



TORONTO FIELD NATURALIST

Number 613 September 2015



Baltimore oriole photographed by Carole Giangrande, May, Col Sam Smith Park

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

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IT'S YOUR NEWSLETTER!

We welcome contributions of original writing of observations on nature in and around Toronto (up to 500 words). We also welcome reports, reviews, poems, sketches, paintings and digital photographs. Please include "Newsletter" in the subject line when sending by email, or on the envelope if sent by mail.

Please re-name digital photographs with the subject and your name (abbreviations ok); scale your photos *to less than 200kb each*. In the accompanying email include location, date and any interesting story or other information associated with the photograph.

Deadline for submissions for October issue, Sept 1.

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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Web: www.torontofieldnaturalists.org

Email: office@torontofieldnaturalists.org

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

Thank you to TFN Outreach volunteers

Thank you to all TFN members who participated in outreach events over the summer. This volunteer effort is vital for helping the TFN to connect people and nature.

We are especially grateful to members who staffed the TFN table at the Tommy Thompson Park Spring Bird Festival, Leslieville Tree Festival, Colonel Sam Smith Spring Bird Festival, Toronto Zoo Migratory Bird Day, Tommy Thompson Park Butterfly Festival, Scarborough Seedy Saturday and Doors Open. Volunteers include: Sally Evans, Karin Fawthrop, Claudius Fehr, Elisabeth Gladstone, Rachel Gottesman, Bob Kortright, Anne Leon, Bernie Marentelle, Linda McCaffrey, Corinne McDonald, Jan McDonald, Margaret McRae, Frances Money, Peter Money, Jason Ramsay-Brown, Jennifer Smith, Mary Taylor, Fanny Wong and Orval White.

Margaret McRae was interviewed by City TV's Breakfast Television about her work with raising monarch butterflies and how she became involved with the TFN.

Nancy Dengler gave a talk on Connecting with Nature in Toronto to the Green 13 Community Group at the Runnymede Library.

Joanne Doucette visited a school and Theresa Moore took members of a residents' association on a nature walk (see reports p. 11).

Madeleine MacDowell, Jane Cluver, Vivienne Denton and Margaret McRae led special public nature walks during the PanAm games. The walks were very well attended and an indication of an appetite for publicized nature walks for the general public.

Nancy Dengler

TFN MEETING

Sunday, September 13, 2015

2:30 pm

Your Pane is their Pain - Preventing Birds from Crashing into Windows

*Michael Mesure, Executive Director, Fatal Light Awareness Program
will show how to make Toronto a safer place for migratory songbirds.*

VISITORS WELCOME!

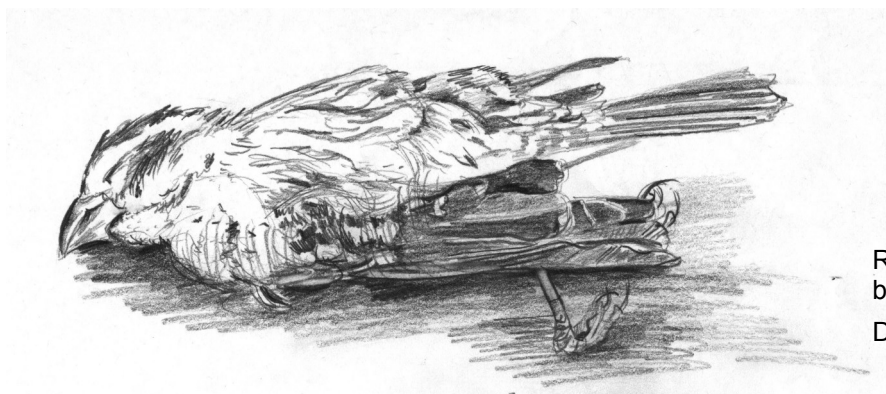
SOCIAL: 2:00 – 2:30 pm

*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.



Rose-breasted grosbeak killed
by collision with window.

Drawing by Diana Banville

UPCOMING TFN LECTURES

- | | |
|-------|--|
| Oct 4 | Ashbridge's Bay: The Natural and Human History of a Wetland
Joanne Doucette, author and naturalist |
| Nov 1 | Participatory Research: Roads, Citizen Science and the War on Science.
Dave Ireland, Managing Director, Centre of Discovery in Biodiversity, Royal Ontario Museum |
| Dec 6 | Biomimicry: Learning from Nature's Designs
Richard Aaron, nature educator |

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.

- Wed **HIGH PARK – Nature Walk**
 Sept 2 Leader: Miles Hearn
 10:00 am Meet at the park entrance, Bloor St W and High Park Ave for a 2 1/2 hour circular walk.
- Sat **CROTHERS WOODS – Nature Walk**
 Sept 5 Leader: Margaret McRae
 10:00 am Meet at the southwest corner of Redway Rd and Millwood Rd for a circular walk. We will walk through Crothers Woods past the North Toronto Treatment Plant and also the main part of Crothers Woods behind Loblaws. This is the walk that was rained out in June. Steep hills, stairs and narrow dirt trails.
- Sun **UPPER WILKET CREEK – Nature Walk**
 Sept 6 Leader: Alexander Cappell
 1:30 pm Meet at the northeast corner of Finch Ave W and Carney Rd (halfway between Yonge St and Bathurst St). Not many are familiar with the upper reaches of Wilket Creek, which flows right through "downtown North York" in a series of linear parkettes into a culvert under the 401, not far from a coffee shop at Sheppard Ave E and Willowdale Ave.
- Thurs **ST JAMES CEMETERY – Heritage and Natural History**
 Sept 10 Leader: Joanne Doucette
 1:00 pm Meet at the gates of St James Cemetery, 635 Parliament St, on the east side just north of Carleton St. A short walk from the Castle Frank subway station. We will explore this old Toronto cemetery, opened in 1844. Circular walk of about 2 km. Family-friendly but no dogs please. Bring your binoculars. The paths are wide, paved and easy with gentle slopes and no stairs.
- Sat **HIGH PARK: OAK SAVANNAH AS A THREATENED HABITAT – Nature Walk**
 Sept 12 Leaders: Joanne Doucette, TFN, and Michelle Dileo, President, Society for Conservation Biology
 11:00 am Meet at the entrance to the park (High Park Ave and Bloor St W). Come tour this rare fire-dependent ecosystem and discover its origins, characteristics, beautiful and rare plants, threats it faces, etc. Circular route. Some hills, steep paths and rough ground, as well as poison ivy. Bring lunch, a drink, and binoculars. Ends about 3 pm.
- Sun **LECTURE – Your Pane is Their Pain: Preventing Birds from Crashing into Windows**
 Sept 13 Speaker: Michael Mesure, Executive Director, FLAP
 1:30 pm Northrop Frye Hall, 73 Queen's Park Cres. See details on page 3.
- Wed **TORONTO ISLAND – Nature Walk**
 Sept 16 Leader: Miles Hearn
 9:45 am Meet at the ferry docks south of Bay St and Queens Quay W. We will take the 10 am ferry to Hanlan's Point and return on the 12:45 ferry from Centre Island. Fare is \$7.25 for adults and \$4.75 for seniors. Arrive in time to buy your tickets and meet the group.
- Sat **HUMBER BOTANICAL GARDEN AND ARBORETUM – Nature Walk**
 Sept 19 Leader: Rachel Gottesmann
 10:00 am Meet at Humber College Blvd at Humberline Drive (stop for bus #35 GO and #96 TTC - Wilson). We will visit the flower gardens created by Humber Horticulture teachers and students, and walk through some of the 6 km of trails through old growth forest to the Humber River. Bring lunch and binoculars. Circular walk to view birds, trees, shrubs and flowers.

- Sun
Sept 20
2:00 p m
EDIBLE TREES, WEEDS AND WILDFLOWERS OF CEDARVALE RAVINE AND CASTLE FRANK BROOK - Lost Rivers
Leaders: Helen Mills, Susan Aaron, Susan Poizner, Michael Wheelerm (see www.lostrivers.ca/content/WalkSchd)
Meet at Ben Nobleman Park, across the road from Eglinton West subway station. Walk along lost Castle Frank Brook, visit a community orchard and stroll among the flowers, birds and pollinators of Cedarvale Ravine. Leaders will share stories about the orchard and heritage cultivated plants and stewardship of the ravines. Walk will end at St Clair West subway station. A joint outing with Toronto Green Community.
- Tues
Sept 22
10:00 am
COLONEL DANFORTH PARK – Nature and Heritage
Leader: Linda McCaffrey
Meet at the park entrance southeast of the corner of Highland Creek Dr near Colonel Danforth Trail and Lawson Rd (travelling east on Kingston Rd, immediately after the bridge over Highland Creek). A circular walk with gentle slopes, stairs, mostly flat and unpaved, not wheelchair accessible. Bring binoculars and a snack if desired.
Driving: Take Kingston Road eastbound, turn right at Lawson Rd and right again at the park entrance. TTC: From Kennedy subway station take the 86B bus to Colonel Danforth Park.
- Sat
Sept 26
1:30 pm
EAST DON – Nature Walk
Leader: Charles Chaffey
Meet at the southeast corner of Coxwell Ave and O'Connor Dr for a 3-hour circular walk exploring the south part of the route of the planned extension of the East Don Trail. Stairs and dirt paths with moderate hills.
- Sun
Sept 27
1:00 pm
MOORE PARK RAVINE AND BRICKWORKS – Nature Walk
Leader: Jason Ramsay-Brown, author of *Toronto's Ravines and Urban Forests*
Meet at the northern trailhead on Moore Ave across the street from the Mount Pleasant Cemetery Visitation Centre. Learn about local history and natural heritage as we take a 2 km linear walk through Moore Park Ravine to the Brickworks. Several steep inclines and uneven trails. Bring water, camera, binoculars, and a snack if you like.
- Wed
Sept 30
1:00 pm
QUEEN'S PARK AREA – Trees and Architecture
Leader: Richard Partington
Meet at the southeast corner of Charles St W and Queen's Park. We will explore the adjacent area and note the wealth of interest, both arboreal and architectural, ending at the north end of Philosophers' Walk.

2015-2016 TFN GRANTS AWARDED

EcoSpark Environmental Organization \$6000

to support the Changing Currents River Study, an outdoor education program for Grade 8-12 students which brings students to local rivers for benthic water monitoring, stewardship and connection to nature.

High Park Nature Centre \$5000

to support Family Nature Walks and Nature Clubs for Kids programs, including expanding the Small Wonders and Nature Baby programs, and continuing stewardship of High Park's black oak savannah.

Ontario Nature's Nature Guardians Program \$5000

to sponsor the Youth Summit for Biodiversity and Community Action, as well as the Youth Council's Winter Leadership Retreat and their Pollinator Protection program.

Royal Ontario Museum \$7500

to complete and post the remaining Trees for Toronto webpages, bringing the total to 101 tree species found in Queen's Park, Toronto Islands, Trinity-Bellwoods Park, and High Park.

Toronto Zoo \$6900

to help the Adopt-A-Wetland Conservation Program and extend the education program that started with "Terrific Turtles" to "Fabulous Frogs" and "Sensational Salamanders", all part of the "Engaging youth in the protection of nature through turtle education and stewardship" program.

Toronto Botanical Garden \$4600

to support the new Urban Nature Ravine Series that aims to stimulate interest in nature by exposing children, youth and families from under-served communities to the natural environment in Toronto's ravines and green spaces.

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

As I write this in early August, I am enjoying some backyard nature sightings, including hummingbirds visiting cardinal flowers, goldfinches coming in to sip water, and a black swallowtail butterfly lingering around the parsley. On TFN walks somewhat farther afield, I've been delighted by the prolific white trilliums in the woods above Wilket Creek, gray fledgling eastern screech owls perched in an apple tree in Glen Stewart Ravine, and glimpses of yellow water shields and white water lilies in the Humber Marshes. I hope that you too have had an enjoyable summer and a feeling of connection with the abundant nature that our summer in Toronto provides.

I also enjoyed attending the City of Toronto's Ravine Strategy meeting in early May, along with Margaret McRae, Charles Bruce-Thompson, Madeleine MacDowell, Paula Davies, Jason Ramsay-Brown and other TFN members. The City and Toronto and Region Conservation Authority are developing a comprehensive strategy to guide the future management, use, enhancement and protection of Toronto's Ravine system. More information about this is available at www.toronto.ca under Parks, Forestry and Recreation/Trees and Ravines. Jason Ramsay-Brown's new book *Toronto's Ravines and Urban Forests* celebrates the nature found in our ravines, as well as identifying many of the challenges caused by overuse.

One of early summer's most memorable events was joining a group gathered at the Moss Park Armoury at dusk to watch hundreds of chimney swifts dive into their roost in the armoury's large chimney, almost giving the impression that they had been sucked in by a giant vacuum cleaner. The event was sponsored by Bird Studies Canada SwiftWatch Program here in Toronto (www.ontarioswiftwatch@birdscanada.org) and is one of several opportunities for the public to participate in monitoring this fascinating, but declining, bird species.

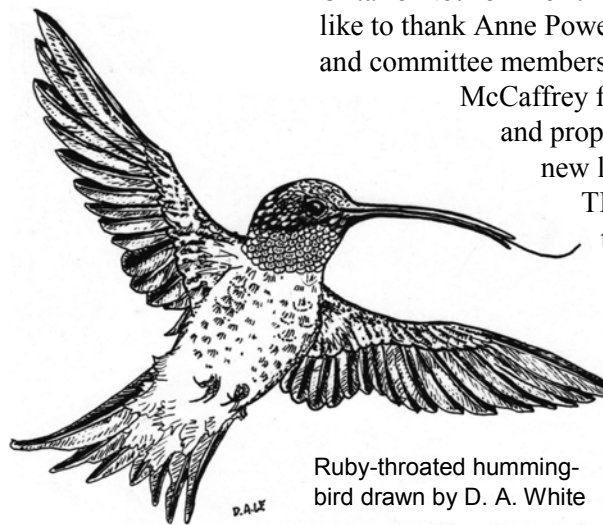
In mid-June I participated in the Ontario Bioblitz, helping to inventory the biodiversity in the Don Valley watershed within one 24-hour period. While the plant team stayed up late at the Ontario Science Centre headquarters to identify and press plants, we were able to head home before the nocturnal insect and bat teams headed out on their quest.

Species identifications are still coming in, but the tally for total species is already at an impressive 1120, comparing well with earlier bioblitzes in the Rouge and Humber watersheds (www.ontariobioblitz.ca).

I would like to express my gratitude to board member Joanne Doucette who has served as Acting Treasurer for three months. She has ably taken over many diverse duties of the TFN Treasurer while Charles Crawford has been out of town. I also would like to welcome Joanne as the new TFN Volunteer Coordinator and to thank her for her work so far in developing a new Volunteer Strategy for the TFN.

In our April newsletter I mentioned that the TFN bylaws are being revised to meet the requirements of the proposed Ontario-Not-for-Profit Act (ONCA) legislation. I would like to thank Anne Powell who has chaired this committee and committee members Bob Kortright and Linda

McCaffrey for their work identifying issues and proposing amendments that reflect the new legal requirements and changes in TFN practice. At our May meeting the TFN board accepted the policy recommendations of the ONCA committee, and the committee will continue to work over these next months to produce a final draft of the revised bylaws. We expect to bring these to the membership for a vote at the AGM in 2016.



Ruby-throated hummingbird drawn by D. A. White

Members of the TFN board have also moved forward from the membership survey and planning session and are working on plans to increase membership numbers, improve member experience, strengthen TFN identity, promote the TFN more effectively, assess our financial policies, and develop policy guidelines and practices on environmental issues. I hope that you will notice some of the immediate changes being made, including more complete information on walk descriptions in the newsletter, a more conspicuous membership table at TFN talks, and a strategy in place to connect volunteers with the many TFN jobs that depend on volunteer effort.

I hope that you enjoy the remainder of the summer and look forward to seeing you at a TFN walk or talk this fall.

Nancy Dengler

MONTHLY MEETING REPORT

Toronto's Urban Forests

May 3. Janet McKay, Executive Director, LEAF

Janet McKay, founder and executive director of LEAF (Local Enhancement and Appreciation of Forests) gave a fascinating and informative presentation on all aspects of the urban forest we are so fortunate to live in.

In this report I focus on three topics, the nature of the forest, why and how it is important, and what we can do as individuals or together to help to preserve and enhance it. To learn more go to www.toronto.ca/trees. This leads you to "Every Tree Counts: A Portrait of Toronto's Urban Forest".

As of 2013 Toronto had an estimated 26.6 % tree canopy cover (10.2 million trees). Parks and other natural areas had 3.5 million trees, borders of city streets 600,000, and private property 6.1 million or 60% of the total. Tree cover increased slightly (1.3%) in the period 1999 to 2009. Tree distribution across Toronto is very uneven. High (average 57%) in ravines, valleys, and parks; high in residential areas with widely spaced homes (the highest, Rosedale, 61.8%); low in industrial areas (average 6.3%).

There are at least 116 tree species in Toronto, but a lack of diversity as 10 species provide 57.7% of the canopy. The most abundant and third most abundant tree species are invasive: Norway maple (14.9% of the canopy) and Manitoba maple (5.5%). The loss of all ash species, caused by the emerald ash borer, is estimated to reduce cover from 26.6% to 24.4%. Between 2004 and 2012 the City and partners planted nearly 100,000 trees

per year. It will be difficult to maintain this planting rate with the decrease of suitable planting areas. To achieve Toronto's ambitious target of 40% tree canopy will require substantial planting rates for many years. A complicating factor is that urban trees face additional physical and environmental stresses, including limited soil volumes, salt and chemical exposure from roads and surface run-off, and physical damage from construction, utilities, lawn mowers, and other human activities.

Toronto's urban forest is estimated to provide ecological services valued at \$28.2 million per year, substantially more than the cost of management. Net carbon sequestration is estimated at 36,500 tons of carbon per year, for a value of \$1.1 million. By shading buildings, providing evaporative cooling, and blocking winter winds, Toronto's urban forest is estimated to reduce heating and cooling energy use by 41,200 MWH (worth \$10.2 million per year).

On a more personal level, two or three trees near a house are estimated to reduce air conditioning by 30 to 40%

and reduce local temperatures by 2° to 4°C. Additional benefits include improved air quality, decreases in average storm water run-off, UV protection, noise reduction, improved physical and mental health, and, very importantly, providing habitat for wildlife.

What you can personally contribute includes watering trees appropriately using a soaker hose, run for a few hours, to water deeply and slowly. Protect your trees, including their roots, from chemical and physical damage. Have any necessary pruning done by a fully qualified arborist. Get trees from the city (free!) for the area between your lot line and the street.

Contact LEAF (www.yourleaf.org) to become knowledgeable about trees and shrubs, share your knowledge, and plant native backyard trees (which LEAF will subsidize). A little farther afield, start or join an "Adopt-A-Park-Tree" program.

Peter Money



Photo © 2009 Kanchan Maharaj, LEAF

EXTRACTS FROM OUTINGS LEADERS' REPORTS

Chine Drive Ravine, Apr 11. Leader: Bob Kortright. A red-tailed hawk at the meeting point, and a Cooper's reported a block away augured promise and so it proved.

A winter wren was, unusually, cooperative enough to allow all good views. A Caspian tern, two turkey vultures, many flickers and sapsuckers, and a hermit thrush were first of spring birds for me, as were dozens of swallows, a female red-winged blackbird and cowbird, song sparrow, brown creeper and golden-crowned kinglet for many. All the sapsuckers, goldfinches, house finches, downy woodpecker and juncos were seen in little Midland Ravine Park, where they sheltered from the cool wind.

German Mills Creek, Apr 18. Leader: Theresa Moore. We saw extensive construction at the golf course and noted how this would impact turtles and returning songbirds. Near the park entrance a little brown bat flew over our heads to a nearby tree trunk, and an eastern phoebe flew nearby, feeding from perches. We found coltsfoot, bloodroot and violets in bloom. Plans for signage were discussed. This project, aimed to protect grassland birds from disturbance and limit the spread of dog-strangling vine, began two years ago and the signs are expected shortly. Several turkey vultures and a green darner dragonfly were seen.

Ashbridge's Bay: Past, Present, Future, Apr 19. Leaders: John Wilson, Bob Kortright. Bob discussed winter birds, focusing on the Icelandic gulls evident along the windy headland, nicely framing the number of summer birds that we discovered, including yellow-rumped warblers, ruby-crowned kinglets, hermit thrush, rough-winged swallows and white-throated sparrows. John and Bob added observations about the extensive Ashbridge's Bay marsh that was mostly filled a century ago, pointing out the small remnant, as well as the extensive renaturalization and natural colonization of "manufactured" landscapes in Ashbridge's Bay Park and the Leslie Street Spit. We also noted plans for managing four combined sewer outfalls - in part the remnants of four "lost streams" and for containing drifting lakefront sediments that enter Coatsworth Cut, hampering pleasure boating.

Taylor Massey Creek, Apr 25. Leader: Margaret McRae. Birds seen included kinglets, song sparrow, downy and hairy woodpeckers, blue gray gnatcatcher and a white-throated sparrow. We discussed gabion baskets, armour stones, erosion, outfalls and TRCA plantings. We counted

29 dogs off leash but only a few on leash.

Annual Jane Jacobs Walk, May 4. Leaders: Pleasance Crawford and Helen Juhola. We have led this evening ramble on Jane Jacob's birthday since 2007. Following the long, cold winter, we were heartened to observe the sure advance of spring. We heard the buzzy trill of a chipping sparrow, the rapid tapping of a yellow-bellied sapsucker, and the call of a male red-winged blackbird to a female in a nearby tree. A planting of prairie smoke (*Geum triflorum*) blossomed beside the limestone edging of a front garden, and coltsfoot flowers remained partially open as daylight faded in Cedarvale Ravine.



Virginia waterleaf flower.
Photo: Harvey Medland

Rouge Valley Park, May 5. Leader: Stephen Kamnitzer. In flower were red and white trilliums,

bloodroot, coltsfoot and trout lilies. We also noted Dutchman's breeches, squirrel corn, may-apple, columbine, angelica, wild cucumber, burdock, blue cohosh and celandine. Birds included: hermit thrush, red-bellied woodpecker, song and chipping sparrows, rose-breasted grosbeak, brown creeper, white-breasted nuthatch, red-winged blackbird, and turkey vulture.

East Don Parklands, May 9. Leader: Phil Goodwin. In Bestview Park we found black cherry, beech, blue beech, ironwood, sugar maple, white pine, dogwood and ash. This forest is excellent for spring flowers: trout lilies, white trillium, wild ginger, spring beauty, Jack-in-the-pulpit, yellow and blue violets, and Virginia bluebells were flowering. We heard a pileated woodpecker and played its call. It responded and flew nearby to check out the call, drilled two trees nearby and flew off. A chickadee responded to our call several times. We saw a kingfisher fishing on German Mills Creek.

The Beltline, May 12. Leader: John Bacher. It was encouraging to see the establishment of forest so quickly after the Beltline was closed to rail traffic in 1970. We saw some planting of silver maples. There were flowering apple trees and, despite disturbed conditions, large numbers of native plants, notably mature American elm and black cherry. While there are some native plants in the understory, notably purple flowering raspberry, much of area is covered with invasive exotics such as Japanese knotweed and garlic mustard. The city plans to improve wildlife habitat and build bridges, including over the Allen Expressway.

Backus Woods and Long Point, May 12-13. Leader: Joanne Doucette. Twelve members attended this overnight outing to explore unique Carolinian old growth forest, and learn about Bird Studies Canada, bird banding and other activities related to spring migration at Long Point. The first day we hiked in Backus Woods and spotted a prothonotary warbler and many kinds of spring ephemerals. The second day we observed bird banding at the Old Cut Bird Banding Station on Long Point, then walked through the adjacent woods. Next we went to Long Point Provincial Park where we spotted a cerulean warbler, a “lifer” for some. We walked on the trackway over the dunes to the beach. On the way out we saw a sandhill crane in the marsh. At Bird Studies Canada headquarters in Port Rowan we hiked the loop trail around the ponds and were offered the use of the conference room for a warm and sheltered lunch with a great view. We appreciated their hospitality. Returning to Backus Woods, we took a wetland trail along Dedrick Creek where we were treated to a magnificent display of spring ephemerals including a number of plants new to most of us. The lack of mosquitoes on a chilly day made for an enjoyable and less distracted walk. Despite cold windy weather, our bird count was 89, and we identified 121 species of plants.



A few of the participants looking pleased at identifying golden ragwort (*Senecio aureus*). Photo: Ron Dengler

Lower Don Watershed, May 16. Leader: Ed Freeman. We noted a new house has a deck halfway down Mud Creek ravine and wondered if it is in violation of the ravine by-law. We saw Solomon's seal, false Solomon's seal, may-apple, wild geranium, violets, lily-of-the-valley, trilliums, Virginia waterleaf, garlic mustard, dog strangling vine, poison ivy and horsetail. We saw red-winged blackbird, robin, killdeer, turkey vulture and grackle, and heard a yellow warbler and an oriole.

Leslie Street Spit, May 18. Leader: Bob Kortright. Best birds were a female orchard oriole and a peregrine falcon. It was good to see the common terns nesting on the raft unmolested by mink (see TFN #605, p. 9), trumpeter swans nesting on Triangle Pond, and Blanding's turtles on Goldfish Pond. A number of black-crowned night-herons

were on their nests close to the road across from Triangle Pond, and we were happy to see a great egret and great blue heron fly over.

Wilket Creek and Sunnybrook Park, May 23. Leader: Ken Sproule. [This outing coincided with Doors Open (see next page) and ended at the Sunnybrook Park cabin.]

We saw many plants including blue cohosh, mayflower, may-apple, Christmas fern, wild ginger, Jack-in-the-pulpit, false Solomon's seal and star-flowered Solomon's seal. We also saw young purple loosestrife plants being consumed by many imported loosestrife beetles. The large spider we saw in the cabin was a female fishing spider (*Dolomedes tenebrosus*). Wilket Creek was off limits as there was work going on to minimize erosion. The invasive plants goutweed and dog-strangling vine were dominant in some areas. Many dogs were off leash despite the fact there is a large dog park nearby.



Purple loosestrife. Photo: Ken Sproule

Goldie Feldman Nature Reserve, May 26. Leader: Charles Chaffey. We followed the trail system through second growth maple and beech woods where several species of wildflowers not common in Toronto were blooming, including starflower, gaywings and Canada mayflower. Crows were making a commotion, suggesting that they were disturbed by a raptor. After a rest at the TFN bench we returned by a different route, then enjoyed lunch in the shade of a huge sugar maple. In the afternoon we went to the Happy Valley trails which go through more mature forest where there was much less light. White trilliums were more abundant, mostly fading to pink, and there were patches of yellow clintonia and false Solomon's seal in bloom. In a wet area we saw foamflower and a few mitreworts. It was delightful to be in such a peaceful, natural area less than an hour's drive from the city, and we were pleased that TFN had been able to help the Nature Conservancy of Canada to secure the property.

Continued on page 11

Sunnybrook Park Cabin Open House and Doors Open Walking Tours



Top: Doors Open Toronto participants at the Sunnybrook Park cabin. Joanne Doucette is providing background on the cabin before Charles Bruce-Thompson's walking tour

Below: Walking tours in Sunnybrook Park led by Nancy Dengler (left) and Mary Taylor (right).

Bottom: Interior of Sunnybrook Park cabin during Doors Open event showing TFN displays.

Photos: Ron Dengler

TFN was invited to offer walking tours during Doors Open Toronto on the May 23-24 weekend. We chose to hold our event at the Sunnybrook Park pioneer log cabin as this was an opportunity to have the cabin opened after a 20-year-long closure and to use the park's beautiful forests for our natural heritage public tours. Our Open House was well-attended, with a number of TFN members who had volunteered at the cabin when it served as the Nature Information Centre back in the 1980s and 90s visiting over the weekend. Joanne Doucette and Claudius Fehr contributed to display materials and Joanne answered visitors' many questions about the 1869 cabin's origins. TFN volunteers Jennifer Smith, Sally Evans, Claudius Fehr, Peter Money, Frances Money, Linda McCaffrey and Fannie Wong welcomed visitors to the cabin and provided information about TFN.

Our walking tours, led by Charles Bruce-Thompson, Joanne Doucette, Roger Powley, Mary Taylor, Ron Dengler and Nancy Dengler, went very well. We offered four tours each day and attracted over 100 participants on both Saturday and Sunday. Although there are some frustrations in restricting a nature tour to just one hour, participants were very positive about the experience.

We saw a good diversity of tree, shrub and fern species, and false Solomon's seal, Canada mayflower, Jack-in-the-pulpit, may-apple, and one white trillium were in full bloom. We were pleased to reach a much broader range of ages and national backgrounds of participants than seen at many TFN events. As the TFN's primary objective as a charitable organization is to provide nature education to the general public, we can regard the Doors Open event at the Sunnybrook Park cabin as a success.

Nancy Dengler



EXTRACTS FROM OUTINGS
REPORTS, *continued.*

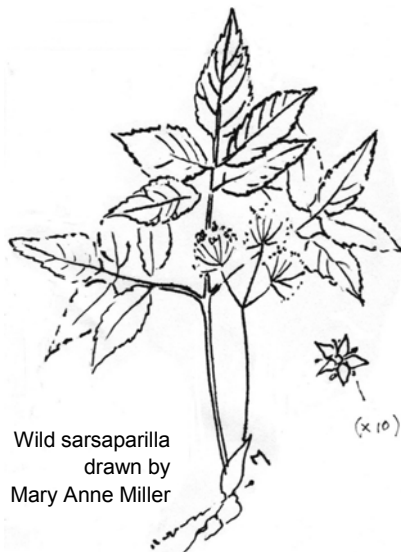
Rouge Park Campground, Jun 3.

Leaders: Jim and Petra Grass.

Sarsaparilla, Canada mayflower and black snakeroot were in flower and other plants of note were wild geranium, bloodroot and wild ginger. Butterfly highlights were: silver spotted skipper, duskywing, Peck's skipper, eastern-tailed blue, spring azure, silvery blue, northern crescent, little wood satyr, common ringlet, tiger swallowtail, cabbage white. We saw 32 species of birds. Highlights were pileated woodpecker, mourning warbler, rose-breasted grosbeak, indigo bunting, brown thrasher, spotted sandpiper, rough-winged swallow, red-tailed hawk and belted kingfisher, and a nesting hole found on the bank of the river. The trails along the river bank are becoming more dangerous due to local erosion and resulting collapses.

Humber Marshes, Jun 7. Leader: James E. Eckenwalder. Cottonwoods were fluffing away and black locust flowers were just beginning to fade. Largest trees in this area (marsh/pond 7) were eastern cottonwoods, white ashes, and crack willows. The second tier of trees is mostly Manitoba maples and white elms, while invasive common buckthorns, Norway maples, and winged euonymus are not overly prominent and confined to the understory. The most attractive herbaceous scenes, with carpets of flower, were in the vicinity of the pond itself. Spatter docks and white water lilies blanketed the "open" water while the shore boasted lots of forget-me-nots, yellow flag iris, creeping buttercup and others. There seems to be a lot less purple loose-strife here than there used to be. The wood nettles seemed much more robust and pervasive than I remember seeing them before and they showed not a trace of the red admiral caterpillars of three years ago. A few species of butterflies, especially Canadian/eastern tiger swallowtails and question marks/eastern commas kept themselves just out of reach of positive identification. Three or four species of damselfly (including one teneral individual*) and a couple of species of dragons were around in small numbers, as were a few inch-worms, other caterpillars, and sawfly larvae. Leaf miners on the cow parsnips were conspicuous on some leaves and showed the characteristic features of serpentine mines. The few highbush cranberry seen were severely shredded by the introduced viburnum beetle. A green frog hung in the water of the exit creek of the pond.

Burke Brook, Jun 9. Leader: Nancy Dengler. We started in a wet area that marks the confluence of two lost rivers, now both completely buried. Their presence is marked by a small wetland with eastern cottonwoods and cattails. We



walked along the east side of Lawrence Park, originally designed in a naturalistic style by W.S. Brooke, the landscape architect for the Lawrence Park estates. One remaining feature of his plan is a row of unusually large American hornbeam trees (a.k.a. blue beech or muscle-wood). We followed a dirt path on the north slope of Burke Brook ravine. Examination of a 1911 photograph suggests that this slope was bare 100 years ago. Now it is well-vegetated with black locust and Norway maple, as well as sugar maple, black cherry, ironwood and beech. We walked under Mt. Pleasant Road overpass and looked at a small restoration area with flowering raspberry and blooming pagoda dogwood.

Windfields Park, Jun 13. Leader: Nancy Dengler. We could see the effects of storm water runoff after major storm events, including eroded stream banks and flooding over the creek's flood plain. Our destination was a patch of woods at the south end of this accessible stretch of Wilket Creek. An aerial photograph of the area from 1954 shows continuous forest along Wilket Creek as far north as this patch, suggesting that trees in this area might be 100 years old or more. This part of the forest has many impressive large trees, including red oak, white pine, bitternut hickory, ironwood, black cherry, beech and sugar maple. About half our group were students taking a plant ecology course. One of their assignments was to participate in a TFN walk and identify and report on at least 6 native species. TFN members pointed out candidate plants and their diagnostic characteristics to the students whose interest and enthusiasm enlivened the experience for everyone.

West Deane and Heathercrest Parks, Jun 14. Leaders: Brian Yawney and Michael Bielecki. Natural features were inter-woven with the history of six heritage properties. We looked at photos of a heritage cemetery and remnant farmlands prior to development. A highlight was the many heritage trees: red and white oaks, bitternut and shagbark hickories, sugar and red maple, as well as black walnut up to 116 cm DBH [diameter at breast height]. There were signs of red squirrels or porcupine stripping bark from some trees. A new water monitoring station was noted in Mimico Creek, as were several sites of worrisome, continuing erosion. The western extension of the Eglinton cycle trail for the PanAm games was shown. Residents bordering the park are dumping yard waste with the result that garlic mustard is invading and threatening the trout lily in this undisturbed pocket of woodland.

* Teneral: describes the soft, pale and helpless adult after emergence from the naiad stage.

TORONTO WILDFLOWERS: VERVAINS

The Vervain family (Verbenaceae), with 34 genera and about 1150 species, is distributed almost worldwide. *Verbena* has a long human association (see sidebar, next page). The genus *Verbena* includes about 250 species, three native here.

Verbena hastata (blue vervain) and *V. urticifolia* (white or nettle-leaved vervain) are common in open moist sites across Toronto. Locally rare *V. stricta* (hoary vervain) favours drier open areas. The TFN's *Vascular Plants of Metropolitan Toronto* (2nd ed., 1994) recorded it only in Morningside Park and the Rouge. My photos are from High Park.

Verbena species have flower clusters on numerous terminal spikes. Flowers bloom progressively, forming a band moving up the spike. Local species can bloom from June to October. *V. hastata*, to 2 m tall, has 5 to 10 cm long flower spikes. Individual flowers are 2 to 5 mm

across. *V. urticifolia*, to 1 m tall, has thin spikes, to 5 cm long, of about 1 mm flowers. *V. stricta*, generally less than 1.5 m tall, has the largest flowers, to 9 mm across, in about 10 to 12 cm spikes. Locally its flowers are pink.

V. hastata occurs from the Lake Temagami ecoregion to the U.S. border and also northwest of Lake Superior. It was reported in all U.S. states and all Canadian provinces except Alberta and Newfoundland. *V. urticifolia* is found in southern Ontario, from Manitoba to New Brunswick, and in most of the eastern U.S. *V. stricta* occurs in Ontario, Quebec, and most of the U.S.

When exploring Toronto's open areas, do look for the vervains. They should still be in bloom. *V. stricta* finds should be reported to the TFN.

Article and photos by Peter Money



Top: Blue vervain, *Verbena hastata*
Below left: White, or nettle-leaved, vervain, *V. urticifolia*
Below right: Hoary vervain, *V. stricta*



VERBENA THROUGH THE AGES

Verbena, according to the Oxford Dictionary, was the Roman name for “sacred bough of olive, etc., in medieval Latin [becoming] *vervain*”. Wikipedia, saying “citation needed”, states that verbena [oil] was known as “Juno’s tears” to the Romans and still earlier as “tears of Isis” to the Egyptians. Isis was the Egyptian goddess whose tears over the murder of her husband Osiris were believed by the Egyptians to result in the annual flooding of the Nile. Juno was the most important Roman goddess, the wife of Jupiter. The ancient Greeks dedicated verbena to Eos, the winged goddess of the dawn.

It is not clear when the name of verbena shifted to refer to the Eurasian species *Verbena officinalis* but, in the early Christian period, a folk legend was that this species was used to staunch Jesus’ wounds after he was taken from the cross.

In the Middle Ages it was used to treat various ailments and as protection against spells. Nicholas Culpeper, botanist, herbalist, physician and astrologer, in *The English Physitian* (1652) stated verbena was used, amongst other uses, to promote lactation and as an abortifacient. In John Aubrey’s *Miscellanies* (1696) he stated “Vervain and Dill / Hinder witches from their will”! J. E. Stevens, in *Discovering Wild Plant Names* (1973) recounts that sprigs of *V. officinalis* were carried by ambassadors entrusted with reconciling enemies.

V. officinalis was scientifically described by Linnaeus in *Species Plantarum* in 1753. In modern times verbena, as a tea or incense, has been used by herbalists to treat depression etc. (not to be given to children or pregnant women). A few words of caution: lemon verbena oil is not from *Verbena*, but from *Aloysia citrodora*; Spanish verbena oil is mainly from *Verbena*, but can be from various other species. Buyer beware?

Peter Money

TFN OUTREACH REPORTS

Naturalist’s Visit to a School

May 8. Leader: Joanne Doucette.

I explained to the 20 children attending that we were in the ravine of a buried creek and talked about the fish (Atlantic salmon) that would have lived there. Local people believe there was a Mississauga encampment nearby. We went up the ravine slope to see an apartment building built by Louella Price who came up the Underground Railway to freedom. We talked about how people used their knowledge of nature to survive on the way and find their way to Canada. Then we visited Tea ’N Bannock, a native café. While we waited for our bannock, I showed them a beaver pelt, deer antlers, a bow, snowshoes and a cradle board – all hanging on the walls. On our way back to the school we stopped to listen to Ashbridge’s Creek running in the storm sewer below the street. After they ate their bannock with maple syrup in the circle of rocks in their schoolyard, I told them First Nations stories.

Nature Walk for Settler’s Park Residents’ Association

German Mills, Markham, May. Leader: Theresa Moore.

Theresa has collaborated with the residents, TFN board members, and Town of Markham staff for the past 10 years. Outcomes of this partnership include: recognition of the value of grasslands, abandonment of the aerobic landfill management proposal, designation of the grasslands as a protected meadow, agreement from the Town not to conduct work during nesting season and, most recently, signage about measures visitors can take to protect the ground nesting birds.

We discussed ongoing threats to the area, including invasive plant species, a small fire started by stray fireworks from a nearby residence, and vandalism. Residents shared their stories of wildlife sightings in and around their backyards and were enthusiastic about the many birds and plants seen on the walk, particularly eastern meadowlark, killdeer, great blue heron, and Jack in the pulpit. Of interest, one month later, the area affected by the fire had a much higher density of milkweed than the surrounding areas.

*A great blue heron
Mostly long legs and sharp beak
Stands at attention*

Haiku by Helen Juhola, spring 2015

KEEPING IN TOUCH

The Baltimore oriole [on the cover] and the baby robin were taken at the Bird Fest at Colonel Sam Smith Park in May. The robin seemed newly fledged and, of course, hungry!

Carole Giangrande



Ed note: Carole's lovely photo on the cover shows an oriole in an eastern cottonwood with several of the "necklaces" of green dangling capsules that give this tree its alternative common name, necklace poplar. The capsules contain the summer snowstorm of white fluff to come! The Cornell Lab of Ornithology web page for Baltimore Orioles says they "often nest in American elms, but will build in other trees, especially maples and cottonwoods." More info at: www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/Baltimore_Oriole/lifehistory

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Robins seem to be doing very well this year! We had three nests on our property near Morningside Park. At the back it was fascinating to see the robin apply a mud and clay mixture to the interior of the grass nest, then settle in to wiggle and rotate slightly to form the shape. After this it would fly to our nearby birdbath to wash its dirty breast. Unfortunately this nest was not occupied for long. When a storm blew it down a few weeks later the mud lining was covered with very fine grasses that created a soft bouncy surface.

A nest was built on the second storey drainpipe bend, just below the gutter, despite a new deck being created

below. I delayed the installation of new downspouts until the babies fledged. I wondered how the fledglings would manage the two floor fall but missed the event.

The third nest (see photo) was built on the floodlights by the front door. As the nest was being built we were having bricks laid in the courtyard, but despite all the human activity the nest got built. Once she was sitting on the eggs I put a notice on the gate to please enter the courtyard slowly and quietly but by then she was nervous and flew a bit away no matter how careful everyone was.

Three eggs hatched and I believe two parents were feeding the little ones. At night a parent sometimes flew into a nearby tree and this would activate the motion detector, which made for unusual shadows on the fence. The light did not seem to bother the bird at all. One baby fledged two days before the other two and it was discovered by a neighbour who saw it on the window wiper area of my parked car. Despite its small wings it flew up onto the roof of the vehicle then when we next looked it had gone. After all three had left, I heard, then saw, two of them in the front garden's smoke bush, fourteen feet up. A parent flew in to feed one of them. Yesterday I saw a young robin with the thrush markings on its breast and wonder if it was one of the three.

Anne Leon





Photo: Larry Fawthrop

In April I came across a woodcock's nest. The female sat completely still and was so well camouflaged it's almost impossible to see her in the photo we took. About 10 days after finding the nest we saw this (above). Bird experts have said the eggs were predated.

Karin Fawthrop

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What about permanent conservation areas, off limits to people, in the areas where the plovers attempted to nest on the Toronto Islands? I seem to remember that conservation preserves throughout the Toronto Islands were promised long ago.

Al Roffey



Piping plover at Hanlans Point, July 2015, one of the pair that nested this summer on Hanlans beach - the first record of breeding there in 81 years. Unfortunately a storm washed out the nest and the eggs were broken. Photo: Jenny Bull

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The Cherry Blossoms were at their peak on May 7, 2015. There were crowds of people even though this was a weekday.

Barry Singh



The tiger swallowtail was seen in Craigeigh Gardens on May 30. There were several of them enjoying the lilacs there, as were we! The indigo bunting was taken on June 7 in Earl Bales Park. I believe I puzzled him because I was wearing an indigo coloured top and it wondered if I was possibly a competing male!

Miriam Garfinkle

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FOR READING

The Sixth Extinction (2014) by Elizabeth Kolbert is a fascinating and well written overview of the current man-made mass extinction juxtaposed against our planet's earlier "Big Five" extinctions. Kolbert delves into historical research and takes us around the globe examining important museum collections and visiting field researchers to shed light on what is happening today. Paul Ehrlich warned "In pushing other species to extinction, humanity is busy sawing off the limb on which it perches." Many choose to bury their heads in the sand, to take no responsibility, to shrug it all off as something the next generation will have to deal with. Amidst all the irretrievable losses and enormous challenges, however, Kolbert offers hope, "the thing with feathers," and reminds us that humans are capable of changing course and taking action towards a brighter future.

In his 2009 book ***A Year on the Wing*** (U.K. title *The Running Sky: A Birdwatcher's Life*), Tim Dee gives a beautiful account of his lifelong relationship with nature, in particular with birds. He pulls together experiences from different years and a myriad of places, both worldwide and close to his home in England. Although his observations include the rare and exotic, he increasingly appreciates and learns from the common city birds. "We have broken from nature, fallen from the earth, put ourselves beyond it, but nature ... comes towards us ... Birds begin and end beyond us ... We see them doing things apparently without feeling or thinking, but – and because of this – they make us think and feel."

The reader need not be a birder or naturalist to enjoy the compelling new mystery series by Steve Burrows, a birdwatcher since his childhood in the U.K., now living in Oshawa. ***A Siege of Bitterns*** (2014) and ***A Pitying of Doves*** (2015) are set in England's prime birding area, the Norfolk coast, and feature Inspector Domenic Jejeune,

a Canadian whose passion for birding helps him see what others miss. These intriguing mysteries are well written, sprinkled with quiet humour and hard to put down. Nature lovers are sure to connect with the environmental issues and bird lore woven into the intricate plots but never belaboured. Other mystery lovers will enjoy the books too. Some may discover in them the spark of a new interest or hobby. I eagerly await the next book in what I hope will be a long series.

Marilynn Murphy

Where do Camels Belong?

by Ken Thompson, 2014

This book suggests invasive species are not necessarily all bad. Man is usually in a hurry to control nature, but left alone it often manages without our interference. He provides many interesting, thought-provoking examples. Quite readable!

Helen Juhola

Dam Builders: The Natural History of Beavers and Their Ponds

by Michael Runtz, Fitzhenry and Whiteside, 2015

The author has worked as an interpretive naturalist in Algonquin and Point Pelee Parks and written several books including *Wild Wings: The Hidden World of Birds* (1996) and *Wild Flowers: Beauty and the Beasts* (1994). He is an accomplished photographer and the book is filled with amazing photographs.

As well as being fascinating creatures, beavers also create habitat for many kinds of plants and animals.

We have received a copy of this book.

If you would like to review it for the newsletter please contact the office.

You Spoke and We Listened!

Our website has been updated in response to the feedback we received from the TFN Membership Survey earlier this year. Check it out: www.torontofieldnaturalists.org/

We now have better navigation through the pages, easier to find contact information, beefed up membership page, and new newsletter and volunteering pages. We've also made it easier to find some of the pages that had previously been hiding.

Thank you to everyone who provided feedback on the survey! Further comments on the website can be emailed to webmaster@torontofieldnaturalists.org

IN THE NEWS

Ontario Air Quality Health Index

This summer Ontario replaced the old Air Quality Index with a new Air Quality Health Index. The Air Quality Health Index works like the UV index by providing real-time air quality measurements through a ranking of 1 through 10 or greater, with lower numbers representing better air quality. When the amount of air pollution is very high, the number will be reported as 10+. It also reports on the health risks of the combination of pollutants in the air, where previous air quality indices reported only on air quality for individual pollutants.

If you want to reduce your exposure to high levels of air pollution, you can refer to this index before taking part in any outdoor physical activity.

www.airqualityontario.com/aqhi/index.php

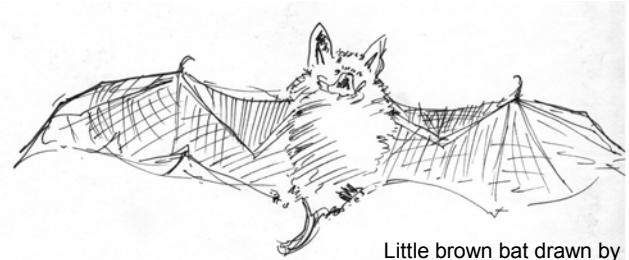
New Signage at Grenadier Pond

New signs have been installed at High Park's Grenadier Pond to help protect ducks, swans, turtles and other wildlife.

Although the pond's wildlife has 'protected' status under municipal, provincial and federal legislation, in reality inappropriate behaviour by human visitors to the pond have harassed, maimed and killed wildlife. Most of the trouble comes from off-leash dogs and abandoned fishing line, hooks and sinkers. To attempt to encourage good behaviour the City has installed signs that clearly show the limited area where fishing is permitted. The rest of the pond and marsh is posted as a "Wildlife Protection Area" and an "Environmentally Sensitive Area", with graphic symbols to indicate the park rules (e.g., no fishing, no feeding of birds, etc.) Boating is not allowed anywhere on

the pond. Dogs are not allowed in any park ponds or creeks and must be on leash at all times when outside off-leash areas.

The signs are not a panacea, but every bit helps when trying to give the wildlife of the pond the respect and protection it deserves.



Little brown bat drawn by
Diana Banville

Good News for Bats?

White-nose syndrome has been attacking bat colonies in North America since 2006. This fungus has affected 6 million hibernating bats in eastern Canada and the U.S. causing them to wake more frequently during hibernation and use up their critical fat reserves. Four bat species have been hit especially hard by the disease, with some regional populations declining by more than 90 percent.

Scientists have been working to save our valuable bat species and it looks like we are a step closer to a solution. Scientists at the University of Santa Cruz discovered that some of the bacteria naturally found on some bats are antagonistic to the fungus. These researchers found six "friendly" bacteria that dramatically inhibited the growth of the fungus in the lab. And two of those proved especially resilient at quashing fungal growth.

Scientists are currently testing to see if treating bats with the resilient bacteria can protect them from white-nose syndrome. If it works, researchers will be able to enter caves where bats are hibernating and spray the bats with the bacteria to give them a chance to survive the winter.

Ontario Signs onto Lake Friendly Accord

This summer Ontario took steps to improve water quality in the province's lakes and rivers by signing onto the Lake Friendly Accord. By signing the accord, which has also been signed by Manitoba, Alberta and Minnesota, the province is pledging to reduce the amount of nutrients in Ontario's waterways. Excess nutrients, like phosphorus and nitrogen, increase the frequency and severity of algal blooms that can contaminate drinking water and damage fish and other aquatic life.

Ontario has pledged to undertake numerous actions to reduce nutrient loading in the Lake of the Woods area, Lake Simcoe and the Laurentian Great Lakes. This is a good step forward, as a coordinated, sustained effort is needed to reduce nutrients in rivers and lakes. For more information on the Lake Friendly Accord, visit www.lakefriendly.ca.

Lynn Miller

REMEMBERING GEORGE FAIRFIELD

TFN member George M Fairfield was a frequent contributor to the newsletter, writing particularly about the birds in his garden near Sherwood Park. Extracts from some of these are printed below in From the Archives.

His obituary in the *Toronto Star* highlights his interest in nature as "an avid birdwatcher and naturalist ... and an early member of the Long Point Bird Observatory and the Federation of Ontario Naturalists [now Ontario Nature]. His lifelong passion for the outdoors is revealed in his books *Wild Places in Canada* and *Ashbridge's Bay: An*

Anthology of Writings by Those Who Knew and Loved Ashbridge's Bay and in the Newsletter he founded for the Toronto Ornithological Club [TOC]. George contributed decades of field work toward the scientific study of birds. He happily shared his pursuits with others as a leader of wildlife expeditions."

As well as editing the book about Ashbridges Bay, George contributed a chapter entitled "A short history of Ashbridges Bay." The book is available from the TOC at www.torontobirding.ca/site/page/view/club.publications

FROM THE ARCHIVES

A Feeding Frenzy

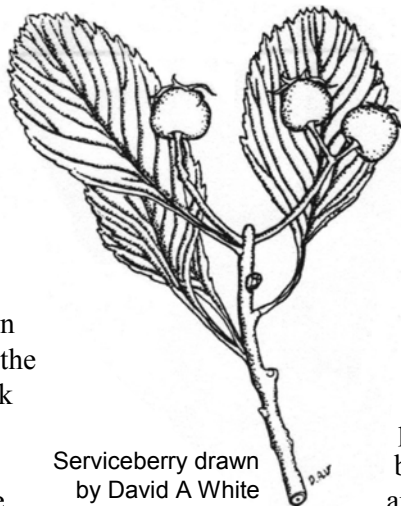
From TFN #470, October 1997

We planted a serviceberry in our back yard three years ago to cover the "fruitless" period between the time when the last mulberry had been eaten and the first mountain ash berries ripened. The bush grew very slowly and is still under two metres in height. However this year it had a good crop of berries.

We watched expectantly hoping to see a few frugivorous [fruit-eating] birds in our yard at mid-summer. Only the odd robin visited the bush and we suspected that we had planted it too close to our deck, only three metres away. On August 8th we had a pleasant surprise. At 6 pm my wife, Jean, called me to the window to see an adult eastern kingbird accompanied by a young bird eating the berries. This was wholly unexpected. We think of the kingbird as a bird of the open countryside, swooping out from its perch on a fence to catch bees or other insects. Here were two kingbirds feeding greedily on berries in a midtown backyard!

Our astonishment grew when the kingbirds were joined by four young Baltimore orioles, four young cardinals and a robin. The kingbirds left, but there was still not room for all the birds in the little bush at once, and two or three had to await their turn on a nearby fence. The melee only lasted a few minutes and then all the birds disappeared. I inspected the bush and there were only a half dozen dried up berries left. The kingbirds visited the bush again the following day and flew off immediately in search of better pickings.

We are hoping for a bumper crop of serviceberries again next year - and the good luck to be on hand when the feeding frenzy takes place!



Serviceberry drawn by David A White

Wall-to-wall birds

From TFN #497, February 2001

... Most of the mountain ash berries from the top and far side of the tree [in our back yard] had disappeared, but there were still good bunches of berries in the low branches close to the house. Four species were feeding on the mountain ash berries: robins, house finches, cedar waxwings and several starlings who were moving back and forth between the Boston ivy and the mountain ash.

The cedar waxwings were feeding on the large clumps of berries just three metres from where I was sitting, two adult birds in their immaculate soft brown, grey and yellow plumage, and three streaking grey young birds. To my surprise one of the adults flew over and perched beside the other, and the two began billing. Then one picked a berry and fed it to the other. The breeding season was long past and I took them to be a mated pair maintaining their pair bond. However the sexes are so similar I could not be sure; maybe they were just good friends.

An Eighty-four Square Meter Paradise

From TFN #519, November 2003

... This morning I am sitting on the back deck with my notebook and a cup of coffee. A chipmunk is in the serviceberry just now helping himself to the berries that ripened overnight. I hope he leaves a few berries for the robins and orioles, but judging by the frequency of his trips from the bush to his storage area, I doubt it...

George Fairfield

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 Sept 6, 8 am - noon. High Park - fall migrants, raptors. Leader: Leslie Kinrys. Meet at the parking lot inside the Bloor St entrance to High Park at High Park Ave.
- Sat Sept 12, 8 am - afternoon. Leslie Street Spit - fall migrants, raptors, shorebirds. Leader: Justin Peter. Meet at the foot of Leslie St at Unwin Ave (south of Lake Shore Blvd E).
- Sun Sept 20, 8 am - noon. Lambton Woods - fall migrants. Leader: Don Burton. Meet at James Gardens parking lot (access from Edenbridge Dr east of Royal York Rd, north of Dundas St W).
- Sat Sept 26, 7:30 am - afternoon. Toronto Islands - late fall migrants, raptors. Leader: Barry Coombs. Meet at Toronto Islands Ferry Docks at the foot of Bay St off Queen's Quay to catch the 8:15am ferry to Hanlan's Point (\$7.25 ferry fee for adults; students/seniors \$4.75). 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.

Toronto Carrying Place – Lieutenant Governor John Graves Simcoe's 1793 Journey

Sat Sept 19, 9:30 am. Historical commentary by leader, Madeleine McDowell. Meet at the Rousseaux site, south of 8 South Kingsway (Petro Canada). The expedition will take the form of a parade, permitting people to join and leave along the route, ending before 2 pm at Eglinton and the Humber River. Information: 416-767-7633.

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.

Lost Rivers Walks

Information: www.lostrivers.ca. Walking tours limited to 20 participants. Pre-registration is not required but, to ensure a spot on the tour, please email in advance to info@labspacestudio.com.

- Thurs Sept 17, 1:30 pm. A River Runs Through It: Greektown's underground aquifer. Leaders: Ed Freeman, geologist, and Ian Wheel. Meet at the east exit from Pape subway station. A 2-hr walk along the edge of East York's Baymouth Sandbar ending near Coxwell Ave and Gerrard St E.
- Sat Sept 26, 2 pm. Lost Waterway Ravines Memorial Walk to Margaret Machell (1920-2015). Leader: Ian Wheel. Waterway Tunnels of CN Rail (GO), Newmarket subdivision; St Clair Ave W to Wilson Ave. Meet at the northeast corner of Caledonia Rd and St. Clair Ave W. A 2 1/2 hour northerly walk.

WEATHER (THIS TIME LAST YEAR)

September 2014

September began with our most consistent warm spell of the summer, with temperatures peaking at 31.5° on the 5th at Pearson Airport (a couple of degrees cooler downtown). But thereafter it turned sharply cooler and wetter: not outstandingly so, but enough to make the month have just near-average temperatures (around 17° both downtown and at the airport) and above-normal precipitation (90.2 mm of rain downtown and 102.8 mm

at Pearson). The last week of the month brought warmer, sunnier conditions again.

Summer 2014 was thus confirmed as a fairly cool, moderate season with only 5 days of 30° readings downtown. Pearson had 7 such days. Predominantly cool weather has now held for a full year.

Gavin Miller

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Publications Mail
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Balancing
Canadian Geese

Photo by
Andrew Kuczer,
May 17, 2015,
along the Cedar
Trail at Rouge
Park

