



TORONTO FIELD NATURALIST

Number 611 April 2015



Spring beauties. Watercolour by Geraldine Goodwin

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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, March 31

NEWSLETTER COMMITTEE

Jenny Bull (co-editor), Vivienne Denton, Karin Fawthrop, Nancy Fredenburg, Elisabeth Gladstone, Judy Marshall, Lynn Miller, 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.

Please note: TFN does not give out its membership list.

Toronto Field Naturalists

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Note: The TFN office is open on Fridays from 9:30 am to noon.

KIDS NATURE PAGE

Starting in September, we would like to have a kids' section in the newsletter, aimed at our young members. The Newsletter Committee is looking for volunteers to provide content for this section.

If you are interested, please e-mail the TFN office putting "Newsletter" in the subject line.

A craft project for your 'grands' or school kids:

This is such a simple idea but v. clever! Take a sturdy toilet paper roll, cover with peanut butter, roll in seed, put over branch or tie on with string looped thru. Enjoy! This one was alive with birds in Ashbridges Bay Park on February 10.

Lynn Pady



TFN MEETING

Sunday, April 12, 2015

2:30 pm

Climate Change Effects on Pollinators

*James Thomson & Sheila Colla, Conservation Biologists, U of T
will report the effects of climate change on bees,
wildflowers' blooming times and plant-pollinator interactions*

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.

Upcoming TFN Lecture

May 3 **Toronto's Urban Forests**
Janet McKay, Executive Director, LEAF

NATURE ARTS

**Volunteers needed to lead Nature Arts
events and members to participate.**

If you can sketch, paint, draw, keep a nature journal, take a photograph or write a Haiku, and are available to lead a Nature Arts event (walk, workshop, hands-on demonstration, gallery or museum visit, etc) on the first Saturday of a month, please contact Joanne Doucette at [REDACTED] or leave a message at the TFN Office (416-593-2656).



Saw-whet owl. Painting by Joanne Doucette

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 2
10:00 am **WYCHWOOD PARK – Nature Walk**
Leader: Doug Paton
Meet at the small park across from St Clair West subway station on south side of St Clair Ave W.
Walk will end at Tollkeeper's Cottage, Davenport Rd and Bathurst St. Morning only.
- Sat
Apr 4
10:00 am **COURTYARDS AND PARKETTES OF DOWNTOWN TORONTO**
Leader: Ken Sproule
Meet at the northwest corner of Yonge St and Front St for a 2 1/2 hour walk through courtyards, parkettes and the PATH. We will always be a short walk from the subway and end at the Eaton Centre
- Wed
Apr 8
6:00 pm **INSPIRED BY THE MASTERS: A SCAVENGER HUNT – Nature Arts**
Art Gallery of Ontario
Leader: Joanne Doucette
Meet at 6 pm outside the entrance of the Art Gallery of Ontario at 317 Dundas St W. Admission is free on Wednesdays from 6 pm to 8:30 pm. Scavenger hunts aren't just for kids! They are a great way to explore artists you never knew existed, and renew acquaintances with favourite masters. This scavenger hunt will involve two or more teams, each with a list of tasks the team members need to accomplish during our visit to the gallery. Afterwards we will meet in a nearby coffee shop to discuss the results of our hunt.
- Thurs
Apr 9
10:00 am **FOOL'S PARADISE**
Leader: Linda McCaffrey
Meet at Pine Ridge Dr bus stop on Kingston Rd, one block west of Bellamy Rd (before the Shell station) for a ramble to the top of the bluffs and along to Fool's Paradise. Doris McCarthy, abstract landscape artist, painted here in her studio from 1939 until her death in 2010. Now a Heritage Trust Property with good raptor viewing. Bring binoculars and lunch. Duration about 3 hours.
- Sat
Apr 11
10:00 am **CHINE DRIVE RAVINE – Birds and Plants**
Leader: Bob Kortright
Meet at the southeast corner of Chine Dr and Kingston Rd. Morning only. Bring binoculars.
- Sun
Apr 12
2:30 pm **LECTURE – CLIMATE CHANGE EFFECTS ON POLLINATORS**
Speakers: James Thomson & Sheila Colla, Conservation Biologists, U of T
Room 003, Northrop Fry Hall, 73 Queen's Park Cres E. See page 3.
- Thurs
Apr 16
1:00 pm **ST GEORGE STREET – Trees and Architecture**
Leader: Richard Partington
Meet at the northwest corner of St George St and College St. We will wind our way to Willcox St through the U of T campus noting things of arboreal or architectural interest. Bring binoculars. 2 ½ hours
- Sat
Apr 18
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 circular walk ending at 12:30 pm.

- Sun
Apr 19
2:00 pm
ASHBRIDGE'S BAY: PAST, PRESENT, FUTURE – Lost Rivers
Leaders: John Wilson and Bob Kortright
Meet at the south end of Coxwell Ave at Lake Shore Blvd E. Get a leg up on Earth Week with a spring walk through Ashbridge's Bay Park to find what has become of the lost marsh that once dominated Toronto's eastern waterfront. We'll look for returning wildlife, particularly early signs of spring. We'll look at future plans for the bay and for urban water treatment nearby, and discuss their implications for our blue-green future. A joint outing with the Toronto Green Community.
- Tues
Apr 21
10:00 am
ASHBRIDGES BAY – Nature and Birds
Leader: Doug Paton
Meet in front of the Beaches Library, south side of Queen St E (west of Lee Ave). Bring binoculars. Circular walk. Morning only.
- Sat
Apr 25
10:00 am
TAYLOR MASSEY CREEK – Nature Walk
Leader: Margaret McRae
Meet outside Victoria Park subway station for a circle walk to look for signs of spring. Bring lunch if you wish.
- Sun
Apr 26
1:00 pm
E.T. SETON PARK – Shoreline Cleanup
Leader: Lynn Miller
Meet at the south end of the circular parking lot in the park. If you need a ride down the hill, e-mail [REDACTED] and wait at the top of the hill at the park road near 75 Thorncliffe Park Dr. There will be a sign at the pickup point and a table at the parking lot.
- Tues
Apr 28
10:30 am
UPPER HUMBER RIVER CIRCUIT – Heritage Walk
Leader: Linda McCaffrey
Meet at Old Mill subway station. We will proceed along the Humber River past Fisher's Mill to Dundas, cross over the river and return to Old Mill along the path on the east side. About 2 hours.



American redstart. Photo by Skip Shand

Carolinian Canada Trip: Backus Woods/Long Point (Port Rowan, Ontario)

May 12 & 13, 2015
Leader: Joanne Doucette

On May 12 we will explore Backus Woods, Ontario's best old growth Carolinian forest. This is a ramble for those interested in birds, flowers, trees, etc. Backus Woods is owned and managed by the Nature Conservancy of Canada (NCC) which purchased the 875-acre property from Long Point Region Conservation Authority in 2011 .

On May 13 we will explore Long Point Provincial Park, a biosphere reserve recognized by UNESCO. Long Point is 20 miles (32.2 kilometers) long and thought to be 4,000 years old. It's a staging area for migratory songbirds and waterfowl, and populated by birds, turtles, fish, reptiles and amphibians.

This is a 2½ hour drive from Toronto. Car pooling. Camping or motel. **Members only.**

Space is limited, so reserve by April 25 by e-mailing Joanne at [REDACTED] or by leaving a message at the TFN Office.

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

By the time that you receive the April newsletter it technically will be spring, but my guess is that it still will feel like winter here in Toronto. We've just experienced the coldest February on record, resulting in enough ice in the harbour to close down the Toronto Island ferries. A few days ago we went searching for wintering ducks and were happy to find long-tailed ducks, common goldeneye, red-breasted merganser, greater scaup and redheads among the mallards and Canada geese at the warm water outflow at the Hearn Generating Station at the base of Leslie Street Spit. I was delighted as always to observe the crispness and fine detail of their breeding plumage in contrast to the wintry landscape.

I am pleased to announce that Jennifer Smith has accepted our invitation to become a member of the TFN board, starting officially in October, 2015. Jennifer is retiring from a career as a public school teacher. She has been an active volunteer at TFN outreach activities such as "Get the Jump on Spring" (see photo) and the recent Digital Images show. Many will recognize her as one of two emcees, along with Richard Partington, at the 90th Anniversary show in October, 2013.

Last Sunday I enjoyed Shawn Blackburn's talk on the first Ontario Bioblitz held in the Rouge Valley in June, 2012 (see report on page 7). Last year the Bioblitz was held in the upper Humber River watershed and 1560 different kinds of plants, fungi, insects, birds, mammals, fish, amphibians and reptiles were recorded over a 24 hour period. This year it will be held in the Don Valley on June 13-14, and I urge TFN members to consider volunteering for this fun and educational event. For information see www.ontariobioblitz.ca.

During the 1970s, the TFN published series of surveys on the natural heritage of eight Toronto Ravines. Although

each survey was conducted over a longer time period, each was in a way, a mini-Bioblitz, aiming to document the rich biodiversity of these special places. I hope that the TFN will give attention to these surveys over the next few years, perhaps making them available online and/or revisiting those sites to compare biodiversity then and now.

Over the past two months the TFN bylaw revision committee, chaired by board member Anne Powell, has been considering the new Ontario-Not-for-Profit Act (ONCA). The TFN bylaw needs to be amended to meet these new legal requirements and to better reflect our current practices. When review of the recommendations for charitable organizations is complete, the ONCA committee will bring policy resolutions to the TFN board. The newly drafted TFN bylaw will be presented to the TFN membership at large, most likely during 2016. In addition, the TFN ONCA committee is considering our objects as they now must meet new criteria for access to eligibility for registration as a charity with Canada Revenue. We plan to present the revised TFN objects at the Annual General Meeting in October, 2015.

Thank you again to all of you who filled out the TFN membership survey which will provide vital information for the TFN board planning session held at the end of March. In addition, board members Joanne Doucette and Lynn Miller have surveyed membership fees and benefits, as well as best and worst practices, of more than 30 nature clubs across Canada and elsewhere. Their comparison and analysis forms the basis of the document *Facing our Own Climate Change – A Review of the Challenges Facing the Toronto Field Naturalists* which along with the membership survey will provide a framework for discussion and identification of TFN goals over the next five years.

Nancy Dengler



New TFN board member Jennifer Smith volunteering at "Get the Jump on Spring" event at Toronto Botanical Garden in February, 2014. Photo: Nancy Dengler

MONTHLY MEETING REPORT

What the *#&! Is a Bioblitz?

March 1. Shawn Blackburn, Programs Coordinator, Toronto Zoo

Toronto Zoo Education Programs Coordinator Shawn Blackburn didn't know much about the answer to this question when he became one of the coordinators of Ontario's first bioblitz.

A bioblitz is a scientific study of what species can be found in a defined environment over a short period of time, usually 24 hours, with a fun atmosphere. They bring together scientists, naturalists and often volunteers from the general public to find every living thing. They have a high potential to find something interesting, and over time will give valuable scientific information about species drift.

Such studies have been done for a long time, but it is only relatively recently that the name "bioblitz" came into use. They have popped up all over the world. In Canada, the first ones were on the west coast, followed by the east coast. Ontario's first took place in 2012 in the Rouge Valley, organized by the Toronto Zoo, Ontario Nature, and the Get to Know program of the Wild Neighbours Society. The planners expected to find about 400 species. The 1450 species found was then the largest number for any bioblitz around the world.

The 250 people who took part, including some members of the TFN, made it the largest bioblitz in the world that year. Professional taxonomists from the Toronto Zoo, the TRCA, and the ROM ensured correct identification, working around the clock in the Rouge Valley Conservation Centre's basement to identify species brought in by other volunteers.

Plants and insects accounted for the largest portion of species found. Almost every Ontario reptile species was found. One of the interesting finds was the black purse spider, the only tarantula species in Ontario. They live their entire life in a well-hidden purse. This one was found dead in the parking lot.

A second bioblitz was held in 2013 again in Rouge Park, followed by one in the Humber Valley in 2014 which found 1460 species in a smaller area than the Rouge Park.

Full species lists for all are posted on the Bioblitz Ontario website: www.ontariobioblitz.ca/species-lists.html. The ROM's Dave Ireland and his team are starting to plan a Canada-wide bioblitz. It is commonly thought that most species are concentrated along the equator. But bioblitzes here and there in Canada show that our colder northern climes also have abundant life.



This year on June 13-14, bioblitzers will spread out for the first time across the Don River watershed. Base camp will be hosted at the Ontario Science Centre. Registration for taxonomic specialists, skilled naturalists and skilled interpreters is from March 9 - April 17. Registration for novice naturalists, nature enthusiasts, young naturalists under the age of 16, and the bioblitz support team will be from April 27 - May 31. All TFN members are encouraged to participate in the 2015 bioblitz. Everyone can learn, no matter how much or how little they know. For more info: www.ontariobioblitz.ca/2015-don-river-watershed.html.

Lavinia Mohr

EXTRACTS FROM OUTINGS LEADERS' REPORTS

Snowshoeing, Jim Baillie Nature Reserve, Feb 7. Leader: Margaret McRae

There was a foot of fresh snow so the snowshoeing was good. Several of us took turns leading the group, with special thanks to Charles Chaffey for his assistance. Five of the group had never been to the reserve before, including a family with two children and we all enjoyed it. It was cold, below zero, and apart from some chickadees we did not see much wildlife. In the swampy areas the seed heads of the cattails were fluffing out and still standing tall despite the ravages of winter. In the forest it was serene and lovely as we walked through the snow covered trees. We pointed out some of the common trees, but on the whole it was too cold to stop and talk about nature. In several low lying places in the forest, Charles pointed out the dark brown fertile fronds of sensitive ferns stiffly poking through the blanket of snow, waiting for spring thaw to release their spores. There were also numerous birch polypores, often topped with a dollop of snow like little iced cakes. In the cold weather we appreciated the treehouse seating by the river and the shelter shed where we ate our lunch.



Snowshoeing at Jim Baillie Nature Reserve, February 7.
Photo by Marcia Sine

Colonel Danforth Park, Feb 11. Leader: Miles Hearn

We noted 41 different trees and shrubs. We saw long-tailed duck, mute swan, ring-billed gull, mourning dove, red-tailed hawk, crow, downy woodpecker, hairy woodpecker, white-breasted nuthatch, goldfinch, cardinal, tree sparrow, and noticed a red squirrel and deer tracks.

Upper Lavender Creek, Feb 14. Leader: Alexander Cappell

Our main experience was the low temperature. It dropped from -8.5C when we started at 1:30 pm to -12C when we left the coffee shop at 5 pm. Starting at Eglinton W, we walked south on Vaughan Road, which is on the inter-fluvial ridge separating Castle Frank Brook (which flows into the Don) from Lavender Creek (which flows into Black Creek). The cold didn't bother us much because we were properly dressed, but everyone's face turned bright pink. From Vaughan Rd, we descended into the ravine of mostly buried Lavender Creek. It's a residential neighbourhood with tiers of houses rising above us on the slopes and outdoor stairways to take us up and down. The creek surfaces near the junction of Lavender Rd and Keele St and then disappears into a culvert under the railroad tracks.

Lost Rivers, Mid-Winter Walk in Riverdale: Howard/Holly/Mill Brook, Feb 15.

Leaders: John Wilson and Joanne Doucette

The temperature with the wind chill was -40 C with strong winds out of the west. Although it was sunny, the cold was brutal. There was not a bird to be seen. Even the squirrels were hiding in their holes like sane rodents. Joanne talked about the three historic trees of Pape and Queen: the black willow for which Willow St. (lower Pape



Outside Wrigley Fire Hall, Feb 15. Photo: John Wilson

Ave) was named, the elm tree purportedly the site of the first lynching in Ontario on Feb. 15, 1819 (136 years ago to the day); and the silver maple that inspired *The Maple Leaf Forever*. We talked about the 1914 fire hydrant in front of 49 Boston Ave where the creek crossed the road and the system of colour codes adopted in 2000 for Toronto fire hydrants, as well as the Russell law suit. Its resolution triggered the industrialization of Carlaw Ave.

We took a break at Dundas and Carlaw in a coffee shop because of the extreme cold. Then we walked north on Carlaw and talked about the history of Badgerow Ave, the lost bridge there and the Badgerow/Bergereau history vis-a-vis the Markham Gang and the Upper Canada Rebellion. We touched on the Sewell murder and the Brooke's Bush Gang. We ended early at the fire hall on Gerrard due to the weather and retired to another coffee shop to warm up and share historic maps and photos. It was agreed that we should do the walk again in more humane weather.

Humber Bay Park East, Feb 21. Leader: Anne Powell

A beautiful peaceful snowy winter day with no wind. Despite reduced visibility because of the falling snow we enjoyed good views of white-winged scoters and common and red-breasted mergansers. Other birds we saw included: trumpeter swans, common goldeneye, long-tailed ducks, lesser scaup, greater scaup, cardinal, chickadee, American tree sparrow and common redpolls.

Morningside Park, Feb 25. Leader: Miles Hearn

We noted around 40 different trees and shrubs. Birds seen included: ring-billed gull, crow, pine siskin, white-throated sparrow, tree sparrow, cardinal, blue jay, starling, mourning dove, rock pigeon, red-bellied, hairy and downy woodpeckers, black-capped chickadee, white-breasted nuthatch, red-tailed hawk. We saw red and black squirrels and about 10 white-tailed deer.

Birds, Ashbridges Bay Park, Feb 28. Leader: Bob Kortright

Ashbridges Bay, Coatsworth Cut, and the yacht club's bay were frozen except for small spaces melted by bubbles around the yacht club's docks. Many redhead and a few greater scaup, common goldeneye, and red-breasted merganser crowded into these spaces. At the

ice edge at the west end of the park, an adult Thayer's gull, about 10 each of Iceland gulls (adult, first winter, and 2nd winter) and herring gulls afforded excellent views alongside about 100 ring-billed gulls of all ages. After all the gulls took off, a buteo (rough-legged hawk?) plummeted out of the sky, but unfortunately out-of-sight on the other side of the yachts. Nearby mallards were outnumbered by scaup, goldeneye, bufflehead, white-winged scoters, and abundant long-tailed ducks. A few American tree sparrows huddled in dense shrubs with a cardinal. The surf scoters present last weekend had unfortunately left.



White-winged scoter and long-tailed duck.
American tree sparrow. Photos by Ken Sproule
at Ashbridges Bay, February 28



FOR READING

The Double-Crested Cormorant: Plight of a Feathered Pariah
by Linda R. Wires. Hardcover, 368 pp,
2014, Yale University Press

North America's double-crested cormorant, like other cormorants, is superbly adapted to catch fish. Cormorants have been vilified since biblical times. So it should be no surprise that European settlers in North America deemed the double-crested cormorant an evil competitor for fish and have tried to destroy the birds. This book thoroughly explores the roots of human-cormorant conflicts, dispels myths about the birds, and describes the history of double-crested cormorant management/control/slaughter.

Conservation biologist Linda Wires synthesizes the cultural, historical, scientific, and political elements of our cormorant's story. She outlines records of enormous populations which were slaughtered in the 19th century, their recovery in the early 20th century as bird hunting diminished, decimation by DDT, and their amazing late-twentieth-century population recovery. She also documents centres of opposition to cormorants, including fish farmers in the lower Mississippi valley, and fishermen in the Great Lakes and elsewhere who pressured state, provincial and U.S. federal agencies into permitting or carrying out slaughter of hundreds of thousands of the birds. Wires exposes "management" as generally a euphemism for persecution and shows that the current strategies of aggressive predator control are unsupported by science.

Ontario, and Toronto in particular, come off relatively well in this book. Although culls took place in Presqu'ile Provincial Park and at Middle Island, Canada's southernmost land which belongs to Pelee National Park, the one at Presqu'ile was stopped, in part by an alliance of groups including Cormorant Defenders International which publicized the cruelty, expense, and futility of the cull. The TRCA received praise for the consultative process which led to the current management of the largest cormorant colony on the Great Lakes on the Leslie St Spit, where cormorants are encouraged to nest on the ground, where the eggs are oiled to limit the growth of the colony, but no culling is done.

The book acknowledges that Pelee National Park culled birds at Middle Island to protect plants that are rare in Canada (in accordance with their mandate), but questioned whether it makes sense given that the plants in question are abundant south of the border, and that the tree destruction caused by the cormorant nesting is a natural process.

Bob Kortright



Drawing by
Diana Banville

There's a Sting in My Tail (2013)
and
A Buzz in the Meadow (2014)
by David Goulson

The author has been a naturalist since childhood. He began with collecting eggs and rearing small animals, though not always successfully. Eventually he discovered bumble bees, which are now the focus of his research. He also discovered the importance of plants and bio-diversity and, in the second book, he reveals the horror of "neonics" (even worse than DDT). We don't seem to learn!

Along the way he bought a property in France that he is trying to make into a perfect place for bees.

There is so much natural history in these two books that I think they are essential reads for anyone interested in how the world works and how a naturalist thinks.

Helen Juhola

Oak Ridges Moraine From Above

Bill Lishman, aka Father Goose (see the film *Fly Away Home*, 1996), will be publishing a limited edition coffee table book of aerial images taken over the past few years flying over Oak Ridges Moraine in his ultralight aircraft. It will be a high-quality, glossy paged, hard-cover publication financed by crowd-sourcing (see www.rockethub.com) and launched on April 22.

To see some of the pictures that will be used, go to: www.thestar.com/news/gta/2015/02/18/bill-lishman-reveals-the-oak-ridges-moraine-as-youve-never-seen-it.html

TORONTO WILDFLOWERS: SMILAX

Herbaceous carrion-flower (*Smilax herbacea*) and bristly greenbrier (*S. tamnoides*) are the two local representatives of the genus *Smilax*. This genus was formerly included in the Liliaceae (lily family) but, after molecular studies, was assigned to the Smilacaceae. This small family includes about 300 species of *Smilax* and about 20 other species. Twenty-two of the *Smilax* species occur in mainland North America, according to the website of the U.S. Dept. of Agriculture (USDA). As with many other plant families, there are several common family names in use: carrion-flower family, catbrier family and sarsaparilla family.

The roots of several more southerly species of *Smilax* species are ground to produce sarsaparilla commercially. Used as a digestive tonic and to treat fevers, rheumatism, etc., at one time sarsaparilla was used as an (unsuccessful) cure for syphilis. In Ontario, the common plant name sarsaparilla is usually used to refer to species of *Aralia*, members of the ginseng family. The roots of *Aralia nudicaulis* (wild or false sarsaparilla) have been used as a substitute to produce sarsaparilla.

S. herbacea is a vine with a stem up to two metres long that is annual – i.e., the plant is a herbaceous perennial, unlike most members of the genus which are woody perennials. Its 10 to 15 mm-wide flowers occur in

spherical umbels. Plants have either male (illustrated) or female flowers. See *The ROM Field Guide Wildflowers of Ontario* (p 109) for the latter. Flowers bloom from late May to mid-June. Their pollinators are carrion flies [hence its common name] and the flowers produce the appropriate scent.

The TFN's *Vascular Plants of Metropolitan Toronto* (2nd ed. 1994) recorded this species as uncommon but reported across Toronto from the Humber to the Rouge, in High Park and on the Scarborough Bluffs. *The ROM Field Guide* stated it occurs south from the Georgian Bay ecoregion and in several ecoregions north of Lake Superior. The USDA shows it in New Brunswick, Quebec, and almost all of the eastern half of the U.S., north of Florida.

S. tamnoides (previously known as *S. hispida*) is a woody perennial vine as much as six metres long. Its about 8 to 10-mm long flowers occur in groups all attached by their stalks to a common point, by definition forming umbels. However, there are relatively few flowers and these bloom individually, forming distinctly humble umbels! The TFN's *Vascular Plants* recorded it as rare in Toronto, reported from the West Don, Morningside, and Rouge areas. My image, taken in late May 1998, is from the uplands between the Rouge and Little Rouge. *The ROM Field Guide* reported it in central and southern Ontario. It has not been recorded in other Canadian provinces but it has been found in most of the eastern half of the U.S.

Flowers of these two species would not strike most observers as beautiful and in one case can assault the human nose. However, this is nature as it is. It should be of interest to fellow TFN naturalists, perhaps of enough interest to enjoy while, when appropriate, not breathing in too deeply.

Article and photos by Peter Money



Left: Herbaceous carrion-flower (*Smilax herbacea*)

Right: bristly greenbrier (*Smilax tamnoides*, formerly *S. hispida*)



KEEPING IN TOUCH

The dried heads of black-eyed susans in my garden look lovely against the snow in the middle of winter. I've noticed in previous years that they're popular with goldfinches that love to pick the seeds out of the heads. One day this year, the stems caught my eye through the window because they appeared to be shaking about. A closer look revealed American tree sparrows clinging to the top of the stems near the head. They seemed to be jumping up and down while flapping their wings. Then the birds dropped onto the snow and started pecking - presumably eating up the seeds - and anything else - that had fallen out with all that shaking!

And they use "bird brain" as an insult!

Jenny Bull

.....



Double-decker woodpeckers! It was fun to catch an almost-mirror image of male downy and hairy pecking away at the High Park bird sanctuary (Feb 22). From the birds' point of view, that home-made suet must have been a special treat!

Carole Giangrande

.....

I suggest the Passenger Pigeon as the national bird for Canada. Think about it, and I am sure you will understand the significance of this suggestion.

Al Roffey

.....



Eating niger seeds from my birdfeeder in February – one of five deer that visit my garden.

Karin Fawthrop

.....



I took this photo of the Bald Eagle in High Park on January 28th, and the mink at Leslie Street Spit on January 25th.

Thought you would like to see. :)

Gray Carlin



URBAN NATURE AND RELEASING PERFECTIONISM

I've been thinking a lot about perfection lately. I have even scolded myself for the imperfection of trying to be perfect!

Escaping to the natural world helps. There, the rustling of leaves and the smell of wild flowers silence the perfection police in my head. I live in the heart of Canada's largest city, yet it is a city filled with wild spaces – parks and ravines abound. In the past year I've spent a lot of time exploring my wild city and I've learned that I need nature – urban nature in particular – to combat my perfectionist demons. The reason is simple – urban nature is not perfect – yet I love it.

When I walk in a city park, or even some of the wilder areas like Toronto's many ravines, I find litter, I find exotic and invasive species, and I often find an abundance of other humans. Yet, the same attributes that make urban wild spaces imperfect make them all the more significant.

Urban green spaces are imperfect because they are affected by the built-up landscape that surrounds them. Yet it is this *proximity* that gives urban nature one of its most important qualities. It is accessible – not only to those who have cars to drive out of the city – for everyone.

The benefits of this accessibility are enormous. The Cities Biodiversity Outlook Project and the Convention on Biological Diversity have summarized a wealth of research on the topic. For example, access to green space decreases stress, and physical activity in green spaces actually inspires people to exercise more! With more than half of the world's humans now living in urban areas, natural areas within our cities often provide the *only* link to the natural world. These green spaces remind us that humans depend on ecosystems to meet our basic needs. Surrounded by built environments this is all too easy to forget.

But let's not be selfish, the benefits are not just for humans. Green spaces provide important habitat for wildlife within the urban ecosystem. For example, urban and suburban areas support a variety of bees and can

provide a richer and healthier diet than intensively managed farmland. This is in part because of human intervention. Backyard gardens harbour astonishing plant and insect biodiversity (though do try to plant native and non-invasive species that are adapted to your area). City trees are important too. Urban forests provide resting habitats for migrating birds and even small fragments of green space in very urbanized areas make a difference. These green spaces are islands in a sea of concrete and therefore havens in the built environment.

Take Tommy Thompson Park in Toronto for instance. The park epitomizes the restorative and even resurrective power of urban nature. It is also the epitome of imperfection – literally a dump – an urban wasteland colonized by weedy species, which were the only things

that could survive the hostile environment. These pioneer plants generated soil that now sustains a variety of wild flowers, shrubs, and trees. Today, the park's meadows contain native and exotic wildflower species that support pollinators like bees and butterflies, and its forest is home to many nesting birds. The peninsula is also a refueling site for thousands of migrant birds as they cross the lake. More than 300 bird species have been recorded in this green space, right in the middle of Toronto.

So when my children's eyes light up at watching a great blue heron flying over a wetland in Tommy

Thompson Park, it doesn't matter that we can see a smoke stack rising just above the trees. In fact, the sight of nature thriving amid our city brings a calm acceptance that helps me to embrace my own imperfections.

Urban green spaces are inspiring, whether remnants of intact forest, restored areas built by volunteers, or wild areas that rose from the dust of an urban wasteland. Urban wild spaces, just like the people who need them, are not perfect. Their beauty and functionality – in spite of imperfection – remind us that the mistakes we make give us depth and wisdom.

Deborah Buehler

Deborah Buehler is a member of TFN, has a PhD in Animal Ecology and a love of writing (see buehlerdm.wordpress.com/articles/)



Perfect kids enjoying imperfect urban nature – because it is there just outside their door.

FROM THE ARCHIVES

Extracted from TFN #195, March 1963

Early in the March of the seemingly endless reign of ice and snow of this winter of 1962-1963, the field naturalist, along with all his fellow-citizens, is asking himself, will it ever cease? Seeking an answer to that question, I went back to my journal to see what other seasons had been like.

April 4-6, 1958: To our delight, we found this weekend that, save for sheltered places in the woods and the remains of old drifts along fences and hedgerow, the snow has gone. Yet, it is so recently gone, and there is still enough left in bits and patches, that we had no idea of seeing flowers. Hence, to us the most amazing find on the first day of our visit was to discover that the woods were already dotted with blooms of hepatica. They varied in hue from deep, almost indigo blue, to pink and white. Near the entrance to the wood, bloodroot was raising white faces beneath the shelter of high grey limestone rocks, and amongst the trees a few spring beauties nodded fragile pink blooms beside moss-green boulders. Here and there we saw the grey-purple flush of new-born cohosh plants, just rising from the brown bed of the woods, looking like little purplish fountains bubbling up amongst the old leaves. A further flash of colour caught our eyes, the brilliant red of the scarlet cup mushroom.

Birds, however, were extremely scarce; for them it is a truly backward season. Nonetheless, here as in the flowering woods, the accent is upon spring, as shown by the birds that come in pairs and by the territorial fight of the chickadees.

Except for the colder part of the night, frogs were making springtime music all the time. The marsh was filled with them, mostly swamp tree frogs, but with a few wood frogs gruffly punctuating the tree frog trills, and one leopard frog snoring an obbligate accompaniment. These are some of the integral sounds of spring, and no vernal season would be quite complete without them.

April 9-10, 1959: As soon as we arrived, we exclaimed at the way in which the snow had disappeared since the previous weekend. We hurried to the marsh where we saw

a skunk cabbage coming into bloom. With the “pussies” on the willows, it constituted the start of springtime blooming, a wonderfully welcome sight to winter-dimmed eyes.



Watercolour of red-winged blackbird from TFN library. Please let us know if you can identify the artist.



Blue cohosh drawn by D. Andrew White

As our eyes were being called to look upon nascent spring, so too were our ears. No one could miss the jubilant conkarees of the redwings, now reclaiming property rights amidst the cattails. A flicker shouted from across the road, juncos trilled and song sparrows set up their familiar music. Then, suddenly, came a burst of finch-like cadences; again and again they rang out. For long moments we were faced with a puzzle, a somewhat familiar yet seldom-heard song. Then it came again, refreshing our memories of a similar April musical years ago – fox sparrows.

Morning arrived cool and damp, like the day before, and again the air was full of song. Out over the pasture I suddenly heard that sound, so sought after nowadays and so seldom heard, the carolling of a bluebird. How good it was to know that a few of these beautiful birds are still with us. If only they can make a comeback and again become a familiar sight in our countryside.

Thus quickly does the picture change. A long winter that seemed as if it would never end has given way with startling suddenness to a swiftly burgeoning spring. Of course, we may have setbacks. There is no certainty in any of these statistics. The one reality is surprise. Each spring has its own timing and character. Nonetheless, by the time this issue of the Newsletter reaches your hands, spring will be starting in some form all through the Toronto area, and will be ready to burst forth in all its glory.

R.M. Saunders

TFN GRANT REPORT: Ontario Nature's Nature Guardians Program

By Sarah Hedges, Conservation and Education Co-ordinator, Ontario Nature

Inspiring Ontario's young environmental leaders

Thank you Toronto Field Naturalists, for your contribution to Ontario Nature's Nature Guardians Program this past year. Your support has allowed us to continue fostering the next generation of young environmental leaders.

Our fifth annual Youth Summit for Biodiversity and Community Action was a huge success and brought together 91 teens from 45 communities across the province for an inspiring, action-packed weekend. Held September 19-21, 2014 at YMCA Geneva Park, youth had the opportunity to participate in a wide variety of outdoor activities and workshops, early morning activities, evening campfires, a Community Action Fair and fun group challenges. The Youth Council is already eagerly planning our 2015 summit.

New to the program this year is our Youth Council's campaign to protect pollinators. Taking a leadership role in this biodiversity crisis, Youth Council members delivered over 1,200 signed postcards to Queen's Park, asking the Premier to restrict the use of neonicotinoids. Council members have also been speaking at events,

writing blogs, hosting pollinator workshops and creating posters and videos that will be used to demonstrate how Ontario citizens can create pollinator habitat in their backyards and beyond. We look forward to continuing this important work with the Youth Council and are grateful to TFN for the support.

To learn more about the Nature Guardians Program, please visit www.ontarionature.org/connect/nature_guardians/index.php



TFN GRANT REPORT: Toronto Zoo's Adopt-a-Pond Program

By Crystal Robertson, Stewardship Coordinator, Adopt-A-Pond Wetland Conservation Programme

GTA Classrooms Learn about Terrific Turtles!

In 2014, the Toronto Zoo's Adopt-A-Pond Wetland Conservation Programme received funding from the Toronto Field Naturalists to spread the word about turtle conservation in local school classes. Five hundred and fifty elementary school students from kindergarten to grade six have taken part in our *Terrific Turtles* program and the response has been fantastic!

The *Terrific Turtles* program offers teachers and students a chance to learn about the variety of turtles in Ontario, the places they live, the things they need to stay healthy and the threats they face due to human influences on the environment. Children have a chance to interact with a live turtle ambassador and life-like turtle models, and participate in fun, hands-on inquiry and curriculum-based activities. The turtle models are used to help the young students identify similarities and differences in animal body forms based on where the animals live and what they eat, and to tell stories about the turtles they have encountered in their everyday lives. After everyone has a chance to ask some intriguing turtle questions, the kids

play a game to illustrate how humans can impact turtle survival. A turtle habitat (a small inflatable pool) with an assortment of natural and man-made items (e.g. lily pads, rocks, pop cans, water bottles, etc.) is used to engage children in a fun activity to learn about what turtles need to survive, and how we can help turtles by keeping their habitats clean. At the end of the *Terrific Turtles* session each participant receives a free turtle poster, wristband and sticker!

Teachers involved in the program have had a lot of great things to say: "Having a real scientist reinforce classroom learning helped to make the information real to the children." – Grade 3 Teacher; "I think that conserving wildlife in Ontario is essential, but students can only do so, when they are aware of the dangers. The Adopt-A-Pond Programme provides students with the knowledge and activities to engage and empower them to want to be agents of change and promote saving or preserving wildlife, like turtles." – Grade 4 Teacher.

Many thanks to the Toronto Field Naturalists for supporting such a well-received program!

TFN GRANT REPORT: FLAP Canada

By Paloma Plant, Program Coordinator, Fatal Light Awareness Program Canada

A new window on the future for songbirds

The Fatal Light Awareness Program (FLAP) Canada, was the first organization in the world to address the problem of bird collisions with buildings and to find solutions to this conservation issue. Since 1993, FLAP volunteers have rescued/recovered over 169,000 birds, of 169 species, including species at risk like the Canada warbler and eastern meadowlark. Thanks to the tremendous support of foundations like TFN, we have moved from just the rescue/rehabilitation component to advocacy and education, as well as providing a strong voice in the drafting of guidelines in policy and standards development.

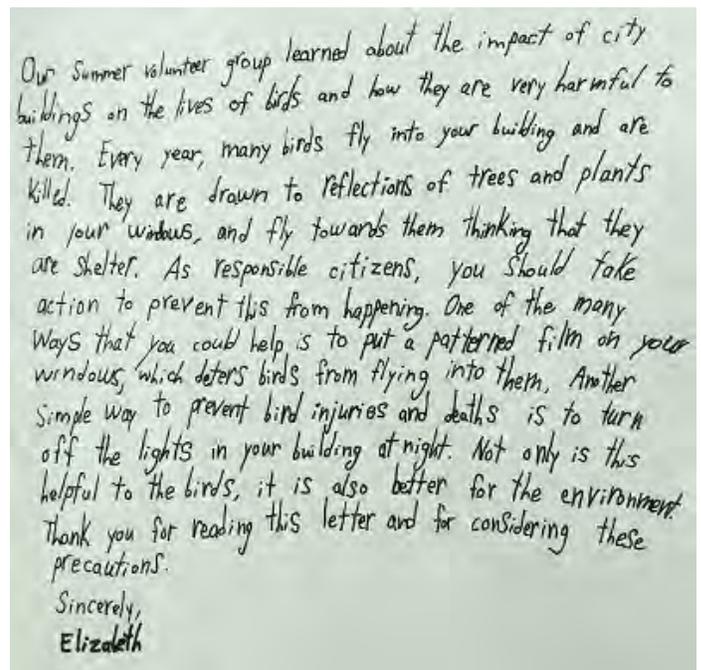
Recently, our education and outreach programmes have greatly expanded, as our research and data have shown that in order to implement prevention techniques, people of all ages need to know about the issue and, more importantly, what they can do to be part of the solution.



With the help of funding from TFN, we have been able to reach out to students from grades 2 to 12. Our presentations are tailored to suit specific age groups, and designed to leave the students with challenges to allow them to take what they learned from the presentation and move forward with it to help in bird conservation.

Younger students are asked to chart any migrants they see in or near their schools on a map, and challenge others as to how many they can spot. Our outreach coordinator led a group of students ranging from ages 14-17 years on a mini-patrol in their neighbourhood, and identified for

them building characteristics that can be lethal to migrating birds. As a result of this, the students were empowered to write to the management of one particularly reflective building which borders a ravine, and asked them to do the "right thing" by looking at ways to prevent the bird deaths from continuing at their structure. Since then, FLAP has been in discussion with the managers of this particular building, and we hope that they will continue to follow through on efforts to mitigate the damage their windows do to birds.



Using our public displays, we show students the diversity of species that migrate through Toronto twice a year. Often, they are surprised at the variety of birds we have on display, and comment on their beauty and colours, and how sad they feel that they died due to obstacles we have placed in their way. We direct them to step outside their classroom to get a sense of how birds are such an integral part of our lives.

We want to continue to inspire children of all ages to step up to the plate and help birds where they can, either locally or looking globally. We encourage students to follow bird migration from a link on our website: www.flap.org/migration-tracker.php and if they do find a bird that has been a victim of a collision with a window, to enter the details on our citizen science link at : <http://74.216.225.85/FLAP/>

IN THE NEWS

NASA: Tropical Forests May Absorb More CO₂ Than Previously Thought

A recent NASA-led study shows that tropical forests may be absorbing far more carbon dioxide than was thought. (Previously scientists thought mid-latitude boreal forests in the Northern Hemisphere absorbed more carbon than tropical forests.) This is good news since climate change is causing carbon uptake in boreal forests to slow down, and if the rate of absorption slows down then climate change will speed up. Forests and other land vegetation currently remove up to 30 percent of human carbon dioxide emissions from the atmosphere during photosynthesis. www.nasa.gov/

Now You Can Easily Report Bird Collisions

FLAP (Fatal Light Awareness Program) has introduced a new online tool "FLAP Mapper" where people can record the location and time of bird-building strikes. The goal of this interactive map is to create a global collision database by using the power of the Internet to reach out to millions of potential data collectors instead of having to rely only on a limited set of volunteers. Another benefit of the new tool is that people can record collisions at residential buildings, which FLAP currently cannot survey, and which cumulatively account for the majority of bird deaths. The tool can be found at www.flap.org.

Ontario to Introduce Legislation to Protect the Great Lakes

The Ontario government is introducing proposed legislation to protect the Great Lakes with a goal of "Keeping the Great Lakes drinkable, swimmable and fishable." The Great Lakes Protection Act, if passed, would:

- Help fight climate change, reduce harmful algal blooms, and protect wetlands and coastal areas.
- Monitor and report on the lake health and take action on priority issues.
- Require progress reports every three years on the ecological conditions within the Great Lakes basin.
- Establish a Great Lakes Guardian Council comprised of multiple stakeholders, including conservation authorities

Details on the proposed legislation can be found at: www.ontario.ca/environment-and-energy/protecting-great-lakes

Ontario Master Naturalist Program Unveiled

The Ontario Master Naturalist Program (OMNP) is a new community program established by Lakehead University, Orillia in partnership with Ontario Nature. Naturalists and those interested in nature and environmental stewardship

can receive training to broaden their knowledge base and fast-track their level of expertise, leading to certification as a Master Naturalist. OMNP is a first of its kind in Canada and was established to recognize a superior level of knowledge and commitment among naturalists.

The OMNP involves a six-module course of study, along with a 30-hour volunteer commitment. Each of the six modules consists of a half-day session that combines class instruction and field observation. Participants must also complete 30 hours of volunteer service for a not-for-profit organization involved in local environmental or naturalist work. For details, see www.ontarionature.org/act/master_naturalist.php and <https://www.lakeheadu.ca/about/orillia-campus/community-programs/omnp>

If you are a TFN member interested in carpooling to attend the Ontario Master Naturalist Program (OMNP) in Orillia in May and June, please contact Joanne Doucette at [REDACTED] by Friday, April 10. Transportation to Lakehead University's Orillia campus or to field locations is not included with the registration fee.

Toronto Company Fined \$30,000 For Illegal Waste Activities

Aqua Bond Inc. has been caught discharging chemical waste into a municipal storm sewer system that then emptied into a tributary of Highland Creek. The discharge was a thick, white material that appeared to be settling at the bottom of Highland Creek. A previous spill had been cleaned up by the city after efforts made to locate the source failed. A second spill led investigators to Aqua Bond, a company which operates a business of chemical compounding and toll blending. The toll blending involves mixing various chemicals. City staff conducted dye testing to confirm that the company was responsible for the spills. They have been charged under the Environmental Protection Act.

The Trees for Schools 2015

The Trees for Schools program encourages elementary students in southern Ontario to plant trees in celebration of Earth Day and as a way of making a positive contribution to the environment. Planting trees helps students connect with nature. This program was launched in 2009 and last year planted 20,000 trees. The Nature Conservancy of Canada (NCC) partners with Copernicus Educational Products to support this program. NCC has provided expert advice on the type of seedlings to provide and Copernicus provides the seedlings. Elementary schools that want to participate should contact Copernicus. www.copernicused.com/company/foundation.aspx

EGG YOLK FUNGUS



A description of “Egg Yolk Fungus” depends on the time of day. In the morning the slimy cap is pale yellow with a hint of green. It is tuque-shaped with striations down the outer half. The gills and fragile stem are also pale yellow with fine white hairs on the stem. As the day progresses, the cap expands like a parasol. By late afternoon the cap is silky with a cinnamon tinge and is almost flat. The gills have become rusty and leave a rusty spore print. The mushroom lasts only a day.

Its scientific name is a problem. Everyone agrees that the genus is *Bolvitius*. The species name has been *vitellinus*, but some are trying to lump it with *titubans*. It is often discovered growing in manure.

Harvey Medland

WEATHER (THIS TIME LAST YEAR)

April was closer to normal after the very cold winter.

Traces of snow lasted until about the 10th in places with near-normal temperatures. It warmed up to 22.7° by the 13th (Pearson Airport) but this was immediately followed by a return to winter-like conditions with a minimum of -6.9° on April 16. It stayed cold for several days but the last part of the month was seasonably cool with frequent heavy rain.

Monthly mean temperature of 6.1° was 1.0° below the 30-year average, largely due to lingering snow and ice, including on the Great Lakes. Snowfall was 3.0 cm, and total precipitation was 91.6 mm. Snowfall was therefore not far from normal but rainfall was about 20 mm above normal.

Wood frogs and spring peepers were calling by the 13th although they were interrupted by the shortish return to cold weather mid-month. Spring has arrived only slightly behind schedule.

Gavin Miller



Spring peeper drawn by Diana Banville

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 25, 8 am - 2 pm. Leslie Street Spit - early spring migrants. Leader: John Carley. Meet at the foot of Leslie St at Unwin Ave. Bring lunch and wear appropriate footwear for wet woods.
- Sun Apr 26, 8 am to early afternoon. Oshawa Second Marsh - little gulls and other migrants. Leader: Tyler Hoar. Meet in the parking lot of GM Headquarters in Oshawa. Exit from highway 401 at Harmony Rd (exit 419), go south on Farewell St and turn east on Colonel Sam Drive. Park in the west parking lot close to the marsh. Bring lunch.

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.

- Apr 5. Lost Waterways. That gurgling sound beneath your feet? It's a river! City Planner Leo deSorcy follows the flow.
- Apr 19. Spring Photo Buff Walk. Professional photographer David Allen helps you frame the best seasonal images. Bring camera.

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 Entomological Association

Sat Apr 25, 1:00-4:00 pm. Toronto Zoo Atrium, 361A Old Finch Ave. TEA BUG-REARING DAY. This meeting is all about fun with insects and spiders! Information: 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



TFN outing in High Park, April 2011. Photo: Anne Leon

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Publications Mail
Registration No. 40049590



Red-winged blackbird photographed by June West, Spring 2012