



Since 1923

# TORONTO FIELD NATURALIST

626 March 2017



Sac spider on sunflower. Photo: Theresa Moore. See page 12.

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**Mission 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.

*Toronto Field Naturalist* is published by the Toronto Field Naturalists, a charitable, non-profit organization. Issued monthly September to December and February to May. Views expressed in the Newsletter are not necessarily those of the editor or Toronto Field Naturalists. The Newsletter is printed on 100% recycled paper.

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**IT'S YOUR NEWSLETTER!**

We welcome contributions of original writing (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 e-mail or on the envelope if sent by mail.

Please re-name digital photographs with the subject and your name (abbreviations ok). In the accompanying e-mail include location, date and any interesting story or other information associated with the photograph.

**Deadline for submissions for April issue: March 1**

**NEWSLETTER COMMITTEE**

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

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<b>MEMBERSHIP FEES</b>	<b>ONLINE NEWSLETTER</b>	<b>MAILED NEWSLETTER</b>
YOUTH (under 26)	\$10	\$20
SENIOR SINGLE (65+)	\$30	\$40
SINGLE	\$40	\$50
SENIOR FAMILY (65+)	\$40	\$50
FAMILY	\$50	\$60

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**

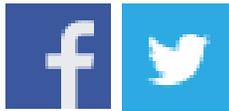
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The office is open 9:30 am to noon on Fridays



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 e-mail [media@torontofieldnaturalists.org](mailto:media@torontofieldnaturalists.org) and be sure to include what your photo is and where it was taken.

To read posts, go to [www.torontofieldnaturalists.org](http://www.torontofieldnaturalists.org) and click on Twitter or Facebook.

**FINANCE COMMITTEE MEMBER WANTED**

Person with knowledge of accounting and financial procedures is wanted to sit on TFN's Finance Committee that advises the board on financial policies and procedures in the investment and management of funds. An accounting designation or relevant degree would be an asset.

Commitment: Committee meetings (2-3 hours) held two to four times a year.



Red Squirrel. Photo: Lynn Miller

# TFN MEETING

Sunday, March 5, 2:30 pm

Protecting the Water, Nature and Communities  
of the Greater Golden Horseshoe

*Josh Wise, Ontario Nature's Greenway Program manager and co-author of Natural Heritage Systems Planning Best Practices guide, will talk about promoting stewardship in Ontario's Greenbelt.*



**VISITORS WELCOME!**

**SOCIAL: 2:00 – 2:30 pm**

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

Just south of Museum subway station exit, east side of Queen's Park. Enter at south end of building, down a few steps on outside stairwell. Accessible 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

**Share your thoughts and insights about this lecture on social media with the hashtag #TFNTalk.**

## UPCOMING TFN LECTURES

- Apr 2 Green Roof Wildlife in Toronto: Opportunities and Limitations.  
Scott MacIvor, Postdoctoral Researcher, University of Toronto, Scarborough
- May 7 Grow Wild: Gardening with Native Plants.  
Lorraine Johnson, author and expert on native plant gardens

## 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.

## 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](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.*
- **We recommend you check with the TTC for any schedule disruptions which may occur on weekends. Allow extra time if necessary.**

Please share your favourite walk photos on social media with the hashtag #TFNWalk

- Wed  
Mar 1  
10:00 am
- COLONEL SAMUEL SMITH PARK – Birds**  
**Leader: Anne Powell.** Meet at the southeast corner of Lake Shore Blvd W and Kipling Ave for a circular walk on mostly paved surfaces, mainly flat. Washrooms at beginning of walk. Morning only.
- Sat  
Mar 4  
2 pm
- TWIG IDENTIFICATION – Workshop**  
Leader: Dr. James Eckenwalder  
Registration required: [office@torontofieldnaturalists.org](mailto:office@torontofieldnaturalists.org) or phone 416-593-2656.
- Sun  
Mar 5  
2:30 pm
- LECTURE – Protecting the Water, Nature and Communities of the Greater Golden Horseshoe**  
**Speaker: Josh Wise, Ontario Nature.** Room 001, Emmanuel College, 75 Queen's Park Cres E.  
See details on page 3.
- Wed  
Mar 8  
10:00 am
- A WALK IN OLD YORK – History and Architecture**  
**Leader: Ed Freeman.** Meet at the northeast corner of King St and Church St for a circular walk on mostly paved surfaces, mainly flat. No washrooms. We will walk from St James Cathedral east to Frederick St, south to The Esplanade and back to St James. Bring curiosity. Morning only.
- Sat  
Mar 11  
10:00 am
- SCARBOROUGH BLUFFS – Geology and Winter Birds**  
**Leaders: Anne and Jim Purvis.** Meet at the Doris McCarthy trailhead at Bellehaven Cres for a linear walk on mostly paved surfaces, flat with some steep slopes. We will walk south through the forest to the Passage and look west to the highest point along the Bluffs noting the layers of glacial deposits. We will then walk east along the waterfront trail past Sylvan Park where we can see examples of cross-bedding in the Scarborough formation, the holes of bank swallows and possibly winter ducks. Finally we'll climb the cliff up to Guildwood. Wear good boots and bring binoculars. Can be chilly at the lake, so wear warm clothes. Morning only.
- Tues  
Mar 14  
10:00 am
- G ROSS LORD PARK AND/OR BARTLEY SMITH GREENWAY – Nature Walk**  
**Leader: Stephen Kamnitzer.** Meet at the main parking lot in G Ross Lord Park (enter from east side of Dufferin St about 1 km north of Finch) for a circular walk on mostly unpaved and uneven surfaces. Assuming sufficient cars, we will shuttle to the Bartley Smith Greenway north of Steeles and explore the renaturalized areas. Otherwise we will just explore G Ross Lord Park. Optional coffee/lunch stop afterwards at a nice Armenian bakery on the west side of Dufferin. The valley has been transformed with new marshlands, the largest constructed deciduous swamp in Ontario and thousands of new trees and shrubs, all of which have resulted in an explosion of wildlife. Birds, beavers, coyotes, foxes, snakes, turtles and frogs top the list. Bring binoculars.
- Sat  
Mar 18  
10:00 am
- MARIE CURTIS PARK – Nature and Heritage**  
**Leader: Ken Sproule.** Meet in the parking lot at the east side of Marie Curtis Park for a 2-hour circular walk. Level ground on paved and unpaved paths. Take #508 Lakeshore streetcar or the GO train to Long Branch. Walk down 42nd St to the parking lot.

- Sun  
Mar 19  
2:00 pm  
**CELEBRATE WORLD WATER DAY ON CASTLE FRANK BROOK – Lost Rivers**  
**Leaders: Helen Mills and friends.** Meet at Winchester St and Sumach St, Riverdale Park West. This year the theme for World Water Day is "There is no such thing as waste water; only water wasted." On this walk we explore secret pathways into the Castle Frank Ravine and a tiny tributary that was once a channel for waste water from Lamb's Glue Factory. We will talk about the water cycle in the city and emerging circular design approaches and economies. Some steps and possible icy conditions.
- Wed  
Mar 22  
10:00 am  
**SMALL'S POND AND SIMPSON'S GARDENS – Nature and History**  
**Leader: Joanne Doucette.** Meet at the southeast corner of Queen St and Coxwell Ave for a circular walk to explore the nature and history of Small's Pond and the neighbourhood. Please wear icers if it is slippery. Morning only.
- Sat  
Mar 25  
10:00 am  
**LESLIE STREET SPIT – Birds, Insects and Plants**  
**Leader: Bob Kortright.** Meet at the park entrance at 1 Leslie St for a 6-hour (12 km) circular walk on flat, mostly unpaved surfaces. We will look for early migrants, possibly snakes and cormorants. Bring lunch and binoculars.
- Thurs  
Mar 30  
10:00 am  
**HIGH PARK – Birds**  
**Leader: Doug Paton.** Meet at the park entrance at Bloor St W and High Park Ave for a circular walk. Bring binoculars. Morning only.

There are still a few spots left in the  
TWIG ID WORKSHOP

Leader: Dr James Eckenwalder, University of Toronto  
Saturday, March 4, 2 pm

Please phone or e-mail to register: [office@torontofieldnaturalists.org](mailto:office@torontofieldnaturalists.org) OR 416-593-2656.



White-tailed deer. Photo: Anne Leon

## TFN SPECIAL PROJECTS

The TFN is establishing a program of Special Projects for 2017-18.

This program is intended to support projects that further the TFN goals of

- 1) stimulating public interest in nature,
  - 2) encouraging protection of nature in Toronto,
- and
- 3) disseminating knowledge of natural history.

The program will fund selected projects initiated, carried out or sponsored by TFN members. More information and applications are available from the TFN website or by calling the TFN office.

Deadline for submission of applications to the TFN office is April 14, 2017.

## PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Suite 1519, 2 Carlton Street has been the TFN's office address and home for more than 15 years. It houses TFN documents and records, photo images, reference books, TFN publications, Newsletter back-issues and the normal office paraphernalia. It serves as a convenient meeting place for TFN board and other meetings, and hosts meetings for affiliated organizations. It is where this newsletter is edited. It is always open to members on Friday mornings to access TFN records, to air concerns to the president or just for a chat.

The office is centrally located, almost on top of a subway station. It is spacious, airy and bathed in natural light. The building in which it is housed is well maintained and appointed.

All these advantages come at a cost. The rent represents a disproportionate portion of TFN's operating budget; a further rent increase took effect on the first of March. And now the building is slated for

redevelopment. Consequently, an office relocation committee was formed in September 2016 to search for a new home for TFN. We have looked at four or five possible locations but, for one reason or another, none of these proved to be suitable.

We are looking for premises in central Toronto, within walking distance of a subway station with a floor area of at least 300 square feet. Ideally it should be naturally lit and, if not on the ground floor, should have an elevator. If any member knows of a location that fits, or almost fits, these criteria, please contact us at our present office where we'll remain until further notice.

Leslie Street Spit, or Tommy Thompson Park, is unquestionably my favourite place in central Toronto. The Toronto Region Conservation Authority (TRCA) is hosting stakeholder meetings to advise on a proposed Spit "Park Entrance Development Project." This would include a pavilion described as containing "accessible washrooms and storage office area in the core with outdoor sheltered gathering/seating and possible bicycle parking" as well as "the establishment of a layout for 102 cars (100 spaces + 2

accessible stalls), bus drop off and bus parking, [and] the new alignment of parking entranceway..." The cost is estimated upwards of \$1.5 million. In other words, a more user-friendly park with a smarter entrance. I'll leave readers to decide if this is the best use of resources and if attracting visitors to the park should be a first priority. The interaction of humans and natural spaces does not have a happy history. Reaction from Friends of the Spit can be seen in their November 2016 newsletter at:

[friendsofthespit.ca/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/2016\\_November-Newsletter-.pdf](http://friendsofthespit.ca/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/2016_November-Newsletter-.pdf)

For those wondering why a boardwalk-building party was not scheduled at the Jim Baillie Nature Reserve in December or January, the reason is that the weather was too mild.

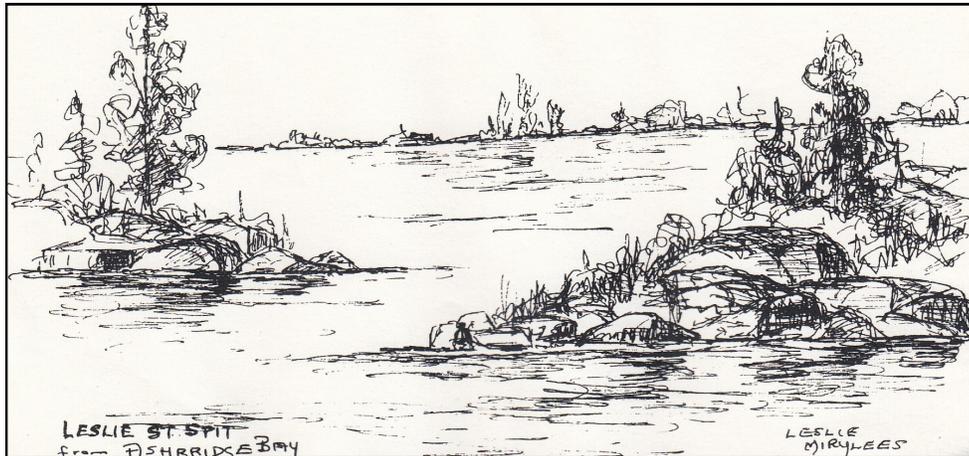
Frozen ground prevents undue soil disturbance that is caused by the application of heavy boots to the reserve's soft, soggy terrain. Blame climate change.

And while I'm on the subject,

on January 11 at Swansea Town Hall, David Miller, former Toronto mayor and current President and CEO of World Wildlife Fund Canada, spoke on the subject, "The power of cities to tackle climate change." Referring to Toronto specifically, Miller lamented the time and energy the city spent on pilot projects, plans and reports while being slow to carry anything to full implementation. Miller suggested that we need to focus more on providing practical answers in response to the question "What can I do?" rather than broad political organizing. The key, he said, is to catalyze people into action.

TFN members can be instrumental here by volunteering for one of the many opportunities we offer. The Cottonwood Flats Monitoring Project is one example. By becoming active and involved, members can contribute towards fulfilling TFN's mission statement, which reads, in part, "*We help people understand, enjoy, and protect Toronto's green spaces and the species that inhabit them.*"

Charles Bruce-Thompson  
president@torontofieldnaturalists.org



## MONTHLY MEETING REPORT

### Seeing the Forest for the Deer: Do reductions in deer disturbance lead to forest recovery?

February 5, 2017

Dr Dawn Bazely, Professor, Dept of Biology, York U

One of the themes that ran through Dr. Bazely's talk was the importance of scientists, and citizen scientists, actively communicating with the public to inform and educate them on environmental research – and facts!

Most of her talk addressed issues in Southern Ontario, a highly fragmented landscape, with only 5-15% of natural cover remaining, due to urbanization, industry and agriculture. With fragmentation comes an increase in forest edges, the preferred habitat of deer.

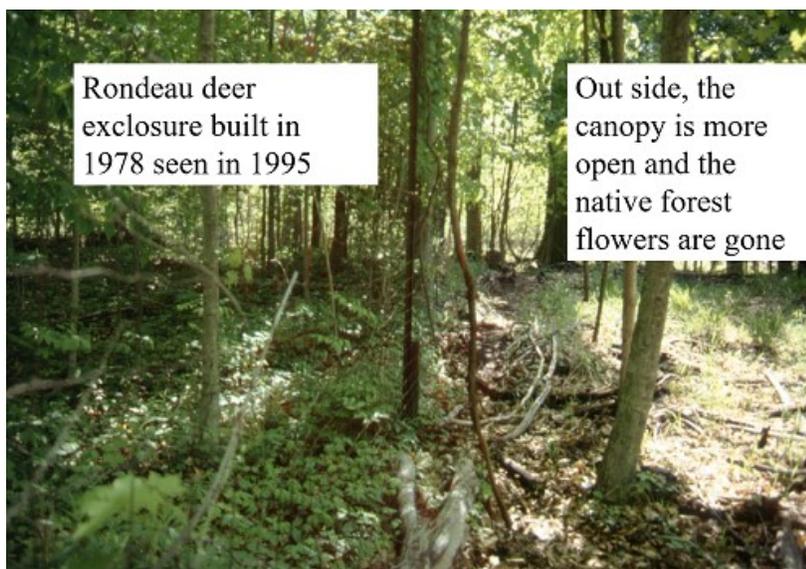
Dr Bazely reminded us that over 99% of all species that have ever existed have gone extinct, but the current cycle of extinction is happening 10-100 times faster than in the past (as Kevin Seymour said in our September 2016 talk). Deer accelerate habitat destruction, one of the identified causes of biodiversity loss.

Much of Dr Bazely's work around deer disturbance has been in study sites located in Carolinian Ontario. These communities tend to be savannas such as Pinery Provincial Park, with many prairie species, or closed canopy forests such as those of Backus Woods. When there are more deer than the ecosystem can support, a "browse line" is visible as high as two metres. As the deer eat the leaves and twigs in winter, they destroy the understory which negatively impacts growth of the overstory. Management goals in areas impacted by deer

grazing include restoring appropriate disturbance regimes and reversing biodiversity losses.

The former is an *ecosystem* approach where deer densities are reduced and fire is reintroduced. The latter is a plant *communities and species* approach where native species are reintroduced and non-indigenous species are culled. Before management actions begin, baseline data need to be collected from sampling and/or historical records.

Deer exclosures (fences built to keep deer out) have proved effective in some areas and have the advantage of allowing areas adjacent to the fences to be easily compared. Grazing by deer results in 50% loss of growing tree stems and reduction in height of indicator species such as trillium. When deer are excluded from areas, regeneration is much slower than expected (over 10 years) and not all native species return.



Rondeau deer enclosure built in 1978 seen in 1995

Out side, the canopy is more open and the native forest flowers are gone

This photo compares an ungrazed fenced enclosure with a grazed area. Both the amount of biomass present and the light conditions are starkly contrasted.

Rondeau Provincial Park, where it was shown that the existence of pockets of seed banks throughout the park made the greatest contribution to the return of native species. By 2009, the graze line was gone and parts of Rondeau were becoming oak savanna. Dr Bazely told an amusing story of waiting over ten years for a plot of Dutchman's breeches to cross a road in Rondeau, with success probably due to an ant carrying a seed across!

Dr Bazely finished with a strong recommendation to get involved in citizen science projects, garden with native species and educate dog owners about the fact that unleashed dogs are the main vectors of invasive species.

Meg O'Mahoney

## CHILDREN'S CORNER

### Buds of Common Street Trees

Buds house tiny little leaves and flowers that have been waiting all winter to come out. These buds are all different, just like the leaves inside them.

Twigs from five trees are shown below. Use this key to identify them by their buds.

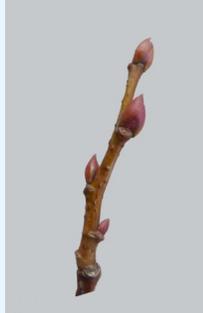
Step 1. Choose one of the twig pictures.

Step 2. Answer the questions and follow through the key until you find the name of the tree.

Step 3. Repeat for the other twigs.



A



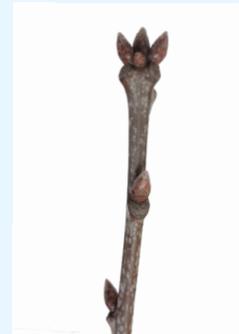
B



C

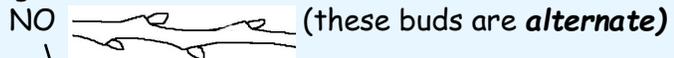


D



E

Are the buds **opposite** each other along the twig?



Are the buds blackish?

YES → Ash \_\_\_  
NO → Maple \_\_\_

Are the buds reddish?

YES → Linden \_\_\_

NO → Is there a cluster of buds at the tip of the twig?

YES → Oak \_\_\_

NO → Are the buds very long and slender?

→ Beech \_\_\_

See answers on page 19.

By Anne Purvis

Illustrations: Jenny Bull

### Teens: Apply for the 2017 Young Ornithologists Workshop!

The 2017 Doug Tarry Young Ornithologists Workshop will be held at Long Point Bird Observatory near Port Rowan, Ontario, from August 5 to 13. 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, 2017**

For more information see [www.birdscanada.org/longpoint/?targetpg=lpboyow](http://www.birdscanada.org/longpoint/?targetpg=lpboyow)  
or e-mail [lpbo@birdscanada.org](mailto:lpbo@birdscanada.org)

## TORONTO'S STEMMED VIOLETS

Stemmed violets are species with their flowers in the axils of their leaves. (For stemless violets, see previous issue.) The TFN's *Vascular Plants of Metropolitan Toronto* (1994, 2nd ed.) listed four valid native stemmed species.

The common stemmed species in Toronto is *Viola pubescens* (yellow violet). The species name means hairy but the species now includes plants formerly placed in *V. eriocarpa* (smooth yellow violet), no longer considered a valid species. This is mainly a species of forest edges and clearings. Its flowers are generally about 15 to 20mm wide. It blooms from May to August. As our only yellow violet it is easy to identify.



*V. labradorica* (dog violet) is the currently accepted name for the species formerly referred to as *V. conspersa* (American dog violet). A bearded species, it has pale purple flowers about 20mm wide and a spur about 5 or 6mm long. Two features distinguish it from *V. rostrata* (long-spurred violet): the longer spur (10 to 16mm long) and beardless petals of the latter. *V. rostrata* is a species reported at Wilket Creek (Don watershed) and in the Rouge that I have been unable to find. The TFN listed *V. labradorica* as uncommon but it was recorded at East Point on the Scarborough Bluffs and in open forests and forest fringes from the Humber to the Rouge. Its range includes the NWT, from Saskatchewan to Newfoundland, Greenland, the eastern 30% of the U.S. and Colorado.



*V. canadensis* (Canada violet) has white flowers up to about 30mm wide, twice the size of those of the stemless white-flowered violet *V. macloskeyi*. The TFN recorded it as locally rare and occurring at Mimico Creek, Lambton Woods (Humber) and Wilket Creek and Wigmore Park (Don). I saw a new locality in the Rouge valley. Its range includes all of Canada except Nunavut and Newfoundland, and all of the U.S. except a few southcentral and southwest states.



Trying to find *V. rostrata* and new occurrences of the Canada violet could be a worthwhile quest. If successful, let the TFN know and report where found.

Article and photos by Peter Money

Illustrations, top to bottom:  
Yellow violet, *Viola pubescens*  
Dog violet, *V. labradorica* (two views)  
Canada violet, *V. canadensis*



### Have you Spotted any Bald Eagles Recently?

Since DDT was banned, things have turned around and bald eagles have been downgraded from endangered to "special concern." According to Emily Rondel, Toronto Projects Co-ordinator at Bird Studies Canada, people in Toronto's west end have been spotting them occasionally this winter, and eagle watchers are noticing them as often as every few weeks.

[www.metronews.ca/news/toronto/2017/01/12/bald-eagles-are-back-in-toronto-and-ontario.html](http://www.metronews.ca/news/toronto/2017/01/12/bald-eagles-are-back-in-toronto-and-ontario.html)

## THE MOURNING CLOAK BUTTERFLY – HARBINGER OF SPRING

Some might say that the song of the cardinal is the first sign of the coming spring in Toronto. But it is difficult to imagine when it's February and there's snow on the ground. For me it's the appearance of the mourning cloak butterfly (*Nymphalis antiopa*) that means spring is here. The mourning cloak overwinters as an adult. It may find a niche under loose bark or roof shingles, a tree cavity or an unheated building in which to spend the winter. It often emerges from hibernation before the snow has melted, making it one of the first butterflies to take flight in the year. I usually see it beginning in mid-March. Surviving for up to one year, it is one of the longer lived butterflies. There are two generations per year in Ontario. It is native to North America and Eurasia.

The mourning cloak larva (also referred to as a caterpillar) feeds on a large variety of host plants including willows, poplars, elms and hackberries. The larva's spines are a deterrent to predators. It remains with its siblings for some time and they will vibrate in unison when disturbed. When the larva reaches full size (approximately 5 cm) it will wander off in search of a site to pupate. This larva was found in High Park in mid-July.



In mid-June I spotted a mourning cloak larva wandering about the wall of a building at my workplace near the East Donlands. A few days later I found this pupa (also referred to as a chrysalis in the case of butterflies) on the same building. The pupa is approximately 2.5 cm.



A week later the adult mourning cloak had emerged. Here it is waiting for its wings to inflate and dry.



The wingspan of the mourning cloak is approximately 7.5 cm although it can reach 10 cm. The dark brown wings with beige trim and blue spots make this butterfly easy to identify. The dark colour allows it to absorb more heat when basking in the sun. This is helpful to early spring butterflies as they need to stay warm to be able to fly. The mourning cloak will aestivate (enter a dormant state similar to hibernation) at some point during the summer, later re-emerging to feed and store energy for overwintering. This mourning cloak [opposite page] was found at Guild Park in mid-September. It was probably obtaining minerals from the wet sand.

Adult mourning cloaks feed on tree sap and rotting fruit and only rarely on nectar, so they do not contribute very much to pollination. A diet of tree sap allows the mourning cloak to appear so early in the year. Here a mourning cloak butterfly along with a comma butterfly (*Polygonia comma*), another early spring butterfly that overwinters as an adult, are feeding on tree sap at L'Amoreaux Park in early May.





Mourning cloak refers to the butterfly's resemblance to a cloak once worn when in mourning. *Nymphalis* is a derivation of nymph, a female nature spirit in mythology, and also refers to a fountain. *Antiopa* refers to a number of

female characters in Greek mythology. It is not clear why this two-part name (*Nymphalis antiopa*) was applied to the mourning cloak butterfly.

Ken Sproule

#### References

- 1) *Butterflies of Ontario*, ROM Field Guide, ISBN 978-0-88854-497-1
- 2) *Butterflies of Toronto*, City of Toronto Biodiversity Series, ISBN 978-1-895739-62-6
- 3) Animal Diversity Web: [http://animaldiversity.org/accounts/Nymphalis\\_antiopa/](http://animaldiversity.org/accounts/Nymphalis_antiopa/)
- 4) Nature North: <http://www.naturenorth.com/spring/bug/mcloak/Fmcloak.html>
- 5) Wikipedia: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nymphalis\\_antiopa](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nymphalis_antiopa)
- 6) DesertUSA: <http://www.desertusa.com/insects/mourning-cloaks.html>
- 7) Images: Ken Sproule, [www.toronto-wildlife.com](http://www.toronto-wildlife.com)

### VOLUNTEER NEEDED FOR TFN MEMBERSHIP DATABASE

We need someone to input information into our membership database, usually once a month but more frequently from May to August.

No special computer knowledge required – just good attention to detail.

If you can help, please e-mail the TFN office (see page 2).

## NATURE IMAGES EVENT

On Saturday, February 4th, TFN members gathered at S Walter Stewart Library to share nature experiences through photography. We were treated to a wide variety of subjects highlighting the many natural treasures to be found in and around Toronto. Thank you to those who organized and facilitated this event, and all who shared their photos.

In celebration of the good news that the giant panda has been removed from the endangered species list, **Anne Byzko** showed some delightful photos taken at Toronto Zoo of the panda cubs and also Juno, the playful young polar bear.



**Teresa Moore** shared pictures of birds, bugs and mammals seen in her neighbourhood, and at Lynde Shores including these wild turkeys. She described some of the photographic techniques used. Her stunning photo of a sac spider on a sunflower [front cover] was achieved by taking about 20 back-to-back shots with a macro lens and using Photoshop to layer them so that everything is in sharp focus.



**Wendy Rothwell** showed a selection of wildflowers seen last June on the alvars and sand dunes of Manitoulin Island, including this lakeside daisy, or “Manitoulin Gold” as it is known on the Island.



**Martin Chen’s** theme was “How to Enjoy Nature Year-round” – the Centennial Park greenhouse, spring birding at Pelee, summer viewing from kayak or bicycle, fall foliage and the Christmas Bird Count. He enjoys observing this serviceberry in his garden as it changes through the seasons.



**Larry Hicks** showed us some exceptional photos of birds and other animals at Bluffers Park, including this tundra swan, rarely seen in Toronto, and a spectacular shot of a long-tailed duck in flight [see back cover].



During the intermission, members enjoyed refreshments and donated goodies, and viewed photos and artwork displayed by Anne Leon, Anne Byzko and Cliff Jansen.

**Lynn Miller** showed us a remarkable array of birds, insects and mammals that frequent her garden in Toronto, including an enchanting red squirrel [see page 2].



This skunk is one of several critters that have taken up residence under her shed.

**Anne Leon** also focused on sightings in her back yard including a beautiful white-tailed deer [see page 5] and this Canada warbler (an “at risk” species) which was rescued after hitting a window.



**Margaret McRae** showed photos from TFN outings, including this bees’ nest seen on the East Don in October. Margaret breeds butterflies, and shared the story of two black swallowtails that emerged prematurely in December and January. To save them from the winter cold, she released them in the greenhouse at Allan Gardens [photo to the right].



**Lloyd Mayeda** showed a presentation of TFN activities and sightings including this snail seen at Milne Hollow. [See other photos on pages 14 and 15.]



**Jenny Bull’s** presentation entitled “Life on the Beach” showed interesting plants that grow on Toronto Islands. She described how these are adapted to being buried under sand, and their role in stabilizing the dunes. This sea rocket was of particular interest.



We have many talented photographers in the TFN. Please remember to send us your pictures throughout the year for inclusion in the newsletter. [See instructions on page 2.]

Wendy Rothwell



## KEEPING IN TOUCH



### ED FREEMAN HONOURED

On December 14, TFN member Ed Freeman was presented with Heritage Toronto's first ever Volunteer Service Award. Ed is one of their longest standing volunteers, having researched and led tours for more than 20 consecutive years. Described as an "outstanding guide," Ed, a geologist, has given tours and talks on the history of Toronto's quarries and brickworks, as well as tours on neighbourhood planning, the city's natural trails and its residential architecture.

TFN appreciates the many similar outings that Ed leads for us.

Top: Kaitlin Wainwright (left) and Kate Marshall present Ed Freeman with his award. Photo: Heritage Toronto



Below: Ed Freeman leading a TFN Nature and Heritage walk at Burke Brook in March, 2016. Photo: Lloyd Mayeda

### Squirrel Attack!

On a mild January day, I was feeding the birds in High Park. As I held out a handful of nuts for the chickadees and nuthatches, a squirrel approached me and begged for some. I explained to him that the nuts were for the birds. He was very persistent, and so appealing that I almost relented. But when I momentarily turned my eyes away, he leapt on my head, knocking off my hat and startling me so that I dropped all the nuts. He greedily gobbled them up and then had the temerity to ask for more.

I have never heard of a squirrel being so aggressive.

Wendy Rothwell

## REMEMBERING DICK WATTS

Dick Watts passed away on Thanksgiving Day 2015 at age 93. He and his wife Florence had joined TFN in 1991. In the late 1990s and early 2000s, Dick led numerous walks for TFN, the Lost Rivers Project and Heritage Toronto. These outings (often with co-leaders including Richard Anderson, Rob Colle, Ed Freeman, Peter Hare, Terry McAuliffe, Madeleine McDowell, and Ian Wheal) explored portions of the Lake Iroquois shore bluff; nearby landforms; and remnants of Castle Frank Brook and Wychwood, Garrison, Rowntree/Lavender and Black creeks.

Dick and I co-led a "Garrison Creek and Regal Heights" walk for TFN in July 2010. Although I talked about the vegetation, Dick devised the route, identified the themes, chose most of the points of interest and invited the neighbourhood.

Not long after moving to Regal Road in 1966, Dick and Florence became active in the nascent Regal Heights Residents' Association (RHRA). Soon after Dick's death,

Toronto City Council passed the condolence motion moved by area councillor Cesar Palacio, who wrote "... Dick was an inspiration to the residents of Regal Heights for more than three decades. His vision and tireless work have made the neighbourhood the vibrant community that it is today."



One of Dick and Florence's many projects was the planting and nurturing of dozens of trees and shrubs and hundreds of daffodils on the slope below Regal Road School. In February 2016 RHRA applied to Cesar Palacio to name the steps descending that slope "Dick Watts Steps."

Transportation Services concurred, not only repairing the stairs and ramp but also installing the Association's plaque. At the unveiling on

October 14, 2016, Florence called the event "a significant recognition of Dick's time in the community." Five days later Davenport MPP Cristina Martins added her own tribute to Dick by reading a member statement in the Ontario Legislature.

Pleasance Crawford

## EXTRACTS FROM OUTINGS LEADERS' REPORTS



Lark Sparrow at Lake Shore Blvd and DVP in January 2017. Photo: Ken Sproule

### **Birds, Toronto Island, Dec 29. Leader: Anne Powell.**

A small number of waterfowl and passerines were present. Sighting highlights were a trumpeter swan and white-winged scoters.

**Beltline, Dec 31. Leader: John Bacher.** We noted young sugar maples recently planted along the path. Environmental outreach by the City appears to have helped encourage adjacent residents to have good tree cover in their back yards, which creates the impression of walking through a forest in the middle of central Toronto. We saw much wildlife, the most significant a sharp-shinned hawk. About 30 squirrels were observed. Other native species included a dozen cardinals, ten chickadees, six white-breasted nuthatches and a downy woodpecker.

**A Cool Walk Along the Humber, Jan 4. Leader: Ed Freeman.** Walkers braved blustery winds and cold temperatures along the Humber River's icy paths to observe a variety of birds. Near the tennis courts in James Gardens we saw a Baltimore oriole's nest dangling from a branch. We then entered a less windy area where trees were pasted with lard splotches to attract birds. We saw cardinals, chickadees, starlings and house sparrows. Within the Humber were groups of mallards, goldeneye, common merganser and Canada geese. As we crossed the river on the remains of the old Guelph Radial Electric Railway line bridge, a hairy and a downy woodpecker were on the same tree so that we could clearly see the size difference between them. We saw deer and rabbit tracks in snow patches. Black squirrels were active in the woods.

**Wilket Creek, Jan 7. Leader: Ken Sproule.** A cold and icy but pleasant walk north along Wilket Creek to Edwards Gardens and back through Sunnybrook Park. Birds seen: black-capped chickadee, cardinal, white-breasted nuthatch, junco, red-tailed hawk, robin and house finch.

**Waterfowl, Ashbridge's Bay, Jan 14. Leaders: Petra and Jim Grass.** The day was brisk and overcast. We saw 22 species of birds, the best an Iceland gull at Ashbridge's Bay. After the official outing, some of the participants went to see the lark sparrow that had been viewed by many birders in the Don Road and Lake Shore Blvd area for several weeks. [To see Jean Iron's video of this rare Toronto sighting in December, visit [www.jeaniron.ca/2016/larksparrow.htm](http://www.jeaniron.ca/2016/larksparrow.htm)]

### **Botany of Tropical Plants, Allan Gardens, Jan 21.**

**Leader: Nancy Dengler.** Our walk emphasized the tropical and subtropical relatives of plant families that are familiar to us here in Ontario. These include members of the tomato family (Solanaceae) such as angel's trumpet, the floriferous shrub from Brazil "Yesterday, today and tomorrow," and tree tomato/ tamarillo whose developing eggplant-like fruits were protected from marauding squirrels by glass sleeves. Species of the milkweed family included balloon milkweed and Madagascar palm. Balloon milkweeds are native to southeast Africa, but are invasive weeds in many arid climates including southern Spain and northern Morocco. Monarch butterflies from North America are blown to Europe every year and now have been able to exploit these milkweeds and establish breeding populations in Spain and Morocco because of these weedy invasives. We also looked at the more subtropical relatives of our native prickly pear cactus, including the scrambling, vine-like Queen of the Night cactus that is the source of edible dragon fruits.



Queen of the Night cactus (above) and outing at Allan Gardens (below). Photos: Lloyd Mayeda.



## HOW I FIRST GOT INTERESTED IN NATURE

My interest in nature has been awakened and deepened many times – often when reading a great book about nature or seeing a new kind of animal (usually a bird) for the first time: My first cardinal three feet outside my bedroom window; a kinglet just outside another window, both when I was too small to use binoculars. But that early interest in nature would have been displaced by other interests unless reinforced by more experiences with nature in adolescent and adult years.

Fortunately it was reinforced by a black sky full of stars (not in the GTA anymore), the northern lights filling the sky just outside Toronto (once), startling deer that jumped so easily over a five-foot fence, then up a 15 foot embankment in a single bound (that's how I remember it), osprey catching foot-long goldfish, a flock of tundra swans settling on our pond, trying to catch a green frog, seeing a newt (or was it an eft?) beside a pond, walking a beach filled with stranded jellyfish with a bounce in my step, walking singing sands, a guided nature walk at summer camp, hundreds of gannets diving for fish off Newfoundland, my first good look at an owl (years after first hearing one), finding a poison dart frog and the excited reaction of the research station biologist when I described it later, a flock of a dozen kinds of antbirds, a basilisk lizard running across the water, a strong northwest wind in mid-September at the Scarborough Bluffs or in High Park carrying hundreds of hawks, falcons and vultures toward Detroit, a fallout in spring migration when the trees at Leslie Street Spit or Sam Smith Park are filled with warblers, seeing great hornbills fly across the river.

Also outings with great birders and naturalists of FON (now Ontario Nature), OFO (Ontario Field

Ornithologists), TOC (Toronto Ornithological Club), TEA (Toronto Entomologists Association), MST (Mycological Society of Toronto) and, not least, TFN, especially a trip to Jim Baillie nature reserve led by George Bryant.

Just as important were books, both for inspiration and for opening doors to understanding nature and evolution, starting with several by T W Burgess and E T Seton, followed by *Last of the Curlews* by F Bodsworth, *A*

*Natural History of Sex* by A Forsyth, *Watchers at the Pond* and others by F Russell, *Winter World* and others by B Heinrich, and *The Origin of Species: The Beak of the Finch*, to mention a few of the most memorable ones.



Ruby-crowned kinglet. Photo: Ken Sproule

Finally, the internet, particularly Wikipedia, has enabled an approach to an understanding of many things, including the tree of life – the way in which we are all related, not just to chimpanzees, gorillas, orangutans, gibbons, monkeys,

tarsiers, lorises, bushbabies and lemurs, but also, proceeding sequentially down the tree of life, to colugos, tree-shrews, rabbits and rodents, other mammals, birds and other reptiles, amphibians, lungfish, bony fish, sharks and rays, lamprey, hagfish, salps, tunicates, echinoderms, other deuterostomes, protostomes, other bilaterians, comb jellies, corals, sponges, collared flagellates, fungi, slime molds, stramenopiles (e.g. kelp), alveolates, rhizaria, excavates, plants, archaea and bacteria.

TFN has fostered my appreciation of nature by taking me places I did not know about, through newsletter articles and lectures that explained things I did not previously understand, and of course by enabling contact with others who appreciate nature too.

Bob Kortright

### 2016 Ontario Nature Conservation Awards

**Nomination Deadline: March 27, 2017**

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](http://www.ontarionature.org/act/conservation_award/index.php)

or e-mail [info@ontarionature.org](mailto:info@ontarionature.org) or phone 416-444-8419

## IN THE NEWS

### Large-Scale Tree Counting

Treepedia is a website that lets you examine and compare tree canopy coverage for 15 cities around the world. It was created by the MIT Senseable [*sic*] City Lab together with the World Economic Forum. Using Google Street View, the researchers were able to count individual trees to calculate each city's canopy by using a Green View Index. Toronto's coverage is fairly decent at 19.5% putting us in 9th place. Vancouver, the only other Canadian city to be mapped so far, got second place with 25.9%. Singapore is first with 29.3% coverage, and Paris is the worst with only 8.8%. The goal of the project is to promote increasing the number of city trees. It should be noted that the Green View Index only counts trees; it doesn't reflect the health of the canopy.

This is their website where you can learn more and explore using interactive maps.

<http://senseable.mit.edu/treepedia>

### The Importance of Calling 311

A local resident called 311 to report a foul smelling spill in the Don River near the Gerrard Street overpass. This led to city workers containing the fuel spill to stop it entering the harbour and tracking down the source of the pollution. Akelius Real Estate Management owns the industrial, contaminated, brownfield property where the leak is suspected of originating. They are working with the City on both short-term and long-term plans to stop the leak and prevent it from happening again. The brown, sludgy spill has only been identified as a "petroleum-like material."

Owners of brownfield properties are responsible for monitoring levels of contaminate at their sites, but citizens contacting 311 can make a difference in curbing pollution.

<http://globalnews.ca/news/3192446/toronto-company-responds-to-fuel-spill-leaking-into-don-river-cleanup-begins/>

### University of Toronto Professors Thinking Ahead

Reacting to President Trump's negative attitude towards science and climate change, a group of professors at U of T organized an archiving event before Trump's inauguration to capture data from the US Environmental Protection Agency website. Scientific data removal has

happened in the past under Bush in the US and Harper in Canada. Archiving is a massive effort, as databases cannot be simply copied. Someone has to go through the information, decide what is important and download it, so the group was only able to get a small amount of the data. Archiving events also happened in Philadelphia, New York and Los Angeles where secured data were stored on European servers. Trump's administration removed climate change material when he took office.

<http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/toronto/u-of-t-profs-look-to-save-environmental-data-ahead-of-trump-presidency/article33334699/>

### Province Rejects Proposals for Development in the Greenbelt

After reviewing over 700 requests to remove lands from the Greenbelt, Ontario announced that most of them will

be rejected. Only 13 proposals will be acted on and those are minor adjustments to correct for boundary mapping errors from when the Greenbelt was originally created. The Toronto Environmental Alliance (TEA) asserts that the province's decision is largely due to the outpouring of public support to protect and expand the Greenbelt. Over 35,000 letters were delivered to Minister of Municipal Affairs Bill Mauro asking to protect and grow the Greenbelt in order to preserve vulnerable water supplies and natural areas.

[http://www.torontoenvironment.org/province\\_says\\_yes\\_to\\_protecting\\_greenbelt\\_boundaries](http://www.torontoenvironment.org/province_says_yes_to_protecting_greenbelt_boundaries)

### Free Topographic Maps of the U.S.

National Geographic has created an easy-to-use, interactive website that enables you to quickly find and print topographic maps of the continental US. The maps are the same ones that the U.S. Geological Survey provides but the National Geographic site is much easier to navigate. Unfortunately, Canada isn't included. The Government of Canada has a website dedicated to topographic maps, but the interface is clumsy and non-intuitive. If you are planning on exploring some natural areas, these links are the places to go.

<http://www.natgeomaps.com/trail-maps/pdf-quads>  
<http://www.nrcan.gc.ca/earth-sciences/geography/atlas-canada/read-about-topographic-maps/16840>



## WEATHER (THIS TIME LAST YEAR)

### March 2016

The strange El Niño winter of 2015-16 concluded (well maybe not, as we'll see from April's entry) with more fluctuations between mild spells and, just when we thought we were done, some outbreaks of robust winter weather.

In the case of March, we began with a good snow storm, the first 10-cm fall of the winter which came on the heels of the warm spell at the end of February. We had cold weather and snow cover for a few days, but this was all gone by the 7th. By the 9th, we reached an amazing 20.4° (this value was also reached on this date in 2000). Fairly mild weather with temperatures often rising above 10° lasted until the 17th. Chorus frogs were heard at Claireville on the 12th. Thereafter, however, came a distinct trend toward cooler weather or at least seasonable for March. A messy storm with snow, ice pellets and freezing rain struck on the 23rd-24th. The cold frontal zone stayed nearby the rest of the month with occasional brief incursions of milder weather and thunderstorms.

March ended up being warmer than normal because of the period from the 7th-17th. It averaged 2.6° at Pearson Airport and 3.5° downtown. This is about 2° above normal. The winter overall was the second-warmest on record (at Pearson), with 2011-2012 still being the warmest by a large margin. The incredible warmth of December 2015 was still outweighed by the heat wave of March 2012 which boosted the average for that year, and by the somewhat cooler mid-winter period of 2015-2016. The overall impression of 2015-2016 was that, yes, we did have a winter this year, though it was short and interrupted, while in 2011-2012 we basically completely missed it.

March was wet, with 80.0 mm of total precipitation at Pearson Airport and 98.5 mm downtown. The significant snowfall on the 1st meant that monthly snow totals were close to normal, while some more snow and heavy freezing rain fell on the 23rd-24th.

Gavin Miller

## COTTONWOOD FLATS MONITOR PROGRAM UPDATE



A big thank-you to all of the TFN members who have already volunteered for the Cottonwood Flats Monitoring Project (CFMP) announced in our February newsletter. Excitement is building and it's wonderful to see such enthusiasm for this new initiative. Given the scope of the project, there remain many ways for TFN members to participate so, to learn more, please e-mail [volunteering@torontofieldnaturalists.org](mailto:volunteering@torontofieldnaturalists.org) with "Cottonwood" in the subject line.

While we will continue to provide the occasional update in the newsletter, space is limited, and much of our work will be completed during the spring and summer. In light of this, a Facebook page has been set up for the CFMP to allow people to follow project progress and discoveries: <http://facebook.com/cottonwoodflats>

We hope you'll join us there.

Jason Ramsay-Brown

### Cottonwood Flats Monitor Program Call for Volunteers

Role	Duties
Site Ambassadors	Talk with the public about the TFN and CFMP.
Photographers	Photograph plants, birds, and other animals, as well as project activities. Must have their own equipment.
Bird ID	Identify bird species during monitoring sessions.
Plant ID	Identify trees and other plant species during monitoring session and/or vegetation surveys.
Observers	Provide extra set of eyes or other assistance to team.

## 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](http://www.torontobirding.ca))

Aimed at the intermediate birder, but beginners also welcome. Free to the public.

- Sun Mar 5, 9 am to late afternoon. West Toronto lakeshore to Burlington – waterfowl, geese and swans. Leaders: Garth Riley and Kai Millyard. Meet at the parking lot at Humber Bay Park East (south of Lake Shore Blvd W at Parklawn Rd. We will carpool to drive between hotspots.

### High Park Walking Tours ([www.highpark.org](http://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](mailto:walkingtours@highpark.org)

- Mar 5. Discover the Park through Archival Photos. Leader: Terry Fahey
- Mar 19. My Favourite Trails. Leader: Councillor Sarah Doucette

### Pickering Naturalists 40th Anniversary Celebration ([www.pickeringnaturalists.org](http://www.pickeringnaturalists.org))

- Thurs Mar 2, 7:15 pm at Pickering Recreation Complex in the O'Brien Rooms, 1867 Valley Farm Road, Pickering. Everyone welcome.

### Rouge Park Weekly Guided Nature Walks ([www.rougepark.com/hike](http://www.rougepark.com/hike))

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

### Royal Canadian Institute for the Advancement of Science (RCI) (<http://rciscience.ca/lectures/winter-2017-rcitalks/>)

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

- Mar 5. What Every Citizen of Earth Should Know About the Atmosphere. Dr Hind al Abadleh, Wilfrid Laurier University and Let's Talk Science.

### Toronto Entomologists' Association ([www.ontarioinsects.org](http://www.ontarioinsects.org))

- Sat Mar 25, 1 - 3 pm. Student Symposium. Room 432, Ramsay Wright Bldg, U of T (25 Harbord Street). Graduate students, senior undergraduates and postdoctoral fellows will present talks and posters.

### The Market Gallery ([www.toronto.ca/marketgallery](http://www.toronto.ca/marketgallery))

Until Mar 18: Unearthing Toronto's Oldest Marketplace: The Archaeology of the North St Lawrence Market. A rare opportunity to look into the City's past as this site undergoes a major archaeological dig. South St Lawrence Market, 2nd floor, 95 Front St E. Closed Sun, Mon and holidays.

### ROM Wildlife Photographer of the Year 2016 ([www.rom.on.ca/en/wildlife2016](http://www.rom.on.ca/en/wildlife2016))

Until Mar 19. The exhibition showcases category finalists and winners of the competition through 100 breathtaking photographs.

### ROM Research Colloquium 2017 (<https://www.rom.on.ca/en/whats-on/rom-research-colloquium>)

Feb 28, 9am-5pm, plus evening lecture. Free but registration required. Ten-minute presentations by curatorial staff on a wide array of topics. Enter by school entrance on south side of ROM.

### Lost Rivers Walks ([www.lostrivers.ca](http://www.lostrivers.ca))

Walking tours limited to 20 participants. To ensure a spot on the tour, please e-mail in advance to [info@labspacestudio.com](mailto:info@labspacestudio.com)

### Ian Wheal Walks

- Sun Mar 19, 1.30 pm. Over the Sandbar – Boats, Stage Coaches (of Ashbridge's Bay) and Trains, 19th Century. Meet at Tim Horton's on the east side of Woodbine Ave at Lake Shore Blvd E (Woodbine Beach).
- Sun Mar 26, 1:30 pm. Where Eagles Soar. Meet at the entrance to Rouge Hill GO station. A 10-km walk along Scarborough Bluffs and area.

Immature bald eagle.  
Drawing by Geraldine Goodwin



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Long-tailed duck. Photo: Larry Hicks