



Since 1923

TORONTO FIELD NATURALIST

Number 618 March 2016



Chipmunks at Wilket Creek Park photographed by Anne Byzko (see page 10)

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Toronto Field Naturalist is published by the Toronto Field Naturalists, a charitable, non-profit organization. The TFN connects people with nature in the Toronto area. We help people understand, enjoy, and protect Toronto's green spaces and the species that inhabit them. 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 (between 20 and 500 words) of observations on nature, especially in the Toronto area. 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). In the accompanying email include location, date and any interesting story or other information associated with the photograph.

Deadline for submissions for April issue, Mar 1

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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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

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The office is open 9:30 am to noon on Fridays



TFN is on Twitter and Facebook! Got something interesting to share? We'd love to get your photos and insights on TFN activities, Toronto nature events and interesting nature news. Just email media@torontofieldnaturalists.org and be sure to include what your photo is and where it was taken.

To read posts, go to the website torontofieldnaturalists.org and click on Twitter or Facebook.

Newsletter Volunteer Needed

The TFN is looking for a volunteer to assist the editors in setting up the newsletter. The primary responsibility would be entering and arranging material in an MS-Publisher file, so PC skills are required. Training will be provided. MS-Publisher is easy to learn for anyone familiar with MS-Word.

This position would involve spending time in the TFN office on several days leading up to publication deadlines 8 times a year.

If you are interested in taking on this role, please e-mail the TFN office, to the attention of Jenny Bull and Wendy Rothwell.

TFN MEETING

Sunday, March 6, 2016, 2:30 pm

Ontario's Environmental Bill of Rights: A Citizen's Toolkit for Change

*Ellen Schwartzel, Deputy Environmental Commissioner of Ontario,
will discuss your rights to participate in ministry decisions
and hold the government responsible*

VISITORS WELCOME!

SOCIAL: 2:00 – 2:30 pm

Note change in location:

Emmanuel College, Room 001, 75 Queen's Park Cres.

Just south of the Museum subway station exit (east side of Queen's Park). Enter at south end of building, down a few steps on outside stairwell. **Wheelchair entrance:** second door south on Queen's Park. Elevator inside to the right. Room 001 is one floor below street level.

For information: call 416-593-2656 up to noon on the Friday preceding the lecture.

Apr 3 **Ontario's Badgers**, Josh Sayers, Ontario Badger Project

May 1 **Ontario's Orchids: Perpetual Beauty Worth All Costs**, Tom Shields,
Southern Ontario Orchid Society

Teens: Apply for the 2016 Young Ornithologists Workshop!

The 2016 Doug Tarry Young Ornithologists Workshop will be held at Long Point Bird Observatory near Port Rowan, Ontario, from August 6 to 14.

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

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

Applications are due April 30, 2016

For more information see
www.birdscanada.org/longpoint/?targetpg=lpboyow
or email lpbo@birdscanada.org

2015 Ontario Nature Conservation Awards

Nomination Deadline: March 31, 2016

Ontario Nature Conservation Awards recognize excellence by honouring individuals, groups, government agencies and corporations who have worked to protect Ontario's nature. Awards are published in the fall issue of ON Nature.

For descriptions of the awards and nominating procedures, see
www.ontarionature.org/act/conservation_award/index.php
or e-mail info@ontarionature.org
or phone 416 444-8419

TFN OUTINGS

- TFN events are conducted by unpaid volunteers.
- TFN 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.
- *Please thoroughly clean your footwear before each outing to avoid spreading invasive seeds.*

Thurs **SPRINGMOUNT CREEK – Buried Creek**

Mar 3 Leader: Linda McCaffrey

10:00 am Meet at the northwest corner of St Clair Ave W and Dufferin St for a linear walk, mostly paved with some stairs. A leisurely walk along the Corso Italia, through the Earls court neighbourhood to the approximate location of Springmount spring, now buried. Still, we can trace its course in a southeasterly direction to its confluence with Garrison Creek, just north of Davenport Rd. We will follow the merged creeks to Christie Pits where we can access the Bloor subway or continue along the former route of Garrison Creek to Fort York and then take a Bathurst bus to the subway. Bring binoculars and wear warm layered clothing. No washrooms.

Sat **WILKET CREEK – Nature Walk**

Mar 5 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, Sunnybrook, Serena Gundy and E.T. Seton 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.

Sun **LECTURE – Ontario's Environmental Bill of Rights: A Citizen's Toolkit for Change**

Mar 6 Speaker: Ellen Schwartzel, Deputy Environmental Commissioner of Ontario

2:30 pm Room 001, Emmanuel College, 75 Queen's Park Cres. See page 3.

Tues **ASHBRIDGE'S CREEK – Lost Creek, Heritage, Nature**

Mar 8 Leader: Joanne Doucette

1:00 pm Meet outside Greenwood subway station (Linsmore Cres and Danforth Ave) for a circular walk. We will explore the route of this buried creek south through Monarch Park down Glenside Ave to the site of Ulster Stadium and back through Little India up Craven Rd, and through Monarch Park.

Sat **CENTENNIAL PARK CONSERVATORY – Tropical Plants**

Mar 12 Leader: Nancy Dengler

10:30 am Meet inside the conservatory at 151 Elmcrest Rd, a 3-minute walk from TTC bus stop on Rathburn Rd (#48 bus from Royal York subway station) for a 1 1/2 hour circular walk, mainly on flat and paved surfaces. We will view tropical plants including traveller's palm, tree ferns, gingers, sour-sop and flamingo flower, with an emphasis on tropical relatives of Ontario's native plants. Dress in layers for tropical conditions. Opportunity for walk continuing into nearby Etobicoke Woods. Washrooms available.

Thurs **COLONEL SAMUEL SMITH PARK – Birds**

Mar 17 Leader: Doug Paton

10:00 am Meet at the southwest corner of Lake Shore Blvd W and Kipling Ave for a circular walk. Easy walking conditions. Morning only.

Sat **BURKE BROOK – Nature and Heritage**

Mar 19 Leader: Ed Freeman

1:30 pm Meet at Lawrence subway station on the northeast corner of Lawrence Ave and Yonge St for a linear walk on mostly unpaved surfaces, mainly flat with gentle slopes and some stairs. We will walk along one of Toronto's streams through mature trees and past springs to Wilket Creek and the West Don at Sunnybrook Park. Walk will officially end at Leslie St and Eglinton Ave E, with the option of a longer walk to Pottery Rd. Bring enthusiasm, binoculars and a camera. Dress for weather conditions. Washrooms at end of walk.

Sun **DISCOVER THE ROUNTREE IN ROUNTREE LAVENDER CREEK! - Lost Rivers**

Mar 20 Leaders: Helen Mills and friends

2:00 pm Meet at the corner of Caledonia Rd and Rogers Rd. We will explore the Rountree tributary of Lavender Creek, named for a local landowner. Today it is an industrial and post-industrial landscape and a neighbourhood of modest houses, many of them built by the original owners using bricks from local clays and brickyards. We will be walking mostly on the bed of the ancient Humber River lagoon that was part of Lake Iroquois 12,500 years ago. In memory of Dick Watts who explored and mapped Lavender Creek around 2000. We will end where Lavender Creek comes up in a tiny ravine fragment, close to a coffee shop. A linear walk, approximately 2 km. A joint outing with Toronto Green Community.

Thurs **TWO LOST CREEKS AND A MANSION – Nature and heritage**

Mar 24 Leader: Linda McCaffrey

10:00 am Meet at the southwest corner of Main St and Gerrard St E for a linear walk mostly on paved surfaces with gentle slopes, some steep slopes, stairs and no washrooms. We will trace the route of Tomlins Creek, view the Ames Mansion, and trace the route of Ames Creek through Glen Stewart Ravine, ending at the lake to view water birds. Walkers can then take the Queen car to points west or the Main bus to the subway. Bring binoculars. Morning only.

Sat **LESLIE STREET SPIT – Birds, Insects and Plants**

Mar 26 Leader: Bob Kortright

10:00 am Meet at the park entrance at 1 Leslie St for a 6-hour circular walk on flat, mostly unpaved surface (about 12 km). We will look for early migrants, possibly snakes and cormorants. Bring lunch and binoculars.

Wed **CEDARVALE PARK – Nature Walk**

Mar 30 Leader: Miles Hearn

10:00 am Meet at St Clair West subway station, Heath St (north) exit for a circular walk. Morning only. No washrooms.

**Birding and Car Camping
Safari to Pelee**

Monday, May 9 to Thursday, May 12

Leader: Doug Paton

We will camp at Rondeau Provincial Park, and bird there and at Pelee National Park and environs. We will share transportation where we can and possibly arrange communal suppers to keep costs to a minimum.

We should see lots of species, hopefully owls, woodpeckers, woodcocks, whip-poor-wills, and the exclusive, elusive prothonotary warbler.

On Thursday we will return to Toronto, pausing on the way back to check out birds in the Long Point area.

For further details and to let us know you are coming, please contact Doug Paton at [redacted] or email [redacted]



Cedar waxwings feeding on crab apples.
Photo: Teresa Moore

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

I am writing this on a mild day at the beginning of February, with the snow melting fast and showers predicted for later this afternoon. The comparatively warm temperatures and reduced snow cover have resulted in a lot of conspicuous squirrel activity in my neighbourhood and reports in the press of chubbier-than-usual squirrels. The extended mild weather made it possible for eastern grey squirrels to feed longer in the fall and now to find new food, as well as to dig up old food cached earlier. I have to admit that I didn't even need the official Squirrel Appreciation Day (January 21) to derive much pleasure in watching them busily feed and interact with each other.

One of the goals arising from the board planning session last spring was to draft a new mission statement for the TFN. Previously, we have had several variants used in the membership brochure, website, Newsletter, and outreach materials. The Identity & Promotion working group drafted a new brief statement of our mission (top of page 2), and I am particularly grateful to chair Lynn Miller and members Kathy Cox and Bob Kortright who worked on this, and on the longer TFN "elevator statement" that appears below. In the process I learned that an elevator statement explains not only *who* we are, but also *what* we do and *how* we do it – all in the time that it takes for a short elevator ride!

As I mentioned last month, the TFN board is moving ahead with plans to make the Newsletter available online for members who choose it, starting with the September 2016 issue. At the same time we will post back issues from the past ten years on the TFN website. The current issue (and previous month's issue) will be password-protected, but the back issues will be available to the general public.



Eastern grey squirrel in Edwards Gardens, January 2016.
Photo: Ron Dengler

We believe that an online Newsletter will raise the TFN's profile and, most importantly, make past Newsletter content more accessible for everyone, thereby helping us achieve our charitable object of connecting people with nature in Toronto. For a majority of TFN members, a print copy will be mailed as before.

As you will see on page 8, the board is also recommending an increase in membership fees of \$10 per year (except for Youth members) for members who choose to receive a print version of the Newsletter. TFN membership fees were last raised in 2005. In the intervening years, the Cost-of-living Index has increased 20.5%, and this has been reflected in the costs of printing and mailing the Newsletter, office and lecture space rental, and liability insurance for outings. Although we are seeking other ways to reduce our costs and increase our income, the board has reluctantly come to the decision to recommend this change. As an all-volunteer organization, we depend on the free donation of time and efforts of many individual volunteers to keep things running, but there are some fixed costs that are unavoidable.

I hope that you will be able to come to the Special Meeting of Members on April 3, at 2:30 pm, before the regular monthly meeting talk, to discuss and vote on the motion to change the TFN membership fees. And, of course, I personally hope that you will vote to approve the motion, as I believe that it is essential for the TFN to continue its existing programs and expand its outreach efforts to connect more people with nature in Toronto. I hope to see you there.

Nancy Dengler
president@torontofieldnaturalists.org

TFN "Elevator Statement"

Toronto Field Naturalists connects people with nature in the Toronto area. We help people understand, enjoy, and protect Toronto's green spaces and the species that inhabit them. The TFN is a volunteer-run non-profit and is a member of the province-wide Ontario Nature network of naturalist organizations. We share the desire to deepen understanding of, and appreciation for, the natural spaces and species needed for health and well-being. We do this through our website, newsletter, public lecture series, outreach programs, stewardship of 178 hectares of nature reserves, more than 150 public nature walks each year, and advocacy for policies and programs consistent with our mission.

MONTHLY MEETING REPORT

Changes in the Flora of Rouge Park and Toronto

February 7, 2016. Gavin Miller, Biologist, Toronto and Region Conservation Authority (TRCA)

Gavin Miller, TRCA Biologist and TFN member, gave a comprehensive talk on the change in flora diversity in Rouge Park, based on key findings of a recent Parks Canada-funded TRCA research study. The study also utilized records of previous park surveys in 1973 (Riley), 1991 (Varga & Riley), 1991 (Kamstra), and 2011 (City of Toronto ESA consultant updates) for a detailed comparison of flora over the last 40+ years.

Rouge Park is in a transition zone between the Carolinian (south facing slopes) and that of the Great Lakes and has 936 species of plants (~50 % of all GTA plants) including six species found nowhere else in the GTA watershed area and 15 found at only 1 or 2 other GTA locations.

On first look, the native plant numbers appear to have remained fairly stable while exotics have increased in the area. However, with the robust TRCA Ranking and Scoring system, it can be seen that the more sensitive native species (categories L1 to L3 on a 5-point scale) are showing a decline. (This system uses rarity, estimated population trend, habitat dependence and sensitivity to land use changes. Ranking levels are preceded by L for local.)



The seven L1 species (most sensitive) include New Jersey tea (found in only a couple of places in the park), wood-betony, Canada milk-vetch and Seneca snakeroot. L2 species number 37 and include sicklepod, sycamore, and balsam ragwort. There are 177 identified L3 species. This collective grouping includes species at risk such as ginseng and butternut (only present in parts of the Park). Since 1973 there has been a 14% decline in native species. Hairy aster is down to only one known plant. Extirpated plants include: bashful bulrush, pale vetchling, showy orchis and swamp rose. Hardest hit are the orchids with the loss of at least 13 (possibly 20) of 35 species. When an audience member with the Conservation Committee of the Orchid Society asked about helping with orchid restoration, Gavin raised the point that one of the major causes of orchid loss was people digging them up.

Gavin detailed the numerous causes of ecosystem degradation leading to the loss, including: matrix influence (effect of areas around nature reserve), climate and edge effects (e.g. salt from roads), altered hydrology, encroachment (e.g. silt fences designed to catch silt during heavy rainstorms that are not adequate for the job), air pollution, proliferation of trails (e.g. mountain biking impacts), fire suppression (impact on oak savannahs and prairies), opportunistic fauna (e.g. proliferation of deer, raccoons), invasive flora species (e.g. dog strangling vine; Gavin commented that a natural predator moth is being tested in Carden Alvar and U of T Scarborough) and garden escapees (lily-of-the-valley is outcompeting the trout lily in the woodlands area). He noted that riverbank grape, a native species, is starting to act like an invasive exotic, possibly due to atmospheric changes in the area.

A thorough multi-faceted response to the situation was described by Gavin, with the emphasis on small continuous efforts (such as those seen in Todmorden Mills and the Brick Works), including thoughtful plantings, are the most effective approach. This led to a suggestion from the audience that the TRCA look into providing outreach for interested volunteer organizations so their work is more effective and sustainable.

Margaret O'Mahony

For information about TRCA monitoring programs, visit

- www.trca.on.ca/the-living-city/monitoring/resources.dot
- www.twitter.com/TRCA_Monitoring

Seneca snakeroot (*Polygala senega*), known in Toronto only from Rouge Park. Photo courtesy of TRCA

SPECIAL MEETING OF MEMBERS

Sunday, April 3, 2:30pm, Room 001, Emmanuel College, 75 Queen's Park Cres
(Before the lecture on Ontario's Badgers by Josh Sayers)

For the past ten years, all of us at TFN have worked diligently – and successfully – at keeping our membership fees at 2005 levels.

With increases in both cost-of-living and operating expenses, TFN's Board of Directors is looking for ways to manage our organization more cost-effectively, including reducing office rental costs and taking more advantage of on-line communications. We are also looking for ways to increase the revenues that support operating expenses, including fund-raising and revising membership fees.

We are holding a Special Meeting of Members on Sunday, April 3 at 2:30 pm to propose the following change to membership fees and to our Newsletter:

- For members who choose to receive their Newsletter online, there will be no change in membership fees, except for Youth members whose fee will be reduced by \$10.
- For members who prefer to receive a print version by mail, there will be an increase in fees of \$10 per year, except for Youth members whose fee will remain unchanged.

We will also provide electronic copies of back issues of the Newsletter on the website (except for current and previous issue), making them available to all members as well as to the general public.

We hope to see you on April 3rd to discuss and vote on the motion below:

It is moved that TFN Membership Fees be changed as follows: Fees for members choosing a print version of the Newsletter mailed to them: Family - \$60, Single - \$50, Youth - \$20, Senior Family - \$50, Senior Single - \$40. Fees for members receiving the Newsletter online: Family \$50, Single - \$40, Youth - \$10, Senior Family - \$40, Senior Single - \$30.

TFN Board Nominations Invited

TFN is looking for people with initiative who are willing to devote time to working as members of the Board of Directors.

Please send your suggestions to the Chair of the Nominating Committee, c/o the TFN office (see contact information on page 2).

The Committee's report will be published in the May newsletter.

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

Volunteering is a wonderful way to make a difference as well as to meet like-minded people. We are a completely volunteer organization and our volunteers do a wide variety of things to make the TFN run.

Right now we are looking for volunteers to:

- staff the TFN table at outreach events
- assist at the Ontario Nature Regional Meeting that TFN is hosting at the Toronto Botanical Garden on April 9th

If you are interested in any of these opportunities, or have questions, please contact:

Nancy Dengler, TFN President,
416-593-2656 or office@torontofieldnaturalists.org

TORONTO'S NATIVE SANDALWOOD AND A RELATIVE

Members of the Santalaceae (sandalwood family), about 40 genera and 490 species, are widely distributed from tropical to temperate regions. Family members, mostly semiparasites, include trees, shrubs and herbs. The sandalwood tree, of southern India, is used for making fragrant white carvings and to produce incense. The yellow heartwood and roots are distilled to produce an oil used in the manufacture of soap and perfumes and to anoint the body.

The species in Toronto is *Comandra umbellata*, with the unlovely common name of bastard toadflax. This semiparasite gets some nourishment through its pale green leaves and stems but obtains water and other nutrients through sucker-like structures that attach to the roots of other species. It can be up to 40 cm tall and has clusters of many flowers that are either terminal or in leaf axils. Its flowers are about 3 to 4 mm wide. *C. umbellata* was reported in the TFN's *Vascular Plants of Metropolitan Toronto* (2nd ed. 1994) as uncommon in Toronto but occurring locally in the Humber valley, several places in the Don drainage, in High Park, at East Point, and at the Rouge. Look in April to June in dry sandy areas or oak woodlands (High Park). Its known Ontario range is from the Lake Temagami ecoregion to the U.S. border and also immediately north and west of Lake Superior. The purported Ontario range may reflect not looking hard enough for this not very conspicuous species. It has been reported (U.S. Dept. of Agriculture database) in every jurisdiction in North America except Nunavut, Louisiana and Florida.

A related species is *Geocaulon lividum* (northern comandra), previously known as *Comandra livida*. I photographed it on the Iles de la Madeleine in a dry sandy area typical of its southern Canadian range. *The ROM Field Guide to Wildflowers of Ontario* (2004) notes it also occurs in moist coniferous forests in northern parts of its Ontario range. Its flowers, which are about 3mm wide, are green or purple and grow in small clusters from leaf axils. It is known in all of Canada except Nunavut and in about the northernmost 25% of the U.S.

Our local species is interesting because of its botanical affiliations and, for want of a better word, its lifestyle. The challenge is to have a sufficiently keen eye to find it and perhaps to identify its botanic victims.

Article and photos by Peter Money



Bastard toadflax, *Comandra umbellata*
(top and middle)

Northern comandra, *Geocaulon lividum* (bottom)

TFN NATURE IMAGES SHOW

On Saturday, February 6, a large enthusiastic group gathered at S Walter Stewart Library to view members' images of nature, primarily in and around Toronto. President Nancy Dengler extended a warm welcome to long-time members, newcomers and guests. We were treated to a diverse smorgasbord of photos.

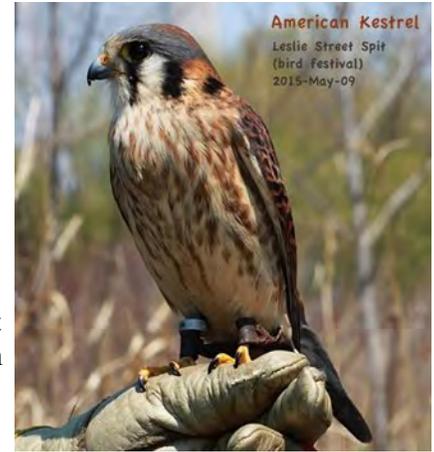
Martin Chen

shared pictures of TFN outings and spoke enthusiastically of his family's visit to Point Pelee where he photographed this Blackburnian warbler.



Augusta Takeda

shared photos of local flowers and birds, as well as sightings during a vacation in the Peruvian Amazon. This American kestrel was seen at the bird festival on the Leslie Street Spit.



Gail Gregory told about her recent interest in fungi, describing her efforts to identify them. She had documented her findings, including spore prints, in a book which was available for us to look at during the break. She shared photos of fascinating species, some she had been able to identify and others (like this one) still a mystery.



Theresa Moore

showed lovely images of birds, mammals and fish observed in the Toronto area. She recommended Lynde Shores, Whitby as an ideal place to view wildlife. This cute possum was photographed there. See also her stunning cedar waxwing photo on page 5.



Anne Byzko shared a fascinating story of two and a half hours spent at Edwards Gardens and Wilket Creek five years ago. Her intent had been to watch birds at a feeder, where she photographed chickadee, cardinal, blue jay and white- and red-breasted nuthatches. But she also had surprising encounters with this groundhog, a raccoon and a delightful pair of chipmunks (see front cover).



During a break, in addition to enjoying refreshments, we had an opportunity to view items displayed on the tables.

Heidi Holmes and Anne Byzko offered for sale notelets featuring their artistic photographs. Lloyd Mayeda displayed books he had made (through Blacks) illustrating various events and a vacation in Japan.

Carole Giangrande showed us some stunning photos of birds and insects, including this young robin seen during the Bird Festival at Colonel Samuel Smith Park.



Lynn Miller showed an interesting variety of subjects, including a TFN clean-up crew at ET Seton Park, a majestic moose in Algonquin Park, mud dauber wasps' nests, and this delightful tree frog.



Wendy Rothwell shared a selection from more than 200 species of wildflowers photographed in High Park over the last couple of years. (See also bloodroot on page 13.) A book of the collection was available for people to browse.



Franca Montalbetti showed us colourful autumn scenes photographed while attending an art workshop at Haliburton. She got some particularly beautiful misty early morning shots.



Larry Hicks, a relatively new TFN member who is eager to connect with other nature photographers, showed us some superb photos of birds and animals in the Toronto area as well as Newfoundland and Ojibway Park in Windsor. Included was this dramatic barred owl at Lynde Shores.



Lloyd Mayeda gave us a Power-Point presentation of TFN outings during the past couple of years, including this one in Rouge Park.



The organizing committee thanks all participants, including those who brought delicious treats or helped to arrange the room. TFN is fortunate to have so many talented photographers among our members. We encourage you to continue sharing your creations with us by emailing them to the office (media@torontofieldnaturalists.org).

Wendy Rothwell

KEEPING IN TOUCH

The lovely mountain bluebird on your February cover inspired me to send along one of my winter bird photos [see back cover]. I took it during a walk through the Royal Botanical Gardens with a group of artists and illustrators in February 2014 (www.SONSI.ca). We were using sunflower seeds to bring the birds close and, after leaving some seeds on a low branch, I was able to get what I think is a really remarkable shot. The snow-covered ground reflected a lot of light up from under the cardinal, revealing some amazing textures and details.

Steven Potter

Squirrel Diaries

Last November, I saw in my front yard an eastern grey squirrel that had lost a lot of fur. I phoned the Toronto Wildlife Centre [416-631-0662] who said it probably had mange, which can be treated easily and should be treated so that the animal has a full, warm coat and is in general good health for winter.

I drove to the Wildlife Centre in Downsview and left a \$40 deposit for a live trap. The very pleasant people there explained that they would take the squirrel back to its local area. (The Ministry of Natural Resources says an adult mammal must be returned to within 1 km of its home base; a baby can be released in a 15 km radius since it hasn't established a home base.)

They gave me detailed instructions, warning that I could expect to catch every healthy neighbourhood squirrel before I caught the right one! As directed, I left the trap outside unbaited for a few days so the resident squirrels would acclimate to it, and then put a small piece of bread smeared with peanut butter in the open trap. I baited it for about two hours for three days, checking it every 15 minutes because the Wildlife Centre staff said I shouldn't leave a trapped squirrel in it for any length of time as it would panic. As warned, I did catch a few healthy squirrels—fortunately, it's easy to release them.

On the third day I trapped the mangy squirrel. At the Wildlife Centre, I was told it could take a week or two for

the medicine to work and to phone in January to learn the outcome. Sadly, I was recently informed that the squirrel had a number of other issues in addition to mange. They treated it with a variety of medicines but then decided to euthanize it. I am glad the Wildlife Centre is there to treat sick animals and to end their suffering when necessary.

Jennifer Smith

Line 9 Pipeline

A letter to the editor from TFN member Miriam Garfinkle was published in The Toronto Star on January 31. The letter, concerning the Enbridge oil pipeline that runs through Toronto, can be read at: www.thestar.com/opinion/letters_to_the_editors/2016/01/31/line-9-pipeline-needs-review.html.



Wild Turkey, Lynde Shores Conservation Area, Whitby, January 2016. Photo: Lynn Pady

Wild Turkeys

I read the article on and saw the picture of wild turkeys in the February newsletter. Is there any estimate of how many wild turkeys there are in Toronto? I have recently seen a flock of about 15 on the north side of 16th Avenue, near Middlefield Road in Markham. My brother reports "lots of turkeys" in Sequin, just south of Parry Sound. I once saw several near Midland.

Albert Roffey

Reply from Bob Kortright:

The closest I can come to answering your question is to refer you to ebird. Go to ebird.org/ebird/map and enter 'wild turkey' under species. This will take you to a map of turkey sightings reported to ebird. You can zoom in on the Toronto area and narrow down sightings by selecting specific months and/or years.

Within the last 18 months I have spotted two exciting species of wild animals. One was a mature male scarlet tanager, seen very briefly from my window. I confirmed the species with the help of my bird field guide. The other was a skunk, the first I've ever seen, on the lawn of St. Augustine of Canterbury Anglican Church at Bayview Ave and Broadway Ave.

Michael Wilson

CHILDREN'S CORNER

Match Up

Sometimes the name of a plant or animal describes what it looks like - with a little imagination sometimes required! Match each picture with its name.



- Jack-in-the-pulpit ___
- Walking stick ___
- Yellow lady's slipper ___
- European praying mantis ___
- Yellow woolly bear ___
- Queen Anne's lace ___
- Turkey tails ___
- Pintail ___



FOR READING

The Secrets of Wildflowers by Jack Sanders
 Lyons Press, 2003, 2014, Paperback, 300 pages, \$21.95

I recently discovered this enchanting book which is packed with fascinating information about 74 representative species of wildflowers, all familiar to us in Ontario. As indicated by its subtitle, *A Delightful Feast of Little-known Facts, Folklore and History*, it is far more than a field guide. Jack Sanders, the Northeast field editor for *Wildflower* magazine, celebrates the beauty of each flower, describes its habitat and distribution, explains the remarkable ways in which it is designed for pollination, and tells how its seeds are dispersed. He gives the derivations of scientific names and surmises possible reasons behind many common names. He tells how the plant has historically been used for food, medicines or other purposes, and offers advice to those who wish to make a wildflower garden.

The book is beautifully written, illustrated with colour photos and whimsical drawings, and enhanced with poems and literary quotations. The sort of book to pick up and savour when one has a few free moments, it has certainly given me a deeper appreciation of wildflowers and makes me eager to get out and renew my acquaintance with them, come spring.

Review and photo by Wendy Rothwell



The book has an interesting chapter about this early spring ephemeral (*Sanguinaria canadensis*), a member of the Poppy family probably first identified in Canada. Its red juice has been used as a dye.

EXTRACTS FROM OUTINGS LEADERS' REPORTS

Castle Frank Brook, Jan 9.

Leader: Alexander Cappell. As we walked following dips in the roads, evidence of the buried creek, at Pears Ave, we saw a large bird, maybe a hawk, in a row of pine trees. When we approached, it disappeared and a dead pigeon came falling down, hitting the ground with a thud, its feathers in disarray, its wings splayed and its abdomen torn open and bloody.

Walkers led by Alexander Cappell on January 9 pause in Nordheimer Ravine where buried Castle Frank Brook passes under the Spadina Rd bridge.

Photo: Lloyd Mayeda



Leslie Creek, Jan 12. Leader: Joanne Doucette. We explored the route of this buried creek where it flowed 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. There are a lot of interesting trees along the way including a magnificent fully armed honey locust, a huge old American elm, an equally large Scotch elm and accompanying English elm, some very large silver maples and other street trees. The banks of the ravine are clearly visible in a number of places including in the laneway north of the railway tracks off Pape (near Cranfield House), and in the park near the Matty Eckler Community Centre as well as the laneway to the south of the park.

Rouge Park, Jan 16. Leader: Glen Hamilton. 18 hardy naturalists were welcomed to Rouge National Urban Park (RNUP) which, when completed over the next ten years, will stretch from Lake Ontario to the Oak Ridges Moraine. Bird feeders leading to the Mast Trailhead were visited by juncos, cardinals, white-breasted nuthatches, chickadees and tree sparrows. Several red-tailed hawks were soaring overhead and a call from a northern flicker was heard in the woods. The flickers should be gone by now, but on January 10th during the annual RNUP Bird Count a tree frog and spring peeper were heard and an American toad spotted, so I'm betting my participant's badge that it was a flicker. An abundance of slushy snow and ice yielded numerous deer, squirrel and vole/mice tracks but no sign of one of our elusive coyotes. We noted several small yellow blooms on the witch hazel shrubs - one of the budding/flowering winter plants.

Botany of Tropical plants, Allan**Gardens, Jan 23. Leader: Nancy**

Dengler. Allan Gardens contains a wonderful collection of plants that are native to the tropical and sub-tropical parts of Mexico, Central and South America, Africa, and Southeast Asia. We first looked at plants from families found almost exclusively in the tropics such as the pygmy date palm (palm family), banana (banana family, allied to bird-of-paradise and ginger families which we also saw), and bamboos (the bamboo subfamily of the grass family is restricted to the tropics).

Other plants in the collection belong to more cosmopolitan plant families that occur in temperate regions such as Ontario, as well as the tropics. These include the arum, loosestrife, pea, ginseng, milkweed and

mulberry families, among others. We were struck by the giant relatives of our jack-in-the-pulpit (arum family) such as Swiss cheese plant and elephant's ears. A large specimen of the genus *Amorphophallus* was in bloom, with a jack (spade) and pulpit (spadix) measuring over 50 cm. The small pomegranate tree (loosestrife family) had three ripening fruits. Members of the pea family included the flashy purple flowers of Hong Kong orchid tree as well as the muted yellow flowers of the bell orchid tree; both share a distinctive "cloven hoof" leaf shape. Japanese aralia had numerous fruits borne in umbels, as is typical of all the ginseng family. Madagascar palm, a giant relative of milkweeds and dog-strangling vine (milkweed family), showed many features of desert-adapted plants, including a succulent stem for water-storage and clusters of defensive spines. We looked at variation in leaf shape in Indian rubber tree, sacred fig and fiddle leaf fig, all species in the genus *Ficus* (mulberry family).



Jack-in-the-pulpit, *Arisaema triphyllum*, our native relative of giant tropical arum family species seen at Allan Gardens. Drawing by Eva Davis

WHY I JOINED THE TFN

Some years ago I noticed ads in *Now Magazine* and my local *Mirror* for walks led by TFN people. I began to attend these walks because I love walking, I like learning more about the natural history of local areas, and I wanted to meet like-minded people. Also, I knew I would be safe walking in a group.

After awhile, in 2007, I joined the TFN so I would receive the newsletter and know in advance about the walks, and also so I could “pay my way.”

As soon as I receive the newsletter, I read with excitement through the upcoming Outings (consistently on page 4 – it’s smart to have it in the same spot!) and mark those that appeal. I am continually impressed by the variety of walks: different leaders, locations and focuses. I appreciate all the information about each walk and am glad I don’t have to pre-register, since weather and personal obligations can change one’s availability.

I also appreciate the research that the walk leader has completed before the walk and the additional information that is often shared by fellow walkers. I always learn something about the area we explore!

Jennifer Smith



Ed: Jennifer recently joined a TFN Beltline walk (see below) and spotted a white-breasted nuthatch. This photo by Ken Sproule shows the nuthatch’s characteristic behaviour climbing head-down the trunks and large branches of trees.

“The white-breasted nuthatch actually can ‘hatch’ nuts, and will eat the contents...be they nutmeats or larvae.” From TFN 415, Nov 1990

Ed: Why did *you* join the TFN? Tell us what you value in your TFN membership or what you have seen on an outing.

EXTRACTS *continued*

Toronto Belt Line, Jan 30. Leader: John Bacher

Sixteen members took part on a looped walk from Davisville subway station to the Allen Expressway. Highlights were a white-breasted nuthatch and the soaring of a red tailed hawk above Yonge Street. Other native birds included cardinals, a common crow and black-capped chickadees. Trees along the trail are primarily invasives though native species include American elm.

In addition to the enjoyment of the walk there was stimulating conversation. One point to emerge was that, in addition to the important role played by city councillor Kay Gardner in the conversion of the former rail line to a trail, there were contributions by many other civic-minded activists. One important figure mentioned was Esther Carin, a senior citizen who began the struggle by speaking at a public meeting in opposition to plans to transfer the land to adjacent homeowners.

A pleasant surprise was the development of a pedestrian island on Avenue Road, realizing part of the challenging task to improve the trail, which hopefully will include a pedestrian-cycling bridge over the Allen expressway.



The Belt Line in February 1986.
Photo by Helen Juhola, TFN Slide Collection

Ed: The City bought the Belt Line in 1990 from CN Real Estate “in recognition of its recreational potential.” An article in TFN 415, Nov 1990, by Bill Granger says the purchase took approximately 30 years of discussion and negotiations and cost \$4,565,975. Many rate-payer groups, individuals, government representatives and TFN supported the acquisition. It was designated the Kay Gardner Beltline Park in May 2000.

SHUTTERBUG PRESIDENTS: ANOTHER LOOK AT THE TFN SLIDE COLLECTION, PART I

The TFN Slide Collection represents the work of 44 members who were also photographers. All told, they donated more than 13,000 slides taken during the pre-digital age of 35mm transparencies. Six of the 44, Jack Gingrich, Wes Hancock, Helen Juhola, Mary Smith, Jean Macdonald, and Robin Powell, also served as president. This three-part series focusses on these presidential shutterbugs.

John A. (Jack) Gingrich's term as president, from 1968 to 1970, culminated in TFN obtaining an option to buy the original 60 acres of what was to become the Jim Baillie Nature Reserve (JBNR). In his description of this water-shed event (published in newsletter #306 in March 1977), Jack wrote: "If I were asked to name the most dramatic week in my life, I would probably pick the week starting March 29, 1970. My two-year term as president was nearly over; the last meeting of the Board of Directors was to be held at my home that Wednesday... The reaction of the board was generally favourable, but it was decided that the final decision should be deferred until the new president [Clive Goodwin] and several new board members took office..." Fortunately, Jack also documented the early days of the JBNR and gave some of those slides to the collection.

Wesley (Wes) Hancock's term as president ran from 1978 to 1980. Both he and his wife Helen were also active in the Toronto Camera Club. Their slides in the collection, depicting landscapes, activities and flora, span the years 1968 through 1997. Of particular historical interest are those showing the dedication of the picnic shelter at JBNR on May 14, 1977.

Pleasance Crawford and Helen Juhola



Top: George Fairfield surveying at Jim Baillie Nature Reserve, November 1970. Photo: Jack Gingrich.

Bottom: Dedication of the Jim Baillie Nature Reserve shelter, 14 May 1977. Photo: Helen Hancock.



Extracted from: *The Jim Baillie Nature Reserve – The Story of the Purchase*, by Jack Gingrich, in TFN # 306, March 1977

...When I arrived home after work on March 31, a message was waiting for me: I was to phone Fred Bodsworth, a former president [of TFN]... He told me that he had received a call from Ian Adams, a fellow author who had been trying for some time to sell 60 acres from his 100-acre property. Although Ian had met Fred on only one occasion, he remembered that Fred belonged to a nature club, and was anxious to sell to someone who would keep the property in its natural state...

I arranged to visit the property the following Saturday... On April 4 Fred and Margaret Bodsworth drove me to

Uxbridge ... I still remember the final lap of our journey down that narrow, snow-covered road where two people waited for us at the bridge. One of them was Ian Adams; the other was his visitor, Farley Mowat. I felt rather out of place with three authors!

... We struggled over the rough trails to view as much of the property as possible before lunch. It was difficult to judge the suitability of the land as it was so covered with snow.

We had lunch at the Adams' house. During lunch Farley Mowat entertained us with hilarious tales. He suggested that the best way to keep people out of the property was to post tiny signs near the bottoms of tree trunks saying "Beware of poisonous snakes"...

IN THE NEWS

High Park Zoo to be Enhanced

Friends of High Park have announced that High Park Zoo will be getting some improvements in the future. This is a huge turn-around from being closed down, which was almost their fate in 2012. The Master Plan, which still needs to be reviewed by the community, seeks to make the zoo better for both human visitors and the animals that are housed there. For example, animals will get expanded space and interactive feeders, while humans will enjoy improved lighting and accessible pathways. The impetus for the changes was the City announcing the construction of the new Deer Pen Road, slated to start in 2017. A date has not been set for the start of the zoo's improvements.

2016 Environmental Performance Index Released

The 123-page report, *Global Metrics For The Environment*, ranks countries' performance on high-priority environmental issues. Of the 180 countries examined Finland ranks the highest and Canada comes in at number 25 (the US is 26th). The nine major areas covered are Air Quality, Water and Sanitation, Water Resources, Agriculture, Forests, Fisheries, Biodiversity and Habitat, Climate and Energy, and Health Impacts.

Some of their findings are:

- More deaths globally occur due to poor air quality than water.
- More than half the world's population live in nations with unsafe air quality.
- The number of people lacking access to clean water has been nearly cut in half.
- Tree cover lost in 2014 equals an area roughly twice the size of Peru.
- 34% of global fish stocks are over-exploited or collapsed.
- 23% of countries have no wastewater treatment.

The report is well written and easy to understand. It can be found here: issuu.com/2016yaleepi/docs/epi2016_final/1?e=23270481/32968129

Canadian Climate Change Deniers may be Taken to Court

Ecojustice filed a complaint in December with the federal Competition Bureau in response to misleading information on climate change being disseminated by the group "Friends of Science." Ecojustice is also trying to get criminal charges laid against the group. "Friends of Science" muddies the water of climate change discussion by trying to discredit established scientific consensus on global warming. Sowing confusion undermines efforts to reduce carbon pollution and transition toward clean energy sources.

Admission to Canada's National Parks will be Free in 2017

As part of the 150th anniversary of Confederation, Parks Canada will be waiving entry fees to all National Parks in 2017. They are hoping that free access will entice those who have "lost familiarity" with the parks to reconnect, along with removing a barrier to those who have never visited. Parks Canada also announced that, beginning in 2018, admission for children under 18 will be free, and any adult who has become a Canadian citizen in the previous 12 months can get one year's free admission. I think that is a nice welcome message to new Canadians.

Toronto Declares Right To Healthy Environment

David Suzuki Foundation's Blue Dot Movement asks that all Canadian municipalities declare their citizens' right to a healthy environment. Toronto did so at the end of 2015.

Part of the declaration states that the City:

- recognizes the importance of protecting the environmental well-being of Toronto and the health, safety and well-being of Torontonians;
- lists the rights that should be given to all people so they can live in a healthy environment, as articulated by the David Suzuki Foundation's Blue Dot Movement;
- highlights how the City will support the Blue Dot Movement's goal of respecting, protecting, fulfilling and promoting these rights, by continuing to implement and enhance Council-adopted plans, actions and strategies;
- affirms that the City shall continue to work with residents and other experts to set specific objectives, targets and timelines and actions the City can take to achieve environmental objectives;

The declaration can be found here: www.toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2015/ex/bgrd/backgroundfile-85952.pdf

Lynn Miller

NEW FEATURE!

Links to websites found throughout the newsletter are available on TFN's website.

Go to torontofieldnaturalists.org and click on Newsletter under Quick Links.

WEATHER (THIS TIME LAST YEAR)

March 2015

The cold trend continued through March, though much less dramatically. It was also a dry, quiet month with the lowest total precipitation in over 50 years.

The monthly mean temperature was -0.8° downtown and -1.9° at Pearson Airport, about 2.5° below normal, which felt downright warm after February. (It was also notably milder than March 2014.) Wintry weather persisted from February through the first week or so of March, then yielded to seasonable conditions with plenty of sunshine. It was just warm enough to get rid of the snow pack by mid-month, though drifts hid in sheltered places to month's end (and even a bit into April). Our mildest reading was on the 16th (9.7° downtown and 11.9° at

Pearson – rather pallid compared to what March can come up with).

A return to cold weather with the familiar Arctic feed occurred from the 22nd to 29th, which clinched the idea that this was to be another colder-than-average month.

Rainfall and snowfall were both scanty. Snowfall was 5.2 cm at the airport and 5.5 cm downtown, all on the 3rd. Total precipitation at Pearson was 14.3 mm, the second-driest on record (1962 being the lowest at 11.9 mm). Downtown we had 16.0 mm.

The first snowdrops came into bloom around the 30th.

Gavin Miller

THIRTY YEARS OF WEATHER!

Congratulations and thank you to Gavin Miller for *more* than 30 years of monthly weather reports for the TFN newsletter.

I met Gavin when he was a teenager whose main interests were exploring Toronto ravines and the weather. Even then he remembered the weather on any day you asked him about. Since then he has become a botanist with Toronto and Region Conservation and has continued providing the TFN with summaries of the weather each month. February 2015 was an outstanding report.

Thanks again, and please keep the reports coming.

Helen Juhola

Ed: several members mentioned how interesting it was to read in last month's weather report about Toronto's frigid February in the context of the world's second warmest February.

Answers from p 13

- a) Walking stick (insect)
- b) Yellow woolly bear (caterpillar)
- c) Pintail (duck)
- d) Jack-in-the-pulpit (wildflower)
- e) Turkey tails (fungi)
- f) Queen Anne's lace (wildflower)
- g) European praying mantis - some kinds belong in the genus *Mantis* (insect)
- h) Yellow lady's slipper (wildflower)

Have You Seen a Wing-tagged or Banded Great Egret?

Scientists are tagging and banding great egrets on their breeding grounds to learn about migration and overwintering patterns. Since 2001 more than 2000 young flightless egrets have been uniquely wing-tagged or leg-banded with red bands, and resightings are needed.

Take your binoculars on your Caribbean vacation this winter and send your egret sightings and photos to Chip Weseloh (chip.weseloh@canada.ca). Remember to record the date, time, and location, as well as colour of the wing-tag (orange, green or blue) or the band and the characters on it.



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 (www.torontobirding.ca)

Aimed at the intermediate birder, but beginners also welcome. Free to the public. Information: www.torontobirding.ca

- Sun Mar 6, 9 am to late afternoon. Toronto to Burlington Lakeshore: waterfowl, geese, swans. Leader: Garth Riley. Meet at the parking lot, Humber Bay Park East (south of Lake Shore Blvd W at Parklawn Rd) to carpool.

High Park Walking Tours (www.highpark.org)

1st and 3rd Sundays of each month from 10:30 to noon. Meet at the benches south of the Grenadier Restaurant.

Information: 416-392-6916 or walkingtours@highpark.org

- Mar 6, Discover the Park through Archival Photos
- Mar 20, My Favorite Trails Walking Tour, Sarah Doucette, City Councillor

Toronto Botanical Garden (www.torontobotanicalgarden.ca/learn/adult/tbg-lectures1/)

- Mar 3, 7:30 pm. New Naturalism: How an Ecological Understanding of Planting will Spur the Next Renaissance of Horticulture. Thomas Rainer. Members free; public \$15.

Rouge Park Weekly Guided Nature Walks (www.rougepark.com/hike)

Explore Rouge Park's trails with a Hike Ontario certified volunteer leader. E-mail hike@rougepark.com or phone 905-713-3184, Mon - Thurs.

Royal Canadian Institute for the Advancement of Science (RCI) (www.royalcanadianinstitute.org)

Science on Sundays lectures at 2pm (doors open 1:15), Macleod Auditorium, Med Sci Bldg, U of T, 1 King's College Circle.

- Mar 6. Let's Talk Science: An afternoon of engaging hands-on activities geared towards children 6-12 years and their families, sharing the excitement of science, technology, engineering and math.

Toronto Entomological Association (www.ontarioinsects.org)

- Sat Mar 19, 1-3 pm. Student Symposium. Room 432, Ramsay Wright Building, University of Toronto (25 Harbord Street). Graduate students, senior undergraduates and postdoctoral fellows will be presenting talks and posters.

Royal Ontario Museum (www.rom.on.ca)

- To Mar 20. Wildlife Photographer of the Year. See website for ticket prices.

The Market Gallery (toronto.ca/marketgallery)

- To June 11. Tunnel Visions: The Story of Toronto's Subway. South St Lawrence Market, 2nd floor, 95 Front St E. Free. Gallery closed Sun, Mon and holidays.

Lost Rivers Walks (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.

Ian Wheal Walks

- Sun Mar 6, 11 am. "Food to Table." When Railways were a produce delivery service. Meet at the southeast corner of Yonge St and Front St. (A 1-1/2 hr, 6 km walk ending in Distillery District.)
- Sat Mar 12, 1:30 pm. YMCA-YWCA "Where it All Began in 1881." Dovercourt-Parkdale. Meet at the southeast corner of College St and Dovercourt Rd. A 2-hr walk.
- Sun Mar 27, 1.30 pm. CN Rail 'feeder' line network to TTC (1926); how Toronto lost a solution to transit problems by rejecting a CN Rail proposal. Meet at St Clair Ave W and Old Weston Rd for a 1.5 hr, 7 km walk.

The Messenger

Carlton Cinema from February 26 to March 3.

The Messenger (www.themessengerdoc.com) is a documentary that follows experts as they explore staggering global songbird declines. (www.rainbowcinemas.ca/A/?theatre=Carlton&)

With the goals of helping deliver the film's important message and motivating audiences to take action for birds, Bird Studies Canada is the documentary's National Outreach Partner.

Visit their website for **Top 6 Ways You Can Help Birds** at birdscanada.org/education/tophelp.jsp

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Publications Mail
Registration No. 40049590



Northern cardinal at Toronto Botanical Gardens in February 2014. Photo by Steven Potter. See page 12.