

Information: www.lostrivers.ca

Sun Dec 8, 2 pm. Dumps in Garrison Creek Ravine (kinds and sources of landfill). Leader: Ian Wheal. Meet at the northeast corner of King St W and Strachan Ave.

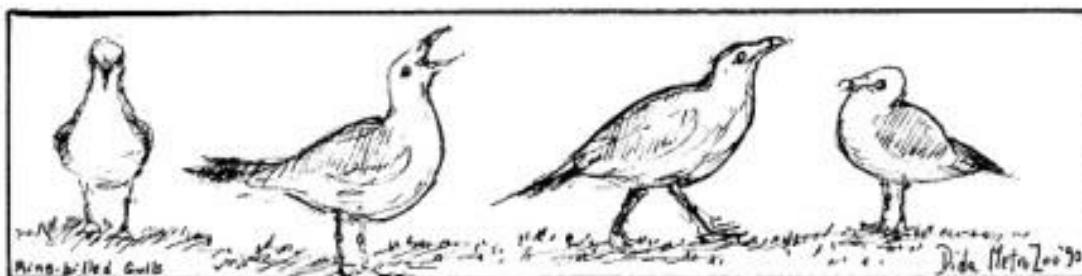
Harbourfront Centre

Through June 2014. Nine Rivers City. A large-scale outdoor photographic exploration of Toronto's nine rivers. Information: harbourfrontcentre.com/visualarts

Ian Wheal Walks

Information: 416-540-6415

- Sat Dec 7, 2 pm. An "Eiffel Tower" at the Don Pinnacle (Broadview and Danforth Avenues). Construction of Canadian Pacific Railway's Don branch in 1888-9 unleashed a development boom along the Don Valley. Meet at the entrance to Broadway subway station.
- Tues Dec 31, 1 pm. Toronto Islands. Meet at ferry docks, foot of Bay St for 1:30 pm ferry. Bring ferry fare.
- Sat Jan 11, 1 pm. Mysteries of Taddle Creek (ponds and wetlands). Meet at the southeast corner of St. Clair Ave W and Wychwood Ave.



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Blackburnian warbler in Norway maple, seen on Toronto Island, Nov 3, 2013. Photo: Jenny Bull