



# TORONTO FIELD NATURALIST

Number 616 December 2015



Etienne Brule Park. Watercolour by Julia Hattori

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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 February issue, Jan. 3**

**NEWSLETTER COMMITTEE**

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

Printing and mailing: Perkins Services Inc.

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- \$50 FAMILY (2 adults – same address, children included)

No HST. Tax receipts issued for donations. Send membership fees and address changes to the TFN office.

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

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TFN has joined Twitter! You can now get up-to-date information on TFN activities, Toronto nature events, and interesting nature news by following us on at @TorontoNature!

**Todmorden Mills Wildflower Preserve receives Community Heritage Award from Heritage Toronto**

Congratulations to Paula Davies and the Volunteer Stewardship Team of Todmorden Mills Wildflower Preserve on receiving a Community Heritage Award from Heritage Toronto after being nominated by the TFN.

Paula is in the centre, holding the award and cheque, and is surrounded by TFN members Jason Ramsay-Brown, Jane Cluver, Charles Bruce-Thompson, Margaret McRae, Donata Frank and Madeleine MacDowell.

Read about TFN's nomination of TMWP for this Award in TFN 615, Nov 2015, p 8.



Photo: Ron Dengler

## TFN MEETING

**Sunday, December 6, 2015, 2:30 pm**

### Biomimicry: Learning from Nature's Designs

*Richard Aaron, nature educator, will explore ways nature's time-tested strategies can provide sustainable solutions to human engineering challenges.*

**VISITORS WELCOME!**

**SOCIAL: 2:00 – 2:30 pm**

For this lecture, an anonymous donor is providing beverages and cookies

A sale of gently used nature books and  
silent auction of the art print *Winter Meadow* by Brian Darcy  
begins at 2:00 pm

**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 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.

## Nature Images Show

**Saturday, February 6, 2016 from 1:30 to 4 pm**

Auditorium, S Walter Stewart Library

Light refreshments will be served.

Nature Arts members will show their work on tables during the coffee break.

170 Memorial Park Ave at Durant Ave (one block north of Mortimer or one block south of Cosburn, 1 block west of Coxwell). Coxwell bus to Mortimer or Cosburn Avenues.

### Volunteers needed!

Please let us know if you can help with this event.

We welcome donations of goodies for the refreshment table, as well as help with setup and cleanup (setup begins at 1 pm).

Call Margaret McRae at  
[REDACTED] or  
[REDACTED]

### TFN photographers!

Show us what you have discovered! Inspire others with your images of the City's landscapes and biodiversity! Highlight the amount of life there is in the city!

Rules for participating:

- You may bring up to 25 digital images to show.
- Bring images on a USB Flash Drive or CD.
- Bring large resolution images (minimum of 1024 pixels along the long edge).
- Images should focus on Ontario with a nature subject (plants, animals, landscapes).
- Arrive at least 15 minutes early so your images can be transferred for projection.
- Please be prepared to introduce your images, or provide a scripted introduction that can be read by a volunteer.



## 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](http://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.
- *Please thoroughly clean your footwear before each outing to avoid spreading invasive seeds.*

- Tues  
Dec 1  
1:30 pm      **DUNCAN MILLS CREEK – Nature Walk**  
Leader: Alexander Cappell  
Meet at the northeast corner of Finch Ave E and Don Mills Rd for a 2 1/2 hour linear walk. This creek is unusual for Toronto in that it flows north rather than south, emptying into German Mills Creek near Steeles Ave E and Leslie St, where we have seen beaver on previous visits. It's a good example of urban creek problems, with collapsed gabion baskets and a crumbling, sheer sand cliff with trees falling off the eroding crest. There's one steep, short climb to exit the ravine at Steeles Ave E and Leslie St on our way to a coffee shop.
- Sat  
Dec 5  
10:00 am      **WALK THE BELTLINE – Nature and Heritage**  
Leader: Linda McCaffrey  
Meet at the southwest corner of Yonge St and Chaplin Cres outside Davisville subway station for a linear walk along the beltline railway to the Eglinton West subway station, about 5 km. Exit at Eglinton West or return to Davisville subway station. A full circuit can take close to 3 hours. Washrooms at the Larry Grossman Community Centre about halfway along the trail. The Beltline is unpaved but quite flat, easy walking. We will review the history of this ill-fated line and the opportunity it provided to Robert Bateman to observe and sketch wildlife as a youth. Bring binoculars.
- Sun  
Dec 6  
2:30 pm      **BOOK SALE AND AUCTION 2 pm**  
**LECTURE: Biomimicry – Learning from Nature's Designs**  
Speaker: Richard Aaron  
Northrop Frye Hall, 73 Queen's Park Cres E. See details page 3.
- Thurs  
Dec 10  
10:00 am      **HUMBER BAY PARK EAST – Birds**  
Leader: Doug Paton  
Meet at the southwest corner of Park Lawn Rd and Lake Shore Blvd W. Bring binoculars. Morning only. Flat terrain. No washrooms.
- Sat  
Dec 12  
10:00 am      **SCARBOROUGH BLUFFS – Nature Walk**  
Leader: Jane Cluver  
Meet on the south side of Chine Drive and Kingston Rd for a 2-hr circular walk. We'll explore the trails of the upper Scarborough Bluffs. No washrooms.
- Thurs  
Dec 17  
10:00 am      **ASHBRIDGE'S BAY – Winter Birds**  
Leader: Anne Powell  
Meet at the southwest corner of Coxwell Ave and Lake Shore Blvd E for a 2-hr circular walk on flat surface. No washrooms. Bring binoculars.
- Sat  
Dec 19  
1:30 pm      **LOST STREAMS ALONG THE DANFORTH – Heritage**  
Leader: Ed Freeman  
Meet at the Pape entrance to Pape subway station for a 2-hr, 5 km walk. Route is along the north and south sides of Danforth between Pape and Woodbine Avenues, diverting south along the south side of the CN railway tracks and back north from Merrill Bridge Park. Mostly paved surface. Some stairs, no washrooms. Bring enthusiasm.

- Sun**                    **WINTER ON LOST MUD CREEK – Lost Rivers, Rivers Rising**  
 Dec 20                Leaders: Helen Mills for Lost Rivers; Ed Sackaney, Catherine Tammaro, Brian MacLean for First Story.  
 2:00 pm                Meet at the southwest corner of St Clements Ave and Avenue Rd for a 2-hr linear walk on mostly paved surfaces. Joint outing and inaugural Rivers Rising walk with First Story. A winter-themed walk originating at the site of the Wendat village that used to be located at Allenby School, exploring Mud Creek and the possible extent of the Wendat corn fields. Rivers Rising Ambassadors will be participating. We will talk about traditions that recognize the longest night of the year. Possible slippery conditions. We hope to have a craft activity and/or a meal at the end of the walk.
- Tues**                    **WILKET CREEK – Nature Walk**  
 Dec 22                Leader: Ken Sproule  
 10:00 am                Meet in the parking lot at the entrance to Wilket Creek Park on Leslie St just north of Eglinton Ave E for a circular walk of approximately 2 1/2 hours through Wilket Creek and Sunnybrook Parks on mostly unpaved trails. If paths are dry and ice-free, there will be some steep hills to climb. Bring binoculars, lunch optional. Winter conditions.
- Sat**                    **FISHERVILLE CREEK AND EAST DON – Nature Walk**  
 Dec 26                Leader: Alexander Cappell  
 1:30 pm                Meet at the northwest corner of Steeles Ave W and New Westminster Dr for a 2 1/2 hour walk. We'll walk along Fisherville Creek south to its junction with the West Don, which we'll follow north back to Steeles Ave W at Dufferin St, where there are coffee shops. We'll see mowed lawns, meadows, wetlands, shrublands, a typical Great Lakes forest, riverbank trees, a few apple trees and the ruins of a weir. Mostly on flat land, with a few easy climbs.
- Wed**                    **TAYLOR CREEK AND DON FORKS – Nature Walk**  
 Dec 30                Leader: Stephen Smith  
 10:30 am                Meet at the parkette at the northwest corner of Coxwell Ave and O'Connor Dr for a circular walk on mostly unpaved uneven surfaces. About 4 km and 2 1/2 hours. No washrooms. We will walk down into Coxwell Ravine Park and look at forests and meadows where Taylor Creek meets the East and West Don Rivers and tour the elevated wetlands and Seton woods area. We'll discuss upcoming plans for the parklands. Bring binoculars and hot drinks. Expect icy conditions. There are steep steps down to the valley which won't be cleared of snow or ice. Participants who want to avoid the steps can drive to the large parking lot off Don Mills Rd and wait to meet the group there.
- Sat**                    **LOWER DON – Nature Walk**  
 Jan 2                    Leader: Margaret McRae  
 1:00 pm                Meet at the northeast corner of Beechwood Dr and O'Connor Dr for a circular walk through Sun Valley and Crothers Woods or the Beechwood wetlands area depending upon conditions. Some hills. No washrooms.
- Thur**                    **VICTORIA SQUARE – Gaudy and Gaunt – Heritage**  
 Jan 7                    Leader: Linda McCaffrey  
 10:00 am                Meet at Bathurst subway station for a linear walk on mostly paved surfaces, mainly flat with gentle slopes. Starting at Honest Ed's gaudy Emporium, scheduled to close December 31, 2016, we will make our way through Mirvish Village, also slated for demolition, through Little Italy noting historic buildings, to Victoria Square at Bathurst St and Wellington St W where we will contemplate the gravestones of Upper Canada's first settlers and the early garrison; then continue along Wellington St W to Clarence Sq at Spadina Ave. The Spadina streetcar will take you back to the subway. Bring binoculars. We could spot some hawks. Morning only.

Outings continued next page

FOR ENJOYMENT OF WINTER OUTINGS

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

## TFN OUTINGS continued

- Sat  
Jan 9  
1:30 pm  
**CASTLE FRANK BROOK – Nature Walk**  
Leader: Alexander Cappell  
Meet outside St Clair West subway station entrance on south side of St Clair Ave W for a linear walk. We'll enter Nordheimer Ravine at St Clair, follow the path of buried Castle Frank Brook southeast under the Spadina Rd bridge, look at a water reservoir, descend the Lake Iroquois shoreline past a historic water-pumping station on our way to Ramsden Park, a former quarry, climb down into the Rosedale Ravine at Rosedale subway station and then head up and out to a coffee shop near Yonge and Bloor. Some stairs and slopes.
- Tues  
Jan 12  
1:00 pm  
**LESLIE CREEK – Nature and Heritage**  
Leader: Joanne Doucette  
Meet outside Pape subway station (Pape entrance). We will explore the route of this buried creek south through Kempton Howard Park and the site of the Blake St brickyards, past the first Jewish cemetery in Ontario and down to Leslie Grove Park. May be slippery. Cleats recommended. Washrooms at beginning and end of walk. Will end at a coffee shop.
- Sat  
Jan 16  
10:00 am  
**ROUGE PARK – Nature walk**  
Leader: Jonathan Harris  
Meet at Glen Rouge Campground parking lot on Kingston Rd east of Port Union Rd and Sheppard Ave E for a 4-km circular walk along the Mast Trail which cuts through the Rouge valley. We'll be keeping an eye out for overwintering birds and other wildlife. There may be opportunities for winter twig identification. Bring lunch, binoculars, field guides. For those coming via transit, the nearest bus stop is at Port Union/Sheppard/Kingston Road and will require a 10 minute walk to the Glen Rouge parking lot.
- Sun  
Jan 17  
2:00 pm  
**BLACK AND LAVENDER CREEKS AND GREENHOUSES AT ROCKCLIFFE-SMYTHE – Lost Rivers**  
Leaders: Helen Mills, Solomon Boye and friends from First Story  
Meet at the southeast corner of Jane St and Alliance Ave for a linear walk on mostly paved surfaces. We will start warm with a tour of Toronto Parks Greenhouse at Rockcliffe where Solomon Boye, supervisor for community gardens at Toronto Parks, will tell us about programs at the greenhouse. Then we will explore Black Creek and Lavender Creek, and visit the Carrying Place Trail in Conn Smythe Park, a great wildlife site.
- Thurs  
Jan 21  
10:00 am  
**HIGH PARK – Birds**  
Leader: Doug Paton  
Meet at the entrance to High Park at Bloor St W and High Park Ave for a morning-only walk with optional lunch at Grenadier Restaurant. Washrooms available.
- Sat  
Jan 23  
10:00 am  
**ALLAN GARDENS – Botany of Tropical Plants**  
Leader: Nancy Dengler  
Allan Gardens is on Carlton St between Jarvis St and Sherbourne St. Meet inside the doors on the east side of the conservatory for a circular walk on flat surface. We will tour the collection of tropical and subtropical edible plants (banana, papaya, tamarind, akee, coffee, and pomegranate, citrus) as well as other plants of cultural importance (sacred fig, mahogany, papyrus, agave, kapok). Dress in layers for the tropical warmth and humidity.
- Tues  
Jan 26  
1:30 pm  
**YELLOW CREEK – Nature Walk**  
Leader: Alexander Cappell  
Meet at the northeast corner of Heath St E and Yonge St for a linear walk with stairs and steep slopes. We'll climb down the Heath St stairs just south of Mt Pleasant Cemetery, where Yellow Creek flows south out of a huge sewer grate into the Vale of Avoca, a deep, steep-sided, forested ravine with houses and swimming pools perched on the edge, then go under the railroad bridge and through south Rosedale to the Rosedale Ravine. End at a coffee shop near Bloor and Yonge.
- Sat  
Jan 30  
2:00 pm  
**TORONTO BELTLINE – Nature Walk**  
Leader: John Bacher  
Meet at the southwest corner of Yonge St and Chaplin Cres outside Davisville subway station for a circular walk to the Allen Expressway on mostly flat and unpaved surfaces. No washrooms.

## Tax Deductible Donations

TFN is dependent for funding on membership dues and donations.

We rely on the generosity of our members for special projects and extraordinary expenses.

If you wish to make a donation to TFN, this may be done by sending a cheque to the TFN office (see page 2), or go to our web site, [www.torontofieldnaturalists.org](http://www.torontofieldnaturalists.org) and click on Donate On-line through [CanadaHelps.org](http://CanadaHelps.org)  
As a charitable organization we issue receipts for use as deductions on your income tax return.

## PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Last Saturday, TFN members Anne Powell, Bob Kortright, Charles Bruce-Thompson, Joanne Doucette and I attended the fall regional meeting of Ontario Nature held at the McMichael Gallery in Kleinburg. The meeting was hosted by the Mycological Society of Toronto and included an enjoyable afternoon foray into the valley of the East Humber River to search for mushrooms (see page 10).

During the meeting, Mycological Society program director Michael Warnock provided some interesting statistics on mushrooms and other fungi. I learned that 25% of the world's total biomass is made up of fungi and that the record for the world's largest organism is still the "humongous fungus" discovered in Oregon by a University of Toronto graduate student. Based on DNA finger-printing and petri dish fusion tests, this giant honey mushroom (*Armillaria solipes*) was determined to cover 8.4 sq km underground, estimated to weigh more than 600 tons, and thought to be 2400 years old. During the talk I was happy to hear that, similar to TFN policy on foraging, the Mycological Society of Toronto encourages a naturalist's (rather than a forager's) approach to mushrooms found in the wild during their forays.

TFN member (and long-time MST member) Pat Burchell gave the Ontario Nature group a sneak preview of a new booklet in the City of Toronto Biodiversity series: *Mushrooms of Toronto*. I learned that Toronto's unofficial mushroom is dryad's saddle (or pheasant-back mushroom, *Polyporus squamosus*), one that is seen on many of our TFN outings. The new *Mushrooms of Toronto* booklet, along with *Trees and Shrubs of Toronto* and *Bees of Toronto* have an anticipated release date of summer 2016. In the meantime, digital versions of six other booklets in the series are available for downloading on the City's website ([www.toronto.ca](http://www.toronto.ca); search on biodiversity booklet series).

Ontario Nature provides a connection between the TFN and over 150 other nature organizations across Ontario. Through *ON Nature* magazine and their website

([www.ontarionature.org](http://www.ontarionature.org)), they keep us abreast of their efforts to protect wild species and wild spaces throughout the province. They advocate on our behalf, such as their campaign to protect pollinating insects by banning neonicotinoid pesticides and taking the province of Ontario to court for weakening the Endangered Species Act. Ontario Nature also provides services that would be difficult to arrange on our own such as the affordable liability insurance that we carry for our outings program. Similar to the TFN's own mandate, connecting people with nature is one of Ontario Nature's primary goals.

Because they are province-wide, they have taken an approach to edible wild food in northern Ontario that I think may be appropriate there, but not so much for a densely populated urban area such as ours. Their Forest and Freshwater Foods Program promotes harvesting of wild foods but, based on concerns raised by TFN members and others at the meeting, Ontario Nature will take measures to clarify that this program is intended for low human population density areas only.

As reported in the November newsletter, I was so pleased that the TFN's nomination of Todmorden Mills Wildflower Preserve was recognized by a

2015 Community Heritage Award from Heritage Toronto. Although these awards are made for efforts to protect "archeological, built, cultural or natural heritage", this appears to be the *first* time that efforts to preserve Toronto's *natural* heritage have been recognized by an award. The only exception that I could find occurred in 2010 when TFN member Madeleine McDowell received a Special Achievement award from Heritage Toronto for her accomplishments in preserving both natural and human cultural heritage of the Humber River watershed.

I am looking forward to our December 6 monthly meeting when Richard Aaron will be speaking on Biomimicry: Learning from Nature's Designs. I hope that you will join us at 2:00 pm for refreshments, the book sale, and silent art auction before the 2:30pm talk. See you there!

Nancy Dengler



Members of TFN, Mycological Society of Toronto (MST) and Ontario Nature on mushroom foray led by MST member Tony Wright (centre) in the Humber River Valley in Kleinburg. Photo: Ron Dengler



## MONTHLY MEETING REPORT

### Roads, Citizen Science and the War on Science

November 1, Dave Ireland, Managing Director, Centre of Discovery in Biodiversity, Royal Ontario Museum

National Geographic's March 2015 edition focussed on the "The War on Science" with ideas such as "Climate change does not exist" and "Evolution never happened" featured on its cover. For Dave Ireland, this highlights the concern that scientists have not been able to communicate their work well enough to the public. His role at the ROM is to help scientists tell their stories more effectively and help the public understand why they are important to them.

The audience learned about the some of the ROM's innovations in bringing scientific work to the public in compelling and engaging ways. One is a partnership with Fleming College to run a nine-month intensive graduate

Environmental Visual Communication (EVC) program housed in the ROM that teaches students about science, videography and social media. The students are then embedded with ROM scientists in their fieldwork such as the Blue Whale Project which became a global story thanks to one of the EVC grads.

Ireland believes roads and road networks are our biggest challenge for biodiversity, and one of the hardest stories to tell. They are without doubt humanity's biggest footprint on Earth. They provide access for invasive species and human activities such as hunting and poaching, and they fragment wildlife habitat.

The Ontario Road Ecology Group (OREG) was started in 2005 to create awareness about the impact of roads on biodiversity and to protect wildlife (particularly species at risk) from the threats of roads - primarily habitat loss and fragmentation and direct mortality caused by wildlife-vehicle collisions. It brings together more than 1,000 scientists, planners and educators who collaborate to provide resources and expertise to people building roads.

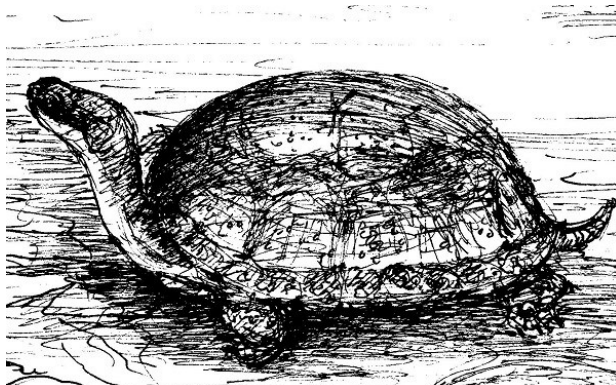
One of the groups they are working with is Algonquin to Adirondacks who want to create a wildlife corridor that crosses the 401 highway in southern Ontario. This would help species from amphibians to moose. Amphibians have been shown by radio tagging to be going up and down the 401 trying to cross; a moose tagged in Algonquin has later been found in the Adirondacks.

OREG makes available a tool that local groups can use to monitor road/wildlife interactions. They are hoping to build out a Canada-wide road ecology group by 2017.

A first step was the Road Ecology: A National Agenda for Canada conference in Ottawa in November 2014. Learn more about road ecology at [www.rom.on.ca/en/blog/roads-roads-roads-road-ecology-in-canada](http://www.rom.on.ca/en/blog/roads-roads-roads-road-ecology-in-canada)

A Guide to Road Ecology in Ontario may be downloaded from: [www.rom.on.ca/sites/default/files/imce/oreg\\_final.pdf](http://www.rom.on.ca/sites/default/files/imce/oreg_final.pdf)

Lavinia Mohr



Blanding's turtle, drawing by a Diana Banville

Erratum: In last month's report we incorrectly identified TFN president S.L. Thompson (1927-1928). We regret the error. Ed.

### Upcoming Lectures

Feb 7	<b>Changes in the Flora of Rouge Park and Toronto</b> Gavin Miller, Toronto Region Conservation Authority Biologist
Mar 6	<b>Ontario's Environmental Bill of Rights: A Citizen's Toolkit for Change</b> Ellen Schwartzel, Deputy Commissioner, Environmental Commissioner of Ontario
Apr 3	<b>Ontario's Badgers</b> Josh Sayers, Ontario Badger Project
May 1	<b>Ontario's Orchids: Perpetual Beauty Worth All Costs</b> Tom Shields, Southern Ontario Orchid Society



## TORONTO WILDFLOWERS: HOLLY

The Aquifoliaceae (hollies and *yerba maté*) is a family of only one genus, *Ilex*, which includes over 400 species. The greatest diversity of species is in tropical South America and southeast Asia. Temperate regions of North America, Europe, and Asia have a few species. Family members are shrubs or small trees. The prickly leaved European species *Ilex aquifolium* is what we know as Christmas holly. According to the *Oxford Dictionary* holly comes from the Old English *holen* or *holegn*. It was, to the Romans, a plant sacred to the god Saturn. They used it to make wreaths carried or used to decorate images, during the pagan festival of Saturnalia. Early Christians, living in the Roman Empire, decorated their homes with holly during Saturnalia, to avoid persecution. When the Roman Empire became Christian, holly became co-opted as a symbol of Christmas. From its pagan beginnings, it was to become a symbol standing for peace and joy.

Many *Ilex* species are grown as ornamentals. Beverages have been made from the leaves of many species, notably *yerba maté*, much used in South America as a stimulant (high in caffeine and theobromine).

The locally native species is *Ilex verticillata* (winterberry or black alder), rare here and only reported in the Rouge Valley in the TFN's *Vascular Plants of Metropolitan Toronto* (2nd ed, 1994). Black alder is a misnomer. This species is deciduous, unlike most hollies which are evergreen. I have not found it here; my illustrations are from Beausoleil Island, Georgian Bay. Plants are up to 30 cm tall and have clusters of about 5 mm wide male and female flowers on separate plants. Male flowers are readily distinguishable by their yellow stamens. It flowers in late summer and later produces red berries, like many other holly species, including of course the evergreen Christmas holly. Our local holly is a good garden plant as its berries are attractive and much appreciated by wildlife. Note that, to produce berries, male and female plants are

needed. According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture database, *I. verticillata* occurs from Ontario to Newfoundland and in most of the eastern half of the U.S.

Locating *I. verticillata* in the Rouge, or elsewhere in Toronto, would be a real find. It may be easier to identify by its clusters of red berries in late summer or fall. If seen, please report locations to the TFN.

Articles and photos by Peter Money



Winterberry, *Ilex verticillata*. Male flowers (top) and female flowers (below).

### James L Baillie Memorial Fund for Bird Research and Preservation (The Baillie Fund)

Bird Studies Canada is accepting applications to the Baillie Fund for 2016. Priority is given to projects that engage the skills and enthusiasm of amateur naturalists and volunteers to help us understand, appreciate and conserve Canadian birds in their natural environments.

**Application deadlines:** Regular Grants: December 15, 2015; Small Grants: January 15, 2016; Student Award for Field Research: February 15, 2016

**Information:** visit [www.bsc-eoc.org](http://www.bsc-eoc.org) or contact the Baillie Fund Secretary at [acoughlan@birdscanada.org](mailto:acoughlan@birdscanada.org) or 1-866-518-0212



## KEEPING IN TOUCH

Here is a photo of 3 kinglets caught in burdock burrs in early October in the Baselands of Tommy Thompson Park. My friend found them and took them to the vet at the Humane Society as Toronto Wildlife Centre (TWC) only had an answering machine. The vet untangled two (the third was dead) which my pal then returned to the Wet Woods and set free, feisty and fine.



Minutes later she found another one and upon reaching TWC they said to keep it overnight in a dark spot as they were closed. The bird died. The same day two other friends rescued magnolia warblers trapped in burrs – both were fine.

Burdock is an invasive species. It is deadly to small birds. Keep an eye out for trapped birds and if you can, chop off the burrs and burn them so the seeds don't spread.

Lynn Pady, photos by Kris Ito and Ruth Danella

I took these photos in September 2013 at Highland Creek in Morningside Park. The child's hand holding a stick gives an idea of the size. I was stunned by the colour and beauty of the gills! The fish is one of several which died as it struggled to spawn up stream.

Anne Leon



Ontario Nature's regional meeting, hosted by the Mycological Society of Toronto, included an enjoyable afternoon foray into the valley of the East Humber River to search for mushrooms. One of the highlights for me was seeing the tinder polypore (*Fomes fomentarius*) growing on a fallen birch log.

This bracket fungus is a decay parasite and may have contributed to the death of the tree. In turn, the fungus bore tooth marks along its margin, possibly those of a mouse, a reminder that fungi are an important food source for wildlife.

Nancy Dengler

Ed: See photo of uneaten *Fomes fomentarius* on page 14.



## BUTTERFLY RAISING REPORT



Monarch caterpillar and male monarch butterfly. Note the black dot on each hind wing. These are pheromone glands to attract females.

This was not a great year for raising butterflies. We had 24 people registered for the program but only seven actually raised any: Charles Bruce-Thompson, Paula Davies, Karin Fawthrop, Jan McDonald, Margaret McRae, Jason Ramsay-Brown, and Pierre Robillard.

The butterflies were very late arriving and low in numbers. We raised 72 monarchs, 40 females and 31 males. One escaped before I could identify whether it was male or female. No one raised any swallowtails. I had four swallowtail caterpillars but all died.

Let's hope we do better next year. The butterflies really need our support. If anyone else wants to raise butterflies with us next year, please give me your contact information, as we have to register with the Ministry of Natural Resources before the beginning of the season.

Margaret McRae

Ed: Check out Journey North's monarch butterfly website at [www.learner.org/jnorth/monarch/News.html](http://www.learner.org/jnorth/monarch/News.html)

This website has frequent updates on sightings, lots of photos and videos, maps and facts.

**October 29 post:** "More roosts and larger concentrations this fall are raising hopes for a population increase from the record lows of the past

three years. Scientists will measure the population in December; results are typically available by March." Fortunately Hurricane Patricia did not affect migration as feared as it dissipated quickly as it crossed northern Mexico.

**November 3 post:** The first monarchs arrived at their wintering site in Mexico.

### KEEPING IN TOUCH *continued*

This eastern towhee (below left) flew into our back yard (in the Bloor-Royal York area) in early October. They love picking through fallen leaves and "lawn litter," and there was more than enough for the little guy.



In mid-October, this beautiful red-tailed hawk (below right) showed up on top of a neighbour's very tall conifer, where it sat until the local birds mobbed it and chased it away.

Carole Giangrande





## OURSpace HIGH PARK

During the summer, High Park Nature Centre moved into more spacious accommodation in the Forest School, enabling them to increase programming capacity. This is a first step towards their goal: “To grow into North America’s leading urban nature hub!”

The second step is to develop an outdoor classroom and restoration site, designated OURSpace, just south of their new premises. This area of approximately half an acre is half covered by a canopy of mature sugar maples and half open (currently mown grass). The intent is to revitalize this under-utilized area, restoring its original tallgrass savannah ecosystem. The vision is to provide an innovative teaching and restoration site that engages community members and park visitors from all around the GTA.

OURSpace objectives are to connect visitors with nature, encourage natural play, restore savannah species and spaces, celebrate seasonality and employ holistic design. The program will include providing a shaded seating area for teaching, sunny locations to support savannah plantings, a variety of natural seating areas, habitat restoration zones, demonstration gardens and interpretive learning stations.



A stakeholders’ meeting was held on September 2nd to brainstorm ideas as to how these objectives might best be achieved, and offer suggestions to Scott Torrance Landscape Architect Inc., the company that has been retained to design and create OURSpace. I represented the TFN at that lively meeting where we grappled with questions like how to engage both students and the

community while fostering stewardship for the space and how best to connect people with nature. Priorities included interactive signage, accessibility and elements that attract wildlife. Emphasis was placed on recognizing and respecting High Park’s designation as an Area of Natural & Scientific Interest (ANSI) and the proximity of OURSpace to an existing restoration site. An approved list of plant species has been provided by High Park

staff with the stipulation that all plant species be sourced from local provenance, and a qualified grower has been retained.

In light of TFN’s support of High Park Nature Centre in recent years, it will be exciting for us to watch these developments.

Wendy Rothwell

## TORONTO'S RAVINE STRATEGY

The City of Toronto is developing new guidelines and plans to help manage, enhance and protect Toronto's ravines in light of increasing pressures due to climate change, population growth, and urban development. Public consultation occurred in May and June by way of a stakeholder workshop and public open house. In addition, a very successful on-line Ravine Strategy Survey was conducted by the City from June to July to further gather citizen commentary and opinion.

In August, TFN was asked to nominate a representative to serve on the City’s Ravine Strategy Advisory Group. The purpose of the group is to provide recommendations to Parks, Forestry and Recreation, City Planning, and Toronto Water in preparation for release of the first draft strategy in mid-2016. TFN member Jason Ramsay-Brown, author of *Toronto's Ravines and Urban Forests* (Lorimer, 2015), has accepted our nomination.

The Advisory Group first met in September. Participants

were introduced and provided with relevant background information regarding the development of the Ravine Strategy to date. Of particular interest were the results from the survey, completed by some 2,700 Torontonians, showing a pronounced public enthusiasm for protecting and enhancing Toronto's natural history and heritage.

The Advisory Group also includes representatives from TRCA, Parks Canada, York University, Evergreen, Walk Toronto, Cycle Toronto, U of T Forestry, Park People, Toronto Environmental Alliance, David Suzuki Foundation, and several other organizations. TFN will be strongly advocating for the preservation and protection of all aspects of Toronto's natural heritage, and for growing and enhancing the ecological function and habitat provided by our amazing tapestry of urban wilds.

The Group plans to meet once a month until early 2016. Watch for updates in future issues of the newsletter. More information can be found at: [goo.gl/jvLZPg](http://goo.gl/jvLZPg)

## CHILDREN'S CORNER: Wintertime

### Word Search – Evergreen Trees

Most of Ontario's evergreen trees are conifers, which grow cones instead of fruit.

Their leaves are called needles or scales.

Some evergreens seen in southern Ontario are: pine, fir, hemlock, white cedar and spruce.

Find and circle each underlined word or phrase in this puzzle. *May be running across, down, diagonal or backwards.*

C	W	S	E	E	R	T	H	I	E
O	T	E	P	I	N	E	T	V	A
N	I	S	L	E	D	D	E	N	K
I	E	E	P	R	A	R	B	E	C
F	C	D	E	R	G	F	G	E	O
E	H	I	J	R	U	K	L	D	L
R	M	N	E	O	P	C	Q	L	M
S	R	E	S	T	U	V	E	E	E
W	N	X	R	I	F	Z	Z	S	H
A	B	C	C	O	N	E	S	D	E
R	A	D	E	C	E	T	I	H	W

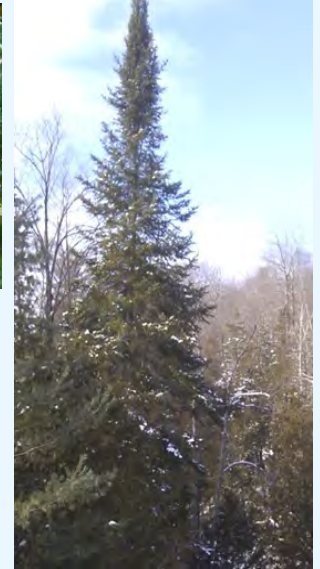
From the remaining letters, find the name of an animal that often finds winter shelter in the forest under the branches of evergreen trees.



Spruce. Photo: J. Marshall



White pine cones. Photo: Jenny Bull



Black spruce. Photo: C. Marshall

### Do You Know...?

- a) Why a rabbit can see behind itself without turning around?
- b) What lives in the water and barks like a dog? (Hint: it's a kind of salamander.)

Judy Marshall

Answers page 19



### ON THE BACK COVER

Look what showed up way out in Tommy Thompson Park on October 25 (see back cover).

A very early young snowy on a log! What a sight! What a gift! What a privilege to watch it preen and sit in the sun on a glorious fall afternoon!

Lynn Pady

Ed: Check out the article "Snowy Owls moving south—winter is coming!" on e-Bird's website about the number of snowy owls coming south early this year.

[ebird.org/content/ebird/news/snowy1015/](http://ebird.org/content/ebird/news/snowy1015/)



## EXTRACTS FROM OUTINGS LEADERS' REPORTS

**Toronto Island, Sep 16. Leader: Miles Hearn.** We found 21 bird species including redhead, pied-billed grebe and northern harrier. Interesting plants included Ohio buckeye, Kentucky coffee tree, beach wormwood, panicked aster, dune grass, switch grass, wild rye and white poplar. Butterflies included many monarchs, mourning cloak, sulphur and cabbage white. See mileshearn.com for a complete bird list.

**Edible Trees, Weeds and Wildflowers of Cedarvale Ravine and Castle Frank Brook, Sep 20. Leaders: Helen Mills, Michael Wheeler, Susan Poizner, Susan Aaron.** Susan introduced the community orchard and described some of the issues they deal with. In Cedarvale Ravine we stopped at a wild apple tree on the edge of the path, and heard the story of the origin of [domestic] apples in Kazakhstan, their journey to Canada and subsequent evolution of a secondary centre of diversity for apples in North America. We also noted a black walnut and other sources of bird food in the distance. We stopped at the family nature garden, a wonderful wetland with diverse native plants and signage. Michael talked about David Suzuki Homegrown National Park and the butterfly pollinator corridor. In the ravine Susan, Helen and Michael shared various stewardship stories, and we looked at a few more edible or poisonous alien and native plants.

**East Don, Sep 26. Leader: Charles Chaffey.** We began on the cool south side of Taylor Creek valley by comparing the three eupatoriums: Joe-pye-weed and boneset had gone to seed, but white snakeroot was still flowering. A downy woodpecker was active in the shrubs. After crossing Taylor Creek and going under the Don Valley Parkway on an informal path, we reached the wider gravelled roadway that is the Toronto Water Access Route, which will become the southernmost part of the East Don Trail going north from the Forks of the Don. Two sunflowers (woodland, and the hairier Jerusalem artichoke) were in full bloom in open places; wingstem (*Verbesina*), with smaller flower heads, was in the wood near the East Don River. The *Symphiotrichum* asters (calico, New England, heath, panicked, heart-leaved and purple-stemmed) were at their peak of flowering, while flat-top white aster (*Doellingeria*) was fading. North of the Forks, the Water Access Route ends abruptly at the East Don; there we looked at maps of the planned East Don Trail going north to connect with the existing trail going south from Lawrence Ave (see [www.toronto.ca/eastdontrail](http://www.toronto.ca/eastdontrail), click on Community Liaison Committee; Read more; Meeting #7; Presentation.) Going back over a hilly woodland path, we saw blue-stem and zig-zag goldenrods together and passed some massive oaks, and, sadly, the dead trunks of big ash trees.

**Moore Park Ravine and Brick Works, Sep 27. Leader: Jason Ramsay-Brown.** We discussed the history of the Belt Line Railway before wandering past Belt Line Pond where we spotted zig-zag goldenrod in bloom and northern pin oak starting to change colour. In Moore Park ravine, we discussed

From top:  
Identifying fungi;  
young lion's mane fungus, *Hericum erinaceus*;  
hoof fungus, *Fomes fomentarius*, on birch.  
Rouge Valley  
Oct 6  
Photos: Lloyd Mayeda



Glacial Lake Iroquois and the history of the Governor's Bridge neighbourhood. On the slope down from Chorley Park we noted the butternuts, one of Ontario's endangered species. At the Brick Works Park ponds, we caught sight of midland painted turtles, a red-eared slider turtle, and a fair sized



snapping turtle. We followed trails to the North Slope, a UNESCO World Heritage site and area of great geological importance, and finished up at the southern end of Evergreen Brick Works.

**Guild Inn, Oct 3. Leader: Bob Kortright.** Late flowers naturally included asters (heart-leaved, large-leaved, panicked, heath, calico), goldenrods (zig-zag, Canada-type), sow-thistles, and white snakeroot, but also late examples of turtlehead, white campion, black-eyed Susan, herb Robert, lady's-thumb and another polygonum, and jewelweed. Mushrooms were few considering the amount of deadwood in the Guild woods, although much of it was recently felled ash, and the weather had been dry, but we did find carnation fungus (*Thelepora*), dryad's saddle, carbon balls, turkey tail, tinder polypore, *Oxyporus*, and something resembling *Xylobolus*. Due to the recently-arrived cool weather, migrant passerines were abundant, staying low because of the wind: both kinglets, parula, palm, black-throated blue, black-throated green, and yellow-rumped warblers, juncos, white-throated sparrows, creepers, blue jays. A loud Carolina wren serenaded us but stayed out of sight.

**Rouge Valley, Finch Meander, Oct 6. Leader: Stephen Kamnitzer.** From the top of the cliff at the meander we could clearly see many salmon in the river about 50 ft below. Fungi noted included: *Boletus ornaticipes* (ornate-stalked bolete), the puffball *Morganella/Lycoperdon subincarnata* (not the usual *Lycoperdon pyriforme* - they lacked a base, ie they sat directly on the log), and some clustered gilled mushrooms (maybe *Pholiota malicola*).

**East Don Trail, Oct 11. Leader: Ed Freeman.** We walked from Wynford Drive north to Lawrence Ave. We descended into the former estuary of Lake Iroquois and examined the site of the Valleydon Railway Station as shown on some maps. We examined the suspended rocks beneath the CNR bridge depicting the high and low water levels in the East Don over the years 1886 to 1998, walked through the Rainbow Tunnel to examine the stormwater pond in Moccasin Trail Park, and returned to read about fish on an interpretive sign after we had seen a large salmon resting just below a set of small rapids. We talked about Alexander Milne and the village of Milnesford Mills, all removed with the exception of one interesting home slowly deteriorating behind a chainlink fence.

**Oak Savanna, Alderville First Nation, Oct 17. Leader: Joanne Doucette.** We had a tour of Alderville First Nation's black oak savanna and extensive prairies with guide Daphne Paszterko, a very knowledgeable graduate of the School of Environmental and Natural Resources, Fleming College Peterborough. She works with Alderville First Nation in the restoration of this very extensive prairie-black oak savanna south of Rice Lake. We also went to nearby Red Cloud Cemetery near Warkworth - a remnant of tall grass prairie in a graveyard established by Quakers in the mid 19th century. It is Ontario's only tallgrass prairie habitat cemetery. Daphne introduced us to the complex plant community of the prairie and oak savannah, explaining the interaction of tall grasses

like big blue stem, Indian grass and little blue stem with forbs\* like round-headed bush clover and butterfly milkweed and how they were restoring this threatened ecosystem through controlled burns, planting and removal of invasive species like Scotch pine and spotted knapweed. The trail system is extensive and well laid out over the rolling hills.



Our guide Daphne Paszterko showing the tall grasses and forbs\* characteristic of Alderville's unique ecosystem.

She explained how they have planted hundreds of lupines which are a blue carpet in late spring. Nesting boxes welcome bluebirds and tree swallows. A number of threatened species of birds thrive in the open grasslands and wooded savanna. We felt very welcome here. The facilities of the Alderville First Nations Black Oak Savanna Ecology Centre are excellent with a place to eat, displays and washrooms. The visit gave us fresh insight into our own oak savannas at High Park and Lambton Woods.

**Salmon, East Don Parklands, Oct 17. Leader: Phil Goodwin.** We spotted salmon at about four locations from Finch Ave to the Cumber Mill dam. We saw a dozen or two, healthy, still moving north. There were a couple of dead ones. This has been a good year for salmon. They were first spotted in the East Don Parkland about Sep 22 and have been heading upstream for about a month, which is good.

**Mount Pleasant Cemetery, Oct 22. Leader: Pleasance Crawford.** Some trees and shrubs were showing their colours; others had yet to reach their peak. Particularly brilliant were some sugar maples, pin oaks, tulip trees, golden ash (*F. excelsior* 'Aurea'), and nannyberry. Native witch-hazels were in flower. Japanese katsura-trees, Norway spruces, northern catalpas, oaks, shagbark hickories, American chestnuts, European larches, crabapples, and dawn redwoods had borne heavy crops. (The cascading male cones of the dawn redwoods were an interesting discovery.) We also caught glimpses of vultures, bluejays, slate-coloured juncos, a kinglet, a hermit thrush, and a low-swooping hawk.

\* Forbs are herbaceous flowering plants that are not graminoids (grasses, sedges and rushes).

## REMEMBERING LOUISE HERZBERG

Louise, who died in September, was a member of the TFN from the early 1980s. Her great interests were history, nature, conservation and the Don Valley.

Her major project at that time was writing a biography of William Brodie, an early Toronto naturalist. She called her manuscript "A Pocketful of Galls". Although it has not been published, her research made her an expert on the lower Don Valley. As such, she became a member of The Friends of the Don, a group of citizens concerned about plans to build high rises in the former Don Valley Brick Works property (now publicly-owned parkland).

She then used her talents in writing *A Human and Natural History of Todmorden Mills*, a TFN ravine study. She was

also involved in writing a chapter about the Don Valley for the Royal Canadian Institute's *Special Places: The changing ecosystems of the Toronto Region*.

She also contributed both poems and artwork to the *Toronto Field Naturalist* (see below) and, for a time, prepared the In The News column for the newsletter.

Helen Juhola

Ed: *Special Places: The Changing Ecosystems of the Toronto Region* was a finalist for the Toronto Book Awards in 2000. Available for purchase or at the Toronto Public Library.

## FROM THE ARCHIVES

### HABITAT

Bird of the tidal marshes  
where the salt sea haze fingers the reeds  
and sometimes there is sand in the wind.  
Your lease has expired.  
We have taken your place by the sea.

Louise Herzberg,  
TFN 390, October 1987

### MOON SPECTRUM

Bright as a copper coin  
struck at sunset, the moon rises,  
sliding through branches like a night animal,  
escaping the dust that colours it marmalade,  
colours it butterscotch, colours it butter,  
making a moon spectrum -  
all in the space of a tree.

Louise Herzberg,  
TFN 384, December 1986



This Golden-crowned Kinglet was found dead as shown, caught in burdock beside Pottery Road at Todmorden Mills on April 10, 1986. We think the gusty winds blowing that day contributed to the bird's misfortune.

Louise Herzberg and  
Helen Juhola,  
TFN 384, December  
1986

## A Perfect Holiday Gift

Consider sharing the benefits of TFN membership with your friends! We are confident that, once they discover the pleasures of our outings, lectures, newsletters and the companionship of other nature-lovers, they will want to renew.

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

## IN THE NEWS

### EL NIÑO'S EFFECT

You have likely already read that this year's strong El Nino is poised to raise global temperatures so that 2015 will become the warmest year on record since recording started in 1880. But El Nino is not just affecting air temperature. Sea surface temperatures have also risen causing mass coral reef bleaching around the world. When the water temperature gets too high for a long period of time (months), corals expel symbiotic algae which weakens them and can lead to their death. The US National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) declared on October 8 that Earth's oceans were experiencing a third mass bleaching event. The first occurred in 1998, the second in 2010. NOAA states that 38% of world coral reefs could be affected by the end of 2015. Reefs support approximately 25% of all marine species. The high water temperatures from El Nino are exacerbated by the warming effect of climate change.

A write-up with charts and videos can be found at: [mashable.com/2015/10/08/record-warm-oceans-coral-bleaching](http://mashable.com/2015/10/08/record-warm-oceans-coral-bleaching)

### MORE NEWS ON MICROBEADS

In the spring we reported that Ontario was making a move to ban microbeads in personal care products (Bill 75, Microbead Elimination and Monitoring Act, 2015). Microbeads are tiny particles of plastic that are too small to be filtered out by water treatment facilities and end up in our water systems. Algae and bacteria grow on the surface of the beads and pick up toxic chemicals. The toxic microbeads are eaten by small fish, which are eaten by bigger fish, and the toxins move up the food chain. The plastic can also remain in the digestive system of animals where the accumulation eventually starves them to death.

Now a new study in *Scientific Reports* has found microplastics in Arctic waters at both the surface level (top 16 cm) and below the surface (6 m). These plastics are from both microbeads and the breakdown of larger plastic pieces, and pose a threat to the highly productive marine food webs found in the Arctic. This research is the first to measure Arctic microplastics and will be useful in the future as a baseline against which to compare future studies. The many questions that remain to be answered, like how the microplastic particles get up to the Arctic, require further research.

The study can be found at: [www.nature.com/articles/srep14947](http://www.nature.com/articles/srep14947)

### BEEES JUST CAN'T GET A BREAK

Diesel fumes can be added to the list of things (climate change, neonicotinoids, habitat loss) that are affecting the health of bees. Researchers from the University of Southampton and the University of Reading have recently

found that exposure to nitrous oxide gases chemically alters the compounds in many floral odours, making it harder for bees to find food. Diesel engines produce nitrous oxide, which is a health hazard to both humans and animals. Now we know that it also affects bees' ability to use their sense of smell to find flowers.

Press release: [www.eurekaalert.org/pub\\_releases/2015-10/uos-sas101915.php](http://www.eurekaalert.org/pub_releases/2015-10/uos-sas101915.php)

### DELAWARE CHILDREN IN NATURE COALITION RELEASES AN ENVIRONMENTAL LITERACY PLAN

Delaware has released guidelines to help educators increase students' knowledge about the environment. The document includes ways to get kids outside to learn about natural resources, ecological systems, and other environmental topics. The plan isn't mandatory but is still a good step in recognizing the need to get children involved in nature. Delaware is fairly far from Toronto but everyone can learn from their work. The 11-page document can be found at: [www.delawarecin.org/ELP%20Sept%202015.pdf](http://www.delawarecin.org/ELP%20Sept%202015.pdf)

Lynn Miller

## ECO ANNUAL REPORT RELEASED

The acting Environmental Commissioner of Ontario (ECO), Ellen Schwartzel, released the ECO's 2014-2015 Annual Report on November 3. Highlights of the report are:

- The need to overhaul the Environmental Registry, which hasn't changed since 1997.
- More protection (and funding) for the Great Lakes to reduce nutrient pollution.
- A call for regulations on reflected light from buildings to lessen bird collisions.
- Better enforcement of the Environmental Compliance Approval applications.
- Charging the true cost of water to all water users.
- Reinstatement of funding to acquire and preserve natural areas that need protecting.
- Stronger measures needed to protect species at risk.

For more information about the report: [eco.on.ca](http://eco.on.ca)

Note: Acting Commissioner Ellen Schwartzel will be speaking at our monthly meeting on March 6 on Ontario's Environmental Bill of Rights. The new commissioner, Dr. Dianne Saxe, starts her appointment on December 1.



## WEATHER (THIS TIME LAST YEAR)

### December 2014

The cold weather that began in November proved to lack the staying power of last winter. After a seasonable beginning which included a significant snowfall, a big mild spell began and lasted until after Christmas. A zonal flow crossing North America from the Pacific Ocean beat back cold intrusions. On the continent-wide scale, it brought welcome rains to the American west coast which is in a historic drought.

December ended up milder than normal with a mean temperature of  $0.9^{\circ}$  downtown and  $0.1^{\circ}$  at Pearson Airport. These values, although mild, are not exceptional ( $1.3^{\circ}$  and  $2.1^{\circ}$  above normal respectively). True arctic air was conspicuously absent, and in fact the coldest readings were above  $-10^{\circ}$  and not as low as the coldest readings of November. There was, however, a bit of modified Arctic air at the very beginning and end of the month, which prevented December from being exceptionally mild overall.

We did have a big snowfall on the 11th, just before the mild weather got established: 22cm downtown and 17.4 cm at the airport. The snow cover melted gradually over the next week, and Christmas was bare in all areas south of Muskoka. This storm meant that monthly snow totals were close to average. Rainfall was very light (about 15 mm) mostly on Christmas Eve. Total precipitation was 37.6 mm downtown and 34.2 mm at Pearson Airport (the lowest airport value since 2002).

The mild weather peaked on Christmas Day and again on the 27th, with highs just over  $10^{\circ}$ . Again, this is not exceptional.

### The Year 2014 as a whole

2014 was a cool year that followed a very long warm trend. January, February, March, July, and November were all significantly cooler than the long-term mean, and only December was noticeably warmer than normal. The winter was one of the coldest in the last 50 years, especially when duration is considered (the Nov 2013 – Mar 2014 period was the coldest on record at Pearson Airport). This led to an

unusually high ice cover on the Great Lakes, which in turn led to cooler waters in the summer and contributed to cool mid-summer temperatures. Downtown Toronto's hottest reading all year was  $30.3^{\circ}$  on July 1; this is the lowest summer peak temperature since 1985. The annual mean temperature at Pearson was  $7.4^{\circ}$  – the lowest since 1996 which had a mean of  $7.1^{\circ}$  (the 30-year average is now  $8.4^{\circ}$ ).

With persistent winter snow cover and frequent shower activity in early summer, the year gave the impression of being wet. In fact, it was slightly drier than normal with 733.8 mm of precipitation (normal at Pearson is 790.0 mm). But there were no torrential downpours like 2013 and the late summer and fall had a bit of a dry trend.

### January 2015

January brought a return to cold weather, continuing the fluctuation begun with cold in November and mild conditions at Christmas. It was, however, dry and undramatic with snow restricted to frequent light falls that were barely more than flurries. The only thing that could be called a snowstorm was on the 29th, when 7 cm fell. Half of the days of the month there was no snow on the ground, or a trace. A west-northwest flow that persisted all month kept things dry and moderately cold. The warmest reading was  $6.2^{\circ}$  at Pearson Airport on the 18th. It fell to  $-21.2^{\circ}$  at Pearson on the 13th. Cold weather also occurred during the first and final weeks of the month.

Monthly mean temperatures were about  $2.5^{\circ}$  below normal:  $-7.6^{\circ}$  at Pearson Airport and roughly  $-6.2^{\circ}$  downtown. Total precipitation was 36.6 mm downtown and 31.4 mm at Pearson Airport, about 20 mm below normal. The shortfall of snow was not huge: we had 20.9 cm downtown and 16.2 cm at Pearson, but it was dispersed in low-density events with no moisture moving up from the Gulf of Mexico. Rainfall was 14.4 mm downtown and 15.2 mm at Pearson, about half the normal. There was no freezing rain.

Gavin Miller



“Ice,” watercolour by Nancy Anderson

### Then the White Men Came

Song lyrics by Roger Powley

Once there were Bison herds as far as you could see  
 Passenger Pigeons that filled a thousand trees  
 There were Salmon in the rivers and the woods were filled  
 with game

Then the white men came

There weren't any fences, no one owned the land  
 There wasn't any border when you crossed the Rio Grande  
 The lakes were clean and sparkled, the air it was the same

Then the white men came

There wasn't any Small Pox to make you sick and die  
 There wasn't any saviour to pray to in the sky  
 There wasn't any fire water to melt away your brain

Then the white men came

## 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.

### 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](mailto:walkingtours@highpark.org) or [www.highpark.org](http://www.highpark.org).

- Dec 6. High Park through the Ages. Local history buff Dave Berndorff traces the evolution of well-known spots in the park.
- Dec 20. Holiday Hike to Colborne Lodge. An informal, social outing with a brisk walk ending with hot cider at Colborne Lodge.

### Rouge Park Weekly Guided Nature Walks

Explore Rouge Park's trails with a Hike Ontario certified volunteer leader.

Information: visit [www.rougepark.com/hike](http://www.rougepark.com/hike), e-mail [hike@rougepark.com](mailto:hike@rougepark.com) or phone 905-713-3184, Monday thru Thursday.

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

Sundays at 2 pm (doors open at 1:15), Macleod Auditorium, Medical Sciences Bldg, University of Toronto, 1 King's College Circle. Information: [www.royalcanadianinstitute.org](http://www.royalcanadianinstitute.org)

- Dec 6. Pueblo Science. Russell Zeid. For ages 6 to 12. Experience the forces of physics through demonstrations and experiments with volunteers participating during an hour of science discovery and fun.

### Toronto Entomological Association

Sat Jan 23, 1:15 pm. Room 206, Victoria College. A Review of Some Biological Control Programs Against Invasive Plants in Canada and Ontario. Speaker: William D. McIlveen. Information: [www.ontarioinsects.org](http://www.ontarioinsects.org)

### The Market Gallery

To Jan 30, 2016. "Framing Toronto" City of Toronto art acquisitions 2010 to 2015: a display of art and artefacts featuring 50 new works in the City's collections. South St Lawrence Market, 2nd floor, 95 Front St E. Free. Gallery closed Sun, Mon and holidays.

Information: [Toronto.ca/marketgallery](http://Toronto.ca/marketgallery).

### Lost Rivers Walks

Information: [www.lostrivers.ca](http://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](mailto:info@labspacestudio.com).

Sat Dec 5, 1:30 pm. Birchcliff Steps (Scarborough Bluffs), hill (Variety Village) and shoreline (LRT route) – A geology and physiography walk. Leader: Ian Wheal and John Wilson. Meet at Kingston Rd and Birchmount Ave.

### Ian Wheal Walks

- Tue Dec 8, 1:30 pm. "Roping in the Children." Centenary of the closure of Ontario Central Prison and Ropery Binder Twine Factory. Meet at the southwest corner of King St W and Strachan Ave.
- Sat Dec 19, 1:30 pm. Aboriginal Fishery - Indigenous Peoples of Parkdale. Meet on the south side of Queen St W at the junction with Gladstone Ave.
- Sun Jan 3, 12:30 pm. Toronto Island. Meet at the ferry docks terminal to take the 12:45 ferry to Ward's Island. (Bring cash fare.) A 10 km walk.
- Sun Jan 17, 11 am. "Fiddler on the Creek" - a walk of the ward. Meet at the northwest corner of Queen St W and University Ave.

### Answers from p 13

C	S	E	E	R	T	E			
O		P	I	N	E	V			
N	S				E	N	K		
I		P		R		E	C		
F			R	G		E	O		
E			R	U		D	L		
R		E			C	L	M		
S	E					E	E	E	
	N		R	I	F		S	H	
				C	O	N	E	S	
R	A	D	E	C	E	T	I	H	W

Hidden animal: White-tailed deer

### Do You Know...?

- a) Its eyes are on the sides of its head.
- b) A mudpuppy. It lives underwater, and sometimes is found in muddy, shallow water. It makes loud squeaks which sound to some people like a dog barking. (*Doesn't look much like a puppy though!*)

More on mudpuppies at: [www.torontozoo.com/adoptapond/Salamanders.asp?sl=1](http://www.torontozoo.com/adoptapond/Salamanders.asp?sl=1)



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**Publications Mail**  
Registration No. 40049590



A very early young snowy owl on a log at Tommy Thompson Park in the afternoon of Oct 25.  
See Keeping in Touch, page 13. Photo: Lynn Pady