



Since 1923

# TORONTO FIELD NATURALIST

Number 669 September 2022



Snowberry Clearwing. Photo: Andrew Interisano (see page 19)

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## PRESIDENT'S REPORT – NOT SCHEDULED

“Have a plan,” they say, “and stick to it.” I’m not sure that will work as a motto for this autumn. I’ve been reading about the famous Apollo 8 mission, taking humans to the far side of the moon for the first time. NASA definitely had a big plan, with every mission moment tightly scripted. As the space craft tilted round the moon, innumerable photos had to be taken of the lunar surface. Then the astronauts looked up and saw the earth rising: breathtaking. Photographer Bill Anders snapped a photo. His commander chided him playfully: “Hey, don’t take that; that’s not scheduled.” The transformative image of our small blue planet – an icon for future generations – was not planned for by NASA engineers.

Reflecting back on this past summer, I have savoured unscripted nature moments, and I bet you have too. I think of the bobolinks that surprised our TFN walkers at Toronto Island airport in late spring. I think also of the Red-tailed Hawk fledged in my Coxwell Avenue neighbourhood this summer; the shrieking and swooping of a family of raptors became an all-day, everyday familiarity. Who could have scheduled that?

Unscripted moments to protect and speak up for nature abound. This summer, for example, there came a sudden call for help to watch over nesting Piping Plovers at Hanlan’s Point (see page 5). The volunteers who responded were willing to change their plans at short notice. Similarly, TFN’s volunteers for Cottonwood Flats or walk leaders are willing to sign up for dates that may turn out to be rainy, buggy, steamy – or absolutely glorious. Let’s thank all those ready to step up as volunteers, pick up new skills and

adapt. Let’s copy their example too. Your fall plans may not have included becoming a walk leader or joining our help-desk or our outreach team, but frankly, TFN is short on volunteers and we need you. Learn how you can join TFN’s volunteer community on page 6.

The most memorable human connections often come unscheduled, but it does help to set the stage. TFN’s monthly public walks set that stage perfectly; they offer each of us moments to reach out and welcome newcomers, and those just mildly curious about nature. The return of our “bring a guest on a TFN walk” policy similarly empowers each of us to grow the nature community, one person at a time. Is there an emerging naturalist in your orbit?

Of course, TFN does have plans for the fall. We have great lectures planned, including two in-person lectures at Emmanuel College (see below). With your help, we hope to speak up for nature during the upcoming municipal election (see page 4). We are also planning collaborations with other groups, as well as our AGM for the evening of October 20 (see page 20). The cooler fall weather will also be great for TFN guided walks – and did I already mention we need new walk leaders?

Life is what happens when we answer a call to volunteer; when we lean into a chance encounter; when we welcome the idle question, and when we look up from our tasks and find ourselves transformed.

Ellen Schwartzel  
 president@torontofieldnaturalists.org

### TWO TFN PICNICS COMING UP!

#### *Pre-lecture, September 11 and October 2*

We are excited to announce that (COVID permitting) TFN will host two in-person lectures at Emmanuel College, St. George Campus of U of T, a two-minute walk from Museum subway station.

Sunday September 11: Native bee biodiversity, Scott MacIvor. See page 20 for details.

Sunday October 2: Microplastics in the Great Lakes, Chelsea Rochman

We invite you to informal picnics beforehand, reconnecting with other TFNers on the lawns around Emmanuel College. So please bring your lunch about 1:00 pm, and maybe a picnic blanket. The lectures will begin at 2:30 pm.

**Our Door Prize:** a beautiful hardcopy book: *An Enduring Wilderness: Toronto’s Natural Parklands*, 2017, by author and photographer Robert Burley. Thanks to City of Toronto.

We hope to make both lectures available via Zoom as well.

## LECTURE REPORT

## The Restoration of the American Chestnut in Ontario

May 8, 2022

Ron Casier, President, The Canadian Chestnut Council

At the turn of the 20th century, there were over three billion American chestnut trees in North America. Prior to 1920 it was a keystone species in Ontario, accounting for 1.5 to 2 million trees and 25% of all hardwoods. The tree provided mast for wildlife, food for First Nations and colonists, and rot-resistant timber as well as tannin for commercial interests. Within a decade, 95% of the trees had vanished, destroyed by a blight of bark fungus that hitched a ride with imported Japanese chestnut trees to a New Jersey nursery in 1876.

The nuts of this tree were both an important economic and medicinal resource. They were sold on city streets, especially at Christmas time when “roasting on an open fire” became a popular tune. Roasting chestnuts could be smelled blocks away. Meanwhile, First Nations used parts of the chestnut to treat various ailments, including whooping cough.

The Canadian Chestnut Council, a scientific and charitable volunteer organization, was established in 1988 to restore the American chestnut in Canada by undertaking surveys to identify remaining trees and inter-pollinating sites; breeding, cultivating and growing new trees aimed at establishing a blight-resistant genome; and ensuring genetic diversity in new populations of the American chestnut.

Through its wild tree surveys, the Council and its partners identified 2,500 American chestnuts remaining in the wild in Ontario. Since these surveys began in 1996, the Council has seen a loss of 12% of wild trees compared with a recruitment of only 0.3%. This loss is due not only to blight, but also to illegal cutting, old age, other diseases and pests, habitat loss, and canopy suppression whereby young trees die for lack of adequate sunlight. Without human intervention, the American chestnut is destined for extinction in Ontario.

The Council started its breeding program in 2001, aimed at creating a highly blight-resistant chestnut with at least 97% American chestnut genome of Canadian origin. Research farms include the Tim Horton’s children’s camp, Ron Casier’s own farm, and the Riverbed Farm. The trees are intentionally inoculated on the trunk with blight. The daily rate of canker lesion growth which appears is then measured in order to determine which trees contain genetic material for disease resistance.

Here is the progress to date:

Over 1,700 first generation (F1) seedlings have been planted;

Over 36,000 F2 seedlings were planted in 2020-2021;

The first F3 crossbred seedlings were planted out in 2020, with an orchard of over 300 trees completed in 2021;

About 4,700 nuts are in stratification, i.e., going through cold storage to facilitate eventual germination.

It is hoped that the fourth generation (F4) of cross breeding will produce the desired American chestnut genome that is blight-resistant.

Another strategy the Council is pursuing is to break the isolation of individual American Chestnuts in the wild that cannot produce nuts due to lack of cross pollination. The death of an isolated tree reduces the total genetic diversity of the species forever. Volunteers take grafted trees which offer greater genetic diversity and plant them in the vicinity of the isolated tree. Within two years the grafted trees begin flowering and provide pollen for cross pollination. The natural cycle of flowering, pollination, fertilization and nut production begins anew. The Council has implemented this strategy at 60 sites in 10 Ontario counties.

In addition to its breeding program, the Council is carrying out DNA research to determine the uniqueness of the Canadian American Chestnut. The latest research indicates that the Canadian chestnut is related to a Georgian sub-species, having travelled up the Mississippi valley to Canada, possibly carried by Indigenous mound-builders who used the nuts for food and medicinal purposes.

To prepare for eventual mass production of a blight-resistant American chestnut in Canada, the Council is exploring micro propagation, in which tissue extracted from a blight-resistant tree’s leaf can be used to propagate thousands of seedlings that are blight-free.

Once mass production begins, there will be numerous challenges to meet, including insects like the gall wasp, saw fly and weevils; the northern migration of black ink disease; and climate change. However, The Council’s success in planting over 37,000 American chestnuts and continuing progress in its breeding efforts offer hope that this important tree species, that offers so many benefits, will become re-established in Ontario.

Philip Jessup

You may hear this lecture at:

<https://youtu.be/k2lcf3llsUM>

## VOTING FOR NATURE THIS FALL

Toronto's upcoming municipal election gives us a rare chance to speak up for urban nature. Let's ask for "More nature nearby, please!" at all-candidates meetings, via emails, at our front doors, outside subway stops and wherever candidates greet voters. The last few pandemic years have already made a compelling case that nature and green space are critical to a healthy 21st century city and to community mental health. Torontonians increasingly live in tall buildings and apartments (roughly 40% by the 2016 census) and rely on local parklands for fresh air and nature. Now is the moment to reinforce that message in every ward across the city. It helps to be quite specific in our requests; Toronto's top nature needs can be summed up as more **care**, more **protection** and more **lands** dedicated to nature.

**More care:** We can ask for expanded volunteer-led care as part of increased investment in nature. Invasive weeds have degraded ravines all over the city. Toronto Nature Stewards (with TFN support) are training volunteers to become responsible stewards for ravine patches, with review and approval by city staff. This year, about 74 hectares of Toronto's ravine lands are getting volunteer-led care; the city has enormous scope to grow this approach since Toronto owns about 6,600 hectares of ravine lands, all at risk of being dominated by dog-strangling vine, garlic mustard, burdock and other weeds.

**More protection:** We can insist on progress to protect Toronto's best remaining bits of nature: the Environmentally Significant Areas (ESAs). Ten years after the City mapped these vulnerable areas and five years after the City promised management plans, over three quarters

of our ESAs are still missing management plans. For starters, ESAs need protection as "low traffic" and "tread lightly" zones, with shielding from crowded trails, dog parks and other pressures.

**More nature lands:** We can ask that more nature be added to Toronto's landscape. Toronto's manager of Parks has warned repeatedly that our city's parkland per person is declining over time, since our population is growing far faster than our parkland areas. We know the terrific potential of nature restoration; the Brick Works, Tommy Thompson Park, Corktown Common and the Meadoway are showcase examples. Political commitment is needed to do more, and Toronto's publicly-owned golf lands offer an obvious next step. Restricting access to these roughly 200 hectares to golfers-only is a strange status quo, and an approach that may have seemed okay in the 1960s. A 21st century vision would transform these lands into truly public greenspaces, including naturalized wetlands and meadows, walking and cycling trails, community gardens and playing fields.

The benefits we enjoy from Toronto's natural ravine lands include buffering against urban floods, reduced traffic noise and cleaner air quality, as well as the simple pleasure and stress reduction of an evening ravine stroll. City staff recently estimated that Toronto's ravines deliver \$822 million worth of recreation and ecosystem services each year. Their true value is immeasurable, and they deserve much better care. Investing in urban nature must be a key facet of our post-COVID recovery, on the path to a truly livable future city.

Ellen Schwartzel  
on behalf of TFN's Advocacy Team

### TFN OUTINGS

As announced in our July email communication, our walks program has become more like it was pre-pandemic. Registration is no longer required for our walks, and you are welcome to bring one non-member guest.

A list of walks available to members is posted on the members-only walks page of our website (<https://tfngo.to/memberwalks>) at the beginning of each month and can be downloaded or printed.

The Walks Team would like to thank members for their patience and understanding as we navigated our way through the pandemic.

## PIPING PLOVERS NESTING IN TORONTO

Piping Plovers are small shorebirds whose tiny size, round bodies and quirky walk make them adorable. There are three separate geographic populations in Canada: the Prairie population, the Atlantic population, and the Great Lakes population. Birds from all three populations winter on the southern Atlantic and Gulf Coasts of the US, and in the Bahamas. Unfortunately, they face many threats and have been designated an endangered species since 1985. The causes of their rapid population decline include habitat loss, disturbance by beach-goers and off-leash dogs, and natural predators. In 1990 there were only 13 pairs of Piping Plovers remaining in the Great Lakes. Plovers returned to Ontario to breed in 2007 after a 30-year absence. In 2018, for the first time in over 80 years, there was a successful nest in Toronto on Hanlan's Point Beach on Toronto Island. As of 2021 there were 74 pairs of Piping Plovers in the Great Lakes population. Conservation efforts are ongoing, including captive breeding in the U.S.

This summer Ontario hosted five nesting pairs including one nest on Hanlan's Point Beach. It was a late nest (the first egg being laid in the second week of June rather than early May) and the nest was close to the water. Volunteer nest monitors with Birds Canada were told that, for these reasons alone, the nest may not succeed.

I was one of several TFN members who spent time on Hanlan's Point beach this summer as a volunteer nest monitor. It was a privilege and a delight to see these birds, but it was also quite stressful. The nest was very close to the fence that ran along the shore. People routinely ignored the request not to walk along that portion of the shoreline

(to avoid scaring off the adult that was incubating the eggs). Several times I watched a crow through my binoculars as it stood next to the nest, and held my breath, hoping it would not eat the eggs. News of the nest spread on eBird and social media sites, and even more photographers showed up once the chicks hatched. Photographers and bird watchers who arrived before the volunteers did not always obey the sign that asked people to stay off that part of the shore. Despite Piping Plovers' endangered status, our governments offer no assistance in protecting them other than funding a roped-off enclosure and signs. Plover nesting sites in the U.S. are actively protected and managed by state and federal governments.

Two of the four eggs hatched on July 10; the other two did not hatch. The chicks walk soon after hatching but cannot fly for 3-4 weeks. The mother left the nest site within a week of the chicks hatching, leaving the father to protect the chicks (which is common). At the time this article was written the chicks were two weeks old and running around on the beach with their father. Hopefully, by the time you read it, they will have flown south and be surrounded by other Piping Plovers.

Piping Plover nest monitoring is one of many volunteer opportunities available with Birds Canada. You can listen to a recent episode of the Birds Canada podcast *The Warblers* to hear about Chewie's (the mother's) attempts to have a successful nest over the past few years. This is her first successful nest!

Article and photos by Diana Turchin



Piping Plover "Chewie" and three-day-old plover chick on Hanlan's Point beach, 2022

For more information about Piping Plovers, see the report of Andrea Gress's lecture in the February, 2022 newsletter: <https://tfngo.to/newsletter665>

## NATURE AND NURTURE – YOUR FUTURE AS A TFN VOLUNTEER

We're rebuilding TFN volunteer teams. Whether you see yourself in an outdoors setting or behind the scenes in admin, planning or coordinating, the following volunteer niches are open for you. The roles typically take about two to four hours per month.

Contact [volunteering@torontofieldnaturalists.org](mailto:volunteering@torontofieldnaturalists.org) and tell us about your interests, skills and time availability. We can share more info on each role. We also offer training, a team experience and connections to other naturalists. We ask that our volunteers have current TFN memberships. If you are not already a member, [join TFN here](#).

**Emerging Outings Leaders:** Chances are, a guided walk was your first TFN experience. Maybe you found yourself leaning into a winter wind, trailing after the ever-cheerful Bruce Thompson. Or perhaps Nancy Dengler led you down a hot, sunny path where Baltimore Checkerspots fluttered. We've all had such seminal events, though details vary. Ever afterwards, we are hooked on urban nature. Now we invite you to return the favour and lead outings yourself. Choose your route and plunge in. Whether you choose to lead one outing or dozens over a year, we will help you get started. We are also happy to link you with an experienced leader to co-lead your first few outings and grow your confidence. An updated Outing Leader's Guide can help you plan. Contact [walkscomm@torontofieldnaturalists.org](mailto:walkscomm@torontofieldnaturalists.org) to discuss next steps.

**Outings Coordinator:** Become a key part of TFN's Outings program by recruiting outings leaders and assembling a monthly roster of outings. This assignment is

done entirely from your home computer, at your own schedule, and in collaboration with the outings committee. Training is provided, as are precedents, lists and calendars. Contact [walkscomm@torontofieldnaturalists.org](mailto:walkscomm@torontofieldnaturalists.org) to learn more about this volunteer opportunity.

**Help Desk Team:** Be part of TFN's voice, volunteering from your home computer, at your own schedule. The help desk team will respond to email and voice-mail, including inquiries about membership, upcoming events and outings, and occasional media calls. This team performs a vital coordinating service for TFN. It's also a great overview to TFN's many programs and projects, from our outings and stewardship at Cottonwood Flats to our newsletter and our advocacy projects. Training provided! Contact: [volunteering@torontofieldnaturalists.org](mailto:volunteering@torontofieldnaturalists.org) to learn more about the help desk team.

**Minute-taker for TFN Board Meetings:** Support TFN's board as minute-taker. Our minutes are vital records, keeping us on track and reminding us of decisions taken and work ahead. Attending board meetings is a great way to get the inside story on TFN's many beloved and evolving programs. The board meets by Zoom, eight times a year; usually the first Sunday of the month at 5:00 pm. Minute-takers should be comfortable writing, editing and sharing Word documents, and participating in Zoom meetings. Training provided! Several minute-takers can share this task. To learn more, contact: [volunteering@torontofieldnaturalists.org](mailto:volunteering@torontofieldnaturalists.org)

Ellen Schwartzel, President

### WANTED – OLD BIRD LISTS!

The ROM's Ornithological Department is compiling records of birds seen in Ontario dating back to the 1800s. This project has been greatly facilitated by the comprehensive scope of the eBird platform launched in 2002. However, they need records prior to 2000 as well as any subsequent sightings that have not been posted on eBird. Extensive historical data are critical to back up and promote any large-scale, meaningful initiative to protect our remaining birds.

The ROM has approached TFN for help, and we have agreed to share with them bird lists included in our Outings Leaders' Reports. In addition, they have asked if TFN members have personal bird lists falling within the above-mentioned categories that they would be willing to donate or lend to the ROM. Their staff would enter these on eBird as "historical" bird lists.

If you are able to make this valuable contribution to Citizen Science, please contact John Kittredge for further information ([johndkittredge@gmail.com](mailto:johndkittredge@gmail.com) or 647-562-1944).

## TRIP TO JIM BAILLIE NATURE RESERVE, JUNE 21

The winter of 2021/22 and the following spring brought a lot of stormy weather to the Uxbridge area where TFN's Jim Baillie Nature Reserve is situated. The reserve is characterized by a water table just below the soil's surface over most of its area. As a result, tree roots tend to be very shallow, making trees, especially the dominant eastern white cedars, susceptible to high winds. One falling cedar can start a chain reaction of several going horizontal, leaving large walls of root systems perpendicular to the ground.

During an early inspection, Michael Moore, Ed Freeman and I found, as we had suspected, that many of the trails were blocked by these windfalls. Most of the tree trunks were too large to remove with handsaws. Michael's offer to bring his chainsaw the next time there was a scheduled trip to the reserve was eagerly accepted.

Accordingly, on a hot and muggy late June day, Michael, with expert and enthusiastic assistance from his grandson Jacob, used his chainsaw to clear all the larger trees from the trails. Some of them had been awaiting removal for several years. Now visitors won't have to clamber over these obstacles to explore the

trails, though it's not entirely smooth going; some parts can still be very muddy, while others have snaking tree roots to snare and trip the unwary. Ed Freeman and Kayoko Smith cleared the boardwalk over the wetland leading from the parking area while other volunteers

(Roberta Benson, Anita Kapel and friend, and Jane Lazizzera) dealt with smaller obstacles.

Also of note: When we took a breather at the end of the trail to Uxbridge Creek, we noticed a native species new to the area – poison ivy! This is an inviting spot to stop for a rest and a bite to eat so, should you find yourself there, please look around carefully before settling down. In the same area we cut down a large, multi-stemmed female buckthorn that, for years, had been dropping its berries into the creek causing problems downstream. I was relieved and thankful to the chainsaw crew for finally disposing of it.



Michael and Jacob clearing the trails.

Photo: Charles Bruce-Thompson

If you would like to join the Jim Baillie Stewardship Team, just send an email to [stewardship@torontofieldnaturalists.org](mailto:stewardship@torontofieldnaturalists.org) and we'll add your name to the list.

Charles Bruce-Thompson,  
Stewardship, Toronto Field Naturalists

## NATURE PHOTOGRAPHY

### Join other photographers

Did you know that TFN has a photography group where members of various skill levels connect to share their passion for nature and photography?

The group meets monthly via Zoom, participating in monthly photo challenges. Members get together for monthly photography-related outings.

If you are interested in joining, send an email to: [photography@torontofieldnaturalists.org](mailto:photography@torontofieldnaturalists.org).

### Share your photos

TFN's Promotions & Outreach Committee wants to showcase your photography on social media – primarily Instagram!

To date we have been featuring photos from members of our photography group and participants in the annual Nature Images Show. We would now like to feature selected photos from other members.

If you are interested in learning how you can submit photos, please email: [photography@torontofieldnaturalists.org](mailto:photography@torontofieldnaturalists.org).

## EXTRACTS FROM OUTINGS LEADERS' REPORTS

**Leslie Street Spit, Apr 12. Leader: Charles Bruce-Thompson.** A perfect early spring day. We saw a fair number of first (for us) sightings of the year including Brown-headed Cowbirds, female Red-winged Blackbirds, Common Grackles, Barn and Tree Swallows, Cedar Waxwings, cormorants, Eastern Phoebes and, the surprise of the morning, a very early Yellow Warbler. We also saw a few species that were enjoying their last few days on the Spit before heading north, including Northern Shovelers, Ring-necked Ducks, Hooded Mergansers, Gadwall and Redheads. We were treated to a very animated Red-breasted Merganser courtship display and, at the end of the walk, saw a raft of about 40 Red-necked Grebes. At the banding station we were treated with warm hospitality by Nigel and the volunteers who showed us a Swamp Sparrow they had just banded.

**Edwards Garden and Wilket Creek, Apr 13. Leader: Kayoko Smith.** It was a beautiful spring day. At TBG the harbinger of spring, witch hazel (yellow), was in full bloom. We were delighted to find red witch hazel (*Hamamelis x intermedia* "Diane") blooming and a stunning collection of irises and hellebores. Internationally-known Dutch landscape designer Piet Oudlof made a great impact in the front courtyard with his innovative use of perennial plant material and emphasis on sustainable planting. We proceeded to Wilket Creek where skunk cabbages poked out from the shallows and coltsfoot was blooming. The chorus of Red-winged Blackbirds and Northern Cardinals and sightings of mourning cloak and Compton tortoiseshell butterflies were reassuring signs of spring. We visited the tabletop of the ravine to discover the Lake Iroquois shoreline and enjoyed a clear view of the creek. In the woods tiny mottled leaves of trout lilies and Virginia waterleaf were emerging. Beneath piled dry leaves were overwintered Christmas ferns. Our final stop was the resting place of Alexander Milne who, from 1830 to 1919, owned property now called Edwards Gardens. Other birds observed were Downy Woodpecker, White-breasted Nuthatch, Winter Wren, Song Sparrow, Red-tailed Hawk and American Robin.

**High Park, Apr 16. Leader: Ellen Schwartzel.** Red-winged Blackbirds were out in full force, displaying their brilliant shoulder patches. Near the mouth of Wendigo Creek we saw Wood Ducks, Mallards, cormorants and a muskrat. Along the path we noted young sassafras trees,

still dormant. Further out on Grenadier Pond a male Ruddy Duck showed its distinctive blue beak, and beaver activity was obvious along the shoreline. Phragmites control work was evident at the southern edge of the pond. At the duck ponds at the southeast corner of the park, a kingfisher dove for fish.

**Ashbridge's Bay Park, Apr 20. Leader: Bob Kortright.** We saw the vegetation that has grown up on the beach since high lake levels caused it to flood in 2017. It was in this area that a disc golf course was installed last fall, but removed recently (for migration and nesting season) following a campaign by birders and Friends of Ashbridge's Bay. Some rare plants have been found there and the area has been great for shorebirds stopping over in spring when water levels are high enough. We also saw the enormous pile of rocks placed last year to protect the shoreline from erosion, the groynes under construction to prevent silting up of the harbour entrance (necessitating dredging in the past), and the new sewage plant outfall under construction. After five days of cooler-than-normal temperatures bird numbers were modest, but we found 26 species, including many creepers and a cooperative pair of Rough-winged Swallows posing near the small bluff, now covered by erosion-preventing rocks, where they have nested in past years.



Red elderberry at Highland Creek.

Photo: Mitch Pencharz

**Wildflowers, Lower Highland Creek Park, Apr 23. Leader: Danielle Pellatt-Hall.** We saw many species of native wildflowers, shrubs and trees. We also saw a few invasive species in this Environmentally Significant Area (ESA) but not nearly as many as in some less-protected spaces. The spring ephemerals were starting to come up, including bloodroot, trout lily, ramps (wild onions) and Virginia waterleaf. We saw young trilliums starting to pop up but still furled. Dame's rocket was quite comfortable in the area with many of its basal rosettes visible. Red elderberry and chokecherry were starting to unfurl their leaves and flowers but red osier dogwood was waiting for warmer days. Trees were less active. Only the maples were opening their flowers. We saw Manitoba maple, hybrid Freeman maple, river birch, eastern white pine, crack willow, beech and hemlock. One area of the forest floor that had a lot of moss-covered debris from old dead wood was completely covered by little dark bumps (ostrich ferns). These would soon grow into fiddleheads before unfurling into full fronds.

*continued on next page*

EXTRACTS *continued***Earth Day litter clean up and nature walk, German Mills Settlers' Park, Apr 23. Leader: Theresa Moore.**

On a cool overcast Earth Day, we collected litter and construction waste along Leslie north of Steeles up to the entrance of the park and discussed the history of the area and conservation efforts. Birds observed included Belted Kingfisher, Killdeer, American Goldfinches, Turkey Vultures, Yellow-rumped Warblers, Downy Woodpecker, cormorants, Canada Geese, Blue Jay, Northern Cardinal, robins, Song Sparrows and many Red-winged Blackbirds. A Red-bellied Woodpecker was heard. Coltsfoot, violets, and bloodroot were in flower. We also saw sprouting stinging nettle, tansy and horsetail. The latter released a little cloud of spores when lightly touched.

**Birds, Colonel Samuel Smith Park, Apr 28. Leader: David Creelman.**

We rambled around the park, which threads through parts of Humber College and juts into Lake Ontario. Despite the recent cold inhibiting migration, there were many birds. Highlights included Blue-headed Vireo, two Eastern Towhees, Northern Parula, Yellow-rumped Warblers, Chipping Sparrow, Hermit Thrush, Golden-crowned and Ruby-crowned Kinglets, Belted Kingfisher, Turkey Vultures, and many Northern Flickers. Most of our group saw close to 40 species.

**University of Toronto downtown campus, May 1.**

**Leaders: Ellen Schwartzel and Paul Overy.** Distant shouts of Queen's Park protesters mingled with traffic noise as our group gathered north of the Ontario legislature. We absorbed the ambience and considered how crowds and heavy foot traffic are everyday realities for the stately oaks, pines and maples of Queen's Park. A multi-year project to rejuvenate this park and restore the health of the trees is now in a final phase. Walking southwest in a steady rain, we found that King's College Circle had become a massive construction site. U of T is moving roughly 260 parking spots from street parking to underground and, in the process, is installing a geothermal energy system – Canada's largest to-date. We discussed key moments in the history of the University and explored sites of scientific interest on campus: the magnetic and meteorological station, examples of ancient

rocks and micro-woods. Despite the chilly wet weather, the 70 cherry trees north of Robarts Library were at a lovely early stage of blossoming,

**Aggie's Wildflowers (Lambton House), May 8.**

**Leader: Madeleine McDowell.** Starting in Aggie's Wildflower Garden at Lambton House (a joint TFN, Heritage York and Black Creek Conservation-funded Project), we traversed city streets (lots of violets) through an outdoor classroom in the Warren Park Schoolyard with oaks, ash and maples to the treed sandy Gooch Ravine with its shrubs, springs, bloodroot and marsh marigolds. Then we crossed to the Magwood Sanctuary, well-treed with oak and beech, skunk cabbage, trilliums in bloom, the most spectacular display of trout lilies I have ever seen, may-apple and wild ginger blooming.

(Garlic mustard is a severe problem but the City has forbidden locals to remove it). We saw yellow violets as we left the woods before proceeding to the Humber River and back through a grassy lane and pedestrian trail to Lambton House.

**Toronto Island, May 10. Leader:**

**Charles Bruce-Thompson.** We couldn't have asked for a better day for this walk, part of Birds Canada's 2022 Toronto Bird Celebration. The leaves hadn't yet fully unfurled and bright sunlight illuminated everything. Most of the walk was on the trail forming the perimeter of Billy Bishop Airport, where there is plenty of varied habitat. Our progress was halted by an

impassable puddle, so we could not complete the circuit. This made it impossible to visit all of Hanlan's and catch the ferry as scheduled. Among the more noteworthy birds we saw were Black-throated Green, Cape May, Palm, Yellow and Yellow-rumped Warblers and Northern Parula. Non warblers included Lincoln's and White-crowned Sparrows, Hermit and Swainson's Thrushes, a Brown Thrasher, Red-tailed Hawk, Gray Catbird, Brown-headed Cowbird, Common Raven, Baltimore Oriole, Rose-breasted Grosbeak, Warbling Vireo, Eastern Kingbird, Spotted Sandpiper, Great Egret, a pair of Canvasbacks and, the stars of the day, a pair of Bobolinks. If I include the usual suspects (robins, chickadees, etc.) we must have seen around 40 species. My bird identification skills are often tentative at best, so my thanks to David Creelman for his expert advice and gentle guidance in all things avian.



Wild Ginger seen on Aggie's Wildflowers walk.

Photo: Jean Trivett

## PURPLE MARTINS IN HIGH PARK

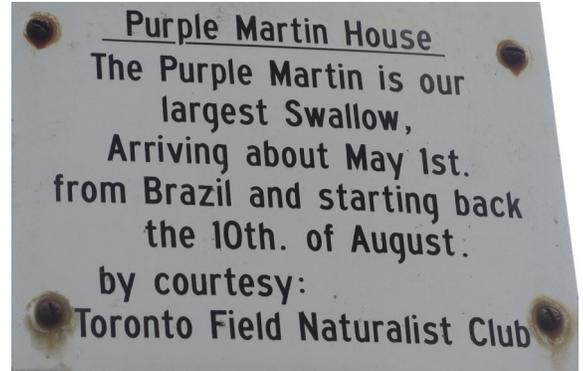
Purple Martins once nested in natural tree hollows or cliff crevices, but nowadays they benefit from human-provided “apartment complexes.” Decades ago, thanks to a donation from TFN, one of these was installed on the east bank of Grenadier Pond in High Park. Regrettably, in recent years, this Purple Martin house was taken over by House Sparrows. A few years ago, the TRCA provided a new house at the south end of the pond that has attracted nesting Purple Martins.

To my surprise, while walking in the park in late July, I spotted Purple Martin activity at the old TFN house. Upon checking with members of the High Park Natural Environment Committee, I learned that Purple Martins have been observed there the last couple of years, but their impression was that the martins nested in the new TRCA house, gathering around the TFN house only after their young had fledged and the sparrows had departed.

However, upon checking further, Monika Croydon was excited to spot in one of the cavities a nest containing three juveniles. It is good to know that the TFN house is once again serving its intended purpose!

Wendy Rothwell

Sign on TFN Purple Martin house. Photo: Wendy Rothwell  
Purple Martin feeding young. Photo: Monika Croydon



## UPCOMING JUNIOR NATURALISTS' EVENTS

We are excited to welcome families with children between 6-12 years to join in the TFN Juniors fall 2022 programs that run Saturday mornings 10:00 am – 12:00 noon. The program follows the wildlife around town.

Sept 10: Fish for cool stream creatures with Don Scallen in Highland Creek.

Oct 15: Experience the salmon run in the Humber River and learn how Indigenous folks harvested and used Atlantic salmon.

Nov 12: Create a T-shirt with dyes made from local plants.

Dec 3: Visit Colonel Sam Smith Park to welcome our returning winter ducks.

If you are interested in joining any of our Juniors events, please contact Anne Purvis at [juniortfn@torontofieldnaturalists.org](mailto:juniortfn@torontofieldnaturalists.org). Your name will be added to an email list and you will receive an invitation a week before each event. If your family is able to attend, you pre-register by responding to the invitation email. One parent is required to stay with your children for the duration of the program.

## JUNIOR NATURALISTS

### Invasive Plants

On June 11, the Junior Naturalists held their last session of the season exploring the importance of nature stewardship through invasive species removal. We removed garlic mustard and dog-strangling vine from Ashbridge's Bay and learned about the impact of invasive plants on the native flora and fauna. We also did a survey of the number of insects found on the different tree species in the area, and found that native species had far more insects, and evidence of insects (eaten leaves), than exotics.

Invasive species are those that have been introduced, either intentionally or accidentally, into a new habitat in which they quickly establish themselves and outcompete native flora and fauna. Some of these plants, like garlic mustard, were brought over from Europe as a food plant, while others were ornamental plants that expanded beyond the gardens where they were initially planted. The Province's Invasive Species Strategic Plan has identified at least 441 invasive species growing in Ontario.

In addition to being very fast-growing, some species can spread enormous numbers of seeds. Garlic mustard, for example, can produce up to 150 seed pods per plant, with over 20 seeds per pod. These plants can increase the pressure on native plant species by altering the soil chemistry; can affect the fungi that help plants absorb nutrients, and are either unpalatable or toxic to local insects and herbivores that will inadvertently overgraze the native plants in the area looking for food.

Native plant and insect species have evolved together within the same ecosystem. In many cases, butterflies and moths have become highly specific about

the plants they will eat, especially during the caterpillar stage. Quite often the adult females will not lay their eggs on other species. Furthermore, approximately 90% of species are host plant-specific. Insects are a vital component of an ecosystem's food web, forming an important food source for birds (especially hatchlings) and other animals. As a result, reducing their numbers increases competition among their consumers and further species loss in the area.

Dog-strangling vine is a member of the milkweed family, and it produces a chemical that can attract monarch butterflies. That said, the plant itself is toxic to the young caterpillars that are poisoned after hatching. Garlic mustard has a similar effect on the West Virginia White butterfly, poisoning the caterpillars when eggs had been mistakenly deposited on it.

Fortunately, there is a variety of things that people can do to help:

If you have a garden, be sure to plant native species. Many nurseries sell native plants, and the Ontario Invasive Plant Council has a pamphlet of native alternatives to common nursery invasives (<https://tfngo.to/growmeinstead>). Also, there are several visual guides to invasive species in Ontario to help people identify invasives, so they can be removed, and advise the proper disposal methods for these plants.

When you are leaving an area with many invasive species, it's important to look at your legs and shoes to see if any seeds have hitched a ride in the treads or as burrs on your clothes. If you find any, remove and dispose of them safely to help stop their spread.

Vanessa McMain

## RESTORING COTTONWOOD FLATS IN THE DON VALLEY SPECIAL LECTURE, MAY 19, 2022

**Speaker:** Jason Ramsay-Brown, author of *Toronto's Ravines and Urban Forests* (Lorimer, 2015 & 2020), Past-President of Toronto Field Naturalists (TFN), Community Stewardship Program (CSP) Cottonwood Flats, Cottonwood Flats Monitoring Project (CFMP).

TFN has been involved with Cottonwood Flats for over five years, during which time Jason Ramsay-Brown has been the Primary Administrator of the Cottonwood Flats Monitoring Project (CFMP). The Flats are a unique parcel of meadow and wetland in the Don Valley, next to Crothers Woods. Jason talked of the past, present and future of this restoration effort as explored through five years of data collection and site-monitoring. The roles of citizen scientists and community stewards are crucial to the future of the Flats.

Don Valley has been transformed through its long history. Most precontact sites have been destroyed, but the area was used by Indigenous people for thousands of years. Colonial settlers used the river for sawmills and more recently the area was a site for industry. Some remnants of this industrial use include the scattered concrete blocks renamed Slab City. During the late 20th century the flats were used as a dump for snow and road debris.

Between 2010 and 2014, the City and its partners produced a plan to restore the area to wetlands. A key part of this plan was the enclosure of a one-acre songbird meadow to protect ground-nesting birds from being trampled by humans and dogs. Due to budget restrictions and the dissatisfaction of the local community, however, the wetland was not created as planned. In July 2016 staff from the City of Toronto's Natural Environment and Community Programs section of Urban Forestry approached TFN to ask that we participate in developing a long-term monitoring program at Cottonwood Flats. TFN members contributed to developing strategies that would be used to monitor the site year-by-year. In 2017 the CFMP began its on-the-ground work.



Songbird Meadow. Photo: Jason Ramsay-Brown

How does the CFMP work? Cottonwood Flats has 10 permanent monitoring plots. One vegetation assessment and five monitoring sessions are held throughout the year on dates aligned with previous inventories and assessments.

The TFN monitoring team includes a number of specialists. Birders monitor birds, nests and fauna sightings. Botanists focus on vegetation assessment including life cycle data and new species. Observers (non-specialists) are assigned unique tasks or assist other team members. Site Ambassadors do public education and collect data on urban use of the area. The photographer takes a visual record so we can compare season to season from year to year. Administrators coordinate the data received from team

members' maps and logs, and produce plot overlays with vegetation, sightings and notes. These are organized into annual reports that are available on the TFN website at <https://tfngo.to/cfmp>.

What have we, citizen scientists serving as objective observers, found? We have recorded 26 bird species, 14 species of butterflies, two mammals, one reptile

and one amphibian. The tree canopy is dominated by European Buckthorn and Black Locust. 70% of vascular plant species are exotic/invasive. The herbaceous layer was dominated by tansy and white sweet clover (WSC). In 2019 dog-strangling vine (DSV) took over. With the herbicide treatment of DSV in 2021, coupled with decline of WSC, we expect to see a new second place dominant in 2022.

But a key question for us has always been, "What's the desired ecological trajectory?" Our collected data clearly show that, without the intervention of stewards, the Flats would become an extension of the kind of urban wilds typical of the lower Don.

In April 2022 TFN agreed to serve as Team leader for a new City of Toronto Community Stewardship Program (CSP). The CSP (Cottonwood Flats) concentrates on Slab City and the songbird meadow. Members will attempt to

*continued on next page*

## WHAT'S MAKING THAT SOUND?

We are all familiar with the chips, whirs and buzzes that fill the air in late summer. I am always puzzled to determine what insect is making which sound, so I was delighted to find a fascinating article, *The Scoop on the Buzz* by Lesley Grant, in the summer 2022 issue of *ON Nature*. Lesley shares interesting facts about the grasshoppers, crickets, katydids and cicadas that contribute to this orchestra.

There are 23 species of singing crickets and 35 species of katydids in Ontario, each species having a unique song. As with birds, these sounds pertain to mating. The male insect's purpose is to attract a female and deter competing males. Crickets make their sounds by scraping their right wings over "files" on their left wings, while katydids vibrate their wings left over right. Grasshoppers also produce mating sounds but not as a nonstop chorus, and most are beyond the range of adult human hearing. The common dog-day cicada (one of nine cicada species in Ontario) produces a raucous whine by contracting membranes on the sides of its abdomen. This buzz is similar to that of a power tool, which can cause confusion for female cicadas.



Clockwise from top left: Grasshopper, photo: Mitch Pencharz; Crickets, photo: Ken Sproule; Katydid, photo: Andrew Interisano; Cicada, photo: Theresa Moore

The article contains many other interesting facts about the mating habits and life cycles of these arthropods. You can read it at <https://tfngo.to/scooponthebuzz>.

Wendy Rothwell

Other resources recommended by Lesley Grant:

<http://songsofinsects.com/> features photos and recordings of numerous species of crickets, katydids, grasshoppers and cicadas.

<https://musicofnature.com/albums/insect-lullabies/> Lang Elliott's digital album showcases the singing insects including some species found in Ontario.

<https://www.inaturalist.org/projects/grasshoppers-crickets-and-katydid-of-ontario> features nearly 25,000 observations of 126 species of Orthoptera in Ontario.

<https://www.cicadamania.com/> a website dedicated to photos, sounds and news about cicadas.

### RESTORING COTTONWOOD FLATS *continued*

control invasives such as tansy, buckthorn, DSV and Japanese knotweed. There is hope that native species such as snakeroot, found a few years ago, will return, and species such as wild bergamot, black-eyed Susan and others will be reintroduced by seeding.

There is a robust link between involvement in citizen science and stewarding. CFMP data will inform our CSP stewardship activities, and the results of our stewardship efforts will be monitored and documented in future CFMP data.

More information on the Cottonwood Flats Monitoring Project, the Community Stewardship Program team and how you can participate is available at <https://torontofieldnaturalists.org/stewardship-citizen-science/>

Nicola Lawrence

To listen to this lecture go to: <https://youtu.be/LwUHM91r76c>

## TREE OF THE MONTH: GREEN/RED ASH (*FRAXINUS PENNSYLVANICA*)

Green ash is one of the few tree species in which characteristics of our street trees are markedly different from those growing locally in natural habitats, including ravines within city limits. Native stands are found in low-lying, wet places, like stream and river floodplains, pond and lake margins, and seasonal swamps. These trees, often also called red ash, are hairy on their twigs and leaflet undersides, often so densely as to be fuzzy. The many trees lining streets, in contrast, almost always have completely hairless shoots and leaflets. Known as green ash “proper” if the two forms are taxonomically distinguished as varieties, these smooth-skinned trees mostly originated from trees growing along riversides in the Prairies. Because of its prevalence along roadways, green ash is the ash tree we notice most often, supplanted only in the fall, when its rather ordinary yellow autumn leaves are briefly eclipsed by the much more conspicuous reddish purple leaves of white ash (*Fraxinus americana*).

Green ash is typical of its genus. The leaves are pinnately compound, usually with seven leaflets, one at the tip, the other six in opposite pairs along the sides. The leaves themselves are also oppositely arranged, with pairs attached directly across the twig from each other, so that branching is also opposite. Like many other trees with compound leaves, branching in green ash is rather sparse compared to trees with simple leaves. Since the branches quickly angle upward, successive pairs of leaves and branches are rotated by 90° around the shoots (decussate). Thus, when you look straight down a twig from its tip, all the leaves fall into four ranks (positions around the circumference) in a very regimented fashion.

The decussate arrangement of structures also extends to the flowers and fruits, and to the variably elongate, branched clusters (inflorescences) in which they are borne. Green ash, like most other ash species, is dioecious, bearing only male *or* female flowers and inflorescences, which are wind-pollinated in all our familiar ashes. Pollinated female flowers grow out into highly characteristic, efficiently wind dispersed, symmetrically winged samaras shaped like paddles for a miniature fairy in a pea-pod canoe.



From top:  
Compound leaf with seven leaflets.  
Winter twig with decussate arrangement  
of leaf scar and buds.  
Photos: Ken Sproule

*continued on next page*



## PROTECTING TURTLES

You may have read an article by Elaine Smith in the July 16th Toronto Star about *Turtle Protection*, a newly-formed Indigenous-led volunteer conservation program that guards turtles' nests in High Park. She writes, “Turtles are valuable wetland custodians that eat mosquito larvae and decaying carrion and vegetation to help keep the water clean.” Two of the eight at-risk species of turtles in Ontario, painted and snapping turtles, are common in High Park. Grenadier Pond is a natural habitat for them, but they come ashore to lay their eggs. The mother turtle chooses a sunny spot where warm soil will incubate them, digs a hole, lays a clutch and returns to the wetlands. *Turtle Protectors* are installing boxes with mesh to protect the turtles' nesting spots from natural predators such as raccoons, skunks, coyotes, foxes and off-leash dogs.

I recently went to explore and was surprised at the number of these protective boxes, some of them a long way uphill from the pond. It's hard to imagine a turtle making such an arduous journey, or to envisage how many baby turtles these nesting sites might represent.

Wendy Rothwell

TREE OF THE MONTH *continued*

From top: Galled male flowers, Cottonwood Flats. Galled and unaffected female flowers, Peterborough.

Photos: Ron Dengler

The flowers are the focus for one of ash's most compelling features, particularly noticeable in winter: conspicuous, persistent galls stimulated by two species of tiny, wormlike eriophyid mites in the genus *Aceria*. Galls induced by ash flower gall mite (*A. fraxiniflora*) are most common. In the spring, mites burrow into individual flowers of a male inflorescence and stimulate the formation of a spherical bumpy gall about 1 cm across. The galls harden and inhibit the shedding of male inflorescences that would normally take place soon after pollen is shed. These galled inflorescences can even last through a second growing season before falling, even though the mites themselves are long gone. On female inflorescences, ash key gall mite (*A. fraxinivora*), while less common than ash flower gall mite on males, can be striking. The galls are similar to those on the males except that each one has a completely recognizable samara sticking out of it. Unlike *A. fraxiniflora*, which is confined to flowers, *A. fraxinivora* can also form separate, dissimilar galls on foliage. While both mites may have a modest impact on reproduction of infected trees (especially in males), neither seriously affects their health or longevity.

That is not true for an individually much less conspicuous, but much more impactful, specialist herbivore, the emerald ash borer (*Agrilus planipennis*), accidentally introduced from temperate northeastern Asia. The adult beetles, handsome relatives of our many species of metallic wood boring (or jewel) beetles in the family Buprestidae, do not themselves do much damage, though they do feed on ash foliage. Instead, the larvae, which, like those of other buprestids, are referred to as flat-headed borers, feed in great numbers beneath the bark, cutting off the flow of photosynthate in the phloem and water in the strongly ring-porous wood as the stem is girdled, killing it. In Toronto, green ash is the primary host of this beetle, which also readily attacks white ash as the local population of green ashes succumbs to the feeding. The spread of emerald ash borer is completely out of control. With no end in sight, millions of infested green ash trees are dying, have died, or have been cut down for safety and arboreal hygiene, and millions more are expected to succumb.

The contrasting impact of feeding by these arthropods on green ash also highlights the importance of long-term interactions between herbivores and their foodplants. The two gall mites are native North American species that have fed upon green ash for many generations, probably for hundreds of thousands of years. Like predator and prey, they have, no doubt, undergone many genetic accommodations with each other. Green ash has only very recently (just in the last thirty years or so) encountered emerald ash borer (which feeds broadly on all

ash species within its native range) and has no specific genetic defences against it. It is a race against time to see what kinds of defences might evolve before the tree is extirpated.

James Eckenwalder

## ENCOURAGING NEWS RE LDD CATERPILLARS

After the nightmare infestation of LDD caterpillars last year, it was heartwarming for me to see this helicopter arriving to spray over High Park in late May. More recently I saw one of the burlap traps installed on several trees in the park to capture LDD caterpillars, gain insights into volume and determine whether the virus sprayed was showing up in caterpillars. Joel Harrison-Off from the City's Parks, Forestry and Recreation informed me that, since numbers have gone way down, they probably won't do a large-scale data collection. The massive downturn in the population is due partly to the spraying, but also to a natural collapse. Joel said the product sprayed is a highly targeted virus that affects only LDD caterpillars and can have some carry-over effect into next season. This is good news indeed!

Wendy Rothwell



## PLANNING FOR A BIODIVERSE CITY – SPECIAL LECTURE, APRIL 11, 2022

Jane Weninger, Senior Planner, Toronto City Planning, shared a sobering context for her overview of Toronto's green policy framework: We are in a climate and biodiversity crisis, as indicated by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC)'s Sixth Assessment released this year, and the United Nations' Fifth Global Biodiversity Outlook Report released in 2020, which reported that biodiversity is declining at an unprecedented rate. However, there is hope that green policies can help, and the City of Toronto is a leader.

The Greater Toronto Golden Horseshoe is a rich bioregion that includes the Niagara Escarpment, the Oak Ridges Moraine, Protected Countryside, and shoreline of Lake Ontario. The Province's planning framework sets out broad, overarching policies, enabling by-laws and regulations implemented locally by municipalities.

Three provincial land-use documents guide the City's framework for managing nature. The Growth Plan defines where and how the region will grow. The second is the Greenbelt Plan, which protects natural heritage and agricultural systems, some of which extend into the City's boundaries. The third is the Provincial Policy Statement, which requires municipalities to protect natural features as well as the quality and quantity of water.

Toronto's Greenspace System includes the valleys, ravines and lakeshore as well as several urban river systems that connect the Oak Ridges Moraine to Lake Ontario. Toronto is growing fast and is expected to add 700,000 in population over the next 30 years. Despite its dense urban form, Toronto is surprisingly rich in biodiversity, due in part to the intersection of multiple forest zones and migratory bird routes in the region:

- Ravines make up 17% of Toronto's land area;
- 13.5% of the land area is terrestrial natural habitat;
- Almost half of the city's parks are natural parkland;
- There are 11.5 million trees in the city;
- These natural areas provide \$822 million annually in ecosystem services;

- The city's biodiversity is significant, including 404 species of birds.

The City's Official Plan is the primary high-level mechanism for articulating environmental policies. It defines a Natural Heritage System that includes ravines and 86 Environmentally Significant Areas that mandate higher levels of protection. Section 3.4's provisions are generally applied to new development through the Ontario Planning

Act and rezoning. Studies are required to identify impacts of development on the System and how they can be mitigated. The Ravine By-law overlaps with the Official Plan Natural Heritage System to provide an extra layer of protection of features. Any development involving any change in the ravines requires a permit.

Four overall strategies support the city's biodiversity:

**Ravine Strategy** – a framework for management, use, enhancement and protection, including \$460M allocated for ten priority investment areas, such as a loop trail, invasive species management and litter clean-up.

**Biodiversity Strategy** – a framework for protecting and enhancing natural areas including a made-in-Toronto ecological integrity monitoring system.

**Urban Forest Strategy** – implementation of an urban canopy target of 40%.

**Pollinator Protection Strategy** – six priorities to protect 360 species of bees and 100 species of butterflies.

The City has also developed tools to ensure the built environment supports the natural environment. Developers must meet Toronto Green Standards, a market transformation tool that includes ecology and biodiversity as performance categories, driving the development of green skills and products in the marketplace.

**Green Roof By-law** – there are now 850 green roofs that total the area of 160 NFL football fields and provide multiple benefits such as reducing the urban heat island and air pollution.



Toronto City Hall green roof beside Council Chamber. Photo: Jenny Bull

*continued on next page*

## ABOUT TFN

TFN is a charitable, non-profit organization.

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### NEWSLETTER

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**Submissions deadline for Oct: Sept 1**

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#### PLANNING FOR A BIODIVERSE CITY *continued*

**Bird-friendly development** – rules require bird-friendly glazing with low reflectance and visual markings on the glass within the first 16m (higher risk), for instance. Private residences are exempt.

**Tree growth** – adequate soil volume and two-year watering and maintenance are required for trees on new developments.

**Exterior lighting** – fixtures must be Dark Sky-compliant to prevent light spillage into natural areas.

Finally, the City has a Soft Landscaping Bylaw that requires new residences to have 75% of soft landscaping such as soil and gardens planted in the front and side yards. Artificial turf does not qualify as soft landscaping under the bylaw.

Ms. Weninger concluded her presentation with an apropos quote from Jane Jacobs: “. . . perhaps it will be the city that reawakens our understanding and appreciation of nature, in all its teeming, unpredictable complexity.”

Philip Jessup

To hear this lecture go to: <https://youtu.be/5KlwTf2tJoE>

## WEATHER (THIS TIME LAST YEAR)

### September 2021

September was marked by slightly above-normal temperatures and some heavy rains. The sultry air masses of August were occasionally displaced by cold fronts that brought showers and thunderstorms, some of them violent. Warm lake temperatures from the extended August heat contributed some energy to these storms. We had multiple lines of severe thunderstorms in southern Ontario on the 7th to 8th. The 7th brought tornadoes to parts of the southwest, while wind damage from downbursts hit parts of downtown and east Toronto in the wee hours of the 8th. Later in the month, a system brought localized flooding with 60.8 mm falling at Pearson Airport and 56.1 mm downtown on the 21st to 22nd.

After a dry August, it was the wettest September since 1996 with 158.0 mm at Pearson and 138.6 mm downtown. It was the third wettest on record at Pearson.

Temperatures were less anomalous than precipitation. Downtown's monthly mean was 18.4° while Pearson's was 17.6°. This is about 0.5° above the 30-year average. And the run of 30° weather we had in August was over. The month's warmest reading was 27.9° at Pearson on the 14th.

Gavin Miller

## FOR READING



Great Blue Heron.  
Drawing by  
Geraldine Goodwin

### ***The Bird*, by Colin Tudge, 2008**

A great read if you are fascinated by birds, as so many of us are, except that chapter 4 on classification is dated due to the many advances made in this area over the past 15 years. For example, storks, once thought to be closely related to condors (new world vultures), are now known to be closest to Suliformes (cormorants, gannets, etc.) and Pelicaniformes (herons,

ibis, etc.), while condors are closest to hawks, eagles and kites. Nevertheless, Tudge discusses the challenges of classification well, and his writing is always engaging. Don't miss the epilogue, with its cogent analysis of why humans are ruining our natural support system, the biosphere, into the ground. (A better metaphor is needed for the ocean portion of the biosphere which is much bigger than the terrestrial part.)

### ***Fuzz: When Nature Breaks the Law*, by Mary Roach, 2021**

Mainly about human-wildlife conflict and humans who attempt to manage the conflict, *Fuzz* also addresses danger trees. This book is a witty investigation that reveals that some countries are much more willing than North America to accommodate difficult animals. Gulls, rats, monkeys and squirrels, as well as leopards, bears and elephants, are targets of irate humans, while other humans attempt to find humane ways of managing the conflict.

Bob Kortright

### ***Black Lion: Alive in the Wilderness***

**by Sicelo Mbatha with Bridget Pitt**

<https://www.chapters.indigo.ca/en-ca/books/black-lion-teachings-from-the/9781776191482-item.html>

What is the nature of the human relationship with the wild, and how can we tap into it to help heal society's problems? It's these questions and more that Sicelo Mbatha (with co-author Bridget Pitt) sets out to answer in this memoir.

Now in his 40s, Mbatha came of age in a South Africa transitioning from apartheid to a fully representative democracy, and this history is reflected in the arc of his career, from a village childhood with a 28-km round-trip walk to school to running his own guiding company with a mission to deepen guests' connection both to nature and to local communities.

Mbatha's vivid descriptions bring to life the landscapes of his home. You'll meet lions and zebras and giraffes, yes, but also the trees, birds, plants and insects that share their space. And throughout, he also explains the philosophies behind his strong belief in the power of nature. "It has been my life's path to rekindle the wildness in all of us," he writes, "to bring people into the presence of wildness and help open their souls to its beauty, wisdom and infinite power to heal."

Kat Tancock

## KEEPING IN TOUCH

### TFN MEMBER WINS INTERNATIONAL PHOTOGRAPHY CONTEST!

Congratulations to Andrew Interisano, a member of TFN's photography group, who was named the overall winner of Picfair's Urban Photo Awards, a free-to-enter photography contest that received over 6000 entries from amateur and professional photographers from all around the world.

You can view Andrew's winning photo – a late-night capture of two coyotes entitled *Date Night* at <https://tfngo.to/datenight>

### A SPECIAL BIRTHDAY FOR A REMARKABLE LADY!

We are delighted to hear that there will be a party on September 3rd to celebrate Eva Davis's 103rd birthday.

Eva served on the Newsletter Committee for many years. A talented artist and gifted writer, she contributed many drawings, paintings, articles and delightful reminiscences to the newsletter. We wish her a very happy birthday.



### From the Newsletter Committee

After another year of having to do our work via email, members of the Newsletter Committee were delighted to connect in person for a picnic and nature walk in High Park in mid-July. We were pleased to welcome a new member, Leslie Padorr, who is serving as assistant editor.

As we walked by Grenadier Pond, we were excited to see a Great Blue Heron, a muskrat and this Black-crowned Night-heron.

Those of you who receive the print version of the newsletter will have noticed that this issue arrived in an envelope rather than having your name and address printed on the back cover. A number of members experienced significant delays in receiving delivery by the Post Office of their May issue. We have adopted a different mailing method that we hope will prove more efficient. Thank you to members of the Newsletter Committee who have volunteered to label and stuff envelopes.

Wendy Rothwell, Editor



Leslie Padorr, Jenny Bull, Vivienne Denton, Vanessa Hardy, Elisabeth Gladstone, Jennifer Smith. (Absent: Kathleen Brooks). Photo: Wendy Rothwell



Black-crowned Night-heron. Photo: Jenny Bull

## TFN ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Thursday, October 20, 2022 7:00 pm via Zoom

We'll be able to welcome our 2022/23 Board of Directors. We'll also thank our terrific volunteers, recap the past year and look forward to TFN's upcoming 100th Anniversary.

Please mark your calendar and plan to attend! We need a quorum of 50 to vote on core business items.

The Zoom link for the AGM will be available soon in the Members-Only section of our website (see page 17).

## TFN LECTURE

Sunday, September 11 at 2:30 pm

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

**See page 2 for announcement about in-person lectures and picnics!**

### Native Bee Conservation and Diversity in the City of Toronto

*Scott MacIvor, community ecologist and assistant professor, Dept of Biological Sciences, U of T Scarborough, will share recent research findings about urban impacts on wild bee diversity and pollination, and demonstrate how human intervention can improve opportunities for native bees.*



There is an accessible entrance to Emmanuel College via the second door south on Queen's Park. Elevator inside to the right. Room 001 is one floor below street level.

#### Upcoming lectures:

Oct 2: (in person) Plastic pollution in the Laurentian Great Lakes: the state of the science and how it informs policy. Chelsea Rochman, Assistant Professor in Ecology, U of T

Nov 6: (by Zoom) Protecting and Recovering Butterfly Species at Risk in Ontario. Jessica Linton, Senior Biologist, NRS Inc.