TORONTO FIELD NATURALIST

Number 610 March 2015

American kestrel at Colonel Sam Smith Park, January 20, photographed by Carole Giangrande. See p 12.

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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 April issue, March 3

NEWSLETTER COMMITTEE

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

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$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.

Toronto Field Naturalists
1519-2 Carlton St, Toronto M5B 1J3

Tel: 416-593-2656
Web: www.torontofieldnaturalists.org
Email: office@torontofieldnaturalists.org

Teens: Apply for the 2015 Young Ornithologists Workshop!

The 2015 Doug Tarry Young Ornithologists Workshop will be held at Long Point Bird Observatory near Port Rowan, Ontario, from August 1 to 9.

Participants will receive hands-on training in field ornithology. Activities include an introduction to bird monitoring and banding, birding trips, preparing museum specimens, guest lectures, and more!

Six of Canada's most promising ornithologists between the ages of 13-17 will be selected to attend, and will receive the Doug Tarry Bird Study Award to cover all on-site expenses.

Applications are due April 30, 2015

For more information see
www.birdscanada.org/longpoint
or email LPBO at lpbo@birdscanada.org

2014 Ontario Nature Conservation Awards

Nomination Deadline: March 31, 2015

Ontario Nature Conservation Awards recognize excellence by honouring individuals, groups, government agencies and corporations who have worked to protect Ontario's nature.

Awards are published in the fall issue of ON Nature. For descriptions of the awards, and nominating procedures, see www.ontarionature.org or e-mail info@ontarionature.org or phone 416 444-8419.

TFN MEETING

Sunday, March 1, 2015

2:30 pm

What the *#&! Is a Bioblitz?

Shawn Blackburn, Programs Coordinator, Toronto Zoo will explain bioblitzes and what we learn from them

.

VISITORS WELCOME!

SOCIAL: 2:00 – 2:30 pm

Due to high cost, TFN has stopped providing beverages.
You are welcome to bring your own and to take them into the lecture room.

Room 003, Northrop Frye Hall,

73 Queen's Park Cres 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.

RAISING BUTTERFLIES

If you would like to participate in this summer's project to legally raise butterflies, please register with Margaret McRae *by mid-March* so she can send the list to the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forests.

Please provide your name, address, phone number and email address if you have one.

Contact info: [redacted]
or [redacted]

Monarch butterfly photo by Lynn Pady

Upcoming TFN Lectures

Apr 12	**Climate Change Effects on Pollinators** *James Thomson & Sheila Colla, Conservation Biologists, U of T*
May 3	**Toronto's Urban Forests** *Janet McKay, Executive Director, LEAF*

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 Mar 1 2:30 pm
LECTURE – WHAT THE *#&! IS A BIOBLITZ
Speaker: Shawn Blackburn, Programs Coordinator, Toronto Zoo
Room 003, Northrop Fry Hall, 73 Queen's Park Cres E. See page 3.

Wed Mar 4 10:00 am
COLONEL SAMUEL SMITH PARK – Birds and Plants
Leader: Miles Hearn
Meet at the southwest corner of Kipling Ave and Lake Shore Blvd W for a circular walk. Morning only.

Sat Mar 7 10:30 am
S WALTER STEWART LIBRARY – Nature Arts
Leader: Gail Gregory
Meet in the library's front foyer. Come to enjoy a morning preview of a group watercolour show and take part in a group drawing exercise (materials provided). The theme of the show is Air Water Earth. Haiku are welcome as part of the drawing exercise. Please bring any work you wish to share with the group when we go for lunch in a local restaurant. TTC from Coxwell subway station to Mortimer. The library is at 170 Memorial Park Ave one block west of Coxwell past the East York Civic Centre.

Wed Mar 11 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 on flat terrain. Bring binoculars. Morning only.

Sat Mar 14 1:00 pm
DISCOVER A MARSH IN WINTER – Nature Walk
Leader: Joanne Doucette
Meet outside the Rouge Hill GO Station. This walk is for beginners (and others) to explore the Rouge Marshes, the best remaining coastal wetlands in Toronto. Learn about ducks, geese and swans. The Waterfront Trail has been rebuilt and we will follow it from the GO station to the marshes and back (3 km circular walk). Family friendly. Bring your binoculars. See www.rougepark.com/explore/interest/rouge_beachphp for a map of the Rouge Marshes.

Sun Mar 15 2:00 pm
UNEARTHING GARRISON CREEK: CREATING A BLUE-GREEN CITY – Lost Rivers
Leaders: Helen Mills and friends
Meet at the northwest corner of College St and Crawford St. This walk looks at the whys and wherefores of burying Garrison Creek 130 years ago, and at the ways and means used by today's champions of water in the city, who are bringing Garrison Creek back to life. We will visit Community Canoe Gardens, rain gardens and green laneways, all designed to keep our city waters clean and blue, and our city landscapes green and vibrant – the "Blue-Green" city. We will hear from the advocates of the Homegrown National Park, who are bringing the Blue-Green city to life. A joint outing with Toronto Green Community.

Thurs Mar 19 9:45 am
TORONTO ISLANDS – Birds
Leader: Doug Paton
Meet at the ferry docks at the foot of Bay Street by 9:45 am for the 10 am ferry to Ward's Island. Bring lunch, water, binoculars and money for ferry.

Sat Mar 21 10:00 am	**LESLIE STREET SPIT – Birds and Trees** Leader: Bob Kortright Meet at the park entrance at the foot of Leslie St. Bring binoculars and lunch.
Tues Mar 24 1:00 pm	**ASHBRIDGE'S CREEK – Early Spring Ramble** Leader: Joanne Doucette Meet at Greenwood subway station (Linsmore Blvd and Danforth Ave). We will follow the buried course of Ashbridge's Creek looking for signs of spring and learning about the history of the creek. The paths may be icy. Please wear cleats if needed. A 2 1/2 hour walk with gentle slopes, few stairs, ending at Gerrard St or Queen St E.
Sat Mar 28 10:00 am	**COLONEL SAMUEL SMITH PARK – Birds** Leader: Jim and Petra Grass Meet at the southwest corner of Kipling Ave and Lake Shore Blvd W. Bring binoculars. Morning only.
Sun Mar 29 1:30 pm	**LOWER DON VALLEY – Nature Walk** Leader: Margaret McRae Meet at the northeast corner of Beechwood Dr and O'Connor Dr for a circular walk.

Visiting TFN's Jim Baillie Reserve?

Should anyone at the reserve manage to injure themselves we now have a number, 749, to give EMS in order for EMS to find the entrance to the reserve.

Here is a photo of Derek Connelly, a North Durham Nature Uxbridge Trails volunteer, helping us install the new (and first) number sign with the rest of the volunteer crew at the reserve on Wednesday, Jan 21.

Charles Bruce-Thompson

VOLUNTEERS WANTED

FOR TFN OUTREACH EVENTS

We are looking for volunteers to help at the Toronto Field Naturalists' table at the following events:

Sat Mar 7: **Park People Summit**
Regent Park Art Centre

Sat Mar 28: **Scarborough Seedy Saturday and Green Fair**
Brimley south of Kingston Rd

These are all fun events to spend time at. Your commitment will be 3 to 4 hours, morning or afternoon, handing out literature and answering questions. We usually have 2 people covering each shift.

If you can help at any of the above, or at other similar not-yet-listed events, please contact me at:

[redacted]
or [redacted]

Stephen Kamnitzer

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Two weeks ago, Margaret McRae, Sandy Cappell, Joanne Doucette and I visited the pioneer log cabin in Sunnybrook Park. Back in the 1980s and 90s, the cabin was used as a Nature Information Centre and staffed with TFN volunteers on summer weekends (see p 16). Recently, City of Toronto Cultural Affairs invited the TFN to offer walking tours as part of the Doors Open Toronto event in May 2015. Our purpose was to check the condition of the cabin's interior to determine if it was feasible to make the cabin a home base for our walks on that weekend. I am happy to report that, despite being closed for over 20 years, the cabin is in good condition and City of Toronto Parks, Forestry and Recreation has arranged to repair broken window glass and the ramp leading to the front door. We plan to open the cabin on the May 23 and 24 weekend for an open house for TFN members, as well as offering the public nature walks for Doors Open. It would be great to see many of you there, especially those who volunteered in the cabin in the past. We will provide more information about the event in the May newsletter.

Margaret McRae, Sandy Cappell and Joanne Doucette visiting the pioneer log cabin in Sunnybrook Park in late January. Photo: Nancy Dengler

Even though there was little human damage at the cabin, there was ample evidence that "someone" has been making good use of the facilities while it has been closed. An entry hole has been chewed in the base of the front door and the ventilation holes under the peak of the roof have been enlarged. The dirt floor of the cabin was littered with hundreds of chewed black walnut shells. The TFN had installed angled Plexiglas shelves to hold publications and brochures and in one of these we found a soft (unoccupied) nest of dry grass leaves and other plant fibers, most likely the work of a red squirrel.

As I mentioned in the December newsletter, the TFN board is holding a special planning session in late March 2015. The purpose of the TFN Membership Survey (see page 12) is to provide feedback for the board on what you like and what you think could be improved about TFN programs and activities. As a board of directors, we value your opinions and would like to hear about them before the planning session, so please do send us your completed surveys by March 1. The TFN Membership Survey is available online at www.torontofieldnaturalists.org. We plan to report on the results of the survey in future newsletters.

In an all-volunteer organization like ours, I think it is important to take a step back occasionally and assess the longer term picture. All of our dedicated volunteers work as hard as they can in organizing our programs and outreach activities, staffing the office, looking after finances, and other behind-the-scenes efforts. Nevertheless, our membership numbers have not increased significantly over a ten year period and we often struggle to find volunteers for our regular activities. Sometimes the TFN feels like the Red Queen in Lewis Carroll's *Through the Looking Glass* who tells Alice: "Now here you see, it takes all the running you can do, to keep in the same place". Nevertheless when I compare our current situation with the report of the 2005 planning committee, I see that we *have* accomplished some of our major goals, such as organization of our extensive nature photo collection and development of our outstanding website. The board planning session in March aims to look at some of these successes, as well as at some of our perennial problems, evaluate our current programs, and identify new activities or approaches for the future that will help us meet the TFN objectives of helping Torontonians understand, love and protect the natural world.

Nancy Dengler

TFN Board Nominations Invited

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

MONTHLY MEETING REPORT

Mosses, Moose's and Mycorrhizas

Feb 1. Dr Terry Carleton, recently retired from Faculty of Forestry, University of Toronto

Dr Carleton began his presentation to a large audience on a cold winter day by explaining that mosses are bryophytes: non-vascular green plants that reproduce by spores rather than seeds.

Mosses have a very simple structure with a stem, leaves the thickness of one cell, and a rhizoid serving to anchor the rootless plant to its substrate. *Polytrichum* mosses, however, have leaves thicker than one cell.

The moss life cycle alternates between a gametophyte (sexual phase) and a sporophyte (spore-producing) generation. The gametophyte is the main body of the moss that we see. It is haploid, meaning it has only one set of chromosomes. The sporophyte is diploid with two sets of chromosomes. Haircap and some other mosses have different male and female forms.

The main part of the sporophyte is the capsule which holds the spores to be disbursed. Its peristome tip is responsible for regulating the release of spores. Its hygroscopic inner and outer teeth open in response to dryness that comes with winds that will disperse the spores. These capsules show considerable variation in different species. A germinating moss spore forms an alga-like mat that eventually develops a leafy structure.

Canada has 50 different types of sphagnum or peat moss. They prefer the abundant acidic habitat of the shallow bogs of Canadian Shield. In Ontario, *Sphagnum nemoreum* is the dominant type.

Different kinds of mosses are found in alkaline wetlands, including in southern Ontario where cascades, streams and seeps are good habitat. Of particular interest are the tufa mound mosses in Spencer Gorge in the Hamilton area, where the rock forms around the growing moss shoots. Southern Ontario's forest floors do not have many mosses except those growing on rocks and tree stumps, as tree leaf litter inhibits moss growth. Forest floor mosses are found primarily in coniferous forests.

The most common green plant in Canada is Schreber's feathermoss (*Pleurozium schreberi*), found in boreal spruce and fir forest where it makes a continuous carpet that keeps the ground temperature to about 4 degrees, despite warm air above it.

Some mosses play a part in the mycorrhizal symbiosis between coniferous tree seedlings and fungus mycelium. The mycelium gets energy from the seedling, and the seedling gets nutrients and moisture from the mycelium. The mycelium grows around moss tissue at the base of the seedling, and rescues nutrients from the dying moss tissue.

Moose dung is the habitat for the parasol moss (*Splachnum luteum*). Flies attracted by the dung land on the parasol and distribute its spores.

Those wishing to see mosses near Toronto are advised to visit Erin Bog.

The audience enjoyed seeing many beautiful photos of the great variety of moss leaf structures and sporophytes.

Lavinia Mohr

Fruiting capsules of parasol moss, *Splachnum luteum.* Photo: Terry Carleton

The speaker recommended:

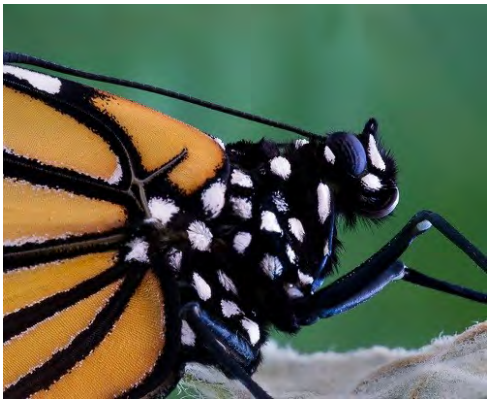
Mosses Lichens & Ferns of Northwest North America by Dale Vitt, Janet Marsh and Robin Bovey. Lone Pine Guide, 2007

Also available from TFN:

A Graphic Guide to Ontario Mosses by Robert Muma, published by TFN, 1985, $5.00

TFN NATURE IMAGES EVENT

On January 31st, an enthusiastic crowd of about 65 gathered at S Walter Stewart Library to enjoy beautiful and fascinating images of nature. After a welcoming message from our President, Nancy Dengler, Lynn Miller projected a series of photo presentations from 11 TFN members.



Theresa Moore's contribution included impressionistic images of fall colours, exquisite ice effects from the 2013 ice storm and a beautiful rose-breasted grosbeak. Having participated in the monarch-raising project last summer, she showed us striking photos of their transformation process.

Augusta Takeda's photos, presented by her husband Steven Barnett, were mainly of birds at Point Pelee and Prince Edward County, including this stunning Blackburnian warbler.

Joanne Doucette showed fascinating art which she had created by modifying her own drawings and watercolours using *Corel Painter* or *Corel Photo Paint* software. These included a great horned owl, a crow and rainbow, and this ruby-throated hummingbird with pictographs.

Margaret McRae showed us a variety of flora, fauna and TFN events, including a Baltimore checkered spot butterfly, a juvenile least bittern seen at Colonel Samuel Smith Park, and this striking pileated woodpecker.

Wendy Rothwell shared images of wildflowers in High Park, including wild blue lupine, cylindrical blazing star, cardinal flower and New England aster.

Carole Giangrande showed us a variety of birds and insects including this macro photo of a tiny bee, an American kestrel cluching a mouse (see front cover) and the painted bunting recently spotted in Oakville (see page 12).

Lynn Miller showed us a Cooper's hawk that frequents her garden, an interesting photo combining a hairy woodpecker with bracket fungi, some intriguing textures seen in winter, and spring flowers to lift our spirits.

During a break we enjoyed refreshments provided by Jennifer Smith and her team of volunteers, and took the opportunity to admire photos and artwork displayed on tables: nature photo notelets by Nancy Anderson, Heidi Holmes' photos of flowers in Diana Dietrick's garden, nature notelets by Anne Byzko, watercolours by Gail Gregory, Kathy Paidock's acrylic paintings of wood ducks and a stunning swan, examples of Joanne Doucette's art (described above) and more of Augusta Takeda's lovely photos.

Anne Byzko then shared the story of a pair of red-necked grebes that nested in Humber Bay Park East last summer. She followed them from April until the end of August, during which time they hatched and fledged two broods and attempted a third. She showed us delightful photos of the tiny young being carried on their parents' backs, changing their plumage as they grew, being fed and learning to fend for themselves.

Ken Sproule's presentation focused on an astonishing variety of moths including pearly wood-nymph, hemlock looper, large lace-border and this horned spanworm. He also shared some photos of birds taken in High Park the day before, including evening grosbeaks and a red-bellied woodpecker.

Martin Chen shared his family's travel experiences over the past year, including time spent in Peru where they saw the impressive Andes condor, and a trip to British Columbia where they climbed Grouse Mountain and delighted in Victoria's Butchart Gardens. Back home, they had enjoyed participating in the Christmas bird count. This photo of a northern mockingbird was taken by his daughter.

The afternoon concluded with a presentation by Ron Dengler of the fascinating flora and fauna he and Nancy had seen during a recent tour along the east coast of Australia. He provided very interesting commentary about the many strange creatures he had photographed, including eastern water dragon, satin bowerbird, a variety of marsupials such as striped possum, musky rat kangaroo and koala bear, a red fox flying bat and this bizarre ichidna.

The TFN is fortunate to have so many talented artists and photographers, and we thank them for sharing their images with us.

Wendy Rothwell

EXTRACTS FROM OUTINGS LEADERS' REPORTS

Col Sam Smith Park, Jan 6. Leader: Doug Paton. The ponds were frozen which cut down on what was to be seen. The only land birds were some robins. A long way out there appeared to be two western grebes.

Toronto Waterfront, Jan 10. Leader: Joanne Doucette. This was supposed to be a winter ramble on Toronto Islands [but the ferry had broken down]. We headed west along the waterfront and saw lots of dabbling ducks and other waterfowl, including common goldeneye, common merganser, trumpeter swan (near two mute swans – possibly foster parents). Alas no snowy owls on the condo roofs (too windy). I gave some history of the harbour and discussed the geology of the Bay and the Islands as well as native stories. We checked out the Marine Unit, the wetland at the foot of Spadina and the Music Garden. Roger Powley pointed out some of the plants, including grasses.

Heritage Walk, Jan 15. Leader: Linda McCaffrey. We saw an immature Cooper's hawk in Trinity Square.

Tree ID, Todmorden Mills Wildflower Preserve, Jan 17. Leader: Stephen Smith. We looked at the distinguishing features of trees in their winter state in the preserve and adjacent historical area. Trees and shrubs included: tulip tree, hackberry, cottonwood, red oak, white pine, white birch, red elm, black walnut, butternut, bladdernut, sycamore, basswood, witch hazel, leatherwood, sugar maple, alternate dogwood, common elderberry, bur oak, red osier dogwood, grey dogwood, white elm, Scotch elm, Jack's poplar, white cedar, black ash, Manitoba maple, spicebush, red elderberry, black maple, black locust, Mazzard cherry, staghorn sumac. We saw a flock of a couple of dozen house finches.

Lost Rivers, PATHology and Geology, Jan 18. Leaders: John Wilson, Ed Freeman. Ed Freeman provided very enlightening observations on the stone used as paneling, flooring and cladding in buildings along the route. He distinguished depositional (sedimentary), metamorphic and igneous rock types and pointed out varieties of each formed through the physical and chemical processes created by heat, pressure and weathering. He also discussed quarrying and finishing techniques of various stone features of the office buildings along the route. We observed numerous artistic proxies (stand-ins) for nature, in the remarkable TD Centre Inuit Art Gallery, and in public plazas where cattle, whales, elephants, Massassauga rattlesnakes, trees and waterfalls are represented. CIBC's archives department manager assisted greatly in providing material for the interpretation of Commerce Court, North Tower (Pearson and Darling, 1931) and West Tower (I.M. Pei, 1972).

Cedarvale Ravine, Jan 21. Leader: Miles Hearn. As well as noting the various trees and bushes, participants observed red-tailed hawk, American robin, house finch, house sparrow, white-throated sparrow, white-breasted nuthatch, chickadee, American goldfinch, cardinal and blue jay.

Botany of Tropical Plants, Allan Gardens, Jan 24. Leader: Nancy Dengler. We had a pleasant walk through the well-maintained collection of tropical and sub-tropical plants. We focussed on some of the groups that make the tropics look tropical such as the palms, aroids, bamboos, and the fig genus, *Ficus*. Although all the coffee berries had been eaten in the last week (most likely by raccoons), we did see bananas, papaya, pomegranate and Swiss cheese plant, *Monstera deliciosa*, in fruit. Our timing was right to see two species of bird-of-paradise, Hong-Kong orchid tree, angel's trumpet, candle bush and tropical hydrangea in flower.

House finches, Todmorden Mills, Jan 17, photographs by Ken Sproule

TORONTO WILDFLOWERS: WILD GINGER AND A RELATIVE

Toronto's wild ginger (*Asarum canadense*) belongs to the birthwort family (Aristolochiaceae). A related species, Dutchman's pipe or pipevine (*Isotrema macrophyllum*, former name *Aristolochia macrophylla*, and earlier *A. durior*), has been found in southernmost Ontario. The birthwort family includes about 700 species worldwide, mainly in north temperate and tropical regions. About 100 species are members of the genus *Asarum* and nearly 500 species of the genus *Aristolochia,* or of genus *Isotrema,* recently split out of *Aristolochia*. North America has six species of *Asarum* and three species, formerly *Aristolochia,* now reclassified as *Isotrema,* on the U.S. Dept. of Agriculture (USDA) website.

Wild ginger has rhizomes (prostrate stems) that taste and smell like the unrelated true ginger (*Zingiber officinale*). They have been used for flavour and to treat sore throats. **WARNING**: the active ingredient (aristolochic acid) in this species is now known to cause kidney failure and has been implicated in kidney cancers. Health Canada issued a warning in 1999 about herbal remedies containing it.

Most wild ginger plants, according to a University of Wisconsin (La Cross) website, have a symbiotic relationship with fungi, together forming mycorrhizae. Wild ginger provides sugars to the fungi and the vast mycelial network is much more effective in transporting minerals to the plant than are its roots. Major pollinators are ants and beetles.

Wild ginger plants have two leaves and one flower which is at the tip of the rhizome. The flowers, about 2 to 4 cm long, are tubular and have 3 petal-like sepals with long tips. These occur on or near the ground. Locally they commonly bloom in late April to early May. Wild ginger is common in Toronto's forested areas. According to *The ROM Field Guide to Wildflowers of Ontario* (2004) it occurs from the Georgian Bay ecoregion south to the U.S. border and as a disjunct population in the James Bay ecoregion. Its Canadian range extends from New Brunswick to Manitoba. It has been reported in all of the eastern half of the U.S. except Florida.

Dutchman's pipe was recently recorded in the Database of Vascular Plants of Canada (VASCAN) as introduced in Ontario. This twining vine is up to 9 metres long. Its flowers have a tubular calyx about 2.5 cm long. Pollination is by flies. The inside wall of the calyx has stiff downward pointing hairs that relax, to allow the fly to escape, only after pollination occurs. Pipevine swallowtail caterpillars feed exclusively on this species, making them poisonous or at least distasteful to potential predators (analogous to monarch butterflies and milkweed). Its native U.S. range may be controversial. The USDA shows it as native in most states from Mississippi to Kentucky east to the southern Atlantic coastal states and also in Pennsylvania and from New York to Maine. It has been widely cultivated and at least some of the northern occurrences may have escaped from gardens.

Dutchman's pipe (*Isotrema macrophyllum)*

Wild ginger flowers can be difficult to see and are worth a close look in forests in early spring. Does anyone know of introduced Dutchman's pipe in southern Ontario?

Article and photos by Peter Money

Wild ginger (*Asarum canadense*) and detail of flower at right

KEEPING IN TOUCH

This kestrel (see front page) was seen on a chilly but beautiful January 20th as it snacked on a mouse in Colonel Sam Smith park.

The painted bunting in Arkendo Park, Oakville was a stunning sight on a winter day (January 24th). Onlookers and neighbours were feeding him well. The little guy's from Georgia and should be wintering in Mexico (our good luck, not his).

Carole Giangrande

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On page 8 of the February newsletter, the leaders of an outing along the Belt Line Ravine claimed that the house where Bob Bateman grew up has been demolished. I think this is wrong.

Bob and his two brothers lived at 287 Chaplin Crescent in a house which had a back yard extending back to what was then a railway siding but is now a hiking path. I am familiar with this house because from 1973 until 1990 I bicycled to work in downtown Toronto along this route, and on my return trip in the summer I would often see Bob's brother Jack mowing the lawn for his mother who still lived there. I saw this house yesterday as I walked home from an RCI lecture. Those on either side have been replaced with large modern flat-roofed club-like houses, but the Bateman house has escaped this fate. I am 99% certain that this is the Bateman house, but I could be wrong.

I would appreciate being either corrected or proven right.

Jack Gingrich

.....

I was very surprised to see this red-winged blackbird in High Park on a chilly day in January! Bob Kortright kindly checked e-bird for me, which reported a dozen or so sightings in Ontario during January, including Pickering, but none in Toronto.

Wendy Rothwell

MEMBERSHIP SURVEY

Please complete the TFN Membership Survey available on the TFN website. It can be completed online or by downloading the document, printing out the 4-page survey, and mailing it into the TFN office.

Please return completed surveys by March 1

Toronto Field Naturalists
#1519, 2 Carlton St
Toronto M5B 1J3

www.torontofieldnaturalists.org

A NATIONAL BIRD FOR CANADA

Canada has a national tree (maple), two national animals (beaver and Canadian horse), but no national bird. Every province and territory has its bird icon, but not Canada. At least 93 countries have official bird emblems, but not Canada. It's time to change that.

Canadian Geographic's National Bird Project's goal is to help designate an official bird for Canada by 2017, our sesquicentennial. You can vote and/or contribute your own short essay at www.canadiangeographic.ca/nationalbird/.

By January, the most popular choices by far were Common Loon (993 votes) and Snowy Owl (726). Canada Goose was third with 336 votes.

In my opinion, the criteria for selecting a national bird should be: found in most of Canada; its population mostly found in Canada; and inspiring.

The snowy owl can be found anywhere in Canada at some time of year, although it may be hard to find in forested areas. The common loon breeds across Canada south of the tree line (except southern prairies and southwestern Ontario where it can be seen in migration) but most abandon Canada for the winter. Both species are also found in Eurasia, and most of both species hatch in Canada. If presence in all parts of Canada is important, then the snowy owl is the obvious choice. There are a few ducks (eg long-tailed), geese (snow & Brant), horned lark, snow bunting and Lapland longspur that nest as far north, but none of them can be found throughout Canada like the snowy. Also, snowy owls are magnificent representatives of Canada, preferring open spaces even in the coldest and windiest weather.

No other country has adopted the snowy (or a loon) as a national emblem (if I can trust Wikipedia's list to be complete). The snowy owl is Quebec's provincial bird. The common loon is Ontario's. Accordingly, the owl might be better for national unity too. And it is not "common".

Bob Kortright

Common loon, drawing by Geraldine Goodwin

Lynn Pady writes:

Don't forget to vote for our national bird. Here is the link: www.canadiangeographic.ca/nationalbird/

Great articles about some top choices on the page too, including the whiskey jack. How can we not have a national bird with that fantastic name? It used to be the *Canada* jay, then the name changed to gray jay (why – who knows?) but it has always been known as the whiskey jack.

Here is the link to the dandy article in the *Globe and Mail* last week including an interview with David BIRD!

www.theglobeandmail.com/news/national/race-is-on-to-pick-the-national-bird-of-canada/article22594632/

Nice to have a 'happy news story' for a change.

"Silent Hunter" (snowy owl) drawing by Joanne Doucette

TFN GRANT REPORT: High Park Nature Centre

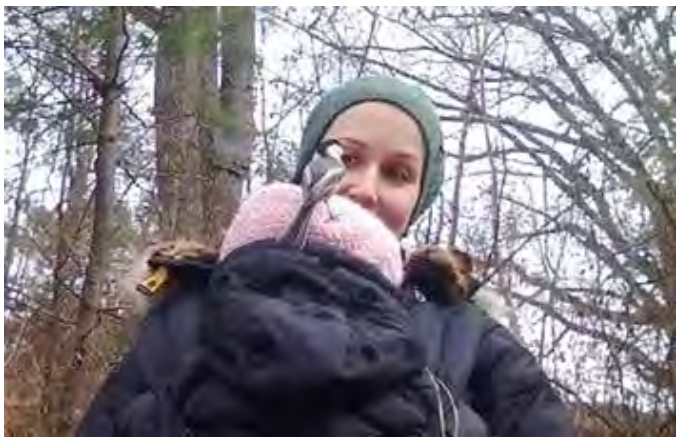
By Jon Hayes, Family Programs Coordinator, High Park Nature Centre, autumn 2014

Exploring nature with kids is one of the greatest joys of life. Here at the High Park Nature Centre we get to do that every single day.

Kids aged six months to sixteen years come out to our many nature clubs. Adults and seniors attend our naturalist courses and workshops. Surprisingly, the things that really engage the very young are often the very same things that excite teens, adults and seniors. Some things in nature are just universally awe-inspiring: fire; seeing a bird for the first time; falling leaves; mushrooms; tracks in the snow; turtles; finding hidden treasures. These are but a few of the many "wonders" we seek out.

Think of an autumn leaf pile.

To a toddler in our Nature Baby club, a leaf pile is an invitation to throw leaves in the air and feel them falling back down on their faces. A toddler can bury a parent in leaves before getting their legs buried themselves. All the while, the smell of decomposing leaves and the brittle leaves crunching beneath boots are etching into their experiences. Plus it is fun.



To a teen in our High Park Rangers volunteer program, that same pile of leaves is a place to find oak leaf galls with tiny insects inside to explore. A teen can use a camera to photograph the leaves and identify the many trees that the leaves came from. The dried leaves could be tinder for a campfire we build for the younger participants. And sometimes it is a pile of leaves to jump around in and throw!

This year has been a period of growth and expansion for the Nature Centre. We doubled our Nature Baby program, our Small Wonders club and increased the High Park Rangers volunteer program. Almost all of our programs this fall had waitlists. This influx is an encouraging sign to future-minded naturalists. It is a sign that young people are getting outside and while outside they are interested in learning about the wild animals and places within the city! Thank you, Toronto Field Naturalists, for supporting our nature clubs and family nature walks. You are a big part of the work we do at the Nature Centre.

A few examples (of many) of when we appreciated your support:

- High Park Rangers using GPS to create ecologically responsible geocaches for younger program participants to find.
- High Park Rangers leading seasonal interpretive Family Nature Walks for the public.
- Ramblers Hiking Club (ages 9-12) and At Home in High Park (ages 5-12) participants removing tons of invasive buckthorn shrubs and planting native woodland and savannah plants, trees and shrubs to improve the habitats.
- Knee-High Naturalists (aged 3-5) cooking bannock over an open fire.
- Nature Babies (ages 6 mo – 2) playing in leaves, learning bird calls, singing nature songs and helping feed chickadees and nuthatches.

Thanks again!

Please contact the High Park Nature Centre for more information about adult workshops, volunteering or visiting the Centre. Email naturecentre@highpark.org or call 416-392-1748 x2

Nature Babies in the leaves. Photo: Gisele Gordon
Chickadee on head. Photo: Jon Hayes

TFN GRANT REPORT: Bird Studies Canada Urban Birds Project

By Emily Rondel, Urban Program Coordinator, Bird Studies Canada

"Urban birds, you mean like pigeons?" is what most people say when told about ornithology in Toronto. Other than a few species found in urban centres the world over (rock pigeons, European starlings, and house sparrows), the consensus seems to be that urban spaces are sterile wildlife deserts. However, to the initiated (TFN members included), urban habitat is a vibrant mix of landscapes; wetlands, mature parkland, gardens, and backyard ravines. Moreover, a city is a place where people and wildlife interact daily, and where nature appreciation is possible at every turn.

Indeed, there are more urban-based bird studies than ever. A recent paper in the *Proceedings of the Royal Society B* summarized the first ever global analysis of urban birds. The findings echo what many city birdwatchers probably already knew; that urban centres contain a good amount of their region's native diversity. The international study, which included 54 cities from all populated continents, showed that at least 2,041 species—20 percent of all known birds—live in cities. The paper also found that 36 bird species identified by the IUCN Red List as threatened with extinction live in urban centres. Some of Toronto's Threatened birds, like chimney swifts, peregrine falcons, and common nighthawks, are even found at higher densities in cities than elsewhere, probably because they have co-opted elements of the urban infrastructure as breeding habitat.

In order to garner greater urban public involvment in bird appreciation and conservation, Bird Studies Canada (BSC) launched its first ever dedicated urban program in Toronto in 2011, and TFN generously supported our efforts in 2014. Initially conceived of as a way to introduce BSC's national programs to the city (e.g. Project FeederWatch and Project NestWatch), this program has quickly grown to include programs specifically aimed at Toronto's birds and people. One example, Toronto Summer Bird Count, is run with the Toronto Ornithological Club (TOC). TOC members comb the entire city each breeding season, listening and looking for the city's nesting birds. Over time, this data will allow BSC and the TOC to understand how birds use the Toronto landscape, and what features of the urban environment are the most important for conservation purposes.

So far, two years of data have already returned some interesting finds, such as the fact that certain aerial insectivore species (birds who hunt insects in flight) are doing relatively well in Toronto. This group of birds is declining faster than any other, making this preliminary finding even more interesting. Other specialized efforts in Toronto include surveys for common nighthawks, and a fledgling effort to record urban screech-owl abundance. All of these efforts are run with the interested public and local conservation partners, ensuring that the results are not just better bird data, but also a better informed and engaged urban public.

If you would like to participate in our urban programs in Toronto, or have questions about Toronto's birds, please contact urban program coordinator Emily Rondel at erondel@birdscanada.org

Photos taken during the common nighthawk migration monitoring program, a new BSC initiative unique to Toronto!
Photo credit: Irena Wilk

FROM THE ARCHIVES

From TFN #358, October 1983
Summer at the Cabin

Ed. TFN will be using the cabin as a base for nature walks for "Doors Open Toronto" in May. See President's Report p. 6

This year the cabin in Sunnybrook Park opened May 1 and will be open until October 2, rain or shine, on Sunday afternoons.

Our thanks to the Metropolitan Toronto Parks and Property Department who placed a permanent sign on the outside of the cabin and a wall holder inside for maps and pamphlets as well as a new map of the park for the wall.

A special thank-you to Jean Macdonald, Helen and Aarne Juhola for setting up and maintaining the cabin and information material; Sally Sturgeon for the many phone calls necessary to schedule volunteers; Betty Greenacre for her excellent photos which were displayed on the walls; Tom Atkinson, Mary Cumming and her sketch book, Emily Hamilton, Muriel Miville and Betty Paul who were at the cabin several Sundays, and all the other members who came to "do their bit" on behalf of the Toronto Field Naturalists.

In the cooler months of spring and fall we have the most visitors. Cyclists and walkers are curious and stop to investigate and chat and then leave with Parks maps and pamphlets that interest them. Many have not heard of the TFN and are interested to learn of our many outings in ravines and parks and take membership application forms away with them.

The hot, humid, summer "picnic" months are our slow days at the cabin. Even when the park is "packed," those who do wander in mainly want directions to the nearest washroom (which, incidentally, is in Serena Gundy Park); however, their children were entertained by the "match-the-name-with-the picture" board.

Members also had pleasant afternoons, not only meeting each other but talking to visitors from near and far, other provinces and even other countries including the USA and England. Local long-time citizens had interesting stories to tell of days gone by. We even had some people drop by the Saturday of the sketching outing at the cabin.

Thank you for a successful summer.

Joyce Cave

One of Mary Cumming's many sketches of the cabin

WEATHER (THIS TIME LAST YEAR)

March 2014

Winter refused to leave Toronto until well after the spring equinox. It was the coldest March downtown in 54 years and 30 years at Pearson Airport. The monthly mean temperature was -4.6° at Pearson Airport and (estimated to be) -2.6° or slightly colder downtown, running about 5° below normal and close to the normal for February.

Long-lasting Arctic high pressure brought mid-winter style sunny and very cold conditions on several occasions during the month. The coldest readings were on the 3rd (-18.4° downtown and -19.6° at Pearson); however, similar conditions with temperatures below -10° prevailed as late as the 26th. Brief warmer periods came during the second week and there was a slow recovery to near-seasonable conditions the very last few days of the month.

Precipitation was unremarkable. There were two substantial snowfalls on the 6th and 12th with very little after that. Snowfall totals for the month were 26.6 cm downtown and 29.6 cm at Pearson Airport, about 10 cm above normal. Rainfall was below normal with the prevalence of cold weather and almost no Gulf of Mexico input. Total precipitation of 27-28 mm was about 20 mm below normal.

Of course, the cold and persistent winter was the big story, especially after the mild conditions that have prevailed over the past 20 years or so. Most remarkably, Pearson Airport had its coldest November to March period on record (extending back to 1938) with a mean temperature over those five months of -4.7°, which beat the record of -4.6° set in 1976-77 and 1977-78. The normal for Nov-Mar is -1.7°. Great Lakes ice cover peaked on March 6th with 92.19% coverage, the second highest on record and the highest since February 1979. This is an incredible outlier given the long-term trend for reduction of sea and lake ice since the 1970s.

Snow cover in Toronto lasted until exactly March 31 downtown and March 20 at Pearson. There was a 101-day stretch downtown with continuously measurable snow cover (Dec 13-Mar 31), although total number of days with snow cover was comparable in 2007-2008.

Gavin Miller

TREMELLA FOLIACEA - LEAFY BRAIN

Tremella foliacea, known as leafy brain, is a unique parasite. Its host is another fungus, but it is not parasitic on the host's fruiting body, but rather on its "root system," i.e. the hyphae that grow inside dead trees.

The red-brown, gelatinous caps are arranged in densely-packed, undulating lobes. Yellow spores mature on the outer surface.

It can grow to one foot in length.

Harvey Medland

CITY OF TORONTO PARKS AND TRAILS
Wayfinding Strategy Phase Two

Discussion and Stakeholder Workshop
January 27th, 2015

If all goes well Toronto will be seeing new signs popping up in Toronto for those navigating the city on foot. The strategy, an initiative from the City of Toronto, aims to develop and install a coherent and accessible wayfinding* system for Toronto, including Toronto's park system, to create high quality pedestrian environments and foster a culture of walking in all of Toronto's neighbourhoods. The strategy is being developed by the firm Steer Davies Gleave.

Phase One developed the broad principles of defining a wayfinding framework for Toronto, including design principles, implementation strategy, outline business case, funding sources, and the parameters for a pilot implementation

The second phase of the Strategy is devoted to the design, building, and evaluation of a pilot implementation of the system, probably in the general vicinity of Riverdale Park East and West. A further ambition is to develop a Digital Wayfinding Strategy.

Phase Three will be a city-wide rollout.

The purpose of the January 27 meeting was to present an overview of Phase One and introduce Phase Two. Participants were asked to consider such aspects as the materiality of sign products (concrete, steel, etc), information content, mapping and graphic identity.

To get some idea of what is proposed there is a prototype of the TO360 wayfinding signs standing on Queen Street, directly opposite Old City Hall (shown at right). Bear in mind that this was designed for narrow, crowded urban streets, and we were assured that trail signs will be less stolidly monolithic.

As far as the Toronto trail system is concerned, the present mishmash of ad-hoc, unintegrated and wholly inadequate signage is overdue for renewal. I recently counted seven separate information signs at the Kingston Road entrance to Glen Stewart Ravine.

Mention was made of indicating Environmentally Significant Areas, but otherwise the discussion was limited to signage and ancillary issues.

For those who would like to see how this develops, go to www.toronto.ca and type "wayfinding" in the search box.

Charles Bruce-Thompson

* From the City of Toronto website:

What is wayfinding? *A wayfinding system enables people to orient themselves in physical space and navigate from place to place. City wayfinding relates to the built and the natural environment and makes streets, neighbourhoods, and the city more "legible", helping people to find their way. Wayfinding is more than signs—it includes names, maps, new media, and elements of the public realm such as lighting, street furniture and public art.*

Photo: Jenny Bull

Flash of vivid red
Through pine boughs and swirling snow
The feeder beckons

Haiku by Elisabeth Gladstone

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

- Sun, Mar 1, 9 am - late afternoon. Toronto to Burlington Lakeshore - waterfowl, geese, swans. Leader: Garth Riley. Meet at the parking lot at Humber Bay East (south of Lake Shore Blvd W at Park Lawn Rd). Go south on Parklawn and then keep right to go to the parking lot to car pool.

High Park Walking Tours

1st and 3rd Sundays of each month from 10:30 to noon. Meet at the benches in front of the Grenadier Restaurant.
Information: 416-392-6916 or walkingtours@highpark.org or www.highpark.org.

- Mar 1. Discover the Park through Archival Photos. Master Gardener Terry Fahey narrates the story of changes in the park for the past 100 years.
- Mar 15. My Favourite Trails. City Councillor Sarah Doucette reveals her special High Park places.

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.

Harbourfront Centre

To June 2015. No Flat City, Toronto's Incomparable Terrain. A photographic exhibit of the GTA landscape.

Toronto Entomogical Association

Sat Mar 28, 1 pm. Student Symposium - Graduate students, senior undergraduates and postdoctoral fellows will be presenting talks and posters. Room 432, Ramsay Wright Building, University of Toronto (25 Harbord St). Info. www.ontarioinsects.org

The Market Gallery

Jan 24 - May 9. Toronto Observed Through Three Generations. South St Lawrence Market, 2nd floor, 95 Front St E. Free. Gallery closed Sun, Mon and holidays. Information: Toronto.ca/marketgallery

Science on Sundays – Royal Canadian Institute for the Advancement of Science (RCI) – Lectures

Macleod Auditorium, Medical Sciences Building, University of Toronto, 1 King's College Circle (nearest subway Queen's Park Station) Info: royalcanadianinstitute.org

- Mar 1. Let's Talk Science – Inspiring Discovery. An afternoon of engaging hands-on activities geared towards children 6-12 years and their families. Doors open at 12:45. Event ends 3:30 pm

Ian Wheal Walks

- Sat Mar 21, 1:30 pm. Hillcrest pre-TTC: Slopes, Swamp, Station (CP Rail). A walk of Hillcrest-Wychwood area. Meet at southeast corner of Bathurst St and Dupont St.
- Sun Mar 29, 1 pm. Venice Gondola Hike - Corso Italia to Don Valley (14 km). Meet at 1 pm at the southeast corner of Caledonia Rd and St Clair Ave W. (A hike partly taken by Sandford Fleming and his wife, Annie Hall in 1860.)

Ontario BioBlitz

ONTARIO BIOBLITZ 2015-the DON

SAVE THE DATE: JUNE 13-14

Location: Don River Watershed
Host: Ontario Science Centre

Registration and event details coming soon!
www.ontariobioblitz.ca

Toronto Field Naturalists
1519—2 Carlton St.,
Toronto, Ontario, M5B 1J3

Publications Mail
Registration No. 40049590

Beaver at Leslie Street Spit, January 2015 photographed by Miriam Garfinkle