



TORONTO FIELD NATURALIST

Number 603 April 2014



Crabapple Tree. Watercolour by Kathy Paidock (Voted best in TFN Nature Arts Show)

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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.

ISSN 0820-636X

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 May issue, April 3

NEWSLETTER COMMITTEE

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

Printing and mailing: Perkins Services Inc.

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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.

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**** VOLUNTEERS NEEDED ***

TO HELP AT THE TFN TABLE (OR LEAD A BIRD WALK)
 AT ONE OR MORE OF THE FOLLOWING UPCOMING TFN OUTREACH EVENTS

Outreach at public events is an important part of the work of the TFN, helping us to grow our membership.

Saturday May 10, Tommy Thompson Park (Leslie Street Spit) Spring Bird Festival.
 The displays are from 8 am to 4 pm.

Saturday May 10, International Migratory Bird Day, Toronto Zoo.
 The displays are from 9 am to 3 pm.

Saturday May 24, Colonel Sam Smith Park (Etobicoke) Spring Bird Festival.
 The displays are from 9 am to 1 pm.

If you can spare 2 to 4 hours to help out at the TFN table at one or more of the above events or if you wish to lead a bird walk, please contact Stephen Kamnitzer (TFN Outreach Coordinator) at ██████████ or ██████████

TFN MEETING

Sunday, April 6, 2014

2:30 pm

The Reluctant Twitcher

*Richard Pope, a relatively normal birdwatcher
who became a reluctant twitcher in 2007 and wrote a book by the same name,
will share humourous adventures and photos.*

VISITORS WELCOME!

SOCIAL: 2:00 – 2:30 pm

Room 003, Northrop Frye Hall, 73 Queen's Park Cres East
Remember this is a new location!!

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.

VOLUNTEER NEEDED

The TFN Lectures Committee is seeking a volunteer to help with writing the monthly meeting reports. The person should be available to write 2 or 3 reports during the year and able to provide a report quickly, as the submission deadline can be as early as the day after the monthly meeting.

If you can help in this way, please contact the TFN office, attention Lectures Committee.

Next TFN Lecture

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.

- Thurs
Apr 3
10:00 am **COLONEL SAMUEL SMITH PARK – Nature Walk**
Leader: Kerry Adams
Meet at the bus shelter in front of Father Redmond Catholic School on Col Samuel Smith Park Dr south of Lake Shore Blvd W at Kipling Ave. Bring binoculars for bird watching if you have them . Morning only.
- Sat
Apr 5
10:00 am **HIGH PARK ZOO – DRAWING ANIMALS – Nature Arts**
Leader: Nola McConnan
Meet at the entrance to High Park at Bloor St W and High Park Ave. We will walk to the zoo area followed by lunch at the Grenadier Restaurant. Bring what you need for sketching, writing, photography plus any work you wish to share with the group after lunch.
- Sun
Apr 6
2:30 pm **LECTURE – The Reluctant Twitcher**
Speaker: Richard Pope
Room 003, Northrop Fry Hall, 73 Queen’s Park Cres E. See page 3.
- Wed
Apr 9
10:00 am **TAYLOR MASSEY CREEK – Identifying Birds by Song**
Leader: Miles Hearn
Meet at Warden subway station, Warden exit. We will walk east through the St Clair Ravine, explore Pine Hills Cemetery and Farlinger Ravine, ending at a TTC stop on Kennedy Rd. Bring binoculars. Morning only.
- Sat
Apr 12
10:00 am **YELLOW CREEK AND MUD CREEK – Nature and History**
Leader: Ed Freeman
Meet at St Clair subway station, St Clair entrance. Walk will end at Davisville subway station. We will learn about past landscapes and people, plus whatever nature has to show us in mid-April. Bring lunch, curiosity and proper footwear for the day.
- Sun
Apr 13
1:00 pm **CROTHERS WOODS, PART 2 – Tree Identification**
Leader: Stephen Smith
Meet at the south parking lot at the Loblaws store on Redway Rd, next to the road down to the North Toronto Sewage Treatment Plant. We’ll walk south along the dirt trails through the forest to end at Pottery Rd looking at northern and southern forest tree and shrub species. Some steep hills. 3hrs.
- Tues
Apr 15
10:00 am **ASHBRIDGE'S BAY – Birds**
Leader: Doug Paton
Meet at the southern corner of Lake Shore Blvd E and Coxwell Ave for a walk in Ashbridge's Bay Park. Bring binoculars. Morning only.
- Thurs.
Apr 17
11:00 am **HAPPY VALLEY FOREST – Frogs, Toads and Salamanders**
Leader: Ann and David Love
Come for a walk in the Happy Valley Forest. We will be looking for frogs, toads and salamanders., especially eastern red-backed, spotted, eastern newt and Jefferson salamanders. Bring drinking water and lunch. Contact Margaret McRae at [REDACTED] by April 13 re car pooling arrangements .

- Sat
Apr 19
10:00 am
- ROUGE PARK – Nature Walk**
Leader: Orval White
Meet outside the Rouge Valley Conservation Centre, (RVCC, aka Pearse House), 1749 Meadowvale Rd. We'll do a 2-hour loop walk looking for migrating birds, wetlands creatures and early spring wildflowers.
- Sun
Apr 20
2:00 pm
- CORKTOWN COMMON – Lost Rivers**
Leader: John Wilson and “Friends of Corktown Common”
Meet at the corner of Queen St E and River St to tour the award-winning Corktown Common Park - its naturalization, accessibility, flood protection, public art, ongoing maintenance plans and nearby Pan Am Athletes' Village construction. The plantings and wetlands should be just "Springing" to life. A joint outing with the Toronto Green Community.
- Tues
Apr 22
9:30 am
- TORONTO ISLANDS – Birds**
Leader: Anne Powell
Meet at the ferry docks at the foot of Bay St in time to catch the 9:45 am ferry to Ward's Island. Fares: Adult \$7, senior/student \$4.50. Bring binoculars. Morning only
- Sat
Apr 26
10:00 am
- GERMAN MILLS CREEK – Nature Walk**
Leader: Theresa Moore
Meet at the northeast corner of Leslie St and Steeles Ave E for a loop walk. We should see wildflowers and birds. Morning only.
- Sun
Apr 27
1:00 pm
- TAYLOR CREEK PARK – Spring Ephemerals, Ferns and Wildflowers**
Leader: Dianne Dietrich
Meet at the Victoria Park subway station on Victoria Park Ave and travel west along Taylor-Massey Creek, taking detours where the best sightings are. Bring binoculars for distant views. We'll end up about 10 minutes from Main subway station. Duration about 3 hrs.
- Wed
Apr 30
10:00 am
- LAMBTON WOODS AND JAMES GARDENS – Nature Walk**
Leader: Miles Hearn
Meet at the southwest corner of Scarlett Rd and Edenbridge Dr for a morning only circular walk with emphasis on bird song and identification.



Snowshoe Walk, Charles Fell Nature Reserve, Feb 6 (see page 10).
Photo by Margaret McRae.

CALLING TFN MEMBERS WITH GPS EXPERTISE

TFN is planning to map the Jim Baillie Nature Reserve using GPS this spring. The aim is to map the reserve boundaries and the trail system. Later we can add topological features, trail conditions, and any other interesting items of interest.

We would like this to be a collaborative venture; any member familiar with GPS/GIS technology, or who has a GPS device, is invited to participate. All things being equal, we plan to start work this May.

If you are interested in participating, please contact Charles Bruce-Thompson

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

We have applied to the Ministry of Natural Resources for TFN members who register to be allowed to raise monarch and swallowtail butterflies legally. Please let me know if you would like to be added to our list of people licensed to raise butterflies. We presently have 7 registered. We need your name and full address to register you and we have to report on numbers raised at the end of the season. More information will be provided in the May newsletter. Great questions and answers about Monarchs can be found at <http://www.learner.org/jnorth/search/Monarch.html>

Our outreach committee has been active this season with some very successful presentations, and more are scheduled. Please let the office or Stephen Kamnitzer know if you are willing to help host a TFN table at any events (see page 2) or lead an outreach walk. We have at least 3 bird festivals in May, and there may be more. We also expect to be asked to lead walks for other groups again this year, some in areas we don't usually go to, so we are welcoming new leaders and new destinations.

We are in the process of finalizing all our programs for the summer. Anyone who would like to lead a walk who hasn't been asked should contact me and we would be happy to include you if there is still room. When you send in your membership forms, please complete the questionnaire about areas where you might like to volunteer. We need walk leaders, people for outreach tables and walks, people to contact those who haven't renewed their memberships by July, people who can survey our nature reserve with GPS and create a new map, and people to

look for new outing destinations. We probably have many needs I haven't thought of yet, so feel free to suggest new projects you would like to participate in.

It was a busy month for meetings. I attended another one on the proposals for the Port Lands and filled out several questionnaires about the Gardiner and Ontario Place.

We had a successful outing leaders' workshop on February 8th. We decided to create two new committees or task forces, for which several people have volunteered to serve.

- One would be a group to scout out new natural areas within Toronto and on the fringes of the city limits which might be considered for future walks. We would also welcome members to suggest additional walk locations and we might ask neighbouring naturalist clubs if we can advertise and participate in some of their walks.
- The other committee would focus on new technology and how it could be used by TFN. We would like to use GPS to map the trails in our Jim Baillie Nature Reserve this year, and welcome help from members experienced in GPS use.

Please let us know as soon as possible if you would like to be on one of these committees.

Margaret McRae



Greyabbey Park, Scarborough.
Drawing by Anne Leon

FOR READING

Along The Shore:
Rediscovering Toronto's Waterfront Heritage
by M. Jane Fairburn, ECW Press, 2013.

This book examines the Toronto waterfront, past and present, through the lens of four nearby districts - the Scarborough Bluffs, the Beach, the Island, and the Lakeshore (New Toronto, Mimico, Humber Bay, and Long Branch). A rich photographic journey supplements the history and explores the geography and landscape of these waterfront districts, revealing a thriving culture of people who relied upon Lake Ontario for survival. Anecdotal, descriptive and deeply personal.

MONTHLY MEETING REPORT

In the Eye of the Beholder: Beauty in the Natural World

Sunday March 2, Kyle Horner, wildlife photographer and nature educator

Why do so many of us find snakes repulsive and birds beautiful?

There may be an evolutionary basis for our notions of beauty. People everywhere see beauty in savannah-like landscapes where humans first evolved. They see beauty in the human face, helping us care for and protect our families. We tend to see beauty in animals with some resemblance to humans. The human-like eyes of dogs and birds are beautiful, but not the eyes of insects. In evolutionary time, we developed an aversion to animals very unlike humans that could be dangerous. Avoiding ugly repulsive venomous snakes and spiders had a survival benefit.

Hard-wired notions of beauty and ugliness have a direct relationship to the conservation of nature. Even the work of the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) reflects a beauty-based bias. It assesses species to decide if they are in trouble and should be placed on the Red List of Threatened Species. It has evaluated almost all mammal and bird species, but only 40% of reptiles, 35% of fish, 1% of insects, and a mere 32 species of arachnids. This shows that we value more highly the species we identify with more closely and consider beautiful. Ugly animals are not getting the conservation attention they need.

Many of Ontario's species at risk are unloved insects, fish and snakes such the Eastern Fox Snake which has 70% of its range in Ontario. If it is going to be saved, it has to be saved in Ontario. Seeing the beauty in snakes may help to save it.

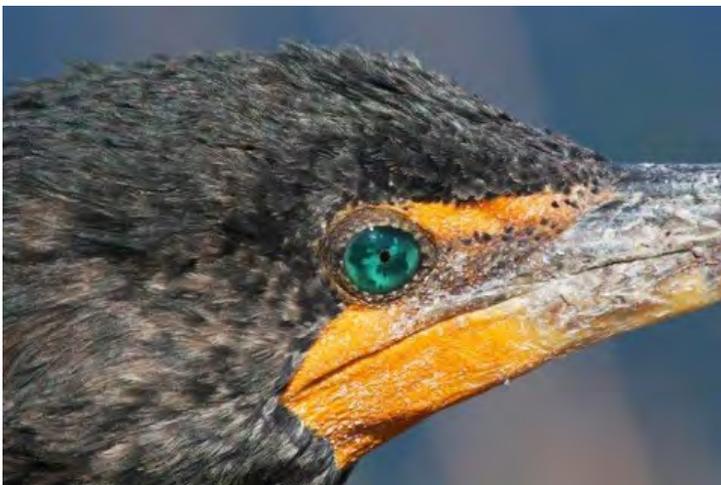
Nature conservation requires changing our notions of beauty. Horner believes we can change our hard-wired ideas of beauty. His photography featuring animals that are in need of more love and appreciation is part of his mission to expand our ideas of beauty in nature.

Strange forms, colours and ways of life can be beautiful. The leaf-mimicking Katydid looks like a sick yellow dying leaf unattractive to creatures that like to eat leaves and those that like to eat insects. The male big-nosed chameleon's bulbous nose is very attractive to females. The Central American strawberry poison dart frog is dressed in loud crazy colours so that its poison skin can be recognized without its having to be sampled. Scorpions are attentive mothers. The stick insect is tasty and defenceless, but its crazy spines and colours make it look frightening to predators. The electric light bug has giant body-builder arms strong enough to catch fish, and what looks like a long tail that is really a snorkel. It breathes through its rear-end, as do some turtles. This, too, is beauty.

At the end of this well attended lecture, we were reminded of the words of Albert Einstein: "Our task must be to free ourselves by widening our circle of compassion to embrace all living creatures and the whole of nature and its beauty."

Can we see the beauty of the wolf spider with its sensitive puppy dog eyes and attractive hair? Or the beauty in the unappreciated cormorant?

Lavinia Mohr



Double-crested Cormorant (*Phalacrocorax auritus*)



Wolf Spider (Family: Lycosidae)

Photos by Kyle Horner

OUTINGS LEADERS WORKSHOP

An enthusiastic group of Outings Leaders met at the S Walter Stewart Library on Saturday, February 8 to share their ideas and hone their skills, with the aim of making TFN outings the very best they can be.



In a group activity facilitated by Theresa Moore, all were asked to think of walks in which they had participated, describing the most, and least, helpful qualities and actions of the leader. These were summarized into the following tips for successful outings leadership.



Preparing for an outing:

- Arrange with the Outings Co-ordinator the time, place and subject of the outing you would like to lead.
- In some cases, shared leadership might be desirable, where one person is familiar with the location and another has more expertise about the flora or fauna likely to be seen there.
- Ensure the newsletter notice includes clear information about meeting place, focus, duration/distance, and any aspects of the terrain that might cause difficulties for some walkers.
- Do a pre-walk within a few days of the outing to plan the route, ascertain if washrooms are open, be aware of any hazards or unusual circumstances, and prepare interesting information about things likely to be seen.
- Bring field guides that may be helpful in showing participants how to identify the flora or fauna you expect to see.

At beginning of outing:

- Arrive on time. Allow about 5 minutes grace time for late-comers. If it seems appropriate to wait a bit longer for an expected bus or streetcar, explain this to the group and use the time for introductory remarks.
- Introduce yourself; describe the route, length and purpose of the walk; advise about anticipated washroom breaks, and forewarn people of any difficult terrain or icy conditions that will be encountered.
- Greet newcomers, make them feel welcome and offer them a TFN brochure.
- Mention your area(s) of expertise, and introduce knowledgeable people in the group who can help answer questions.
- Stress the importance of walkers staying with the group behind the leader. If the group is large, select a helper to “shepherd” any stragglers.
- Encourage everyone to bring interesting sightings to the attention of the group.

During outing:

- Set an appropriate pace so that everyone can keep up, yet allowing sufficient time to see and enjoy interesting things. (The most common complaint was going too fast.)
- Stop periodically and gather the group to point out items of interest. Pick quiet locations and be sure to speak audibly and clearly. In summer, look for a shady spot.
- Try to include interesting information about what is seen, not just identification, but don't make long speeches.
- Make sure everyone has an opportunity to see what is being described, and be specific in pointing out the location of a bird.
- Include beginners by taking time to help them understand how things are identified. Encourage experts to share their knowledge.
- Welcome questions and try to be accessible to all participants. If individuals ask questions while walking, try to save the answers until the next pause, to be shared with the group.
- Broaden the interest of the outing beyond its main focus by mentioning any environmental, historical or architectural aspects of the route.
- In the interests of safety, keep group together when crossing roads; be aware of hazards or obstacles; and help less agile walkers with barriers, slopes, uneven terrain or icy conditions.
- Be flexible, adjusting to bad weather conditions. Have a Plan B.
- Enthusiasm, humour and interesting anecdotes add to the enjoyment of an outing.

At end of outing:

- Ask for feedback – anything that would have improved the group’s experience.
- Make sure everyone knows how to get to the nearest TTC.

After the outing:

- Be sure to submit an Outings Report. Use the “Comments” section to highlight any aspects of the walk that were particularly exciting, interesting or disturbing. This is helpful in writing “Extracts” for the Newsletter.



After a refreshment break, there was a panel discussion led Bob Kortright (moderator), Anne Powell and Stephen Kamnitzer, involving much lively participation. The subjects discussed, at the request of attendees, were:

Grace period to be allowed for latecomers: It was generally agreed that a walk start 5 minutes after the advertised time unless the arrival of a TTC vehicle is imminently expected. Gathering near the starting point for introductory remarks allows some extra time for late arrivals. A leader may (if they wish) publish their cell phone number as part of the outing listing in the newsletter to help latecomers locate the group.

Times of walks: It was generally agreed that we continue to provide a variety of morning and afternoon walks, longer outings including a lunch break as weather and accessibility of washrooms permit, and evening rambles in summer. While a starting time of 10 o’clock is convenient for morning walks, allowing people to get to the site by TTC and avoid rush hour, an earlier hour would be preferable for seeing birds. Any leader who wishes to try an early Saturday bird walk is welcome to do so.

Level of difficulty: Currently the newsletter notice includes reference to challenging terrain. It was suggested that we classify our outings by “level of difficulty” as is done by some other organizations.

Safety Issues: If a leader feels nervous doing a pre-walk alone in a remote location, they may ask TFN to line up a “buddy” to go with them.

New technologies: Sade Clarke suggested that GPS technology be used to post on our website maps of routes frequently used for TFN outings. (This is done by the Ontario Field Ornithologists.) It was suggested we seek others with technical ability to work with Sade to assess the feasibility of such a project.

New areas and trails: Our traditional standard has been that all TFN walks must be TTC-accessible. However, with improved transit to locations surrounding Toronto, it may be feasible to explore areas further afield. Car-pooling, which we have used for outings to our nature reserves and Happy Valley, could be adopted for other locations such as Rosebank, Rouge Marshes, Petticoat Creek, Seaton Trail, Sixteen-mile Creek, Seneca College, Boyd and Kortright conservation areas, etc. Perhaps we could arrange joint outings with other naturalist clubs near Toronto. By examining a “green” map of Toronto, we may identify natural areas within the City that we have been neglecting. Margaret McRae has received requests from Parks People to do outreach walks in locations for which we don’t have leaders. It was recommended that we set up a scouting committee to look into these possibilities. Audrey Campbell, Charles Chaffey, Anne Powell and Sade Clarke volunteered to serve, and others will be invited to join them.

Areas of interest: It was suggested we form closer ties with organizations such as Historical Societies, the Mycological Society of Toronto, etc. inviting their members to participate in our outings and share their knowledge.

Thank you to Margaret McRae, Charles Bruce-Thompson and Theresa Moore for organizing this helpful workshop, and to all our dedicated outings leaders.

Wendy Rothwell

*Fire burned through here
Beneath the blackened tree trunks
The forest floor greens*

Haiku by Elisabeth Gladstone

EXTRACTS FROM OUTINGS LEADERS REPORTS

From Castle Frank into the Don Valley, Jan 18.

Leader: Roger Powley

We looked at winter tree buds and noted evidence of emerald ash borer. There were tracks of cottontails, squirrels and meadow voles and we saw a red-tailed hawk. We ended at Todmorden Mills to look at the work done by the wildflower preserve stewards.

Botany of Tropical Plants, Allan Gardens, Jan 25. Leader: Nancy Dengler

We looked at banana, Swiss cheese plant, Ponderosa lemon, pomegranate, kumquat, and papaya in fruit and the edible fruit plants coffee, akee, Barbados gooseberry and the dragon fruit cactus which were not in fruit at the time. We marvelled at the strange shape of the Buddha's hand citron, the long nectar-bearing spurs of the comet orchid, and striking flowers of the Chinese orchid tree. In the cactus house we saw the remains of the century plant that made newspaper headlines in July of 2013 when the huge asparagus-like stalk flowered three meters above the roof of the glass house. After flowering, the large rosette of needle-shaped leaves died back, but we spotted two new suckers ("pups") that sprouted from the brown and dying stem and which will form a new generation of century plants.



Outing at Allan Gardens. Photo by Ron Dengler

Snowshoe Walk, Charles Fell Nature Reserve, Feb 6. Leader: Charles Chaffey

From the south end of the reserve we snowshoed north, getting out of the cattail swamp where the snow was very deep by crossing the frozen creek to the west side. After following the creek bank north for a few hundred metres we crossed back and continued into an alder thicket and eventually a spruce wood which were more sheltered, sometimes following deer tracks. It was very peaceful.

When the wood became more dense and difficult to get through, we turned westward toward the open swamp.

Waterfowl and other Winter Birds, Ashbridge's Bay, Feb 9. Leaders: Jim and Petra Grass

The park area has been cleared of broken branches resulting from the ice storm. The route was snow covered but not slippery. The inner bay and boat docking area were frozen solid. Waterfowl seen included numerous greater scaup, long-tailed ducks, bufflehead and common goldeneye, as well as some red-breasted and common mergansers, white-winged scoters, an American black duck and a wood duck. Other winter birds seen included a juvenile snowy owl, white-breasted nuthatch, American tree sparrows, dark-eyed juncos, black-capped chickadees and a pair of northern cardinals. A Metro Police officer took an interest in the snowy owl, and joined the observations through a scope provided by Garth Riley (TOC member).

Birds and Trees, Humber Bay East, Feb 15.

Leader: Bob Kortright.

In addition to the expected mute swans, mallards, gadwall, greater scaup, bufflehead, common goldeneye, long-tailed ducks and red-breasted mergansers, we found one likely mallard/black duck hybrid; also a number of white-winged scoters which may have been forced south to Lake Ontario by freezing over of the upper great lakes. Botany highlights included bayberry and buttonbush.

Moore Park Ravine and Don Valley Brick Works Feb 25. Leader: Wendy Strickland (Natural Environment Specialist, City of Toronto).

Helping Wendy were Parks Program Officers, Karen Sun and Jessica Iraci. We observed various measures taken to restore Moore Park Ravine to something approaching its natural state, as well as wetlands created by the establishment of Don Valley Brick Works Park. In such projects there are many and often conflicting constituencies to be consulted, including nature lovers, dog-owners, property owners whose land is contiguous with the park's boundaries, anglers, city by-laws, health and safety, flood prevention (Mud Creek is in danger of breaking its banks, which would flood the Brick Works), walkers and joggers, cyclists and off-road enthusiasts. Initiatives like culling invasive trees, fencing and narrowing paths, and inhibiting dogs running freely raise concerns among one constituency or another. We came away with a much better perspective on the difficulties faced when planning and executing natural restoration projects.

KEEPING IN TOUCH

I enjoyed Paul Delaney's presentation about Astronomy. Thank you.

Theodora Nandy

Re Peter Money's article in the March newsletter, I thought this quote from Mrs. Simcoe's Diary might be of interest.

Madeleine McDowell

1793: Wednesday 4th September – I rode to St. John's Creek (the Humber River). There is a ridge of land extending near a mile beyond St. John's House, 300 feet high and not more than three feet wide; the bank towards the river is of smooth turf, There is a great deal of hemlock spruce on this river; the banks are dry and very pleasant. **I gathered a beautiful large species of *Polygala*, which is a genus of annual and perennial herbs and shrubs of the order of Polygalaceae.**

I'm forwarding a news item about neighbours successfully taking a stand against developers illegally removing trees. It's a rare victory and wonderful to see how individuals can make a difference. [See In the News, p. 17]

Marilynn Murphy

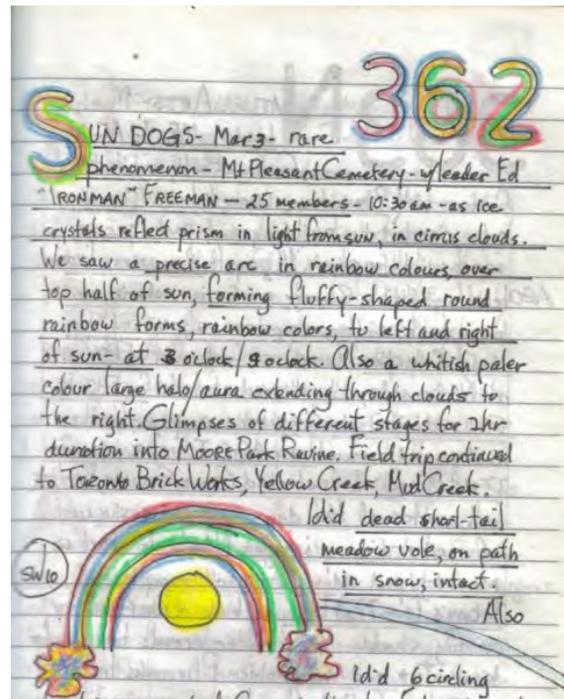
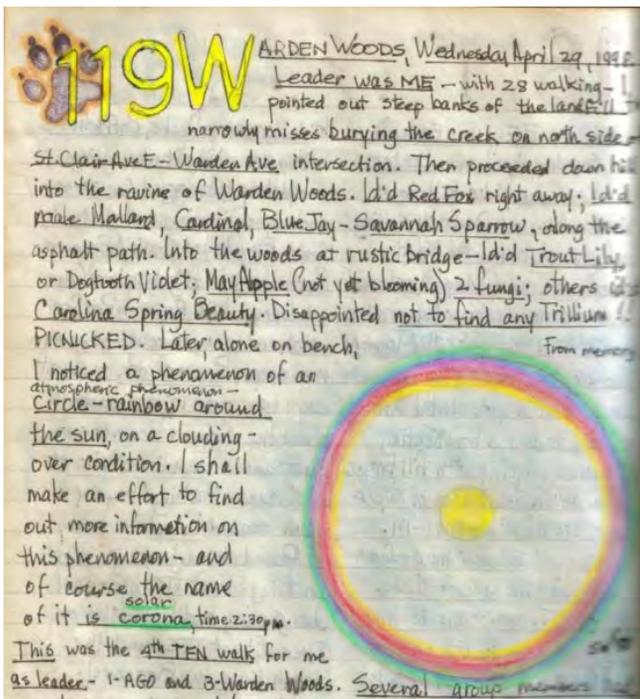
While walking around the yacht basin at Ashbridge's Bay around 5:30 on March 6 I was amazed to see, from about 50 metres, the resident snowy owl "wing" a male red-breasted merganser. I'm not sure if the owl got him in the air or if the merganser had been roosting on the ice. Unable to fly, the merganser ran through the new snow. The owl would jump on it (the imprints of its wings are

clearly visible in the snow) but the merganser would waddle away as I expect the snowy was trying to figure out how to finish off such a large meal. The owl hopped after and jumped the duck a second time and once again the merganser waddled off, this time to hide under a dock. The owl just stood there, possibly not too sure if it should go under the dock, and a stalemate ensued. I continued my walk and circled back to find the owl on top of the dock, possibly having a meal in the dwindling light. This must have been one hungry snowy as the red breasted was about 2/3 its size. Do they usually try to predate such large prey or was this driven by hunger?

On March 4 I got very close (5 metres) to what I think was a Ross's goose feeding in a sheltered area along Kew Beach. My guess is based on there not being a tell-tale grin patch and its stocky neck. I did take photos on my small Pixel and can ask the resident IT expert, my son, to download, if anyone is interested.

Good birding, Glen Hamilton

The newsy content and design of newsletter #602, March 2014 is prize-worthy. Thanks for the honor of nicely done pictures and copy by yours truly. I especially enjoyed the Archives piece and sketch with Mary Cumming's delightful writing about Nature Arts. And Bob Kortright's enlightening feature with pictures ... I also breathlessly witnessed the solar corona and sun dogs on January 22. Here [below] are two of my previously illustrated journal entries on the topic c.1998 and c.2010. Susie Weiss



TORONTO'S SMALL NATIVE LILIES

Most “lilies” found in Toronto have been assigned to other families (see *The ROM Field Guide to Wildflowers of Ontario*, 2004). Native species still in the lily family (Liliaceae) include summer-blooming *Liliums* (see TFN #599, Nov 2013) and five or six spring-blooming species, two of *Erythronium* (trout lilies) (see TFN #588, May 2012), a *Clintonia*, *Medeola virginiana* (Indian cucumber-root) and *Streptopus lanceolatus* (rose twisted-stalk, called *S. roseus* in *The ROM Field Guide* and in earlier publications). *Clintonia* and *Uvularia* (bellwort), family currently uncertain, will be discussed next month.

Medeola virginiana, up to 70cm tall, has about 8mm-long flowers with yellowish green backwards curling tepals, dark red stigmas and yellow stamens. The nodding flowers are held below an upper whorl of leaves. Berries are upright above the leaves. This species can flower any



time from May to July. I saw it blooming locally in early June. *Medeola* is from Medea, a legendary Greek sorceress (see *The ROM Field Guide*). The common name refers to the root, alleged to taste like cucumber. Please do NOT “harvest” this locally rare plant! It was reported in the Rouge Valley and High Park in the TFN’s *Vascular Plants of Metropolitan Toronto* (1994, 2nd ed). Its Ontario range is eastern Ontario north to the Lake Temagami ecoregion. It occurs from Nova Scotia to Ontario and in the eastern US west to the Great Lakes region.

Only one of the four known subspecies of rose twisted-stalk, *Streptopus lanceolatus* ssp *lanceolatus*, ranges into Ontario. Plants are up to 80cm tall. The diagnostic characteristic is that the flowers are “on stalks with a distinct twist from leaf axils” (*The ROM Field Guide*, p.76). Field guides refer to rose to reddish-purple flowers.

Continued on next page



Left: Indian cucumber root, *Medeola virginiana*.
Right: Rose twisted-stalk, *Streptopus lanceolatus*,
early stage flower and late stage flower

THAT DELICIOUS MOREL!

In the glory days of Rome and Greece, mushrooms were a mystery and a threat. They were given names such as death-cap, destroying angel, fairy butter, dead man's fingers, trumpet of death and stinkhorn. They were the spawn of thunder and lightning. Today their toxins are used as rocket fuel.



May is morel month, time for the annual foray to find *Morchella esculenta*, the common morel. Commercial pickers have their annual secret locations. When they spot one, they don't move because there are usually more about. Only after they have carefully scanned the area do they begin picking them at the base of the stem. If you find them in apple orchards, just look. They are probably

pumped with pesticides. Attention birders: there are many morels at Point Pelee.

The spores develop in sacs (asci) on the inner surface of the honeycombed head. When they mature, the air pressure within the sac becomes greater than it is in its surroundings. Consequently, the sac bursts open shooting the white, yellow or creamy-colored spores several inches into the air. Several texts claim that if you breathe on a morel, the increase in temperature will cause sacs to pop open and that you can hear it!

Recipe books warn you that you should always cook morels sufficiently to remove the toxins and bugs. It is best to avoid alcohol for a few days after consumption.

Morels are ancient and can be found on six continents. Yet their taxonomy still seems a mystery. Scientific names vary from text to text. Whatever their title, enjoy their discovery and taste and listen to them as they "shoot" their spores.

Article and photo by Harvey Medland

Ed. Please do not pick and eat any mushroom unless you are sure of the identification.

TORONTO'S SMALL NATIVE LILIES *continued*

In fact the common tepal colour (see the *Flora of North America* on-line) is "white or greenish yellow, streaked or spotted with pale rose to reddish-purple" until a very late stage. The bell-shaped flowers are about 10mm-long and the tips of their lobes curl back. They occur on stalks from leaf axils. My illustrations show a pale-coloured flower that conforms to the FNA description but may not be fully open and a late stage deep rose flower. *Streptopus*, stated *The ROM Field Guide*, is from the Greek *streptos* (twisted) and *pous* (foot) referring to the flower stalk. This plant, uncommon in Toronto, blooms in late May to early June. The TFN's *Vascular Plants* reported it in Morningside Park, the Rouge Valley, High Park and on the Scarborough

Bluffs. Melanie Milanich found it at Taylor Creek and has shown it to TFN members there. It has been reported throughout Ontario except the northwest. Its Canadian range is Newfoundland to Manitoba. In the US it occurs only in the easternmost quarter of the country.

While in Toronto forests in the spring do keep a lookout for these two species and, if so inclined, note the characteristics of *Streptopus* flowers. Field guides and the more authoritative FNA database seem in disagreement. Please send any comments to the TFN.

Article and photos by Peter Money

Ed. Correction to last month's article on polgalas (page 15) : re *P.darwiniana*, the sentence towards the end of the second-last paragraph should read: "The filaments are probably on the lowermost (keel) petal, like filaments on other polygalas. In this species this petal is virtually all fringe!"

TFN GRANT REPORTS

Ontario Nature offers meaningful events for Toronto youth

By Sarah Hedges, Nature Guardians Coordinator, Ontario Nature

Ontario Nature has held some exciting events for youth recently through our Nature Guardians Program.

In August 2013, 27 newcomer youth from two of our Toronto-based partners, the Learning Enrichment Foundation and YMCA Newcomer Youth Leadership Development Program, joined Ontario Nature for a two-night camping trip in Rouge Park. This was the first camping experience for most participants, and for some it was also the first summer spent in Canada. Eighteen countries were represented among the participants, who spoke a combined total of 21 different languages. Highlights of the trip included a nature photography workshop, a guided hike through Rouge Park, a swim at Rouge Beach and nightly campfires with s'mores and songs.

Participants also learned how to build a fire, set up a tent and prepare outdoor meals for a large group. The camping experience had a great impact on all involved and gave youth the confidence to go on trips like this in the future.

Following the camping trip in September 2013, we held our

fourth annual Youth Summit for Biodiversity. This was our biggest and best summit yet, with 104 young environmental leaders from 49 different communities across Ontario in attendance for an incredible weekend at YMCA Geneva Park on Lake Couchiching, Orillia. We were thrilled that ten of the newcomer youth who attended the camping trip also signed up to join us at the Youth Summit. The diversity of workshops offered meant there was something for everyone – including building bird feeders, learning about the Environmental Bill of Rights, searching for frogs and turtles, making natural body care products, debating on green energy issues, learning about medicinal plants and much more. Participants gained new

friendships and support networks and were further inspired to create change through a highly-anticipated keynote speech by conservationist and filmmaker, Rob Stewart. Early morning activities like canoeing and a polar bear dip, and evening activities including a high-energy team challenge and campfire brought everyone together and created memories that are sure to last a lifetime.

The Youth Summit also kick-started the activities for the 2013-2014 Youth Council and we are fortunate to have a very passionate group of 35 young leaders guiding our initiatives this year. In February 2014, we brought them together for a Winter Youth Retreat at Camp Kawartha, where they strengthened friendships, participated in

outdoor winter activities, and planned for 2014 events. Important outcomes included planning of the 2014 Youth Summit and suite of Our Special Spaces conservation events, as well as the creation of an action plan to begin a youth-led advocacy campaign on pollinator conservation.



Youth Summit, 2013. Photo by Brendan Towes

These events would not have been possible without the support of the Toronto Field Naturalists. By supporting the Nature Guardians Program, you have given newcomer youth from Toronto the opportunity to participate in a suite of meaningful nature-based events and provided young leaders from across the province with the capacity to take action for the wild species and spaces we all love.

To see photos and testimonials from the events or learn more about the Nature Guardians Program, please visit http://www.ontarionature.org/connect/nature_guardians/index.php. Contact info: sarahh@ontarionature.org, (416) 444-8419 x 241

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TFN GRANT REPORTS continued

Toronto Wildlife Centre's Window into Wildlife Rehabilitation

By Julia Coey, Development Coordinator, Toronto Wildlife Centre

A small black nose appears in the corner of the screen, partially obscuring the webcam's view of a tree-filled wildlife enclosure. Seconds later, the camera is upside down. It's a low-tech glitch – the star of the internet broadcast, a curious red fox, has knocked over the protective case containing the camera, and only adds to the charm of live programming.

Thanks to a grant from Toronto Field Naturalists, Toronto Wildlife Centre launched an exciting pilot webcam project in July 2013 called *Window into Wildlife Rehabilitation*. The goal: Create awareness of the issues facing urban wildlife and foster an appreciation of the amazing diversity of wildlife in the city. Because the animals in our care are wild – and must stay that way – and are incredibly stressed in captivity, exposure to humans is kept to an absolute minimum. *Window into Wildlife Rehabilitation* allowed thousands of people to observe wild animals up close, without causing them unnecessary stress.



Every week day during the summer and fall (the busiest time of year at Toronto Wildlife Centre), an unobtrusive webcam was set up in the enclosure of a wild animal, or group of wild animals, in care. Patient information, like where each animal was found and why it needed care, along with preventative tips when relevant, appeared underneath each video. Most of the animals admitted to Toronto Wildlife Centre are injured, orphaned or made ill as a result of human activity. Simple actions, like rinsing food residue from jars and cans before recycling, reduces the chance that a hungry wild animal will get a paw or even its head dangerously stuck trying to access a tasty morsel. The link to the *Window into Wildlife Rehabilitation* page was shared via social media channels, like Facebook and Twitter, and promoted in Toronto Wildlife Centre's publications and the media.

Window into Wildlife Rehabilitation aired 75 times and represented 46 different species of wildlife. While most episodes featured one species using a static fly-on-the-wall video style, we also broadcast a live leg surgery on a sandhill crane; orphaned eastern grey squirrels getting formula (something that happens up to four times a day); and a special broadcast in December of big brown bats being handfed.

We received lots of positive feedback, including stories from teachers who showed the broadcasts to their classes, and an entire office that tuned in to watch from their desks each day.

A selection of these videos can be found in the *Window into Wildlife Rehabilitation* archives at <http://torontowildlifecentre.com/webcam-video-archive>

Orphaned Virginia opossum blissfully unaware it is being watched.

Webcam episode: Sandhill crane recovers from a broken leg in his outdoor enclosure.



APRIL SKIES

The longer, colder nights of winter are beginning to give way to the warmer skies of spring. With the arrival of the Vernal Equinox on March 20 (12:57 PM EDT), astronomy enthusiasts can venture into the evening air with renewed expectations. The bright stars of Gemini, specifically Castor and Pollux, are high in the south west sky being chased across the heavens by Leo and its bright star Regulus. Leo in my opinion is one of the few constellations that actually resembles its namesake, a lion. High in the southern sky mid-evening in April, the “backwards question mark” of bright stars forms the mane of the lion and its front paw and is facing west with Regulus being the very base of this question mark and front paw. Trailing behind the head of the lion by about a hand-span of degrees (about 15 degrees) is the lion’s hindquarters, denoted by a triangular trio of comparably bright stars.

While the brighter stars of the winter constellations, namely Taurus, Orion and Auriga, are disappearing into the western twilight, there remain ample bright stars to point the way to wonderful objects for the casual observer. In Gemini for example, just west of Castor and Pollux is the largest planet in the Solar System, Jupiter. With the exception of the Moon, Jupiter outshines all other evening objects at this time. The careful observer using binoculars can even see the dance of the largest of Jupiter’s moons, the Galilean satellites as they orbit seemingly from side to side of the planet from night to night.

Sliding all the way past Leo to the southeast horizon, a pair of bright planets are making their way into the evening April skies: Mars, distinctly rose in hue and Saturn, a subdued cream. Mars will rise as the Sun is setting on the 8th and is at opposition, meaning it will be visible all night. Both these planets are dimmer than Jupiter but easily seen in Toronto skies and will be featured at Public Viewing evenings (Wednesdays) at York’s Observatory throughout the spring and summer months (yorkobservatory.com).



Jupiter. Image taken with the 40 cm telescope, York University Astronomical Observatory

Full Moon is on Tuesday the 15th of April and celestial mechanics will generate a total lunar eclipse this day with mid-totality occurring at 3:45 AM EDT (Tuesday morning). These are wonderful events to see. Follow the disappearing bright (full) moonlight as it is replaced by a dim rusty red at mid-eclipse. The partial phase begins at 1:58 AM EDT and is all done by 5:33 AM EDT. No telescope is needed to enjoy this celestial event and it is perfectly safe to observe (and photograph) from anywhere in Canada.

Clear skies!

Paul Delaney
York University Astronomical Observatory
observe@yorku.ca

Ed. We thank Paul Delaney, speaker at our February monthly meeting, for this article, and for arranging to provide future astronomy articles by some of his students.

715 newly-discovered planets!

Associated Press release: On February 26, NASA confirmed that NASA’s Kepler telescope had found a bonanza of 715 planets outside the solar system, pushing the number of planets discovered in our galaxy to about 1700. These announcements were also about implications for life behind those big numbers. Four of the new exoplanets orbit their stars in “habitable zones,” not too hot or too cold for liquid water, which is crucial for life to exist. Douglas Hudgins, NASA’s exoplanet exploration program scientist, called the announcement a major step toward the planet-hunting Kepler telescope’s ultimate goal: “finding Earth 2.0.”

For more details, visit ctvnews.ca/sci-tech/nasa-s-kepler-telescope-finds-715-new-planets-outside-solar-system-1.1705152

IN THE NEWS

Co-Founder of Bruce Trail named to Order of Canada Extracted from *Guelph Mercury*, Dec 30, 2013

Philip Gosling is being honoured for his “crucial contributions to the creation of Ontario's Bruce Trail and for his philanthropic devotion to the natural world,” according to the citation issued from the Governor General's office. But he's most pleased that 50 years after the Bruce Trail opened it remains a protected area. Gosling said it took two years of talking before land was purchased and agreements were drawn with landowners who would allow the public to traverse private property as they followed the Bruce Trail. He started the Gosling Foundation in 1977 as an outdoor science school and 10 years later formed a partnership with the University of Guelph to create, develop and maintain the Gosling Wildlife Gardens. As well as being a founder of the Bruce Trail, Gosling is the founding Chair of the nature reserves committee of the Federation of Ontario Naturalists (Ontario Nature). He received the Natural Heritage Award in 1982, a certificate of appreciation from the Province of Ontario and an honorary doctor of laws honour from the U of G in 2008.

Nature London (McIlwraith Field Naturalists) Celebrates 150 Years in 2014

In 2014, Nature London is marking 150 years since the founding of the Victorian-era group to which it traces its roots – the London Branch of the Entomological Society of Canada. Planned events include:

Lecture tracing the natural heritage of southwestern Ontario as it evolved from post-glacial lake bottom, to magnificent woodlands and prairies, to the landscape of today. John Riley, Nature Conservancy of Canada, March 4.

Tree Planting and Plaque Unveiling at Mount Pleasant Cemetery, to honour William Saunders, Sr, the founder in 1864 of the London Branch of the Entomological Society of Canada, who is buried there. Saunders was an early advocate of the use of native trees for landscaping purposes. He was responsible for much tree planting in the city, including the native tulip and cucumber magnolia trees that currently tower above the cemetery grounds. April 29.

Talk on William Saunders, an internationally acclaimed pharmacist, entomologist, horticulturist and plant breeder. In 1886 he established the Dominion Experimental Farms system and became its founding director. Fall 2014.

Some of Nature London's **anniversary field trips** are open to non-members. See naturelondon.com

Source page: naturelondon.com/naturelondon/?page_id=443

Residents rally to protect Chatsworth Ravine Trees From CTV Toronto, Feb. 3

Toronto Councillor, Karen Stintz, says the city will be pursuing charges against a developer who illegally tore down several mature trees in a neighbourhood near Yonge Street and Lawrence Avenue. The site, located along a ravine-protected zone, was demolished without the city's permission, which could incur a fine of \$500 to \$100,000 per tree. Local residents were outraged when the demolitions began and reportedly blocked a Mack truck from leaving the site. For details see: http://www.thestar.com/news/gta/2014/02/01/karen_stintz_blockades_construction_crew_that_took_down_trees.html <http://toronto.ctvnews.ca/city-to-file-charges-against-developer-for-illegally-cutting-trees-1.1668813>

Honeybees may be infecting bumblebees with deadly diseases

Extracted from theguardian.com, 20 February 2014.

Bumblebees appear to be contracting deadly diseases from their domesticated honeybee cousins, according to a study that looked at 26 UK sites. They probably pick up diseases when they go to flowers after infected honeybees have visited them, or when they invade honeybee hives and steal nectar. The latest research shows bumblebees are more severely affected by the diseases.

“Wild populations of bumblebees appear to be in significant decline across Europe, North America, South America and also in Asia,” said Mark Brown of the University of London. This is economically significant because the wild insects pollinate a large portion of the world's crops. Studies suggest that bumblebees provide \$3 billion worth of flower pollination annually in the US alone.

For more on this subject, listen to podcast “Plight of the Bumblebee” at www.nature.com/nature/podcast

Record-breaking Bird Migration Discovered

Scientists have uncovered one of the world's most amazing annual bird migrations. Using geolocator technology, a red-necked phalarope was tracked on a 16,000-mile round trip from Scotland to the Pacific Ocean (via Iceland and Greenland, south down the US eastern seaboard, across the Caribbean and Mexico, to a location off the coast of Ecuador and Peru) and back again. Many experts had previously believed that Scottish-breeding phalaropes joined the Scandinavian population at their wintering grounds, thought to be in the Arabian Sea. To learn more, visit www.rspb.org.uk/media/releases/360162-tiny-tag-reveals-recordbreaking-bird-migration.

WEATHER (THIS TIME LAST YEAR)

The overall impression was that of a cool, wet month. Indeed, total precipitation was just above 100 mm (normal is about 60 mm), and there was snow and freezing rain as late as April 11th-12th.

The monthly mean temperature of 6.9 downtown and 6.1 at Pearson Airport was the coolest since 2003. It was just about one degree below the long-term average – short spells of cold weather in April are not unusual in Toronto. One of the main contributors to the persistent cool, unsettled pattern was persistent snow cover that extended south to within 100 km of Toronto and even into the US Great Plains (where it was welcome indeed for recovery from the 2012 drought and heat wave) right into mid-April.

The snow is a self-reinforcing cold-maker for two reasons. One is that the white surface reflects the sun's rays and prevents the energy from being absorbed, kind of an anti-greenhouse effect. The second, for those who remember high-school chemistry or physics, is the latent heat of melting. Heat energy goes into melting the snow first, then into warming the ground.

On the other hand, sunshine was actually above normal at 198.1 hours (normal is 185.1) and there were a few warmer spells, notably with temperatures reaching into the low twenties on April 18th.

Gavin Miller



Photo by Karin Fawthrop of white-tailed deer invading her garden.

VOLUNTEER FOSTER PARENTS NEEDED

Hundreds of orphaned baby animals will need a hand in the spring. Toronto Wildlife Centre is looking for volunteers to care for baby squirrels or other wild critters at home. Must be age 18+ and available to feed animals 4 or 5 times a day. Training provided.

For information:

<http://www.torontowildlifecentre.com/foster-care>

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. Information: www.torontobirding.ca

- Sat Apr 26, 8 am - 2 pm. Leslie Street Spit - early migrants, warblers, sparrows. Leader: John Carley. Meet at the foot of Leslie St at Unwin Ave (south of Lake Shore Blvd E).
- Sun Apr 27, 8 am to early afternoon. Oshawa Second Marsh - little gulls, shorebirds, warblers. Leader Tyler Hoar. Meet at the parking lot at GM Headquarters in Oshawa. From Hwy 401, take Harmony Rd exit #419; go south on Farewell St., turn east onto Colonel Sam Drive and follow to the west parking lot close to the marsh.

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.

- Apr 6 My Favourite Trails, Sarah Doucette
- Apr 20 Lost Waterways, Leo deSorcy

Toronto Entomologists' Association

Sat Apr 26, 1 - 3 pm. TEA Bug-rearing Day at the Toronto Zoo Atrium, 361A Old Finch Ave. Information: www.ontarioinsects.org

Lambton House Heritage Talk

Thurs Apr 10, 7:30 pm The Dale Estate and Brampton, the Flower Town of Canada. Speaker: Dale O'Hara 4066 Old Dundas St (#55 bus from Jane subway station). Tea and coffee served from 6:45 pm.

Leslieville Public School's 150th Anniversary

Sat Apr 26, 1:30 - 2:30. TFN outings leader, Joanne Doucette, will give an illustrated talk on the history of Leslieville's schools. Leslieville Junior Public School, 254 Leslie St.

Toronto Urban Fishing Ambassadors

Sun Apr 27, 10 am. Tommy Thompson Park Cleanup. TFN members are invited to join in this project being organized as part of the Great Canadian Shoreline Cleanup campaign. Meet inside Tommy Thompson Park front gate at the foot of Leslie St. Water, snacks, gloves and garbage/recycling bags will be provided. Dress appropriately for the weather. Information: Andrea Chreston at TRCA 416-661-6600 x5772

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.

The Market Gallery

To Apr 19. South St Lawrence Market, 2nd floor, 95 Front St E. Free. To Preserve & Promote Black History: Celebrating 35 years of the Ontario Black History Society. Gallery closed Sun, Mon and holidays.

Information: www.toronto.ca/culture/the_market_gallery.

Lost Rivers Walks

Information: www.lostrivers.ca.

- Fri Apr 25, 6:30 pm. Moat Fortress; Garrison Common under water. Leader: Ian Wheal. Meet at the southwest corner of King St W and Strachan Ave.
- Sun Apr 27, 2 pm. Sandford Fleming and Annie Hall Trail of Don River. Leader: Ian Wheal. Meet at entrance to Castle Frank subway station.

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

Sat Apr 19, 2 pm. Lawrence (Lol) Solmon, Builder of Toronto's Waterfront. Meet at the northeast corner of King St W and John St.

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Registration No. 40049590

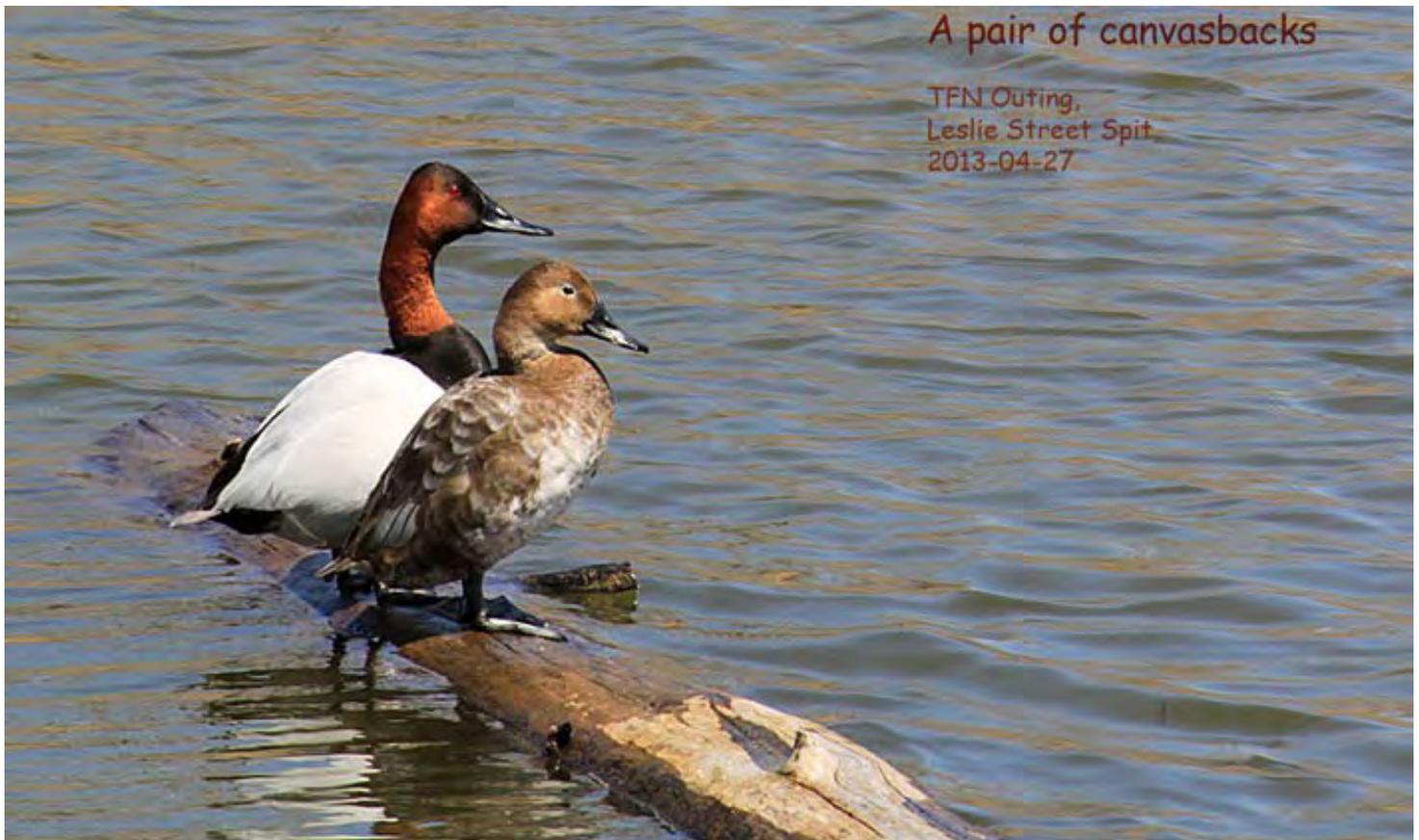


Photo by Augusta Takeda