

TORONTO FIELD NATURALIST

Number 539

April 2006



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TORONTO FIELD NATURALIST

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MEMBERSHIP FEES

\$50 FAMILY (2 adults – same address, children included)
\$40 SINGLE, SENIOR FAMILY
\$30 STUDENT, SENIOR SINGLE

No GST. Tax receipts issued for donations. Membership fees and address changes should be sent to the TFN office.

Please note: It has always been the policy of the Toronto Field Naturalists not to give out its membership list.

IT'S YOUR NEWSLETTER!

Send us your original writing (up to 500 words) of your thoughts and experiences of nature in and around Toronto. Do you have a favourite natural area in Toronto? Did a TFN outing introduce you to a new park? Tell us about it! Did you see any plants or animals that particularly interested you? Let us know! Tell us what, where and when, and any field guides or other sources consulted.

Also welcome are: reviews, poems, cartoons and sketches, articles on natural history and digital photos of TFN outings. Remember that photos will be reproduced in black and white photocopy.

Please include your name, address and telephone number so submissions can be acknowledged. Newspaper clippings should include source and date.

Unsigned letters or emails will not be read. Attachments to unsigned emails will not be opened.

Note the deadline for submissions of time-sensitive material, e.g., notices of meetings or events. Deadline for May issue: 3 April 2006. Send by mail or email.

NEWSLETTER COMMITTEE:
Diana Banville, Jenny Bull (editor), Eva Davis, Karin Fawthrop, Nancy Fredenburg, Elisabeth Gladstone, Siobhan Montague (associate editor), Marilynn Murphy, Toshi Oikawa, Wendy Rothwell.

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TFN PUBLICATIONS

TORONTO FIELD NATURALISTS CLUB
ITS HISTORY AND CONSTITUTION, 1965..... \$2.00

CHECKLIST OF PLANTS IN FOUR TORONTO PARKS;
WILKET CREEK, HIGH PARK, HUMBER VALLEY,
LAMBTON WOODS, 1972.....\$2.00

TORONTO THE GREEN, 1976
Metropolitan Toronto's important natural areas are described and recommendations given for their conservation and management; includes maps, bibliography and index\$10.00

TORONTO FIELD NATURALISTS RAVINE SURVEYS..... ea \$5.00
Survey No. 1 Chatsworth Ravine, 1973
Survey No. 2 Brookbanks Ravine, 1974
Survey No. 3 Chapman Valley Ravine, 1975
Survey No. 4 Wilmore Ravine, 1975
Survey No. 5 Park Drive Ravine, 1976
Survey No. 6 Burke Ravine, 1976
Survey No. 7 Taylor Creek Woodbine Bridge Ravines 1977
Survey No. 8 West Don Valley, 1978

INDEX OF TFN NEWSLETTERS (1938 to present)..... \$10.00

TORONTO REGION BIRD CHART, 1983.....\$ 5.00

A GRAPHIC GUIDE TO ONTARIO MOSSES, 1985.....\$5.00

GUIDE TO TORONTO FIELD NATURALISTS' NATURE RESERVES, 2001.....\$5.00

TORONTO ISLANDS: PLANT COMMUNITIES AND NOTEWORTHY SPECIES, 1987.....\$5.00

TODMORDEN MILLS, 1987.....\$5.00

VASCULAR PLANTS OF METROPOLITAN TORONTO, 1994.....\$10.00

TORONTO CHECKLISTS (birds, other vertebrates, butterflies, other invertebrates, mosses, other plants).....ea. 50¢

HUMBER FORKS AT THISTLETOWN, 2000.....\$5.00

Add \$2.00 *per item* for postage and handling; no GST. Order from TFN office, see address above.

TFN MEETING

Sunday, April 2, 2006 at 2:30 pm

Ontario Breeding Bird Atlas in the Hudson Bay Lowlands

Mark Peck

Royal Ontario Museum, Department of Natural History, Ornithology
Ontario Nest Record Scheme

VISITORS WELCOME!

SOCIAL HOUR

2:00 - 2:30 pm

Bring your own mug if you wish,
only paper cups provided.

Remember daylight savings time begins today!

For more information call the TFN office at (416) 593-2656

Room 001, Emmanuel College, University of Toronto,
75 Queen's Park Crescent East

Room 001 is one floor below street level. Entrance at south end of the building, down a few steps on an outside stairwell.

Wheelchair Entrance: Second door south on Queen's Park Crescent E. Door does not have automatic opener. Elevator is inside to the right.



NEXT MEETING:
Conservation of Northern Boreal Forest
Wildlife
Sunday, May 7, 2006.

Skimming by my head,
early on a spring morning,
amorous sparrows.

haiku by Aarne Juhola

TFN OUTINGS

- TFN events are conducted by unpaid volunteers.
- The club assumes no responsibility for injuries sustained by anyone participating in our activities.
- Children and visitors are welcome at all TFN events. Children must be accompanied by an adult.
- If you plan to bring children in a stroller, be aware that there may be steps or other unsuitable terrain.
- Please do not bring pets.
- To get to outings on time, check TTC routes and schedules by calling 416-393-4636.
- Check the weather by calling 416-661-0123 so you will know what to wear on outings which go rain or shine.
- Wear appropriate footwear for walking on trails which may be muddy, steep or uneven.

- Saturday
April 1
10:30 a.m. **CEDARVALE/NORDHEIMER RAVINES – Nature Arts**
Leader: Mary Taylor
Meet at the St. Clair West subway station exit on the north side of St. Clair Ave. W. Bring art supplies, camera and/or binoculars for doing artwork/nature study. We will meet to share our work after lunch.
- Sunday
April 2
2:00 p.m. **MONTHLY MEETING – See notice on page 3.**
2:30 p.m. Social Hour
Lecture – Ontario Breeding Bird Atlas in the Hudson Bay Lowlands
- Wednesday
April 5
1:30 p.m. **TORONTO LAKESHORE - Nature and some local history**
Leader: Ed Freeman
Meet at the south side of Queen’s Quay W. and Spadina Ave. We will be walking west to approximately Windermere Ave, and The Queensway. Bring binoculars.
- Wednesday
April 12
10:00 a.m. **SCARBOROUGH BLUFFS – Exploring their geological history**
Leader: John Westgate
Gather at Kingston Rd. and Brimley Rd. TTC stop and proceed south on Brimley Rd. to the Bluffer’s Park car park entrance. Leader will meet group there at 10:30 a.m. The walk will include Bluffer’s Park and go east along the bottom of the bluffs to the ‘high section’ vantage point. Bring lunch and binoculars.
- Saturday
April 15
2:00 p.m. **GERMAN MILLS – Nature Walk**
Leader: Theresa Moore
Meet at the northeast corner of Steeles Ave. E. and Leslie St. Walk will end about 4:30 p.m.
- Sunday
April 16
2:00 p.m. **THE OLD SHORE OF LAKE ONTARIO – Lost Rivers Walk**
Leader: Helen Mills
Meet at the southwest corner of King St. W. and Spadina Ave. Mostly city streets, but some moderately difficult stretches. This is a joint outing with North Toronto Green Community.
- Tuesday
April 18
10:30 a.m. **HUMBER BAY PARK – Birds**
Leader: Marg Catto
Meet at the park entrance (south side of Lake Shore Blvd. W. at Park Lawn Rd.) Bring binoculars. Morning only.

Continued

Wednesday **EAST DON – Nature Walk: Signs of Spring**
April 26 Leader: Catherine Ukas
1:00 p.m. Meet at the southwest corner of Broadview Ave. and Mortimer Ave. Afternoon only.

Saturday **TODMORDEN/DON VALLEY – Nature Walk**
April 29 Leader: Mary Taylor
1:30 p.m. Meet at the northwest corner of Broadview Ave. and Mortimer Ave. in front of the Dairy Queen.
Bring binoculars and camera. We may see reptiles and amphibians as well as early spring wildflowers and migrant birds.

DEDICATION OF TFN'S
HELEN AND AARNE JUHOLA NATURE RESERVE

Sunday, 28 May 2006

Rain or shine!

Bus leaves York Mills subway station
at 10:00 am sharp, returning by 5 pm.

Lunch provided by TFN.

This is a wonderful opportunity to spend a day at the Nature Reserves near Uxbridge, to get together with old friends and to meet new ones, and most importantly to pay tribute to the remarkable couple who have for so many years given so much to the TFN. Please join us on this special occasion.

Please contact the TFN office by May 10 if you plan to attend.

(416-593-2656; [REDACTED])

Lunch provided only for members who make a reservation.

Bus reservations must include a cheque (\$10.00 per person) made out to Toronto Field Naturalists and mailed to the office by May 10.

A map will be provided in the May issue of the newsletter for those who wish to drive.

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Although much has been accomplished, there is still much to do to ensure the sustainability of the TFN as we know it. The Strategic Planning Committee is completing its critical survey which the board will review this month. This will help us to determine how to proceed. The other thing we will need is your involvement and commitment. The strength of any organization is in its membership.

In response to both internal and external requests the board is participating actively in the process of reviewing certain environmental issues. We have written to the new Federal Minister of the Environment, the Honorable Rona Ambrose, concerning Parks Canada's proposed Discovery Centre at the base of the Leslie Street Spit. We are in support of the recommendation of the Friends of the Spit to find an alternative location for the Centre.

At TFN's March meeting the lecture was "An Introduction to Evergreen Commons at the Don Valley Brickworks". David Stonehouse gave an excellent presentation but it raised the spectre of a potentially

negative impact on the good work that has been done on recreating a natural environment on this site. David invited the audience to a public natural heritage stakeholders meeting at City Hall. The TFN will be attending.

Elsewhere in this newsletter your input has been solicited on other environmental matters. We look forward to hearing from you.

As I write this we are still in the icy grip of old man winter. There is plenty of snow on the ground and ice on the side of the roads. However there is a telltale sign of spring in the air... I am awakening to the sound of birdsong. The spring migration will soon be underway.

We can give the birds a better chance of survival by supporting the Lights Out Toronto campaign and if you are able, please consider donating time or money to help FLAP help the birds. Call 416-366-FLAP (3527).

Pinky Franklin

BOARD NEWS

The following letter relating to Ontario's Nuclear Power expansion (as outlined in the brochure Our Energy, Our Future) has been sent to Premier McGuinty. The board welcomes and invites your comments on this issue.

March 1, 2006

Dear Premier McGuinty,

I am writing on behalf of the Toronto Field Naturalists to express our concern over the government's proposals for public consultation on the building of new nuclear plants.

The time frame announced for this consultation is simply inadequate. The citizens of Ontario know that the establishment of new nuclear plants could have far-reaching financial, environmental and health impacts on future generations. We require substantially more time to study the proposals and develop responses. Speaking for our organization, we have a large membership and it will take time for us to consult them on this matter.

You have been quoted recently as saying, "in an ideal world, we could get to where we need to go through conservation and renewables like wind, but we don't live in that world, we live in this one". The truth is that in this real world, nuclear power has proven to be one of the most expensive and least reliable sources of energy available to us. Unfortunately, many current estimates of the costs of nuclear energy fail to include the historically verified costs of environmental and health damage, as well as the costs of accidents, clean up, waste

disposal and plant decommissioning. Nuclear plants are not only expensive, they're also financially risky because of their long lead times, huge cost overruns, and open-ended liabilities.

It is also important to note that in Ontario's "real world", very little effort has been made to develop alternative strategies such as those you mention: i.e., conservation and renewable sources.

The Toronto Field Naturalists urge you to re-consider your announced intention to proceed without adequate public consultation. We look forward to receiving your reply.

Sincerely,
Pinky Franklin, President

MEETING REPORT

EVERGREEN COMMONS AT THE BRICK WORKS:

TFN March lecture by David Stonehouse, Manager, Common Grounds, Evergreen.

Following its acquisition by TRCA and the City in 1989, the Brick Works has long been ignored in official circles though ironically is very well used on most weekends. The buildings have been upgraded (though many are deteriorating and vandalized) and a wetland installed on Mud Creek, but by and large the central focus of the site (the industrial legacy of brick making since the late 1880's and its geology) remains poorly explained to the public. Many fine public buildings in Toronto are made of Don Valley brick made of the Ordovician shale that was quarried from the Brick Works floor. Few visitors to the site are aware of the international geological significance of the famous North Slope that exposes sediment layers from past interglacial climates sandwiched between those of ice ages. The late Professor Coleman (1859-1939), a former Honorary President of TFN, was instrumental in their discovery, particularly that of the fossil remains of a now extinct giant beaver.

For many years in the 1980's, I had the pleasure of serving with Helen Juhola, who represented TFN, on Friends of the Valley, an organization dedicated along with other community groups to pressing all levels of government to preserve the natural heritage of the site. Left alone, the area has quietly turned itself into a natural regeneration park; the famous North Slope is now a grassy hill, its climatic history now obscured. The industrial past has left and nature has reclaimed the site but its scientific importance awaits interpretation. All this is now about to change.

In June 2005, the Ontario Ministry of Culture committed \$10 million to Evergreen Commons at the Brick Works.

This is a dramatic departure from the recent past, being an ambitious 'environmentally, socially and financially sustainable business venture,' according to David Stonehouse, the project manager, who spoke to TFN as part of its Sunday lecture series on March 5th. Evergreen is a national charity founded in 1991 with a mission to bring people and nature together for the benefit of both. It has a professional team of landscape architects, planners, teachers and social entrepreneurs. Its vision is to attract 250,000 visitors a year to a revamped geological and industrial interpretation centre, restaurants, demonstration gardens and nurseries, a farmers market and a green design facility. The majority of the site will remain a public park and Evergreen will develop only the current industrial pad now occupied by buildings. David outlined the scope of the \$50 million plan, currently being finalized by consultants, and painted a picture of vibrant dynamic outdoor space.

Ensuring the long-term economic viability of the venture and striking a balance between unfettered public access and nature will be key challenges, prompting many questions from TFN members. Certainly this is a major development in the long-term greening of the Don Valley, and Evergreen is to be congratulated on spearheading the transformation of the lower Don. For more details log on to www.evergreen.ca for details of guided walks and community events. TFN will certainly watch developments at the Brick Works with keen interest and thank David for a most interesting talk.

Nick Eyles

AT THE JIM BAILLIE RESERVE

Extracted from a letter to the TFN President from member Jim Allan.



I responded to the Club's request to remove the nails holding the old coloured plastic markers identifying each of the, now, seven trails, in the trees on the Jim Baillie Nature Reserve, starting work in September 2004 by first painting coloured blazes matching the plastic markers as best as possible. Then, I extracted the nails and took down the markers. I have now painted what must be over 400 blazes, and taken down close to 400 plastic markers. None of this would have been possible without the active logistic support and encouragement from [Board member] Jerry Spevak.



On my first trip I thought I had got nearly all the nails out. But on my most recent trip in October, I found maybe a dozen or so I had missed, and, thanks to beaver swamplings, I was unable to cover all the trails, so there may still be even more left.



I wanted to share exciting experiences I had on a canoe trip I took up the river on the afternoon of October 3 before starting work. The weather was very mild. Not knowing what to expect, I went wearing only my swim suit and rubber boots.

The river is very convoluted here, twisting and turning, in a flat, swampy valley, with tall grasses(?), rushes(?), reeds(?) and, I think, alders, on both banks. This means that at each turn, if one goes quietly and with the right wind (facing you), one can come unexpectedly upon wild life, either in the water or on the shore.



On this occasion, I first had to pull the canoe up over a primitive beaver-like dam right across the river, then I came across sightings of some 11 otters, 6 deer, and 5 Great Blue Herons, along with, likely, black ducks and Wood Ducks. Some of these may have been duplications of the same animal/bird re-locating before I got home three hours later.

Subsequently, on dry land in the woods two days later, I saw and heard huge flocks (likely containing hundreds) of starling sized birds (grackles?). Also, some 13 wild turkeys were seen walking through the woods as though they owned the place, which, in a way and up to a point, like the beavers and other residents up there, they do, by proxy, once removed from the Club's own title, do they not?

This is not to suggest the Reserve is teeming with such wild life sighting opportunities. It is not. I have had more sightings of wild life on Toronto Islands and Leslie St. Spit than on the Reserve, as my many trips up to the Reserve without seeing anything unusual will vouch.



Jim Allan preparing to set out to replace the blazes on the trails at the Jim Baillie Reserve.



2005 CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT RESULTS

Extracted from an article by Marcel Gahbauer in Toronto Ornithological Club Newsletter, February 2006.

What a nice surprise it was to have pleasant weather for the 2005 Toronto Christmas Bird Count (December 18, 2005). We set a new record high for species, with 91. However, the total number of individuals showed a slight further decline over last year's relative low. The 47,220 birds counted were the fewest since before the downtown European Starling roost was discovered in 1996.



Blue Jay by Mary Cumming

For a third consecutive year, we added a new species to our all-time CBC list, which now stands at 176. This time it was a Savannah Sparrow discovered at Humber Bay Park. Interestingly, in subsequent days Savannah Sparrows were also reported at several other southern Ontario Christmas Bird Counts, either for the first time, or in record numbers. Other highlights of the Toronto count included the 5 Eastern Bluebirds in Sunnybrook Park (fifth occurrence in the history of the count, and eclipsing the record of 4 in 1950), 2 Killdeer at Humber Bay Park, 1 Barred Owl on the Leslie Spit and 1 Field Sparrow at the Ontario Nature headquarters.

Record high counts were set for: Mute Swan (191), Lesser Scaup (246), Cooper's Hawk (13), Red-tailed Hawk (89), Merlin (3), Peregrine Falcon (10), Downy Woodpecker (226), Hermit Thrush (10), Northern Mockingbird (30), Northern Cardinal (398) and House Sparrow (2588). Black-capped Chickadees, at 1265, were just under the record of 1294 set in 2001. While initial comments were made about this indicating a rebound from the decline they seemed to experience from West Nile Virus in 2002, it seems more likely that the elevated numbers in Toronto (as in many other Ontario counts) are a consequence of the unusually strong movement of chickadees in fall 2005, with many individuals appearing to have settled in the region, at

least for the winter. Finally, this was the first time since 1953 that 7 species of owl were recorded during the count period.

At the opposite extreme, some species were much less numerous than usual. After their low numbers the past three years, everyone was looking to see whether Blue Jays and American Crows had recovered at all yet from their drastic declines in 2002 following the arrival of West Nile Virus in Toronto. The 41 Blue Jays recorded was the highest total since the crash, although still far below historical averages. Similarly, the 65 American Crows represented a considerable improvement over last year's meagre 26, but the population remains at less than 10% of the average in the preceding decade.

Other species with low numbers this year included Common Goldeneye (465), Long-tailed Duck (4432), Great Black-backed Gull (26), Cedar Waxwing (14), European Starling (9509, the fewest since 1995, and largely accounting for the lower overall total number of individuals) and House Finch (302).



Long-tailed Duck by Diana Banville

As always, the differences from year to year are notable. In 2004 we recorded 4 warbler species; this year for only the third time in a decade we had none. Whereas Double-crested Cormorant, Bald Eagle and Ruddy Duck all set record highs last year, we couldn't find these species at all on the 2005 count. These examples illustrate just how variable the results can be - which is why we put in the effort we do each year.

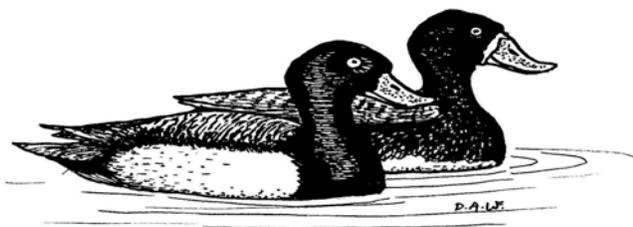
Note: For more information on Toronto Ornithological Club, visit their website at www.torontobirding.ca or go on one of their Jim Baillie Memorial Bird Walks, regularly listed on our Coming Events page.

LAKE ONTARIO MID-WINTER WATERFOWL INVENTORY

Extracted from an article by Bill Edmunds in Toronto Ornithological Club Newsletter, February 2006.

For the second year in a row, the weather during the Waterfowl Count (January 8, 2006) was excellent, which provided near perfect viewing conditions. This is the 60th "Duck Count" for the Toronto Ornithological Club and 16th year that the entire Canadian shoreline of Lake Ontario has been covered.

This year we recorded 378,132 waterfowl from 35 species, the second highest total ever. Record high numbers were reported for: Tundra Swan, Mute Swan, Northern Shoveler, Black Scoter, Surf



Greater Scaup by D. Andrew White

Scoter, Common Goldeneye, Red-breasted Merganser and Ruddy Duck. Higher than usual numbers were reported for Trumpeter Swan, Green-winged Teal, American Black Duck, Mallard,

Greater Scaup, Long-tailed Duck, Hooded Merganser and Common Merganser. Lower than usual numbers were reported for only Double-crested Cormorant and Northern Pintail. Missed species were loons, eiders and Cackling Goose. Also reported were 52 Bald Eagles, all from the Kingston area.

In the Toronto area (Whitby Harbour to Bronte Harbour), 53,871 waterfowl from 27 species were reported, the lowest total since 1999, but still above the average total for the last 16 years (50,556). Species with the highest counts were the usual Canada Goose, Greater Scaup, Long-tailed Duck, Mallard, Redhead, Bufflehead and Common Goldeneye (listed in order of abundance). High numbers were seen for Trumpeter Swan, Mute Swan, Northern Shoveler, both Scaup species and all three merganser species. Low numbers were recorded for loons (missed), grebes (missed), Northern Pintail (missed), American Wigeon, White-winged Scoter and Common Goldeneye. Rarities included 1 Double-crested Cormorant, 1 Snow Goose, 1 Wood Duck, 3 Green-winged Teal, 16 Northern Shoveler, 3 Canvasback, 5 Ring-necked Duck, 2 Harlequin Duck, 1 Surf Scoter and 7 American Coot.

In more ways than one, geology is the foundation of natural history. Geological formations not only form the physical base of terrestrial life and control the climate around it but also tell the temporal history of nature. Geology tells us how things came to be the way they are. Moving continents, rising and falling mountain barriers, vast volcanic eruptions and continental ice sheets all have played an essential role in creating the diversity of life [we know] today. Without a basic knowledge of geology, it is difficult to make sense of this diversity.

From *British Columbia: A Natural History* (revised and updated) by R. Cannings and S. Cannings, Greystone Books – Douglas McIntyre, Vancouver, Toronto, 1996, 2004

TWO BIG BLACK BIRDS GOING IN DIFFERENT DIRECTIONS: COMMON RAVEN AND TURKEY VULTURE

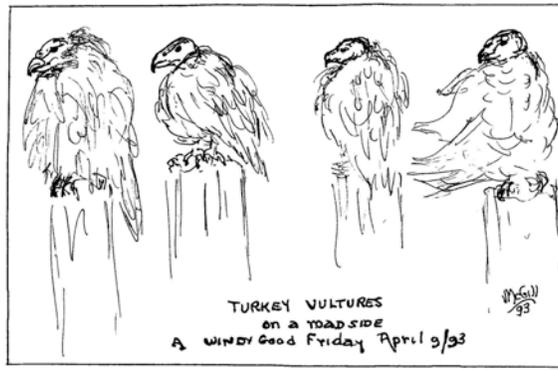
Extracted from an article by Mike Cadman & Peter Blancher in OFO News, February, 2006

Now that birders have had their fun collecting field data for the [Ontario Breeding Bird] atlas, the fun can begin for scientists and conservationists. One of the key things those groups want to look at is how species distributions have changed over the past 20 years.

It's become evident over the course of the atlas that the Common Raven has expanded considerably south and east of the Canadian Shield. The increase on the Hudson Bay Lowland is not statistically significant and the number of squares is unchanged in the Northern Shield area. The 6% increase in the Southern Shield is statistically significant, as is the 29% increase to the south of the shield.

The reasons for the expansion of the Common Raven's range are uncertain. Expansion into areas where forest cover has increased, such as in Grey and Bruce Counties, down the Niagara Escarpment and across the Oak Ridges Moraine, suggests one explanation. But the species is found well north of the treeline, so forest cover alone doesn't seem to be enough of an answer. Perhaps the species is still rebounding from the effect of the wolf poisoning and trapping campaigns of the early- to mid-twentieth century, and may be benefiting from less direct human persecution over time. The species is now nesting frequently on silos and other locations that might not have been safe at one time. Maybe by the time of the next atlas, they'll be common again in the Niagara River Gorge as reported by Alexander Wilson (1814).

The Turkey Vulture is another species that is a lot easier to find these days in much of Ontario. The assessment shows an increase between atlases in all four regions in which the species was reported, with the larger increases coming in the northern part of the species' range. In the Carolinian Region a 6% expansion was reported and elsewhere south of the shield, particularly in the southeast, 14%. But on the shield, where it was quite uncommon during the first atlas, the number of squares has expanded 18% on the Southern Shield and 21% on the Northern Shield. Analysis shows a statistically significant shift in mean range to the north and also to the east.



Turkey Vultures by J. McGill

The reasons for the expansion of the Turkey Vulture are also unclear. Perhaps it's still rebounding from the last ice age which made Ontario inhospitable for Turkey Vultures (and almost everything else). Or perhaps climate change is

resulting in better conditions for the species in Ontario or elsewhere in its breeding range. It may be that the continuing expansion of the road system is providing more road-kill, or the increase in the provincial deer population is helping this species (and maybe the Common Raven, too). The species is now nesting more frequently in abandoned buildings, small woodlots, and even large hedgerows.

So, in Ontario, while the Common Raven is expanding south, the Turkey Vulture is expanding north, and both species are moving into eastern Ontario.

TFN's April lecture is on the Ontario Breeding Bird Atlas in the Hudson Bay Lowland. See details page 3.

Note: OFO News is the Newsletter of the Ontario Field Ornithologists. For more information on OFO, visit their website at www.ofo.ca or write to Ontario Field Ornithologists, Box 455 Station R, Toronto On M4G 4E1.

FEEDING HOUSE SPARROWS

From an article by Natalie Helferty, President of Richmond Hill Naturalists, in their newsletter *The Bulletin*, January 2006.

House Sparrows should *not* be deliberately fed if one wants to keep warblers and other native species around. The House Sparrow is extremely aggressive and usurps the nests of our native birds, which is why we don't have bluebirds or swallows living in urban areas. Climate change also adds to the pressure that our native birds and other species are already feeling, so having invasive, non-native competitors around does not help the situation.

As well, bird feeders can actually contribute to the loss of our native birds if they are not designed and placed appropriately with the correct seed type for our native birds. House Sparrows will eat cracked corn whereas other species do not, so using cheap birdseed is a big problem. Black squirrel overabundance is also a major problem as they are nest predators, as are blue jays, grackles, crows and raccoons, so the bird-feeder should not be large enough to accommodate these species.

Keep seed from falling to the ground and squirrel-proof it.

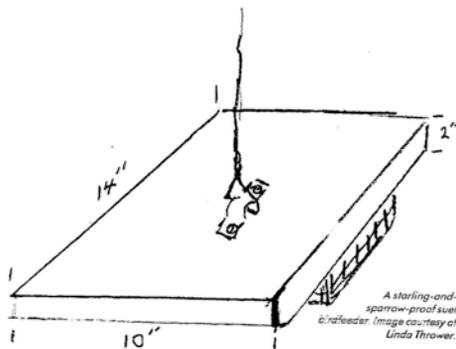
Using native vegetation is very effective at both providing winter food and keeping House Sparrow numbers down, or away from natural areas, as well as providing habitat and cover for both the birds and top predators

It has been suggested that the best way to improve native bird habitat within our towns and cities would be to remove our lawns and add in "3D habitat structure" (a combination of both short grasses and tall vegetation such as trees, bushes and shrubs), which would provide for more shade and transpiration (evaporation through the pores of leafy plants), a benefit of which would also be to help mitigate climate change effects (heat and dry air) and infiltration (moist soils and therefore less surface runoff, which can cause flooding).

THREE TYPES OF SUET BIRDFEEDERS

Extracted from an article by Linda Thrower in *The Wood Duck*, January 2006

Only one technique has proven itself against both House Sparrows and starlings, because neither of these birds is good at hanging upside down. This sparrow-and-starling-proof suet feeder is made by using a flat piece of wood with a suet cage secured on to the bottom. We use a small piece of metal strapping to hold the suet feeder solidly onto the wood; a space of one-to-two inches around the suet seems to work for Downy Woodpeckers and nuthatches. Some people use the fibre bags from the butcher to put the suet in, but we have heard some very disturbing stories about



woodpeckers getting their tongues caught in the fibre of these bags.

Another method of feeding is a string of peanuts in the shells for titmice, chickadees, Hairy and Downy Woodpeckers and nuthatches. To make the string, use an old ice pick or skewer to poke holes through the peanut shells. Using a piece of flexible wire (we use wire because it can be reused), thread the peanuts, making a loop at one end so the peanuts don't slide off. Once it is full, make another loop at the other end. Both loops can be used to attach the string to a branch. Walnuts in the shell can be added by drilling a small hole through the shell. We used a one-eighth inch drill bit. Before hanging the peanut loop, and this is where it gets tricky, take a small hammer, and tap a small hole in the side to give the birds a way in.

Watch out for the suet going bad and the peanuts growing a black mold. Both feeders need to be changed if you see this happening.

Ed. Note: If you try this suet feeder, please let us know if it is successful. *The Wood Duck* is the Journal of the Hamilton Naturalists' Club, P. O. Box 89052, Hamilton, Ontario L8S 4R5

BUDS A-BURSTING IN THE SPRING!

Have you ever seen oak flowers? Maple flowers? Ash flowers? Many tree species have inconspicuous flowers that go unnoticed by most people. But for those of us who live in the city without the opportunity to see trilliums and trout lilies, trees may be the best way to see native spring flowers! During spring, we can see daily changes in the density of colour covering the branches of our city trees. While much of that colour is from leaves unfurling and expanding, some is from flowers that we may be completely unaware of.

Some trees, such as silver maple and the shrubby pussy willow, flower well before their leaves come out. The swelling of the red flower buds on silver maples and the silvery catkins of pussy willows are a sure sign that winter is almost over. Both have separate clusters of male and female flowers which become easier to tell apart when the yellow pollen on the male flowers is ready to be released.

Many early flowering tree species have inconspicuous flowers, often without petals – simply stamens and pistils. They are mostly wind pollinated species with no need for colour to attract insects. Their male flowers are clustered in catkins or dangle on long stalks so the breeze can easily catch the pollen.

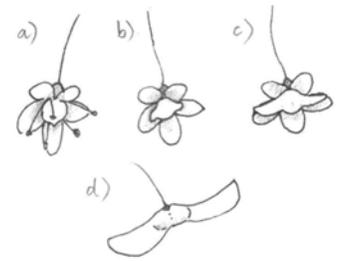


Manitoba maple: cluster of male flowers on long stalks.

Two trees that are particularly noticeable as they green up in the city are the non-native weeping willows and Norway maples. They both flower as the leaves are emerging, with the yellowish green haze that covers them formed by both flowers and young leaves.

While willows have tiny flowers clustered in catkins, Norway maples have loose clusters of more familiar-looking flowers with 5 sepals and 5 petals. If there's a Norway maple you pass every day that has low branches, stop and look closely and you

will see the tiny wings of the samaras (or maple keys) growing bigger and bigger every day as the flowers develop into fruit.



Norway maple: a) flower; b) and c) wings start budding and enlarging on the ovary; d) fruit (petals have fallen)



Trees that flower after their leaves are fully developed tend to have showier insect-pollinated flowers: buckeyes and horse-chestnut are examples. Early in the spring, the buds of horse chestnut are so big and shiny they can be seen gleaming in the sun as the bud scales crack open to allow their large leaves to escape and expand.

One of the last trees to leaf out in the city is Kentucky coffee-tree. Since it is a Carolinian species more at home further south, you may not see the leaves until June. Once other trees have leafed out, Kentucky coffeetrees often look dead as it appears as if there are no buds on their branches. This is because the side buds are very small and there is no terminal bud. The Latin name for Kentucky coffeetree is *Gymnocladus*, meaning “naked branch,” (*gymno-* naked and *-cladus* branch).



Jenny Bull

Kentucky coffee tree: buds are small, barely sticking out from twig.

KEEPING IN TOUCH

GYPSY MOTH SPRAYING

The February issue of the TFN Newsletter contained an article from The Toronto Star headed "Residents Push for Gypsy-Moth Spraying". TFN members are likely aware that in most jurisdictions where BTK spraying has been proposed, it has usually been vigorously opposed by naturalist groups, despite the fact that BTK is regarded as much less objectionable than sprays used prior to the 1990s.

Pest management is a complex subject with many pros and cons that can be debated. I would like to suggest, however, that a decision to spray gypsy moths in urban areas with BTK is more complicated than the article quoted in the Newsletter suggests.

It is understandable that residents want to protect their trees from damage, but they may not appreciate the significance of the danger to butterfly and moth populations. In fact, BTK kills up to 80% of the order Lepidoptera in the area sprayed. This has the potential to disrupt the whole food chain, affecting other insects and birds. J. Mark Scriber of the Department of Entomology, Michigan State University, states that,

See also extract from news article on spraying in Mississauga, p. 18.

"despite the assurances about short duration field toxicity of BTK, it turned out that the purported window of 'vulnerability' for hundreds of non-target Lepidoptera species was not simply 2-4 days post-spray as reported for the gypsy moth larvae, but instead could extend for 4-6 weeks or more, even under natural field conditions...."

In urban areas, it is preferable for homeowners to protect their trees by other means. Gypsy moths are in the egg stage for 8 or 9 months and it is relatively easy to remove eggs from the trunks of trees during the winter months. There are also ways of girdling the trees with adhesive paper in order to disrupt the late stage larvae's normal pattern of descending from the trees at night and returning to the trees in the morning. Of course, where spraying is intended to protect large, commercial forests, these techniques are not practicable.

It is also worth noting that one or two years of attacks by gypsy moth caterpillars rarely kill the trees unless they are already unhealthy for other reasons.

Barry Mitchell

GULLS

I have lived in Thorncliffe Park since the mid-sixties and have enjoyed observing the natural life around me. Currently my apartment location is in the vicinity of the public school and the East York Shopping Centre, which attracts large numbers of people from time to time. I have always observed large flocks of gulls, coming and going, at these locations. Since about mid-winter – that is, several weeks ago – I have noticed the absence of the gulls – almost totally. Perhaps, two or three birds will

fly over, but they do not settle down. There has been a change in some of the feeding arrangements in my area which I have thought may be the cause – but the school yard has not changed, to my knowledge, and this does not account for the complete reversal of behaviour in a period of some 40 years.

I would be interested in any comments.

Reta McWhinnie

TFN BOARD NOMINATIONS INVITED

The 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 Chairman of the Nominating Committee, c/o TFN, 1519 – 2 Carlton St., Toronto, M5B 1J3. The report of the Committee will be published in the May newsletter.

Keeping in Touch continued ...

REMOVING LOWER BRANCHES TO PROTECT FEEDING BIRDS

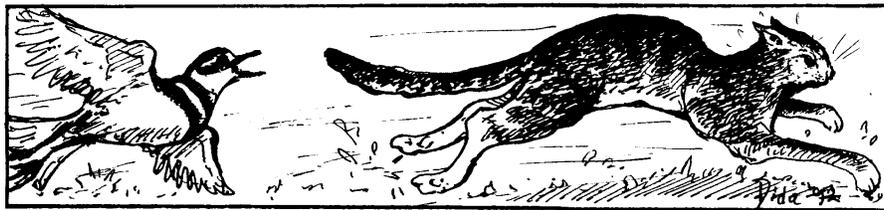
This is possibly a silly statement. I have never seen it suggested that cats can be deterred from a property by removing the lower 2 feet (about) from evergreen trees and shrubs. Maybe this is common knowledge, but I must have missed it.

I tried it for this winter and I found it works wonders. I only feed the birds during winter and this step along with

my "cat prevention fence" has practically eliminated the problem of cats attacking the birds coming to my feeder.

May I suggest that this method of "cat prevention" be published in your newsletter so that other concerned individuals and the birds that they feed may benefit.

Al Roffey



Drawing by Diana Banville

RE: STARLINGS

My own experience with starlings is varied. Home on the farm in 1940s and 50s Germany they were the harbingers of spring along with the swallows, all returning from Africa.

Here in Toronto they seem to stay all winter. The numbers seem to increase and decrease periodically as

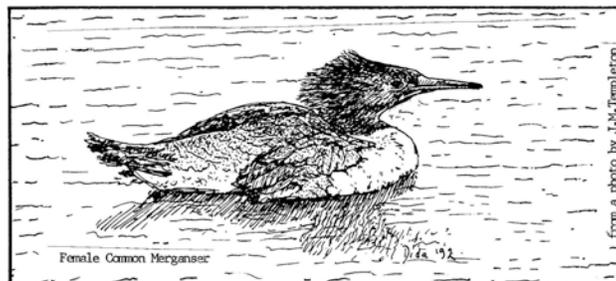
they descend onto the yards with great noise to pick whatever from the grass. Sometimes they whistle softly drawn out sounds from hydro lines. Sometimes on cold days we can hear their soft chirping in the furnace room, as they gather on the roof around the chimney.

Ruth Hotzwik

Ed. note: Ruth Hotzwik sent in an article from the Toronto Star on starlings. See extract on page 18.

MERGANSER

Many thanks for all the birding items in the March issue which I thoroughly enjoyed. However one thing caught my attention. In his article, George Bryant referred to an American Merganser which



Female Common Merganser by Diane Banville

I cannot find in any of my bird books. Is this something new I should learn about? Perhaps Mr. Bryant could inform.

Tessa Edward

Ed. note: The American Merganser is now called the Common Merganser.

Keeping in Touch continued ...

TRUMPETER SWAN

Further to Boris Mather's article in the last newsletter (TFN538-18), here is the photo of a trumpeter swan at Humber Bay Park East.

I took this photo on January 15, 2006.

Yoshi Nagata



CITY PARKS

Roger Powley is interested in improving our city parks. To this end he has drafted a thought-provoking parks assessment which provides the basis for a constructive discussion. Roger's intent is to propose changes in the way Toronto designs and maintains its parks.

Please call the office (416-593-2656) if you are interested in participating in a brainstorming session on this topic.

IN MEMORIAM

John Livingstone, who died in January, was one of Canada's foremost naturalists and environmental educators. As well as teaching for more than 20 years at York University, he wrote numerous books including *Canada: A Natural History*, *Arctic Oil*, and *The Fallacy of Wildlife Conservation*, a critique of western values and assumptions around conservation. He wrote many award-winning programs for the CBC's *The Nature of Things*. He was president of the Federation of Ontario Naturalists and the Canadian Audubon Society, and founding trustee of the Nature Conservancy of Canada.

Information from: Canadian Network for Environmental Education and Communication
<http://www.eecom.org/english/winners2004.html>

REVISED REFERENCE BOOK

Aquatic and Wetland Plants of Northeastern North America

2 volumes, by Garrett E. Crow and C. Barre Hellquist. University of Wisconsin Press. March 2006.

A revised and enlarged edition of Norman C. Fassett's *A Manual of Aquatic Plants*.

A comprehensive manual and illustrated guide to native and naturalized vascular plants growing in aquatic and naturalized wetland habitats in northeastern North America from Newfoundland to Minnesota, Virginia and Missouri. Paperback edition.

IN THE NEWS

FOREIGN BIRD HAS MADE ITSELF AT HOME

Extracted from an article by Jerry Langton in the Toronto Star, February 18, 2006.

On a cold March morning in 1890, Eugene Scheiffelin opened his cages and released 100 starlings into Manhattan's Central Park. He had decided to bring all of the birds mentioned in William Shakespeare's plays and poems to his country. Currently starlings range from Alaska to Florida, from Newfoundland to Baja Mexico. Most scientists agree that there are at least 200 million of them - as many as 10 million have been seen in a single flock - and the population is growing.

Like other successful invasive species, starlings have grown to remarkable numbers as forests have been cleared and human population densities have increased. In their ancestral home in northern Europe, hundreds of generations of starlings adapted to live in proximity to

humans. Compared to native [North American] bird species, starlings are more aggressive about acquiring and defending nesting sites, have bigger broods, have a higher tolerance to parasites and pollution, tend to flock in large numbers and have little or no fear of human disturbance. When starlings don't arrive first at nest sites, they will attack other birds' eggs or nestlings, and have even been witnessed luring young birds out of nests with worms, encouraging the fledglings to fall to their deaths.

Starlings are one of the primary threats to Ontario's lucrative grape and berry and cherry crops. But some farmers consider starlings beneficial as "they prey on the leatherjacket larvae and fireworms that eat the grass." When breeding and raising their young, the starlings

gorge on the harmful bugs, allowing the grass to grow and the cattle to graze. Starlings also represent a huge food source for native birds of prey like Merlins and hawks.

Although estimates of the total amount of destruction caused by starlings have recently been reduced by prominent biologists, the fact remains that starlings have caused the population of many birds to decline sharply. Hardest hit has been the once-common Eastern Bluebird, which nests in similar cavities but has not adapted a strategy to defend its eggs or young and has seen its numbers fall to crisis levels. Ironically, starlings are actually decreasing in numbers in much of their original range, especially in the United Kingdom.

MISSISSAUGA TO SPRAY GYPSY MOTHS

Extracted from an article by Mike Funston in the Toronto Star, 3 Mar. 2006

This week council's general committee approved an aerial spraying program to eliminate an infestation of gypsy moths that threatens to defoliate thousands of trees this summer. A helicopter will spray areas totaling about 500 hectares between April 15 and May 15 using the pesticide BTK. It will be done in the morning, no later than 7:30.

BTK is a bacterial agent that attacks

the digestive tract of moth and butterfly caterpillars and kills them. It is sprayed after the insects hatch in the spring. It can be applied at ground level, but that's more expensive and less effective, because many of the egg masses are near the treetops.

City forestry officials have been monitoring the gypsy moth outbreak since 2003 and have termed the infestation "the most widespread

and damaging insect outbreak in the city's history." Trees can be damaged with as few as 13 egg masses of gypsy moths, but some trees have been observed with more than 1,000 egg masses.

Red oak and white oak make up 50 per cent of the trees being attacked, with maple, birch, white pine and white spruce also popular with caterpillars. Spraying will cost \$200,000 to \$300,000.

Worry much?

Once he was annoyed that horse-riders had allowed their animals to gallop through a certain puddle, scattering the water with no heed for the pond-skaters there. No thought for the insects at all.

From *Findings* by Kathleen Jamie, Sort of Books, 2005

THE GROUNDS OF TORONTO'S BRICKWORKS ARE A MARVEL OF NATURE, BUT ...

Extracted from Peter Worthington's The Final Say in the Sunday Sun, 12 February 2006

...It's hard to exaggerate how precious today's Brickworks is, especially in the spring and summer when, each year, red-winged blackbirds increasingly take charge, and an assortment of herons, ducks, turtles, muskrats and other birds and

wildlife establish occupancy. All this is about to change. A local environmental group, Evergreen, has grandiose plans for the Brickworks, a \$50 million project that some of us who treasure the Brickworks as it now is, fear will change it forever...

Attracting more people attracts more money, but a projected 250,000 visitors will require raised walkways, or more fencing on paths, more controls to protect wildlife...

ECO EDEN OR TEEMING TOURIST TRAP?

Extracted from an article by Paul Terefenko in NOW, 2 March 2006

...After years of failed attempts by the city to find a suitable steward, the eco-friendly charitable organization Evergreen has stepped up... to turn [the Brickworks] into a show-piece for sustainability... "It's going to attract hundreds of thousands of people who under normal circumstances would have no reason to visit," says Councillor Jane Pitfield. That, however, may be the biggest problem. There's currently no bus service in the area and there are no more than maybe 350 parking

spaces... Residents attending public consultations have expressed concern about an increase in pedestrian traffic at the Brickworks harming trails and wetlands. "It's not a spawning ground for fish; it's not a nesting habitat for numbers of songbirds. It's a unique little oasis, but it's far from being an ecologically sensitive site," says Evergreen founder Geoff Cape. Sensitive or not, the space is still very important, and any change should be closely watched.

According to geologist [and TFN member] Ed Freeman, the Quarry Garden behind the Brickworks is a geological remnant of the ice ages unique to North America and a window to a time when our climate was more like Pennsylvania's and 200-kg monster beavers roamed the land." It's difficult to pin down what elements will become reality but there are no plans to pave over anything but the existing industrial footprint...

Evergreen's website: <http://www.evergreen.ca/en/brickworks/index.html>

The Toronto Humane Society has posted letters from Evergreen and the TRCA which give some background on the project at http://www.torontohumanesociety.com/mainframe_opinionarticles.htm

RETURN OF THE NATIVE

Extracted from an article by Owen Bowcott in Guardian Weekly, February 3-9, 2006.

In the United States it is known as "re-wilding" - the transformation of cultivated land into nature reserves and the reintroduction of vanished native species. Now British conservationists are taking notice, and moves to purchase bigger swaths of the landscape are gathering pace. The enthusiasm for conservancy schemes is being financed by mass-membership organisations and grants from the lottery and other funding bodies. Meanwhile the decline in agricultural subsidies for food

production and pressure to lower international trade barriers have accelerated the abandonment of marginal farmland.

This is the best opportunity since the iron age - when large-scale tree-felling began for smelting - to transform the landscape. There are so many benefits: tourism income, flood mitigation in valleys, carbon sequestration, water purification. Marginal land will become uneconomic. It's one of the rare

situations where conservation and economics are working in the same direction. In the U.S. "re-wilding" means returning land to its state before settlement by Europeans, but in Britain the landscape has been formed by thousands of years of human occupation. Managed grazing prevents most sites reverting to wild forest. Rare birds have been reintroduced and plans to reintroduce bears, lynx, wild boar and wolves are under consideration on several Scottish estates.

IN THE NEWS continued.

WIDEN NATURE BUFFER, BIOLOGIST TELLS OMB

Extracted from an article by Gail Swainson, Toronto Star, February 24, 2006

Expanding the customary buffer zone around natural areas would better safeguard wildlife, an Ontario Municipal Board hearing has been told. "Right now, the province does 30 metres, but you also have to look beyond that to see what is needed," biologist Steve Varga testified yesterday. Varga said he prefers a 150-metre cushion between wetlands and other natural heritage areas and surrounding subdivisions.

Varga, an inventory biologist with the Ministry of Natural Resources, is appearing at an OMB hearing into

a contentious subdivision proposed for 600 hectares of countryside in Richmond Hill. It marks the first urban expansion application before the OMB in Greater Toronto since the province passed its landmark greenbelt legislation a year ago.

Varga told the two-member OMB panel he was offering his professional views, not those of the province. He testified earlier that development on 160 hectares of the site was prohibited under greenbelt and Oak Ridges Moraine plans. Despite this, a further 40 hectares

should be included in the development ban. The additional protected land would further buffer sensitive wetlands and help knit together wildlife corridors.

Varga agreed that steps were taken by the province to limit development on the site. He believed the province stopped short of protecting all areas that warranted full preservation. He had pushed for more protections when the greenbelt and moraine plans – which he helped draft – were implemented.

GREENBELT PASSES FIRST REPORT CARD BUT MORE WORK FOR ONTARIO GOVERNMENT TO DO, NEW REPORT SAYS

Media Release from the Ontario Greenbelt Alliance, February 28, 2006

The first year of Ontario's 1.8 million acre Golden Horseshoe Greenbelt has been a success, according to a new report released today by the Ontario Greenbelt Alliance, though many areas still need improvement. While the report card gives the Ontario government an overall grade of "B", ongoing plans to expand and build new highways, critical natural areas still in need of protection, and uncertainty around municipal compliance with the Greenbelt Plan continue to be of concern.

The report, *Greenbelt Report Card: Grading implementation and progress in Year 1*, grades the provincial government in five key areas: protecting the Top 10 Greenbelt Hotspots ("B-"); dealing with challenges from municipalities ("Incomplete"); making the Greenbelt 'greener' ("B+"); expanding and building highways ("D"); and ensuring adequate resources ("A").

"The provincial government and Halton Region have been outstanding in protecting invaluable woodlands and other natural areas in North Oakville," said Rob Burton, President, Clear the Air Coalition Inc. in Oakville. "Now if the province would only intervene in the Ontario Municipal Board case, we could make their grade an A+."

Of the Top 10 Greenbelt Hotspots, first identified by the Ontario Greenbelt Alliance in April 2004, six receive a passing grade, two get a failing one and two are graded "Incomplete". Boyd Park, in Vaughan, gets the only "A+" thanks to a recent Ontario government decision stopping a highway that would have cut through the park. The proposed North Leslie development, in Richmond Hill, gets an "F" as the government has protected only half of the area deemed environmentally significant. An "Incomplete" grade

goes to Simcoe County because it's too early to judge recent steps taken by the Ontario government to protect the area from poorly planned development.

"The day the Ontario government stopped the Pine Valley Drive highway extension was a great day for Boyd Park and an even better day for the Greenbelt," said Deborah Schulte, Co-Chair, Friends of Boyd Park. "This is just what was needed to give Ontarians something to celebrate on the Greenbelt's first anniversary."

The *Greenbelt Report Card* gives the lowest grade ("D") for ongoing proposals to expand or build highways. "A large, bold conservation initiative such as the Golden Horseshoe Greenbelt is bound to suffer a few bumps on the road, especially in its first year," said Wendy Francis, Ontario Nature's

Director of Conservation and Science. “However, overall, the early results are positive. The Greenbelt is not only starting to have an impact on the ground, but also is serving as a great learning experience for green space-first land use planning across Ontario.”

Greenbelt Report Card: Grading implementation and progress in Year 1 is available to download for free on the Ontario Greenbelt Alliance web site: www.greenbelt.ca. The Ontario Greenbelt Alliance is a diverse multi-stakeholder coalition of over 75 organizations who share a common vision for protecting and expanding the Golden Horseshoe Greenbelt.

BOTTLED WATER? PFUI

Extracted from the Globe & Mail, February 16, 2006

In 2004, the world consumed 154 billion litres of bottled water, an increase of 57 per cent in just half a decade, according to the Washington-based Earth Policy Institute. “It costs 10,000 times more,” adds The Independent on Sunday, “to create the bottled version than it does to produce tap water, say scientists. Huge resources are needed to draw it from the ground, add largely irrelevant minerals, and package and distribute it – sometimes halfway around the world. The plastic bottles it comes in take 1,000 years to biodegrade, and in industrialized countries, bottled water is no more pure and healthy than what comes out of the tap.”

REALITY TAKES WING OVER BIRD FLU

Extracted from BBC News *Viewpoint* by Dr Leon Bennun, Director of Science, Policy & Information, BirdLife International.
© BBC 2006/02/17 Full report at <http://news.bbc.co.uk/go/pr/fr/-/2/hi/science/nature/4721598.stm>

Vested interests mean wild birds are being blamed for the spread of avian flu whereas responsibility really lies with modern farming. recombination and selection through which highly lethal forms of influenza virus can evolve. sensationalized. In some countries there has been a backlash against bird conservation, leading to calls for the culling of whole populations, draining of wetlands and destruction of nesting sites. In fact, H5N1 outbreaks in wild birds have so far mostly burned themselves out without culls or other human interventions.

If wild birds had been spreading the disease across continents there would have been outbreaks following migration routes; but this hasn't happened. Certain countries on flight paths of birds from Asia remain flu-free, whilst their neighbours suffer repeated infections. Countries which imposed strict controls on the import and movement of domestic poultry after initial outbreaks have suffered no further infections. Countries which have not yet developed a large-scale intensive poultry industry have also been largely spared. Such a distorted picture also means that the right questions are not being asked, and the most effective protection measures may not be undertaken. BirdLife is calling for an independent inquiry into the spread of H5N1 which gives due weight to the role of the global poultry industry, and maps both official and unofficial poultry trade routes against the pattern of outbreaks. It may also be time to take a long, hard look at the way the world feeds itself.

In intensively farmed poultry, the high density of birds and constant exposure to faeces, saliva and other secretions provide ideal conditions for the replication, mutation, The timing and pattern of outbreaks has largely been inconsistent with wild bird movements; but they have often followed major trade routes. The view that poultry movements have played a major role in the spread of the disease is supported by an analysis of viral strains recently published in the US journal *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*. Some of the agencies attempting to monitor and control avian flu, such as the FAO, have been reluctant to draw attention to the role of intensive agriculture, because of the impact on national economies and on access to cheap sources of protein. The role of migratory wild birds in the transmission of the disease has been exaggerated and

WEATHER (THIS TIME LAST YEAR)

APRIL 2005

April was characterized by three very distinct weather regimes that made the month notable both for its bright, dry conditions and for heavy rains and snows. A major spring / late winter storm hit on the 2nd - 3rd, with heavy rain and snow. In Toronto itself, virtually no snow accumulated, but locations as close as the Oak Ridges Moraine got 30 cm or more.

But from the 4th - 19th, there were almost continuous sunshine and normal or occasionally well above-normal temperatures. This resulted in 212.1 hours of sunshine recorded at Pearson Airport, well above the normal of 184 and the highest since 1999 (which had 218.7 hours). A cold front on the 19th - 20th ushered in an unsettled, troughy final third of the month with another heavy

rainfall on the 23rd followed by frequent showers and slightly below-normal temperatures.

Overall, the month was sunny (as stated above), rather wet due to the two storm systems in the early and latter parts of the month, and slightly warmer than normal. The monthly mean of 8.6° downtown and 7.7° at Pearson Airport was about a degree above the long-term average. Snowfall, although it did not accumulate significantly, was the highest since 1996 at 19.4 cm downtown and 16.2 cm at Pearson. (The dense, icy accumulation in April 2003, however, lasted a week.) Total precipitation was 97.4 mm downtown and 97.6 mm at Pearson Airport, 25 - 30 mm above normal but exceeded as recently as 2002.

Gavin Miller



Nature themed pottery by TFN member Elizabeth Block. See XXXXXXXXXX

COMING EVENTS

The Doug Tarry Young Ornithologists' Workshop: Discovering the World of Birds at Long Point, Lake Erie
 Space is limited to six participants 13-17 years old. Applications due 30 April 2006. Application form at www.bsc-eoc.org/lpbo/yow.html. Mail to Landbird Programs Coordinator, Long Point Bird Observatory, Box 160, Port Rowan, Ontario N0E 1M0. Fax: 519-586-3532, E-mail: lpbo@bsc-eoc.org.

- Friday 28 July to Sunday 6 August 2006

FLAP (Fatal Light Awareness Program)

Spring Bird Migration

- April 2, 1 – 3 pm—Toronto Wildlife Centre Tour. Carpooling available. Visit www.torontowildlifecentre.com. RSVP Susan at 416-366-3527 or e-mail flap@flap.org.

Bird Rescue Training Workshops:

- April 8, 12 noon – 1:30 pm—General Orientation. 2 – 4 pm Assessment Workshop. Royal Bank Plaza, Upper Concourse Level (Bay & Front; by Union subway station), RSVP.
- April 22, 9 – 10:30 am—Bird Identification Workshop at High Park. For info, contact Robert Emerson: robertemerson@care2.com
- April 22, 12 noon – 1:30 pm—General Orientation. Royal Bank Plaza, Upper Concourse Level (Bay & Front; by Union subway station), RSVP.

High Park Walking Tours

Walks begin at 1:30 pm just south of the Grenadier Restaurant. Donations of \$2.00 accepted.

For information phone 416-392-1748 or 416-392-6916 or visit www.highpark.org

- Sunday, April 2—Stormwater Management in High Park and Area.
- Sunday, April 23—Restoration Efforts in High Park.

Lost Rivers Walk

- Sunday, April 16, 2:00 pm—The Old Shore of Lake Ontario. Meet at the SW corner of King St. and Spadina Ave. Mostly city streets but some moderately difficult stretches. Leader Helen Mills.

North Toronto Green Community

- April 18, 5:30 – 6:30 pm—Annual General Meeting; 7:00 – 9:00 pm—Spending Green: Making your Dollars Count with Toby Heaps and Karen Kun. 40 Orchard View Blvd, Room 224 (Eglinton subway station; 1 block north of Eglinton Ave., just west of Yonge St.). RSVP 416-781-7663. For more information, visit www.ntgc.ca.

Toronto Entomologists Association

For further information, visit www.ontarioinsects.org

- April 22, 1 pm—Purple Loosestrife: a Biological Control Success Story, Jim Corrigan. Room 113, Northrop Frye Hall.

Royal Canadian Geographical Society

- April 25 and 26 at 7:30 pm—Father Goose: The Wild Life of Bill Lishman. Ontario Science Centre. \$15 non-members. For more information, visit www.rcgs.org. Tel. 416-696-1000.

Textile Museum of Canada

55 Centre Avenue. Tel. 416-599-5321, info@textilemuseum.ca. www.textilemuseum.ca

- To May 14, 2006—A Terrible Beauty. Installations by Jennifer Angus composed of thousands of insects pinned to the gallery wall.

LEAF (Local Enhancement and Appreciation of Forests)

- April 5, 7:00 – 9:00 pm—Learn how trees function, what they need and how you can help them thrive, with Todd Irvine, Certified Arborist. Scarborough Civic Centre, Committee Room 2, 150 Borough Dr.
- April 22—Earth Day and Tree Planting Festival, Downsview Park. For information visit www.earthday.ca or phone 416-952-2227.

Toronto Field Naturalists

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Publications Mail

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A spring outing in the Don Valley in search of the birds on their spring migration. Stuart Thompson, nephew of Ernest Thompson Seton, was the third president of the Toronto Field Naturalists' Club. He was an outstanding conductor of nature hikes. One of his greatest talents was the ability to imitate most of the bird songs and calls. April 29, 1934.