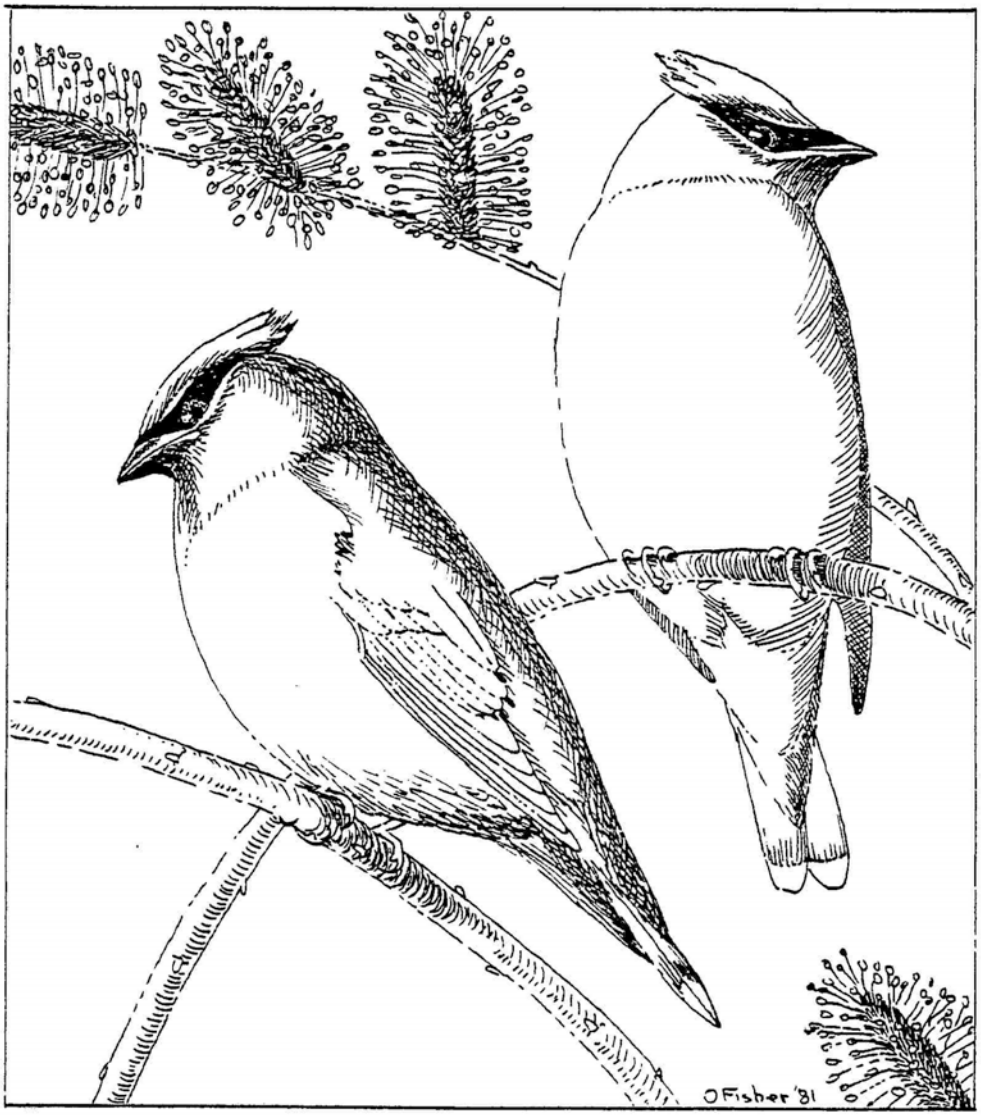
TORONTO FIELD NATURALIST

Number 547 April 2007



Cedar Waxwings on Willow by Owen Fisher

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TORONTO FIELD NATURALIST

Published by the Toronto Field Naturalists, a charitable, non-profit organization, the aims of which are to stimulate public interest in natural history and to encourage the preservation of our natural heritage. Issued monthly September to December and February to May.

ISSN 0820-636X

NEWSLETTER COMMITTEE

Jenny Bull, Eva Davis, Karin Fawthrop, Nancy Fredenburg, Elisabeth Gladstone, Mary Lieberman, Joanne Lynes, Marilynn Murphy, Toshi Oikawa, Wendy Rothwell, Jan Sugerman.

Printing and Mailing: Perkins Mailing Services.
Web Master: Margaret McRae

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, natural history items in the news, and digital photos of TFN outings. Remember that photos will be reproduced in black and white photocopy. Please include your name, address and phone 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: April 5, 2007. Send by mail or email.

Toronto Field Naturalists
2 Carlton St., Suite 1519,
Toronto M5B 1J3

Tel: 416-593-2656
Web: www.torontofieldnaturalists.org
Email: torontofieldn@rogers.com
or tfnnewsletter@rogers.com

TFN PUBLICATIONS

TORONTO F ELD NATURAL STS CLUB TS H STORY AND CONST TUT ON 1965	$2 00
CHECKL ST OF PLANTS N FOUR TORONTO PARKS W LKET CREEK H GH 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 F ELD NATURAL STS RAV NE 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 -- Wigmore 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	
NDEX OF TFN NEWSLETTERS (1938 to 1978)	$10 00
NDEX OF S NGLE YEARS FROM 1979	ea $1 00
TORONTO REG ON B RD CHART 1983	$5 00
A GRAPH C GU DE TO ONTAR O MOSSES 1985	$5 00
GU DE TO TORONTO F ELD NATURAL STS' NATURE RESERVES 2001	$5 00
TORONTO SLANDS PLANT COMMUN T ES AND NOTEWORTHY SPEC ES 1987	$5 00
TODMORDEN M LLS 1987	$5 00
VASCULAR PLANTS OF METROPOL TAN TORONTO 1994	$10 00
TORONTO CHECKL STS (birds other vertebrates butterflies other invertebrates mosses other plants)	ea 50¢
HUMBER FORKS AT TH STLETOWN 2000	$5 00

Add $2.00 *per item* for postage and hand ng; no GST.
Order from TFN off ce, see address above.

MEMBERSHIP FEES

$50 FAMILY (2 adults – same address, children included)
$40 SINGLE, SENIOR FAMILY (2 adults, 65+)
$30 STUDENT, SENIOR SINGLE (65+)

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.

TFN MEETING

Sunday, April 1, 2007 at 2:30 pm

A Blast from the Past: Environmental Changes Recorded by High Arctic Lake Sediments and Organisms

Marianne Douglas, University of Edmonton

Professor Douglas is one of Canada's leading climatologists with nearly 20 years' experience of working at both poles and throughout the world. She reconstructs ancient climates using the fossil biologic record preserved in sediments below lake floors and is in a unique position to answer questions on why climate is changing and where it is going.

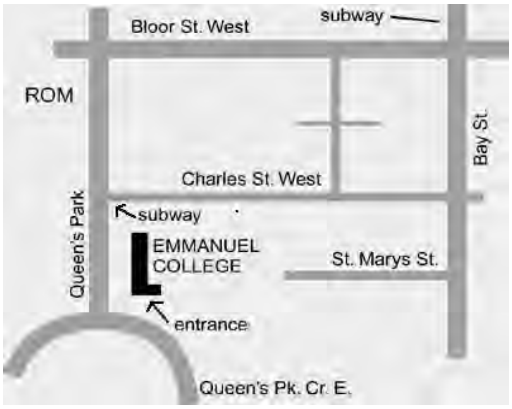
VISITORS WELCOME!

SOCIAL
2:00 - 2:30 pm
Bring your own mug for coffee or juice if you wish,
only paper cups provided.

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: May 6, 2007
Canada Rocks, How Canada was Made:
A 4-Billion Year Unfinished Story
Speak: Nick Eyles, University of Toronto

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.
- 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.

Tuesday,
April 3
10:00 a.m.

PROSPECT CEMETERY – Trees
Leader: Jack Radecki
Meet inside the St. Clair Ave. W. gates, near Lansdowne Ave. Lunch optional. Duration: 2 1/2 hours.

Saturday,
April 7
10:30 a.m.

NORTH YORK CENTRE – Nature Arts
Leader: Joe Bernaske
Meet at the lower level food court of the North York Centre (North York Centre subway stop). This will be an indoor art and photography sharing session in preparation for our upcoming outdoor events. Please bring books, photos and art samples of nature themes for discussion. Also bring art supplies so we can practice drawing (or photography). We will go for a walk after lunch.

Wednesday,
April 11
10:30 a.m.

WEST DON – Nature Walk
Leader: Valerie Allen
Meet at the entrance to the park, west side of Leslie St. just north of Eglinton Ave. E. We will walk into the park, watching for early things. Bring lunch and binoculars.

Saturday,
April 14
10:30 a.m.

TAYLOR CREEK – Early wildflowers
Leader: Melanie Milanich
Meet at the Victoria Park subway exit on Victoria Park Ave. Duration: 3 hours. Bring lunch. Walk will end at Thorncliffe Park where the TTC bus stops en route to Pape station.

Tuesday,
April 17
10:30 a.m.

ROWNTREE MILLS – Birds
Leader: Carol Sellers
Meet at the northwest corner of Finch Ave. W. and Islington Ave. Bring lunch and binoculars.

Saturday,
April 21
2:00 .

GERMAN MILLS – Nature Walk
Leader: Theresa Moore
Meet at the northeast corner of Steeles Ave. E. and Leslie St.

Sunday,
April 22
2:00 p.m.

EARTH DAY WALK – Lost River Walks
Leader: Ed Freeman
Meet at the Summerhill subway station. Walk will end at Summerhill Ave. in north Rosedale. A walk to observe some Earth features with a stress on fossils, earth materials and landforms. Walk difficulty: moderate (uphill from Summerhill Ave. to St. Clair Ave. E.) Duration: about 2 hours. This is a joint outing with Toronto Green Community.

Thursday, April 26 10:30 a.m.	**ROUGE PARK – Early spring wildflowers** Leader: Peter Money Meet at Pearse House, Rouge Hill Conservation Centre, 1749 Meadowvale Rd. There may possibly be a hill en route. Bring lunch.
Sunday, April 29 1:00 p.m.	**MIMICO CREEK – Fossil Walk** Leader: David Rudkin, Assistant Curator – Palaeobiology, Department of Natural History, ROM Meet at the Royal York subway station exit. The group will walk south to the park to view the fossil site. Afternoon only.
Sunday, April 29 2:00 p.m.	**WILKET CREEK – Lost River Walks** Leader: Peter Heinz Starts and ends at the southwest corner of Lawrence Ave.E. and Leslie St. A chance to see spring in and above the valley. Moderate difficulty. This is a joint outing with Toronto Green Community.

OUTINGS COMMITTEE REPORT

Outings from 2006 and Outings for 2007

Thanks to Alexander Cappell who prepares a statistical report for us on Outings each year.

- Over 2000 people attended outings in 2006.
- Our average outing involved 19.5 people, up slightly from recent years.
- The 114 scheduled walks were guided by 56 outing leaders.
- The largest 2006 outing had 80 people. This was a joint outing with Toronto Green Community and was the second largest outing in this century.

Thanks also to the telephone contacts Ruth Munson, Peter Hare, Boris Mather, Joe Bernaske, Margaret McRae and Pat Jones. Thanks to Nancy Fredenburg who mails out the report forms, brochures and checklists to the many members who volunteer their time and expertise.

For 2007 our leaders are wandering the near and far reaches of Toronto to find interesting new areas to explore – and of course we all know that even a regular walk on a familiar path can turn into an outdoor adventure if we listen, look and get lucky!

Gail Gregory
Outings Coordinator

Leaders – Special Requests!

The TFN receives a steady stream of requests from other organizations for leaders to help with their own outings, primarily on weekends. Some environmental groups also want to partner with us on outings in order to provide our special expertise to their members. These outings would tend to attract larger groups. Other requests are to work with children's groups (aged 4 years and up). If you are willing to volunteer for either (1) larger group events, or (2) children's events – please contact me or leave your name with the TFN office. This is a great time to call, as we are getting requests for spring and summer now.

Gail Gregory, Outings Coordinator

PRESIDENT 'S REPORT

On behalf of all members of the TFN, I extend our heart-felt condolences to Phoebe Cleverley on the sudden loss of her fiancé Bob Edmunds, who suffered a fatal heart attack at our monthly meeting on Sunday, March 4. We are very appreciative of the expert help of the nurse who administered CPR until the paramedics arrived and for the care and concern extended to Phoebe and Bob by others in the audience. Our thoughts and prayers are with Phoebe, and Bob's family, at this most difficult time.

On a happier note I am pleased to report that Margaret McRae has been appointed to the board to fill the vacancy left by Linda Stemmler. If you have been on a TFN outing in the past year you will have met Margaret, as she goes on almost all of them. Or you may know her from the article *TFN Membership Opened My Eyes and Many Doors* which was published in the December newsletter. Margaret has taken over the role of web master and is currently maintaining and revamping our website.

The board regretfully accepted the resignation of Jerry Spevak, who lives near our Nature Reserves north of Uxbridge and, for many years, has been a dedicated steward of these properties. Jerry has made many contributions during his service on the board for which we owe him a large debt of gratitude.

George Bryant will be replacing Jerry on the board and will be assuming responsibility for the Nature Reserves. George is also an avid birder who volunteered to update the TFN's bird checklist. Many of you will be familiar with George as an outings leader or from the article he wrote in the February newsletter chronicling his relationship with the TFN from the time he was a junior member.

On behalf of the board, a warm welcome to both Margaret and George.

The TFN is co-hosting a **Save the Boreal Forest Event** with Ontario Nature on Monday, May 7 (see below). Please mark this on your calendar and invite your friends and neighbours to join us for an entertaining and educational evening. Call the TFN office if you can give us a hand that night. I look forward to seeing you there.

Pinky Franklin

HELP SAVE THE BOREAL FOREST!

Monday, May 7, 7:00 to 9:30 pm

Recent evidence estimates that 300 species and 2 BILLION individual birds breed in the boreal forest before migrating south. The boreal forest is recognized as the single most important breeding ground for birds in North America.

Join **Ontario Nature** and the **Toronto Field Naturalists** for a fun and inspiring multimedia experience about the *BILLIONS* of songbirds that breed in the majestic boreal forest. You will hear about the threats their breeding grounds face, as well as the tremendous conservation opportunity to protect this special place and what you can do to help!

FEATURING

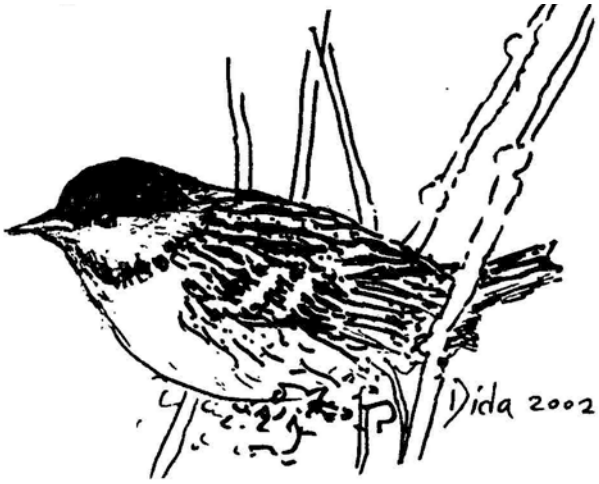
- Stunning photographs and stories of the boreal forest and its songbird inhabitants
- Live original music by Bodhi
- *Silence of the Songbirds* book signing with author and songbird expert, Dr. Bridget Stuchbury
- Dr. Bridget Stuchbury describes the threats songbirds face during migration as well as practical conservation solutions
- Actions you can take to help protect the boreal forest

Jane Mallet Theatre, St. Lawrence Centre for the Performance Arts, 27 Front St. E.
Tickets $25, available at St. Lawrence Centre (416.366.7723, www.stlc.com)
Information Jen Baker, Ontario Nature, 416-444-8419 ext. 224, or email jenniferb@ontarionature.org, or www.ontarionature.org

TFN BOARD OF DIRECTORS 2006-2007

Pinky Franklin President & Promotions	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]
Phoebe Cleverley Past President	[redacted]		[redacted]
Wendy Rothwell Vice President & Recording Secretary	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]
Corley Phillips Secretary-Treasurer	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]
George Bryant Nature Reserves	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]
Alexander Cappell Communications	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]
Nick Eyles Lectures/meetings	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]
Nancy Fredenburg Membership	[redacted]		[redacted]
Gail Gregory Outings Co-ordinator	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]
Margaret McRae Web-master	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]
Barry Mitchell	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]
Ruth Munson Outings Committee	[redacted]		[redacted]

Blackpoll Warbler
Drawing by Diana Banville



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, Suite # 1519 - 2 Carlton St., Toronto, ON M5B 1J3. The report of the Committee will be published in the May newsletter, and elections or acclamation will take place at the AGM in September.

OUTING REPORT

Show & Tell - Nature Arts

The *Show and Tell* session on January 6 led by Eric Lin was an opportunity for members to share their digital photography for the first time.

In his introduction, Eric said, "In the next two hours, TFN photographers would like to share with you their collections of interesting images of nature with basically just a digital camera and a TV screen, which I believe is the simplest and easiest way to bring nature home and to share it with friends and family. This is not meant to exclude any other form of art presentation. You are welcome to bring in any artwork to show."

We were very fortunate that Eric took on the responsibility of providing his own television for the event. A number of members brought in their work and agreed informally to assist each other in the technical challenges that are a part of learning to use and present digital pictures. (Eric even had his presentation set to music!) Other members brought actual artworks or photographs to share with the group of over 40 people. Some participants were Arthur Ortiz, Anne Byzko, Cameron Coneybeare, Barry Mitchell, Margaret McRae, Mary Chris, Diana Banville and Gail Gregory.

Cherry Beach by Eric Lin

We hope that next year's *Show and Tell*, with a variety of media, will attract an even larger audience.

Gail Gregory

ARTWORK FOR THE NEWSLETTER

Do you participate in Nature Arts outings? Are you a nature artist or photographer? The May issue of the newsletter will include members' colour artwork and photographs of nature subjects.

If you would like to contribute one or more pieces, please either:

- email a digital copy of your work;
- bring your artwork (max. size 8.5 in. x 11.75 in.) for digital scanning to the office (2 Carlton St., #1519) on a Friday morning between 9 am and 11:30 am. (we do not need to keep your original, once scanned); or
- leave a message at the TFN office (416-593-2656) and we will call you to discuss making a digital copy of your work.

Black and white drawings also welcomed.

MONTHLY MEETING REPORT

From Chile to chillier (Patagonia to the Weddell Sea), Sunday, March 4

Peter Money, TFN member, retired geologist and amateur naturalist and photographer

Peter Money suggested that, if he had known in advance of the current wintry weather, he might have titled his talk "Springtime in the Andes and Antarctica" – much cheerier than "From Chile to chillier", but with the same content. Regardless of the title, the auditorium at Emmanuel College was packed to enjoy Peter's illustrated presentation of flora, fauna and geology of the Antarctic and sub-Antarctic.

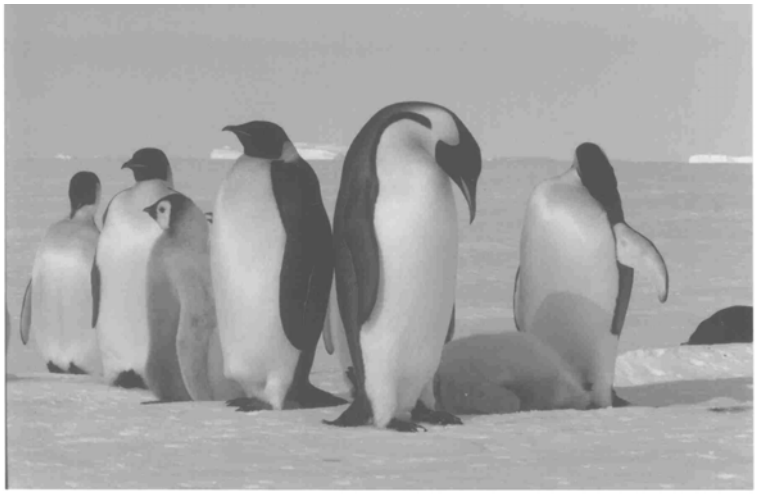
His talk took us from northern Patagonia near 40° S, to 76° S deep in the Weddell Sea. In Patagonia, we saw, among others, alpine and arid zone flowers, condors, parakeets, ibis, rheas, guanacos, maras, and Patagonian grey fox. The guanacos provide evidence that Africa, and the rheas that also Australia and New Zealand, were once united to South America. It was pointed out that the development of the physical world and life is thoroughly intertwined. Andean condors would likely not exist had not plate collisions pushed up the Andes.

We then progressed through various island environments, with their own species of penguins, albatross and many other creatures to Emperor Penguin colonies in the Weddell Sea. The amazing Emperor is unique in that Emperor males brood their chicks in a brood pouch above their feet throughout the Antarctic winter, while standing on sea ice, the only bird that can survive under these harsh conditions.

We thank Peter for his excellent presentation.

Here are examples of Peter's stunning photographs.

Immature Condor , Cerro Catedral, Argentina



Emperor Penguin group, Weddell Sea

2007-2008 TFN LECTURE SERIES

Do you have ideas for speakers or topics for the 2007-2008 TFN lecture series?
If you would like to make suggestions, please call or e-mail the office.

HURRAY FOR CITIZEN SCIENTISTS!
PROJECT FEEDERWATCH CELEBRATES 30 YEARS

Extract from an article by Kerrie Wilcox in *BirdWatch Canada*, Fall 2006 with permission from Bird Studies Canada

Turning the hobby of bird watching into research for bird conservation is what Project FeederWatch (PFW) is all about. From its rather modest beginnings 30 years ago in Ontario, 15000 people of all ages and backgrounds now participate in PFW across Canada and the United States. These Citizen Scientists act as the eyes and ears for professional ornithologists.

Project FeederWatch is an annual survey of birds that visit backyard feeders over the course of the winter. As a joint venture between backyard bird watchers and ornithologists, it has produced a great quantity of valuable information, helping to increase our scientific understanding of feeder-bird populations.

In 1976, Dr. Erica Dunn of the Long Point Bird Observatory developed the Ontario Bird Feeder Survey to test whether changes in the numbers and kinds of birds visiting feeders reflected changes in population levels. This was the forerunner to the present day North American program. By the time the second year rolled around, the popularity of the program among volunteer participants in Ontario was already evident, with 501 people taking part. Moreover, results from the first several years corresponded well with results from Ontario Christmas Bird Counts, proving the value of using feeder data to monitor winter bird populations.

Fueled by the program's 10 years of success in Ontario, "Project FeederWatch" was launched in 1987 across North America. Since then, it has continued to grow and develop through a partnership between BSC and the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, with support from Nature Canada and the National Audubon Society. Data collected by FeederWatchers are used by a number of bird research and conservation organizations. In addition to the program's ability to monitor long-term changes in winter bird populations across the continent, FeederWatch data are powerful enough to detect and explain even modest shifts in the wintering ranges of many species, track the seasonal movements of irruptive species, and chart the spread of illnesses in bird populations. For example, House Finch "eye disease" (conjunctivitis) was first noticed by a FeederWatcher in 1994. Soon after, a special survey was developed to enable FeederWatchers to track the occurrence and pattern of spread of the disease across the House Finch's range. Since then, FeederWatchers have also helped scientists track avian pox and more recently have recorded localized declines in Blue Jay and chickadee populations, which were attributed to West Nile virus.

PFW results have been used by Partners in Flight to help develop regional landbird conservation plans for birds across North America. FeederWatch data were recently used to detect a decline in House Sparrows and – by analyzing trends in cities, rural areas, and different regions – may help us determine why this species is declining so rapidly across North America. Scientists have also used PFW data to examine the incidence of bird strikes on household windows, allowing us to evaluate the impact that this source of bird mortality may have on bird populations relative to other sources.

How to FeederWatch

Although the data that participants send to PFW are used in rigorous scientific investigations, participating in the program is fairly simple, involving just a few basic steps. In Canada, PFW participants are asked to become members of BSC. For an annual $35 membership fee, participants receive the FeederWatch instruction booklet, resource manual, data forms, a calendar, a poster of common feeder birds, BSC's *BirdWatch Canada* and PFW's *Winter Bird Highlights* with regional summaries and highlights of rare bird visitors.

To register, call toll-free at 1-888-448-2473, or fill out the online form at www.bsc-eoc.org/national/pfwsign.html, or email us at pfw@bsc-eoc.org, or write to P.O. Box 160, Port Rowan, Ont. N0E 1M0 (enclose a $35 cheque to Bird Studies Canada).

The Top 10 Birds for the 2005-2006 Season in Ontario

Black-capped Chickadee
Blue Jay
American Goldfinch
Mourning Dove
Downy Woodpecker
Dark-eyed Junco
White-breasted Nuthatch
Northern Cardinal
European Starling
Hairy Woodpecker

AMPHIBIANS AND REPTILES IN TORONTO

HELP TO UPDATE DISTRIBUTION INFORMATION !

In 1982, the TFN published *Amphibians and Reptiles in Metropolitan Toronto: 1982 Inventory and Guide,* written by Bob Johnson, curator at Toronto Zoo. Members of the TFN and other interested naturalists contributed data for the publication over the course of a year. This booklet is now out of print and the occurrence and distribution of amphibian and reptile species in Toronto has changed over the intervening 25 years.

For 2007, we invite TFN members to contribute observations of frogs, toads, salamanders, turtles and snakes in Toronto in order to update distribution data for the species found in our city.

To help you make accurate identifications, we have extracted from the booklet the descriptions and habitats of the 25 species observed in Toronto during the 1982 survey. This information is presented below for Reptiles. Amphibians were covered in the March 2007 newsletter. The centrefold from both issues can be removed and referred to throughout the year.

Note: There are no venomous species of snake within 100 km of Toronto and no illness will result from the bite of any of Toronto's native amphibians or reptiles. However, please exercise caution around any animal (see especially snapping turtle below), and when exploring wet habitats.

Please send your observations, including observer's name, species name, date, exact location and habitat to: Bob Johnson, bjohnson@torontozoo.ca or mail Bob Johnson, Toronto Zoo, 361A Old Finch Ave, Scarborough, ON M1B 5K7.

Visit www.torontozoo.com/adoptapond for species identification guides.

REPTILES

TURTLES

Carapace = upper shell Plastron = lower shell Barbell = fleshy projection.

SNAPPING TURTLE

Status in Toronto in 1982: Locally common
Description: Our largest turtle (20 to 40 cm), weighing up to 18 kilograms. Has a large head with barbells on chin. Carapace olive-brown to black with three longitudinal ridges that may be worn with age. Plastron much reduced and cruciform (cross-shaped). Has enlarged triangular shaped scales running the length of the long tail.
Natural History: Found in a wide variety of aquatic habitats but prefers still waters of rivers, marshes and lakes. Basks in sun at surface of water and more rarely on logs or in shallows. Feeds on carrion, fish, amphibians, reptiles, birds and small mammals. Quite aggressive out of water because head cannot be withdrawn into and protected by the reduced lower shell. Often found on land in June seeking nesting sites. Utilizes river gravel bars or muskrat lodges or well-drained soils often quite far from water; more recently eggs are laid in gravel beds of railway embankments or gravel shoulders of roads.

Illustrations Wally Edwards©Adopt-a-Pond, Toronto Zoo

STINKPOT TURTLE

Status in Toronto in 1982: Rare

Description: Our smallest turtle (8 to 12 cm) with two light lines on head; barbells on chin and throat. Dark brown to black carapace smooth and somewhat domed. Plastron much reduced so that skin is visible; transverse hinge across shell between front legs. Short tail.

Natural History: Largely aquatic, crawling about bottom of ponds, slow-moving rivers and lakes. Feeds on carrion, tadpoles, fish and aquatic invertebrates. Occasionally leaves water to bask; an agile climber. When disturbed, musk-like odour secreted from two glands on underside. Sometimes caught on hooks baited with worms.

MIDLAND PAINTED TURTLE

Status in Toronto in 1982: Common

Description: 10 to 15 cm. Smooth, streamlined, olive-coloured carapace with red and black markings around the edge of the shell. The plastron is yellow with a dark, oval blotch along the midline. Two yellow lines on head and neck. Tip of upper jaw notched with two tooth-like projections. No serrations on rear of carapace.

Natural History: Aquatic turtle most often seen basking in numbers on logs or rocks (often one turtle on top of another with neck and legs extended). Found in marshes, ponds, and rivers with an abundance of submerged vegetation. Omnivorous. Elaborate courtship in which small male titillates chin of female with the long nails of his forefeet. Females seen on land in June most likely searching for nesting sites although some migration from deeper hibernation ponds to rich, shallow swamps may occur in spring. Isolated populations are very wary of observers and will drop from basking logs into the water at the slightest disturbance. In early spring turtles were seen basking in the lee of cool winds on sunny days when the air temperature was 5˚ C.

WOOD TURTLE

Status in Toronto in 1982: Rare/extirpated. In 2006: Extirpated

Description: 13 to 20 cm. Carapace sculptured with concentric grooves. Yellowish lower shell has no hinge. Orange or red on neck and forelegs.

Natural History: Primarily terrestrial although it can swim well and may be found in gravel bottomed rivers in early spring. It prefers woodlands near rivers and unlike most turtles can feed out of water. Omnivorous.

BLANDING'S TURTLE

Status in Toronto in 1982: Rare/extirpated. In 2006: Rare

Description: 13 to 20 cm. Smooth, domed carapace brown/black with yellowish flecks; no keel or serrations. Yellow plastron has dark blotches around perimeter and transverse hinge across middle (sometimes called semi-box turtle for this reason). Underside of relatively long neck and throat are yellow; face has a conspicuous "smile."

Natural History: Aquatic turtle seen basking on rocks or logs with neck outstretched (look for yellow throat and "smile"). Prefers shallow waters of ponds and marshes with abundant aquatic vegetation. Lays eggs in June.

Illustrations Wally Edwards©Adopt-a-Pond, Toronto Zoo

MAP TURTLE

Status in Toronto in 1982: Rare/extirpated. In 2006: Rare
Description: 10 to 25 cm. Irregular, light lines on olive to brown carapace – hence "map like"; suggestion of a keel from front to back of carapace; serrations on hind margin of carapace (painted turtle has smooth rear margin). Plastron yellow. Yellowish spot behind eye.
Natural History: Found in large bodies of water (rivers, lakes, coastal wetlands); often seen basking on logs. Feeds on snails, clams, crayfish and fish. Nesting occurs in late June when female may wander far from water in search of well-drained, sunlit sites. Eggs hatch in September.

SNAKES

NORTHERN RING-NECK SNAKE

Status in Toronto in 1982: Rare
Description: 25 to 40 cm. Smooth scales; anal scale divided. Small; brownish to steel grey with yellow to red neck collar and belly.
Natural History: Secretive. Found in moist woods particularly near wetlands, under stones and logs. Preys on small salamanders, worms and frogs.

EASTERN MILK SNAKE

*Status in Toronto in 1982:*Locally common/uncommon
Description: 60 to 100 cm. Smooth scales; anal scale single. Three longitudinal rows of black-bordered, reddish-brown blotches on background of grey/brown; side blotches smaller than those on back. Undersides checkered.
Natural History: Secretive; found under boards, logs and rocks in river valleys, fields and open woodland, particularly around farm buildings. Will vibrate tail if disturbed. Preys on mice which it subdues by constriction. Gravid female snakes will often bask in the sun, making themselves vulnerable to human interference.

NORTHERN WATER SNAKE

Status in Toronto in 1982: Rare/extirpated
Description: 55 to 100 cm. Keeled scales; anal scale divided. Grey to brown background with dark crossbands that extend down onto flanks. Underside yellowish with red crescents. Thick body.
Natural History: Found in marshes, swamps and quiet waters of rivers. Swims readily. Eats fish and frogs.

Illustrations Wally Edwards©Adopt-a-Pond, Toronto Zoo

SMOOTH GREEN SNAKE

Status in Toronto in 1982: Rare
Description: 35 to 55 cm. Smooth scales; anal scale divided. Small. Bright green snake with large eyes.
Natural History: Prefers open fields often near water where invertebrate prey such as spiders and caterpillars are found.

NORTHERN BROWN SNAKE

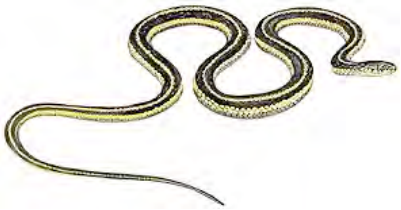
Status in Toronto in 1982: Locally common
Description: Small snake (23 to 40 cm). Scales keeled; anal scale divided. Brownish background colour; faint light brown stripe down midline of back with two rows of small dark spots on each side. Darkish streak behind eye; young snakes have a light collar across neck.
Natural History: Common but secretive snake found under stones and logs in city parks, ravines and fields. Feeds on earthworms and slugs. Its nocturnal, secretive nature makes it a difficult species to observe. Most reports of snakes in buildings turned out to be this species, particularly in the fall when hibernation sites are being investigated. Its diet of slugs and earthworms, small size, and docile nature make it an ideal urban dweller.

RED BELLIED SNAKE

Status in Toronto in 1982: Uncommon
Description: 20 to 30 cm. Scales keeled; anal scale divided. Small russet brownish snake with yellow to red belly and three light spots on neck.
Natural History: Secretive snake found near moist woodlands. When disturbed, often curls tail to show red underside. Feeds on worms, slugs, and small amphibians.

GARTER SNAKE

Status in Toronto in 1982: Common
Description: 45 to 100 cm. Keeled scales; anal scale single. Greenish to black background with three longitudinal yellow to orange stripes; usually a row of black spots between stripes. Occasionally melanistic (black) individuals are found (Toronto Islands).
Natural History: Not secretive but will retreat from disturbance; often active during daylight. Found in fields, ravines and hydro/rail corridors. Feeds on fish, frogs, toads, worms and young birds. When it is captured a foul-smelling fluid is discharged. Overwinters in a traditional underground den (a hibernaculum) with other garter snakes, milk snakes, and brown snakes.



Illustrations Wally Edwards©Adopt-a-Pond, Toronto Zoo

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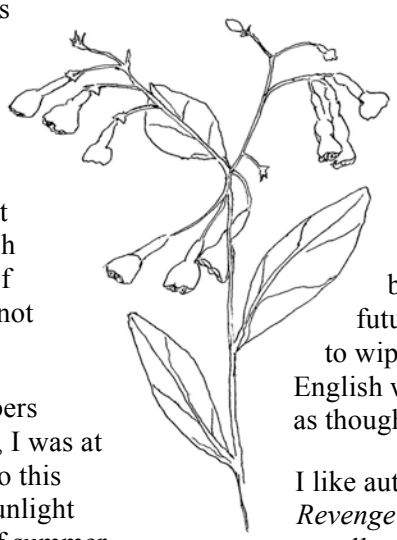
MERTENSIA

A rare find – at least for me! I have only seen this wildflower once before in all my years of gadding about, and that was on a TFN outing in a Toronto ravine.

Mississauga's Sixteen Mile Creek has as one boundary a stretch of old forest, and the long picnic area at the park's entrance also boasts a forest remnant in its centre. It is possible to penetrate this old growth section in the spring but by summer it has become too dense for entry, which is as well for the splendid massings of Michigan lily which can be seen but not reached.



Last Victoria Day, which TFN members might remember as gloomy and gray, I was at Sixteen Mile Creek, and ventured into this remnant of e*nchanted forest* which sunlight rarely penetrates even at the height of summer. The shade and damp had produced soup-plate-sized sproutings of one of spring's earliest bracket fungi, the splendid *Polyporus squamosis* (Dryad's Saddle) with its striking brown blotches on a creamy background. There were long feathery-white trails of false Solomon's seal and large mauve clumps of wild geranium. Then I was stopped in my tracks. Before me was the blue of heaven, earthbound – a great massing of M*ertensia!*

I am always amazed at, and grateful for, Earth's continued working of miracles in the face of what we do with our poisons … all the way from applied chemicals (lest we be overtaken by the horror of dandelions) to endless auto exhausts, factory discharges and modern explosives, military and otherwise. I am struck again and again, when watching old war classics like *All Quiet on the Western Front* and *Days of Glory,* or present-day newsreels – what we are allowed of them – from today's Afghanistan or Iraq, at how Earth rebounds *in spite of us*. How Flanders Fields do again blaze with poppies, and willow herb regenerates the world over on bomb sites, and soil blasted bare of all visible life survives to produce future crops. We do, after all, do our damnedest to wipe out the very cradle of our being. (As one English wit has put it, we behave towards our planet as though we have another one in the boot of the car.)

I like author James Lovelock's concept, in his *The Revenge of Gaia*, of Earth as Gaia, the Mother equally concerned with all her children. If we would only drop our conceit of being the pinnacle of creation rather than "just" another part of the whole, we might stop doing irreversible damage to all life, our own included.

These meanderings have come a long way from their source. Or have they? I can only be grateful that the miracles of Earth/Gaia continue, and that my most recent experience was the finding of sky-blue M*ertensia* on the dreary Victoria Day of May 22, 2006.

Eva Davis

There are two species of *Mertensia* in Ontario: *M. paniculata* (northern bluebells) found in dry to moist boreal forest and *M. virginica* (Virginia bluebells) found along rich floodplains of southern Ontario. *Mertensia* is a member of the borage family. Ref.: *The ROM Field Guide to Wildflowers of Ontario*. Ed.

Keeping Toronto clean and beautiful is up to all of us.

Extracted from the City's website: www.toronto.ca/litter.

Torontonians took this philosophy to heart, signing up in record numbers to participate in the 2006 20-Minute Toronto Makeover held on April 21, 2006. Approximately 123,250 people registered and that's not counting the many others that didn't register but donated their time to pick up litter. Your overwhelming participation across the city shows how proud Torontonians are of their city.

In 2002, the City of Toronto established a litter reduction goal of 50% for the period of 2002 to 2007 and mandated litter audits be done on an annual basis. This year we've reduced litter by 40% since 2002. Progress can be attributed to collection and enforcement enhancements that were put in place over the past several years. For more details, see The City of Toronto Streets Litter Audit 2006 at www.toronto.ca/litter

See Coming Events, page 23 for some 2007 cleanup events. Eds

IN THE NEWS

Getting mercury out of Toronto schools

From a news release by The Recycling Council of Ontario, January 29, 2007

The Recycling Council of Ontario and Toronto District School Board are pioneering an environmental stewardship project to recycle fluorescent tube lighting from schools. The program is slated to recover 48,000 lamps in six months, thereby avoiding the deposition of over half a kilogram of mercury into Ontario landfills and incinerators. The spent lamps will be transported to Fluorescent Lamp Recyclers in Ayr, Ontario.

About 30 million fluorescent lamps, comprised of 8.8 million kilograms of glass, 110,000 kilograms of metals, 140,000 kilograms of phosphor and almost 1 metric tonne of mercury, are sold in Ontario annually, 90% ending up in the waste stream.

Mature woodlot preserved:

From an article by David Nickle in the Scarborough Mirror, January 10, 2007

A proposed condominium and seniors' apartment complex to be built next to the Scarborough Civic Centre by Henderson Development (Canada) Ltd. threatened the destruction of a 3-acre woodlot containing trees as old as 120 years. When approached by Ward 38 Councilor Glenn De Baeremaeker (Scarborough Centre), a former environmental activist, Henderson agreed to modify their plans so as to preserve two thirds of the woodlot. De Baeremaeker hopes that Henderson will turn the land over to the City, to be preserved as a publicly accessible woodlot indefinitely.

Government Graded on Greenbelt: B+: 2nd Anniversary Report Card finds Greenbelt still vulnerable

From a media release from www.greenbelt.ca February 28 2007

The Ontario government gets an overall grade of B+ for its efforts to protect and promote Ontario's 1.8 million acre Golden Horseshoe Greenbelt, according to a report card released today by the Ontario Greenbelt Alliance. That's an improvement over last year's Greenbelt Grade, a B.

The report card awards passing grades for a range of Greenbelt issues, including:

"Greening the Greenbelt": designating more than 2,300 acres of provincially-owned land as parkland within the Greenbelt (Grade: A+);

"Acting Like You Mean It": standing up for Greenbelt boundaries when challenged by developers and municipalities (Grade: A);

"Structuring for Success": making sure the Greenbelt receives adequate resources (Grade: B+).

The Ontario government receives poor grades for some critical areas, including:

"Where There's Smoke": protecting the Top 10 Greenbelt Hotspots, areas under threat from industry and development (Grade: C);

"Cutting the Greenbelt to Pieces:" planning for roads, sewers and other infrastructure throughout the Greenbelt (Grade: D)

York Region's shortlist of routes for the York Durham Sewer System (Big Pipe) is of particular concern. All but one of the proposed routes cut through the heart of Bob Hunter Memorial Park, a 500-acre park in Markham. The park is a cornerstone of the newly created Greenbelt corridor that links the Oak Ridges Moraine to Lake Ontario.

The report card highlights five areas for improvement for the government in the coming year:

- expand the Greenbelt into areas such as Simcoe, Northumberland and Wellington Counties and Waterloo Region;
- support Greenbelt producers – the people who farm nearly 1.2 million of the 1.8 million acres in the Greenbelt;
- get rid of special privileges for aggregate operations; provide better oversight and better protection of natural areas in the Greenbelt;
- reform the Ontario Municipal Board (OMB) and financing of municipal election campaigns;
- strengthen the mandate of the Conservation Authorities throughout the Greenbelt.

Save Ontario's Species (S.O.S.)

From: Ontario Nature's "Endangered Species Summit," February 28 and March 3, 2007

The Committee on the Status of Species at Risk in Ontario (COSSARO – a scientific body) has identified 75 species of plants, birds, mammals, reptiles, insects and fish as Endangered, 46 as Threatened and 45 as being of Special Concern. Primary causes are loss of habitat (wetlands, woodlands, grasslands and water), invasive species, contaminants, introduced diseases, climate change, over-harvesting and other human activities. Ontario's Endangered Species Act (ESA), enacted in 1971, is inadequate because it applies only to 42 of the Endangered species, leaving 77% of Ontario's Species at Risk unprotected. Also, the Act does not include protection of habitat, has minimal and outdated enforcement provisions and is inadequately funded.

In Spring 2006, an Advisory Panel of experts in conservation biology was formed to study this matter. After consultations with the public, Aboriginal communities and key stakeholders, the Advisory Panel submitted their recommendations to the Ministry of Natural Resources, on the basis of which new Endangered Species legislation is being drafted. Minister Ramsay has undertaken to introduce this legislation "at the earliest opportunity in the spring session of the Legislature."

S.O.S. (a collaboration of CPAWS-Wildlands League, Environmental Defence, Ontario Nature, Sierra Legal and the David Suzuki Foundation) has identified 4 critical factors which should be included in the Act:

1. Mandatory protection for **all** species at risk and their habitats
2. A science-based listing process, i.e. any species identified as Endangered, Threatened or of Special Concern by COSSARO should automatically come under the Act
3. Inclusion of recovery plans and programs
4. A significant increase in funding to enable implementation of these provisions

You can help to ensure the achievement of these aims by visiting or writing to your MPP during the Spring Session and making known your concerns about this issue. Or visit www.ontarionature.org and send a letter to Premier McGuinty.

Wendy Rothwell

OPPORTUNITIES FROM BIRD STUDIES CANADA

Baillie Birdathon: Want to have a *lot* of fun and help birds and nature at the same time? Do a Birdathon this May! More than 7,000 people from across Canada participate in and/or sponsor Birdathon every year. During a 24-hour period, they attempt to find as many bird species as they can, sponsored at a flat rate, or on a per-species basis. Canada's Baillie Birdathon is the oldest sponsored bird count in North America. It was established in 1976 as a national fundraiser to support the research and conservation of wild birds. Funds raised by participants benefit the work of Bird Studies Canada as well as designated bird observatories, the James L. Baillie Memorial Fund, which provides research grants to amateurs across Canada, and participating conservation and naturalist clubs. All contributions to Birdathon are tax-creditable.

The Doug Tarry Bird Study Awards foster the development of ornithological interests in Canadian teenagers. Recipients of the awards attend a week-long workshop/natural history camp or a month-long student internship at Long Point Bird Observatory (LPBO). The Workshop is being held from August 3 to 12 2007. Space is limited to 6 participants, ranging from 13-17 years old. The Award covers all direct costs of the workshop but recipients are responsible for their transportation to Long Point. Applications due April 30 2006.

Canadian Lakes Loon Survey: Survey any Canadian lake at least once in June (for loon pairs), once in July (for newly hatched chicks) and once in August (for the number of young that survive). Your report will join hundreds of others from across the country to support the conservation of loons and lakes. Registration $35 (includes membership in Bird Studies Canada).

FOR INFORMATION: www.bsc-eoc.org; 1-888-448-2473; Bird Studies Canada, PO Box 160, Port Rowan, Ont. N0E 1M0. For Birdathon, email birdathon@bsc-eoc.org. For Doug Tarry Awards, email lpbo@bsc-eoc.org.

KEEPING IN TOUCH

Why did I join the TFN? For the birds.

When I was a child, we spent our summers in the Adirondacks, where my father would fasten a slab of suet to a tree outside the dining room window. I'm ashamed to say that I never paid any attention to the birds which came to eat it.

In 1991, I spent a week in Cozumel. I wasn't a birder, didn't have binoculars, but there are birds there (!), and I noticed them. A man lent me his binocs so I could get a good look at a Turkey Vulture perched on a fence. I saw a face only a mother vulture could love, and later watched them in flight - beautiful. I watched swallows swooping around the hotel in the evening (what kind? no idea), replaced as it grew darker by bats. (I did not inform the other hotel guests.)

A few years later I went to Costa Rica as a volunteer on a turtle conservation project, and then spent a few days in Monteverde. I did take binoculars this time, but I heard a lot more birds than I saw. In Monteverde I spent a morning with a local naturalist, who showed us, among other things, Swallow-tailed Kites mating and quetzals.

When I came home, I wanted to be a birder. I saw TFN walks announced in NOW Magazine, went on them, and soon joined the club. It's only a slight exaggeration to say that everything I know about birds I learned from TFN leaders and members. They must have been very patient indeed.

I date my transition from wannabe birder to beginning birder to Presqu'ile Park, April 2000, where I was able to identify half a dozen species by myself. I will never be an expert, but I am now good enough to provide the kind of help to beginners that other TFN members used to give to me.

Elizabeth Block

The Small Stuff

There is a common expression “don’t sweat the small stuff.” As a field naturalist, I find the small stuff is the most interesting and the most ignored by the average citizen. In the bird world, most people know an eagle, but if you showed a photograph of a kinglet to people on the street, a high percentage would not recognize the species. It is the same with mammals. How many people would recognize a meadow vole or a short-tailed shrew?

My latest pursuit is to learn more about our native and introduced small fish. I discovered a website which is fantastic if you are like me and don’t know one small fish from another. The name of this site is about 60 characters long, so I would suggest you just google *The Baitfish Primer Species Accounts*. They show colour photographs of all the small fish in Ontario and describe all the identifying features. There are 79 species, which really surprised me. I was familiar with names like shiner, minnow, dace and chub, but had never heard of fallfish, bigmouth buffalo or quillback, to name a few. Many of the fish are illegal for use as baitfish because they are endangered or can be confused with endangered species. There are also introduced fish we do not want in all our waterways. I am seriously thinking of getting a minnow trap next summer to see what is swimming in our local ponds and rivers.

Although I am not an expert in any one subject of natural history, I like knowing a little bit about everything.

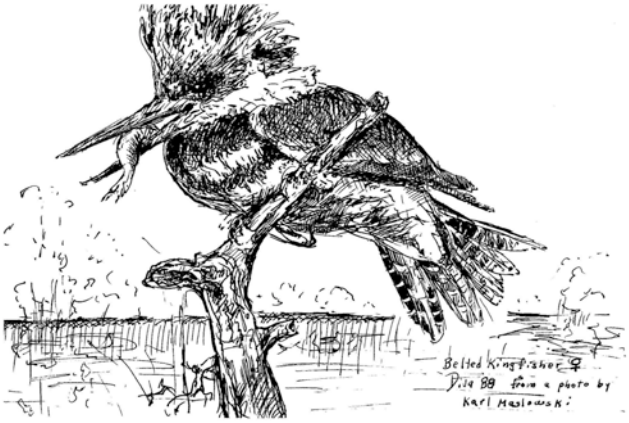
Roger Powley

Snow Lion photographed by Michael Kononoff in Taylor Creek Park on Chinese New Year

KEEPING IN TOUCH *continued*.

Seen on the Humber in Winter

While walking along the Humber River near dawn on Sunday February 4th I saw a female Kingfisher. It was its rattle call that alerted me to it. It was flying from tree perch to tree perch along the west side.



Belted Kingfisher by Diana Banville

Also rather neat, there were Mallards swimming in an open patch of water by an outflow pipe on the east side. (The rest of the river was frozen around there.) On my way back when I passed this open water, they appeared to be gone. After a moment I realized that there was enough of a gap between the river and the ice for them to be swimming under the ice.

Linda Stemmler

Bhutan, September-October 2006

Bhutan is no Shangri-la. Its mountains are too vast, the ridges too steep and sharp, and life for the rural majority is hard. Bhutan is not a walk in the park. It has a savage beauty which is almost totally unspoilt. 72% of the country is under forest. Of the remainder, a large portion lies above the tree line which occurs at surprisingly high 12500 – 13000 feet. 28% of the country is national park. Farmland is hard to find, with every flat area terraced and cultivated. Once you leave the limited roads you are walking on yak tracks with the next village often two days' hard walking away. You better not forget the salt or lose your reading glasses!

Climate variations coupled with huge changes in altitude make Bhutan a country with an extremely rich flora. On our trek we started in rice paddies, climbed through deciduous then alpine forest until reaching the village of Laya where yaks graze and only barley and winter wheat can be grown.

Francis Pommaret in her book *Bhutan – Himalayan Mountain Kingdom* writes "The wealth of floral species (5400) recorded includes 17 species of conifers, 46 species of rhododendrons, junipers and magnolias several yards high, carnivorous plants, rare orchids, blue poppies, edelweiss, gentians, primulas, artemisia, daphne, giant rhubarb, high altitude plants as well as medical plants. Bhutan is such a botanical paradise that one of its ancient names meant Southern Valleys of Medicinal Herbs."

The national flower is the blue poppy, which grows at high altitudes and draws hardy tourists from around the world. The flowering of the blue poppy coincides with the last of the monsoon which, combined with its high altitude habitat, makes sightings for the faint of heart or body a challenge. The national tree is the cypress, which is often associated with religious places. The Bhutanese identify with it because it is straight and strong and can grow in inhospitable soil.

Almost none of Bhutan's higher peaks have been climbed. These peaks are so numerous that they do not warrant a name unless they are over 21000 feet. We had tantalizing glimpses of the towering fortresses that are Bhutan's highest peaks, only to lose them in cloud, and then be rewarded, on waking up one morning, to see sunrise highlighting Bhutan's second highest peak (23997 feet) in the most extraordinary changing combination of pink, orange, tangerine and finally white. We were literally camping at the foot of the goddess mountain, which had been hidden in cloud all the previous day.

Norman Hardie

Singing Song Sparrow
Southerly situated
Surely springtime soon

Alliterative haiku by Roger Powley

FOR READING AND LISTENING

ATLAS OF BIRD MIGRATION: TRACING THE GREAT JOURNEYS OF THE WORLD'S BIRDS, edited by Jonathan Elphick, Firefly Books, 2007, 176 pages, $35.00. Reviewed by Marilynn Murphy

The striking dust jacket claims "this comprehensive and authoritative full-color guide to the mysteries of bird migration, features all of the latest science, including the results of advanced satellite tracking methods" and that it "reveals everything scientists know so far". A tall order indeed for a book of limited text, its 176 pages being largely taken up with pictures and maps.

Colourful and eye-catching it certainly is. The editor and contributors have undertaken a huge challenge, amidst innumerable ongoing scientific studies, to convey the complex subject of bird migration on a global scale and in a way understandable to the general public. The result is an overview painted in broad brush strokes. It deals briefly with an array of issues, including flight mechanics, timing, navigation, genetics, routes, conservation problems and scientific study methods. Anyone whose curiosity is piqued by the contents should look elsewhere for the finer details and for information on the many species necessarily omitted from so slim a volume.

The atlas contains several items I found interesting, from an explanation of how migration is thought to have evolved, to the intriguing migration patterns of the Red-footed Falcon which breeds from eastern Europe to easternmost China and winters in a corner of southern Africa. Through easily understood maps, it also puts into a global perspective such birds as Red Knots, Tundra Swans and Snow Buntings, all familiar to perusers of North American field guides, but actually circumpolar, with far-flung migration ranges.

Problems exist though, most immediately noticeable in the index which I found difficult, inconsistent and much in need of correction. The Common Loon, not listed in the index, is recorded in the Catalog of Migrants under "Winter Visitors From the Far North". Its breeding range is given as "Arctic and sub-arctic N. America, Greenland & Iceland." In fact the Common Loon, familiar to Ontario cottagers, also nests across southern Canada and several American states.

Anomalies appear too in the journey lengths stated for certain species. In some species which have both migratory and, in certain areas, resident populations, the lowest journey length is logically shown as 0, for instance Sandhill Cranes 0 - 2500 miles. However in several similar situations, such as Calliope Hummingbird, 1250 - 3000 miles, the stated journey length apparently disregards resident populations.

Elsewhere, the unequivocal statement that "the Eskimo Curlew was thought - mistakenly - to be extinct. A small number survives today" took me by surprise. Hoping I'd missed a momentous announcement, I checked various sources but alas, for many years sighting reports have apparently been unauthenticated and as the National Audubon Society website sums up, "occasional reports . . . leave open the possibility that a very small population may still exist . . . but most authorities consider this species extinct".

The Atlas of Bird Migration may appeal to those who want a general introduction to this fascinating topic in a popularly accessible format. Readers should, however, be wary of the details.

The above book was sent to TFN by the publisher with a request for it to be reviewed for our members. *Ed.*

Bird Songs edited by Les Beletsky, published by Chronicle Books/becker&mayer
Description extracted from: www.lesbeletsky.com/songs.shtml

Bird Songs is an illustrated collection of 250 North American birds that focuses on their vocal behaviour and includes an attached digital audio player featuring songs of the 250 species. The text of the book is based on Cornell University's Lab of Ornithology's *Birds of North America* series. The audio feature of the book is derived from bird recordings from Cornell's Library of Natural Sounds. Artwork for the book is provided by four outstanding bird artists: John Sill, Diane Pierce, David Nurney and Douglas Pratt. Les Beletsky is a professional wildlife biologist and freelance natural history writer.

FROM THE ARCHIVES

THE BIRD-WATCHER'S VOCABULARY or AVIANESE MADE EASY

from an article by Gerry Bennett in TFN Newsletter no. 158, October 1958.

Bird-watchers are a lot like human beings. Like human beings they have a language which is not well understood by other forms of life. The beginner, caught in the bewildering whirl of identifying birds, finds that he must also learn the dialect of his colleagues, a patois not hitherto defined, a medley of meaningful metaphors which I have come to call "Avianese".

I have long admired this colourful lingo, this fascinating phraseology molded, not of fantasies, but of honest truths garnished with the harmless hyperbole and served with the elasticity of exaggeration. It allows no lies. The birder may stretch the truth, but had better not break it, or verily he shall be drummed out of the corps. Avianese allows no bluffs, no boasts, no babble. Gradually, the beginner learns to adopt the language, to master its phrases and, as his life-list lengthens, so does his repertoire of Avianese.

After receiving a flood of requests (two post-cards in the past seven years), I'm outlining a compendium of phrases translated into English to assist the beginner in getting started in this world of the Idion's Delight. So don't wait. Why be a novice when, with a little imagination, the beginner may become a veteran, the veteran an expert and the expert a genius?

Vocabulary

Avianese	English Translation
We scoured the area.	We drove around the marsh twice.
Blue jays seem to be on the increase.	I was out twice this year and saw blue jays both times.
My latest record by 12 days	I don't get out much in October.
Let's leave fairly early.	I'll call for you at 4:30 a.m.
I brought a light lunch.	Eleven sandwiches, a pie and a quart thermos of tea.
Active in the field	Goes to Pelee every spring.
Thousands	Hundreds
Hundreds	Dozens
There's a lovely little spot just ahead.	We're coming to the Sewage Disposal Plant.
Authority	Owns a Peterson, keeps records and subscribes to Field Notes
Eminent authority	Also reads Bent.
Time for lunch.	10:30 a.m.
Be sure to stop at Ormsby and look for a black rail.	There was one reported there in 1934. It was collected.
Tanagers were all over the place.	We saw three in Cedarvale and one near Aurora.
A wave	Three birds or more
A heavy flight	Several waves
An invasion	Quite a few
Birds are a lot scarcer this year.	Don't get around much any more.
Absolutely guaranteed	Vaguely possible
Several other observers saw it.	My neighbour and his wife were with us.
I don't see what else it could have been.	I didn't see it very well.
We had a most enjoyable outing.	We sat in Holland Marsh until midnight and heard two yellow rails. It stopped raining at 10.
Let's not try for a big list.	Let's quit after we get 120.
Well seen	Only two trees between me and the bird.
A dandy look	Well seen
An amateur	A list hound
A list hound	Me, and proud of it!

WEATHER (THIS TIME LAST YEAR)

April 2006

April was reminiscent of last year with its long spells of sunny, fairly warm weather (this year the 8th-11th, 15th-20th, and 28th-30th had almost continuous sunshine). Rainfall, however, was almost exactly normal (around 60-65 mm), with most of it falling on the 7th and 22nd-23rd. Thunderstorms occurred on the 3rd and 12th but severe weather was absent.

The result of the sunny spells was a total of 229 hours of sunshine, about 45 hours more than the normal and the highest total since 1998 (238.6 hours).

Normally April has some snow, but we missed our chance with only a trace. The 2005-2006 total winter snowfall was 85.0 cm (Pearson), 30 cm below normal and the lowest since 1999-2000 which had 81.8 cm.

Monthly mean temperatures were 1°-2° above the long-term average: 8.2^{o} at Pearson Airport and 8.9^{o} downtown. It was the warmest April since 2001, but with no freak hot spells as in 2002 or 1990.

Gavin Miller

Winter patch of white
Ah! Spring Delight
First snowdrops pushing through dead leaves.

House building starts anew
Grass, twigs and twine
Cozy home for robins' eggs.

From warm sun-streaked clouds
Soft raindrops fall
Faster now – flecked with snow – April Fool.

Haikus by Elisabeth Gladstone

Green Living Show
Automotive Building, Exhibition Place, Toronto Friday April 27 to Sunday April 29, 2007

The Green Living Show is Toronto's first show dedicated to all things green. Information… Innovation… Inspiration… everything you need to green up your life is right here, under one roof!

Find out how to tread more lightly on the earth by checking out over 200 exhibitors offering environmentally friendly products and services. Learn from our experts, authors and educators and become inspired with our many special features including The Loblaws Healthy Living Cooking Stage, The Home Depot Eco Options Centre, sustainable fashion shows, a native wildflower garden, alternative vehicle ride and drive, the Green Living Eco Kids Zone, the Urban Forest and an impressive show and sale of Canadian wildlife art.

Children under 12: Free. Adults $10, Students & Seniors $7. Online: Adults $9, Students & Seniors $6.

Note: **TFN members are being offered a special discount – 2 tickets for the price of 1. To take advantage of this offer, show your newsletter and quote code '2TFN' when buying tickets at the door or buy online quoting the code at www.greenlivingshow.ca.**

COMING EVENTS

Keeping Toronto clean and beautiful!

Registration: Toronto, York, East York, Etobicoke, call 416-392-7899; Scarborough or North York, call 416-392-7913. www.toronto.ca/litter

- Friday, April 20, 2:00 pm. The 20-Minute Toronto Makeover. Mayor David Miller asks Torontonians to come outside at 2:00 pm and do a 20-minute clean-up blitz around your office, school or neighbourhood
- Saturday, April 21. Mayor David Miller's Community Clean-Up Day. Get together with friends, co-workers and neighbours to clean up an alley, park or area in your community.

Earth Day Cleanup – Davenport Square Park

Sunday, April 22, 2 to 4 pm. Massive park cleanup: cleanout of weeds, suckers, saplings, plus garbage removal in preparation for heritage plants. Northwest corner of Bathurst St. and Davenport Rd. Everyone welcome! Bring gloves.

Jim Baillie Memorial Bird Walks - Toronto Ornithological Club

Saturday April 28, 8am to early afternoon. Early Migrants, Leslie St. Spit. Leader Hugh Currie. Meet at the foot of Leslie St. Bring a lunch.

Toronto Entomologists' Association (TEA)

Saturday, April 28, 1 pm. Piquing the Public Interest: recent adventures in Thailand and China. Speaker: Margaret Pickles. Northrop Frye Hall, Room 113, U of T, 73 Queen's Park Crescent. Information: www.ontarioinsects.org

Toronto Historical Association – Annual Heritage Showcase

Friday, April 20, 10 am to 5 pm. The Rotunda, Toronto City Hall, Queen Street. Member groups display Toronto's heritage, whether homes, buildings, ravines or trees. Information: 416-967-6432 or peggykurtin@sympatico.ca

The Market Gallery

March 3 – June 10. The Spadina Expressway Affair. South St. Lawrence Market, 2nd Floor, 95 Front St. E. Free.
Focus is on the people and communities involved in the debate surrounding the expressway. Wed.-Fri. 10 am to 4 pm; Sat. 9 am to 4 pm; Sun. noon to 4 pm. Information: 416-392-7604.

Lost River Walks

- Saturday, April 14, 2 pm. Robert Burns Creek. Leader: Ian Wheal. Meet at the northwest corner of Steeles Ave. W. and Weston Rd. Free
- Saturday, April 28, 2 pm. Erosion on Don River (East Branch). Leader: Ian Wheal. Meet at the southeast corner of Donway and Don Mills (one block south of Lawrence Ave. E.). See severe erosion and exposed shrubs and slopes. Free.

Backyard Naturalized Habitat Workshop

Saturday, April 14. North York Civic Centre, 5100 Yonge St., Committee Rooms 1 & 2. North American Native Plant Society. $20 for members, $30 for non-members. One day workshop, hosted by Dan Bissonette, that blends the best of traditional garden concepts with proven approaches to naturalization to help you create an oasis in your yard.
Information: 416-631-4438, www nanps.org, nanps@nanps.org

Rouge Valley Hikes

Every second Sunday at 1:30 pm. Information: 416-282-8265.
Hikes last about 2 hours and are on - rain, cold, snow or shine.

Toronto Bird Observatory – High Park

Open to the public Saturday mornings during spring migration (approx. end of March to end of May).
Information: Christina Sharma at 416-236-7234 or projectchirp@rogers.com.

Ian Wheal Walks

- Saturday, April 7, 2 pm. West Garrison (Brockton) Watershed. Meet at the entrance to St. Helen's Catholic Church, Dundas St. W. just east of Lansdowne Ave. Free.
- Thursday, April 12, 2 pm. Dufferin Grove Park and vicinity. Meet at the southeast corner of Bloor St. W. and Dufferin St. Free

Toronto Field Naturalists
2 Carlton St., #1519
Toronto, Ontario M5B 1J3

Publications Mail
Registration No. 40049590

Todmorden Mills spring cleanup by TFN members in 1980s. Photos by Muriel Miville

See Coming Events (p.23) for some 2007 cleanup events