



Since 1923

TORONTO FIELD NATURALIST

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Wood Ducklings. Photo: Lillian Natalizio

REGULARS

About TFN	15
Extracts from Outings Reports	12
For Reading	7
Junior Naturalists	9
Keeping In Touch	8
Lecture Notice	16
President's Report	2
TFN Outings Information	4
Weather (This Time Last Year)	14

FEATURES

Voices for Toronto's Nature	3
Remembering Miles Hearn	5
Tree of the Month: Flowering Dogwood	6
Bird-friendly Windows	10
CFMP Wants You!	11
Do You Love Toronto's Ravines?	11
Plants Along the Sidewalk: Dandelion	13
Leslie Street Spit Enforcement Update	14
Focus on Nature: Abstract	16

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Being connected to nature is beneficial for everyone, and enabling this connection is what TFN strives to do through our programs. By getting people into our green spaces to experience the beauty they have to offer, to move with awe, we seek to inspire and educate. The hope is that these experiences will lead people to want to know more about these spaces and how to protect, conserve and restore them. There are many issues impacting our green spaces and, although it may feel overwhelming at times, we must remain committed and persistent in speaking up for nature. Concerted and sustained effort by us and other nature and community groups is very important. TFN will continue our own advocacy work (see page 3) and will support other groups in their endeavours.

One of the ways our outings committee has recently started to do this is via public walks in partnership with community and nature groups. We choose specific areas around the city hoping to generate awareness on issues impacting our green spaces. In March I co-led a walk with Francesca Bouaoun from *Ontario Place For All* to showcase the beauty and importance of Trillium Park and Ontario Place, while addressing the provincial

government's plans for this area. Look forward to more public walks like this in the future.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank two volunteers who have recently stepped down from roles with TFN. The first is Barry Singh, who had been our bookkeeper for quite a few years. Barry, thank you so much. We greatly appreciate all you have done for us. The second is Paul Overy, who was a member of our outings committee. Paul, thank you for all your efforts in support of this key program, especially in helping us deliver walks safely during the peak of the pandemic. We are most appreciative.



Gibraltar Point viewed from Ontario Place
Photo: Zunaid Khan

Thankfully, Paul Overy will continue in his capacity as coordinator of our *Toronto Nature Now* radio show which, thanks to his efforts, is back producing new episodes. If you have not had the opportunity to listen to this

great show, you can visit <https://tfngo.to/torontonaturenow> to learn more.

Get outside and enjoy nature.

Zunaid Khan
president@torontofieldnaturalists.org

IMPORTANT NEWS: PLEASE READ

The process for renewing your TFN Membership will be different this year. Don't worry, membership fees will remain the same! A fuller description will be provided in the May newsletter, and we ask our members to seek out and read it next month. In the meantime, a bit of back story:

A few years ago, TFN began a process of modernizing our membership database and the processes related to joining and renewing. This project was very successful and, as it turned out, quite timely. Without such changes it's hard to imagine how TFN could have continued to provide some of our member services during the height of the COVID pandemic.

The next stage in this modernization will enhance and expand the benefits of being a TFN member! We want to make your membership more valuable to you, and make being a TFN member more convenient and engaging. All the volunteers working to make these changes a reality are super excited by what it will mean for TFN and our members, and trust you will be as well.

Jason Ramsay-Brown

VOICES FOR TORONTO'S NATURE

Where are the voices speaking up for Toronto's nature? The enormous pressures of Toronto's housing crisis and the everyday evidence of eroding services seem to monopolize the attention of media, public and decision-makers. If you're feeling frustrated that local bird habitats or pollinator trends get short shrift, I invite you to consider how TFN is speaking up for nature at City Hall.

First, for context, let's tip our hat to an under-reported movement growing all over the city. Devoted teams of volunteers are caring for parks and ravine lands all over Toronto's landscape. Toronto Nature Stewards (now with 30+ sites) and dozens of "Friends of ..." groups function at hyper-local scales. They may care for a single stretch of creek, say, or an oblong patch of valley land. These volunteers may be in frequent contact with their local councillor and City Parks staff, reminding them of problems and promises, requesting bylaw enforcement and patiently offering advice on City plans and studies. TFN is proud to be part of this movement, with our own volunteers stewarding our own hyper-local patch of the Don Valley at Cottonwood Flats since 2017 in close partnership with the City. Learn more about TFN's citizen science project and invasive weed control at Cottonwood Flats.

A city-wide nature advocate is also needed, to amplify and complement the patch-work of locally focused care. TFN has been a key voice for nature for a century now; more about our history will appear in a future newsletter. Over those 100 years, our volunteers have continually built, retooled and sharpened their civic engagement skills to suit evolving times.

These days, a determined team of TFN volunteers meets monthly to focus on advocacy. Last fall, our aim was to "put nature on the ballot" for the October municipal election. You might have seen our call-outs for civic engagement on social media, or TFN's opinion piece in the Star last summer. We hope you attended an all-candidates meeting, armed with one of our nature-focused questions – though there was a dearth of all-candidates meetings city-wide. Post-election, we sent each councillor a letter outlining needs for more care and protection for

Toronto's natural lands. TFN also gave a deputation at City Hall Budget committee on January 17 where several interested councillors asked questions.

Next, we're gearing up to meet councillors one-on-one. With so many new faces on council, we have a chance to explain what's happening with Toronto's biodiversity, and the challenges faced by ravines and parklands. We also want to offer councillors "show and tell" tours of natural spaces in their wards. Of course, councillors have overwhelming pressures on their time, so we'll need to do our homework to get a hearing. TFN's 100-year record of credible advocacy should stand us in good stead.

Parallel to our city-wide advocacy, TFN's volunteers are also active on certain site-specific files, such as the evolving Toronto Island Master Plan. At the time of this writing, the draft plan proposes all manner of increased visitor pressures, while offering wholly inadequate protection to the Island's remarkable biodiversity. We have work to do!

Make no mistake, your voice is always vital in support of local nature. Please make a point to email your ward's city councillor today:

- You can learn your councillor's name at this link <https://tfngo.to/council>
- Be sure to provide your address to show you are a local constituent.
- Explain that local nature and biodiversity are top concerns for you, and ask what's happening in your ward this year to care for and restore ravines and parks.
- Also helpful: ask for the City's action at specific natural areas in your ward blighted by invasive weeds, erosion, trampling or waste.
- Your photos can share compelling evidence.

We would love to be copied on responses you receive; we hope to summarize these in a future issue of the newsletter. You can reach our advocacy team at action@torontofieldnaturalists.org.

Ellen Schwartzel on behalf of TFN's Take Action team

TFN LECTURE POSTPONEMENT

Regrettably the lecture about the Eastern Coyote scheduled for March 5 had to be postponed on short notice. We look forward to hearing Lesley Sampson's lecture on June 4.

TFN OUTINGS INFORMATION

A list of walks available to members is posted at the beginning of each month on the 'Members Only' walks page of our website (<https://tfngo.to/memberwalks>) and can be downloaded or printed. You are welcome to bring one non-member guest. Listed below are two April outings you might like to consider.

Bestview Woods and East Don Parklands: Signs of Spring, Nature and Heritage Walk

Leader: Theresa Moore

Saturday, April 29, 9:30 am

Meeting Point: By Shoppers Drug Mart, 1515 Steeles Ave E on the southeast corner of Steeles and Laureleaf Rd.

Walk Details: A 2-hour, 6 km circular walk on mostly unpaved, flat surfaces with a few gentle slopes and some stairs. There are some tree roots on the woodland trails and, if there have been recent heavy rains, these trails can be a bit muddy and/or slippery.

Walk Description: We'll discuss local heritage and look for signs of Spring – especially early wildflowers and returning birds. We'll walk south to the Bestview Park entrance and explore the Bestview Woods trails before joining the main East Don Parkland Trail. We'll turn back near the Finch Hydro Corridor and return to our starting point where there are a coffee shop, pizza place, Subway, and noodle house. Those who wish may drop out early at Cummer Ave and go on their own to Finch or Sheppard or head west along the Hydro Recreation Trail.

TTC: The #53B Steeles East bus (not the #53E Express!) runs from Finch subway station to Scarborough, stopping at Laureleaf Rd.

What to bring: Binoculars

Washrooms: Available at end of walk.

Walk Leader's Cell Number: 416-493-3201



East Don Parkland. Photo: Jason Ramsay-Brown

Miles Hearn Memorial Walk Earl Bales Park: birds, insects and plants

Leader: Bob Kortright

Saturday, April 15, 1:30 pm

Meeting Point: Park entrance from Bathurst St, 180 m south of Sheppard Ave W. Drivers – park in the lot at the end of Raoul Wallenberg Rd west of the community centre, less than 200 m from the meeting point.

Walk Details: A 2.5 hour, 2.5 km circular walk on mostly flat paved surfaces, with some steep slopes and stairs.

Walk Description: We will exchange reminiscences of Miles at the beginning and as we walk around the park, spotting birds, trees, other plants and any butterflies or other insects we can find. If the hill is slippery, we can stay on the tableland.

TTC: Sheppard West bus #84 or express #984 from Sheppard-Yonge or Sheppard West subway station to Bathurst. Walk south to meeting point. Or Bathurst bus #7 or Bathurst North bus #160 from Wilson subway station to McAllister Rd (one stop south of Sheppard).

What to bring: Binoculars

Washrooms: Available along the way.

Walk Leader's Cell Number: 416-699-8842



Miles Hearn

REMEMBERING MILES HEARN

TFN members were deeply saddened to hear that Miles Hearn passed away on February 25. We extend our condolences to his wife, Marie, and their family. For 15 years, Miles served as Bird-watching, Flora and Fauna – Discover the Outdoors instructor for the Toronto District School Board's Learn4Life program, for which he won the 2022 Jack Henshaw Award. During the past decade, TFN members were privileged to benefit from Miles' knowledge of and enthusiasm for nature as he led outings for us including several at the Jim Baillie Nature Reserve. Locally we knew him best for his fascinating series *Plants in Winter* and *Wild Urban Plants aka Weeds*.

We are perhaps less aware of Miles' musical talents, playing French horn in the TSO and other orchestras and singing in the Mendelssohn Choir. See his obituary in the *Globe & Mail*: <https://tfngo.to/mileshearnobit>.

Richard Longley, fellow TFN outings leader and long-time friend of Miles, shared these memories of him:

TDSB Learning4Life nature walks with Miles were amazing explorations of the city's parks and lakeshores – in all weathers – and opportunities to share the wisdom of an amazing man. He showed how to identify plants, from weeds to trees, in all seasons, with tricks: pointy buds, knobbly buds, alternating and opposite buds, smiley-face and monkey-face leaf scars, to distinguish the various ashes, elms and other things woody; the floral arrangements of the bewildering variety of asters, and introductions to plants we might have heard of by name but never previously recognized.

Miles seemed to possess a special kind of literacy that included his knowledge of birds. His ability to spot a bird and identify it, whether it be a speck in the sky, a blob on a branch or invisible but, for him, identifiable by its song. His ecstasy when he spotted a bluebird, a cuckoo or anything unusual! The experience that grew from his childhood and that he shared with us gave Miles skills that were essential to him during his annual bird count expeditions into northern Ontario and reason to hire him



as a guide-naturalist on cruises on waters as local as the Great Lakes or as remote as the ice flows of Antarctica. The void left by Miles' shockingly sudden departure, less than two weeks after the walk that would be his last, will be hard to fill. Other TFN members possess his expertise, but the energy that powered Miles through successive programs of Learn4Life walks, six days a week, some with walks paired back to back, will be hard to emulate. Hard to emulate too, will be Miles' follow-up to each of his walks, his brilliant photographs of the birds and plants he'd met that day, catalogued and captioned to create a superb, tightly focused, naturalist guide and diary:

<https://mileshearn.com/>.

How should Miles be remembered? Add his name to a piece of natural or reclaimed land? Create a prize or a scholarship for a young naturalist? (Miles, the former high school teacher, would appreciate that.) There must be many ways of remembering Miles as he deserves, such as TFN members sharing their own naturalist skills and leading walks they have not led before. Meanwhile, we are left with the memories of the hundreds of people who knew and walked with

him. Miles Hearn will be missed dreadfully, but his spirit will keep marching on.

Here are a few tributes received from other TFN members:

I am without words. Miles transformed my life, and that of many other people. Jane Cluver

The last thing I was expecting, especially for someone apparently so healthy in mind and body. This'll leave a large vacuum in many people's lives, not least mine.

Charles Bruce-Thompson

I took Miles' TDSB walks for three years on and off. I learned a lot from him, not just identification skills but his view on nature. Also I liked his photos which captured his love of creatures small and large. Certainly, I will lead walks honouring Miles in future and encourage other TFNers to do so. Lots of good memories. Kayoko Smith.

JOIN A MEMORIAL WALK IN HONOUR OF MILES HEARN (See details on previous page)

Miles was not only determined to communicate his knowledge of the birds and plants and the beauty of nature to everyone on his walks, but was also kind and patient – an exemplary leader of nature walks, for the TDSB, for TFN, both in our Jim Baillie nature reserve and all over the city, and for Friends of Cedarvale and likely many others. He especially delighted in showing us the tenacious survivors of the plant world on his weed walks, showing that you do not need to visit national parks, provincial parks, conservation areas, or even city parks to find fascination in the natural world. Nature is right beside the sidewalk within metres of almost any transit stop.

Bob Kortright

TREE OF THE MONTH: FLOWERING DOGWOOD (*CORNUS FLORIDA*)

Settled for most of the year discretely within the understorey, flowering dogwood announces its presence dramatically in May, when its flowering lights up the deciduous forest with a flurry of showy white saucers some 6 to 8 cm in diameter (though sometimes up to 10 cm in some more southerly individuals).

Looking for all the world like four-petaled flowers, these are actually pseudanthia (“false flowers”) which, like poinsettia’s inflorescences, attract pollinators in place of individual flowers. What appear to be large, white petals (or various shades of pink in some wild trees and cultivars derived from them) are floral bracts that spent the winter as the protective scales of the flower buds. These are easily distinguished from vegetative buds because they are several times the diameter of the parent twig that they terminate. As the bracts gradually expand to their full glory, the pointy tip from their role as bud scales remains small, leading to a prominent notch at their end when mature. Flowering relatively early, these wide-open pseudanthia are visited by a variety of generalist fly and solitary bee pollinators.

Most dogwoods in Ontario, including eight predominantly shrubby species, have little apparent floral resemblance to flowering dogwood, lacking the showy bracts and having open, highly branched inflorescences with widely separated flowers turning into white, blue or black drupes. Three other species, however, one native and two introduced, share the tight, ball-shaped inflorescence and red drupes of flowering dogwood, and two of these also share its four spreading pseudanthial bracts. Each belongs to a different taxonomic group, including the one that looks most like a miniature flowering dogwood, bunchberry (*C. canadensis*), a tiny native scrap of a ground-cover plant common in moderately sunny openings of all our forest regions. The two introduced

species are both small trees, with cornelian cherry (*C. mas*) occasionally seen, while kousa dogwood (*C. kousa*) is increasingly used as a substitute for flowering dogwood because of its resistance to dogwood anthracnose.

The twigs and subsequent shoots of most temperate trees display one of two main patterns in relation to the ground. Either they extend out horizontally or angle shallowly upward (plagiotropic) or they grow straight upward or at a steep angle (orthotropic). Flowering dogwood’s twig growth is not quite like either of these patterns. Instead, its growth increments begin in horizontal orientation, but then turn up to near vertical at their tips, usually with just one or two pairs of leaves close together right at the end.

Flowering twigs resemble purely vegetative ones in this, so the pseudanthia are largely upward facing. Renewal growth in the following year comes primarily from one or two lateral buds near the tip, which themselves then repeat the pattern. Termination of a leader and its replacement by a new shoot from a lateral bud is called sympodial growth. Some purely vegetative shoots buck the trend and continue to grow without this loss and replacement for two or more years in a pattern of monopodial growth, but flowering always leads to sympodial outward extension because the shoot apex of the original twig is completely used up in making the pseudanthium. All of this leads to a more or less regular “pagoda”-like tree form that is more pronounced in one of our shrubby native dogwood species, the commonly cultivated alternate-leaved dogwood (*C. alternifolia*), which is also known as pagoda dogwood. The effect is further enhanced in the fall, when leaves turn a lovely pink to vibrant red.

Unfortunately, I must add a sad note. Flowering dogwood is extremely susceptible to dogwood anthracnose, a disease caused by an introduced Asian ascomycete fungus, *Discula destructiva* (a highly appropriate name!), that is

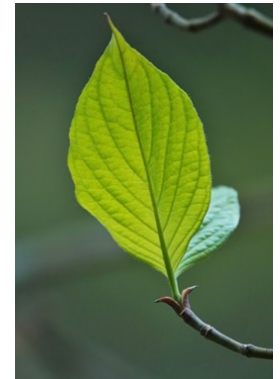
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Profuse flowering



Pseudanthium with a flower fly visitor
(narrow-headed marsh fly,
Helophilus fasciatus)



Single pair of young
leaves with distinctive
venation at the end of a
turned-up twig

FOR READING

A Field Guide to Trees of Ontario

James E. Eckenwalder, Deborah A. Metsger,
Timothy A. Dickinson, Sarah H. Hodges, 2023

This handsome new field guide, published by the Royal Ontario Museum, aims to help readers observe, identify, and become familiar with trees they encounter throughout the province, whether native or introduced.

The lead author, James Eckenwalder, is well-known to TFN members as the author of ‘Tree of the Month’ series and other tree-related articles in the TFN Newsletter. A retired faculty member from the Department of Ecology and Evolutionary Biology at University of Toronto, he is Research Associate at the ROM and has had a life-long fascination with trees, shared with his co-authors and ROM curatorial staff, Deborah Metsger and Timothy Dickinson.

The guide showcases 95 commonly encountered *focal species*, giving common and scientific names and designation as native, cultivated, naturalized or invasive, as well as describing growth forms, leaves, flowers, fruits, typical habitat, and other notes for each. A full page of excellent colour photographs (contributed by fourth author Sarah Hodges and other photographers) accompanies each description. An additional 135 species are presented as *comparison species*; these half-page descriptions and images emphasize how they differ from the related focal

species. Appendix 1 provides abbreviated accounts of less commonly encountered, mostly introduced species.

The Notes sections accompanying the focal species accounts give intriguing perspectives on individual trees, pointing out ecological features, special habitats, roles of pollinators, parasites and predators, complexities of plant reproduction, and indigenous and ornamental uses. One particularly helpful feature is the 33-page ‘Illustrated Guide to looking at Trees and recognizing Plant Parts’. Trees can be challenging to identify because of their large size and the differences between summer and winter appearances, but the guide uses superb photographs and clear line drawings to illustrate the features that make tree identification possible throughout the year. A second feature of note is the series of ‘Diagnostic keys to Ontario Trees in Summer or Winter Condition’.

I also liked the overall organization by plant family, allowing us to familiarize ourselves with the general characteristics of the family before encountering the species accounts of its individual members. The appealing full-page photographs accompanying some family descriptions are emblematic of this field guide: it’s not only informative, but also inspires us to learn more and to care more about Ontario’s diverse tree flora.

Nancy Dengler

TREE *continued*

more or less inevitably fatal to an infected tree. The disease was first reported in the U.S.A. in 1978 and confirmed in Ontario in 1998. Forty years ago, it destroyed a magnificent specimen that graced the front doorstep of my parents’ home. This veteran dogwood was eight metres tall, with a crown of branches all the way down to the ground that spread out six metres and was habitually strewn with a full cloak of pseudanthia followed by masses of bright red, golf ball-sized drupe clusters.

During the last twenty years, my regular May birding forays to the forests north of Lake Erie with Ron and Nancy Dengler have been punctuated by fewer and fewer white clouds in the understorey every year. This February when they, my frequent and much appreciated collaborators in illustrating this series of articles, visited Mount Pleasant Cemetery in pursuit of some additional shots for me (including the bark



Left: Characteristic checkered bark.



Right: Flowering bud

and flowering bud shown here), they found only one of the five trees on the arboretum map still alive. This unwelcome demise explains the current prominence of kousa dogwood around town, with an increasing number

of cultivars available. Coming from the native range of the fungus in eastern Asia, kousa dogwood becomes infected but, because of genetic defences, is not seriously damaged. It is an attractive tree in flower, generally similar to flowering dogwood but, honestly, not quite as beautiful. While individual trees can be treated repeatedly with fungicides, the only real hope for a future with flowering dogwood would appear to be a hybridization program that would transfer resistance genes

from kousa. Hybrid cultivars are already available but they are early generation hybrids and still pretty far from the pure, glorious flowering dogwood.

James Eckenwalder
Photos: Ron Dengler

KEEPING IN TOUCH

We enjoy watching this fox that has been living in our backyard since January. He loves to lie in the sun and under the protection of our hedge. We live a block from the Humber River in Etobicoke, so he must get his food from there.



A friend recently told us that late March to early April is denning season for foxes, when a mother fox will give birth to four or five kits. To protect her kits from coyotes, a mother fox will frequently choose a den site close to people, such as under a porch, shed, garage or barn to keep her family safe.

Susan and Bob Roden

Correction:

The butterfly photographed by Jane Goad, which appeared on page 11 of the March newsletter, was incorrectly identified as a broad-winged skipper.



Bob Kortright has informed us that it is actually a Leonard's skipper. He explained, "As shown in the photo, this species has strongly contrasting silver white rectangles in a c-shaped row with one spot towards the base of the underside of the hind wing. The photo also shows three less contrasting spots on the underside of the forewing. The broad-winged skipper shows a much less contrasting pattern on the underside. Often the trickiest thing when identifying a skipper is figuring out which wing you're looking at." Jane informed us that the photo was taken south of Bancroft, which Bob says is near the northern edge of the broad-winged skipper's range but well within the range of Leonard's.

Bob obtained this information from *Butterflies of Ontario, ROM, 2014*, which he likes because it describes differences between similar species. Thank you, Bob, for bringing this to our attention. Ed

UPCOMING JUNIOR NATURALISTS' EVENTS

We are excited to welcome families with children between 6-14 years to join in the TFN Juniors programs that run Saturday mornings 10:00 am – 12:00 noon. One parent is required to stay with your children for the duration of the program.

- April 15 As the early songbird migrants arrive in Toronto, join us for a morning with Shadowland Theatre Co on Toronto Island. Find out how it feels to be a bird!
- May 13 Come and meet the Blanding turtles and songbirds at Rouge National Park.

Please contact Anne Purvis at juniortfn@torontofieldnaturalists.org if you wish to join the TFN Juniors. Your name will be added to an email list and you will receive an invitation with location details a week before each event. If your family is able to attend, you pre-register by responding to the invitation email. The day before the event we'll send a reminder email with details about weather or any changes.

JUNIOR NATURALISTS EARTHWORMS

With the arrival of spring, we can expect once again to see robins hunting for food in gardens and parks around the city. So now is a good time to think about earthworms, their best-known food, which are just now waking up from hibernation.

Most people know that earthworms are an important composter, munching on fallen leaves and other plant material, aerating the soil with their burrows and mixing the nutrients between the topsoil and the mineral soil layer below. But you might not realize that, after the ice age receded, there were no earthworms left in Canada! All 19 species now found in Ontario are invasive, introduced over past centuries by European settlers, spreading from gardens and farms as well as by recreational fishers.

Following the retreat of the glaciers, native forests evolved with bacteria and fungi as primary decomposers in addition to arthropods. These native forest floors are characterized by a layer of duff (partially decayed organic matter) mixing very little with the mineral soil layer below. Decomposition in native forests tends to be very slow. Mycorrhizae — fungi that live in the soil and along the roots of plants — are very important for nutrient uptake by native plants.

There is evidence that, in addition to leaf litter, earthworms will also eat soil mycorrhizae. Earthworm activity also causes depletion of the mycorrhizae by changing the water availability and soil characteristics necessary for the fungi to thrive. As earthworm numbers increase, this causes native plants that depended on the mycorrhizae (such as trillium, solomon's seal and goblin fern) to disappear in the area.



Not all plants are impacted negatively by earthworms. Plants that evolved in the soils produced by earthworms in Europe, such as garlic mustard, buckthorn and honeysuckle, do very well and rapidly spread in the spaces opened up by the retreating native plants. This leads to a cascading ecological disruption: the invasive plants don't support our native insects, birds and other animals, so they can't find enough food and are forced to abandon the region.

Invasive earthworms seem to be here to stay, as they are very difficult to remove from an area. While their natural spread is rather slow, they can quickly move into an area through human activities like planting or throwing unused fishing bait in lakes or forests. Though earthworms are wonderfully helpful for many plant species, it is important that we avoid behaviours that encourage their spread into our native forests.

Vanessa McMain

Sources:

Ontario Invasive Species Awareness Program

CBC article: *Invasive earthworms are remaking our forests and climate scientists are worried.*

Smithsonian Research Centre - Research Project - Mycorrhizal Ecology and Invasive Worms

Photo: from pixabay.

BIRD-FRIENDLY WINDOWS

Aren't birds amazing! They build intricate nests for their young in a variety of habitats. They find various food sources throughout the seasons. They provide us with pleasurable experiences through their songs, calls and colourful plumage. Soon millions of birds will begin their long migration from South and Central America to their northern breeding grounds. Many will fly over Toronto, which is located in the confluence of the Atlantic and the Mississippi Migratory Flyways. But what birds aren't able to do is successfully deal with two common human-made features of the city: glass and urban light. Each year approximately one million birds die when they hit tall buildings in Toronto.

Many birds have evolved to fly at night when there are fewer predators and the cooler temperatures allow for less energy expenditure. Our city lights obscure natural cues such as the moon and stars which guide birds. This disorients them so that they may become trapped in dangerous areas. Birds do not see clear glass as a solid object. If they see reflections of trees or sky, they will fly directly into the glass. If urban greenery is placed inside a building close to the windows, or outside a building where it is reflected in glass, birds may see the greenery as a place to land and crash into the glass.

In 2007 the City of Toronto approved "Bird-Friendly Development Guidelines." It was the first City Council in North America to adopt a document of this kind. In 2010 Toronto updated this document to create a Green Standard for new developments. "Toronto demonstrated leadership and innovation by being the first municipality in North America to require new development to incorporate bird-friendly standards." See <https://tfngo.to/birdfriendlypractice>, page 9.

Most bird mortality occurs at mid- and high-rise buildings. Perhaps houses are not the most lethal structures for birds, but where we place bird baths and feeders can be problematic. These items should be located as close as possible to windows (half a metre away at the most). If a bird flies into your window from this distance, it is less likely to have built up enough momentum to sustain injury.

If you notice your windows are sustaining bird strikes, there are ways to make them safer for birds. You could close the drapes during particular times of day. You could

move plants away from the windows. The website of the organization Fatal Light Awareness Program (FLAP—what a great acronym!) <https://tfngo.to/flap> lists a number of treatments one can apply to problematic windows. These include FeatherFriendly window film.

Apparently, human eyes quickly become accustomed to the dots on this film and are not bothered by the arrays. Please note that, to be effective, these treatments must be applied to the exterior of the windows, not inside. Widely spaced decals of hawk or crow silhouettes that we sometimes see are ineffective; they leave too much glass still invisible to birds and potentially lethal to them.

We are beginning to see new buildings with a variety of designs on their exteriors to reduce bird strikes. The Toronto Metropolitan University Student Learning Centre has strong visual markers to make its exterior visible. The Pan Am Aquatic Centre has a "frit pattern" on its exterior – in the shape of swimmers – which serves both as a branding item and a deterrent for bird collisions. Some of our new subway stations and condominiums show "polka dot" glass.

Killing birds with glass and light is illegal under Ontario's *Environmental Protection Act*. However, the Ministry of Environment, Conservation & Parks seldom prosecutes building owners for violating this law. The Canadian Standards Association has developed a bird-friendly design for

new and existing buildings but this is not legally binding and is often ignored. We are fortunate that Toronto, and a few other cities, have had an avian-friendly design code in the building approval process. Unfortunately, the current provincial government's recently passed *More Homes Built Faster Act, 2022* (formerly Bill 23), disallows Ontario municipalities from requiring exterior design elements that include coverings on windows to protect birds from crashing into windows, as these are considered impediments to housing construction.

Jennifer Smith



Yellow-rumped Warbler.
Photo: Theresa Moore

Sources:

Toronto Star, Feb. 21, 2022

Toronto Star, Nov. 18, 2022

flap.org

Bird-Friendly Best Practices Glass, 2016, City of Toronto, City Planning

CFMP WANTS YOU!



Interested in Citizen Science? Want to put your ID skills to use in protecting and restoring habitat in Toronto? Looking to connect with fellow TFN members and expand your own skills and knowledge? If you answered “yes” to any of these questions then volunteering with TFN's Cottonwood Flats Monitoring Project (CFMP) might be right for you!

Since 2017, dozens of TFNers just like you have volunteered their time to monitoring our plots at the Flats. The data we've collected tells Toronto a fascinating story about the ecology of this little piece of the Don watershed, and guides the efforts of our Cottonwood Flats Stewardship Team, a partnership between TFN and the City of Toronto's Community Stewardship Program (see below).

If you're interested in participating, please check this schedule and email cfmp@torontofieldnaturalists.org with the sessions you're interested in attending.

Monitoring Session #1:	Mon Apr 24, 5:30 – 7:30 pm
Monitoring Session #2:	Tues May 16, 2:00 – 4:00 pm
Monitoring Session #3:	Sun Jun 11, 10:00 am – 12:00 noon
Vegetation Assessment:	Sun Jul 23, 10:00 am – 1:00 pm
Monitoring Session #4:	Sat Aug 19, 10:00 am – 12:00 noon
Monitoring Session #5:	Sun Oct 15, 10:00 am – 12:00 noon

Want to learn more about CFMP first? Look no further than <https://tfngo.to/cfmp>



DO YOU LOVE TORONTO'S RAVINES?

Then become a volunteer nature steward and help to protect and restore nature in these remarkable spaces with your own two hands! TFN's second year as Team Leaders of the City of Toronto's Community Stewardship Program (CSP) team at Cottonwood Flats is about to begin and we're excited for you to participate.

City of Toronto staff will be hosting a virtual orientation session for new stewards on the evening of April 12, 2023. Register for this webinar to learn more about our urban forest and the volunteer activities stewards practice to sustain and improve habitat across Toronto!

REGISTER NOW FOR THE NEW STEWARD WEBINAR
WEDNESDAY, APRIL 12, 6:00 PM

<https://tfngo.to/csp23>



EXTRACTS FROM OUTINGS LEADERS' REPORTS

Waterfront Trail from Ferry Terminal to Ontario Place, Feb 3. Leader: Zunaid Khan. It was a beautiful sunny, cold winter morning. Large portions of the lake in the inner harbour were frozen, with patches of open water with cold mist moving over the water driven by the wind. The open water spots in the inner harbour made spotting winter ducks easier. The lake was frozen by Coronation Park but there was lots of open water by Trillium Park and Ontario Place. Bird sightings included Canada Geese, Mallards, Gadwalls, Ring-billed Gulls, Mute Swans, Long-tailed Ducks, Red-breasted and Common Mergansers, Buffleheads, Greater Scaups, Redheads, Dark-eyed Juncos, Black-capped Chickadees and, the best sighting of the walk, a Harlequin Duck.



Harlequin Duck. Photo: Zunaid Khan

Don River Valley, Feb 9.

Leader: Vivienne Denton. It rained solidly for the duration of the walk. Although the Don River was running quite high and discoloured grey from road runoff and waste water, the ducks didn't seem to mind. We saw several groups of Mallards and some Common Mergansers on the river. A group of Dark-eyed Juncos was scavenging for seeds in Riverdale Park and we saw a Red-tailed Hawk sitting in a treetop overlooking the river. We stopped in Riverdale Park to look at the patch of phragmites mentioned in the February TFN lecture. and noted with dismay invasives such as tree of heaven along the trail. Rust coloured Japanese knotweed is particularly visible in winter, invading and out-competing native plants and TRCA plantings.



Yellow Creek Ravine. Photo: Richard Longley

Mimico Creek, Feb 18. Leader: Lillian Natalizio.

Walking downstream from Eglinton Ave W along the Mimico Creek Trail, we discussed changes the land has seen; from forest to farm field and then to parkland. Over the last 25 years, restoration plantings have covered significant acreage with species such as staghorn sumac, silver maple, trembling aspen, cottonwood, bur oak, white pine and white cedar. In the remnant upland woods, we focused on the significance of the red oaks and hickories. In the riparian areas, we focused on the success of the naturally regenerated populations of black walnut and

planted American sycamores. Leaving the creek trail at Ravenswood Park, we crossed into the hydro corridor that intersects Mimico Creek at two locations further south and north. The discussion there was about the potential for habitat restoration in the large corridor, which has been recognized by Hydro One as part of the environmental assessment for their Etobicoke Greenway project. While we didn't see the Red-shouldered Hawk that had been seen

the day before, we did get a few sightings of a Red-tailed Hawk. Other notable wildlife sightings included Red-breasted Nuthatch and Downy Woodpeckers.

Two Ravines and Mount Pleasant Cemetery, Feb 23.

Leader: Richard Longley. In Rosedale we discussed urban heritage. In Mount Pleasant Cemetery, reached by Yellow Creek Ravine (west) and Mud

Creek Ravine (east), we noted intriguing graves. The walk in deep snow in the ravines was beautiful. There were a few squirrels and winter robins but not much other wildlife.

Wilket Creek at Toronto Botanical Garden, Feb 26.

Leader: Ellen Schwartzel. We were treated to friendly weather on a late February afternoon, with sunshine and temperatures just above freezing. Contrasting against a blanket of recent snow, the delicate yellow flowers of a Chinese witch hazel glowed in the rhododendron garden. Further south in the wet areas beside the trail, sharp eyes noticed the first

green sprouts of skunk cabbage, emerging where water pooled. Fresh beaver activity was obvious along Wilket Creek, with many saplings downed and a lodge constructed. A Red-tailed Hawk soared overhead, and a cardinal showed itself at a feeder. We discussed the ongoing expansion plans of Toronto Botanical Gardens, including the appealing project motto to "wild the garden, and garden the wild". We wondered why some trees hang on to their leaves over winter*, and why birches have white bark. Sometimes theorizing is more fun than having pat answers.

* For a discussion of this question, see Marvelling at Marescence on page 13 of the December 2012 newsletter: <https://tfngo.to/dec2012newsletter>. Ed

PLANTS ALONG THE SIDEWALK: THE DANDELION

I'd like to introduce you to a neighbour that you think you already know – the dandelion or *Taraxacum officinale*, its botanical name. You and I usually have only two or three names, plus nicknames. But the dandelion has many – some common, some not so common.

In English we call it “dandelion” which comes from the French *Dent-de-lion* meaning “lion’s tooth” for the jagged leaves. Other English names include “blowball”, “doon-head-clock”, “pee-a-bed” and more. In today’s French it is *pissenlit* or “piss the bed”. The Anishanaabeg called it *dado'cabodji'b'k*, *wesa'usakwūnek*, *mindimooyenh*, etc.

Dandelion seed sailed across the Atlantic by choice and by accident. It was in every settlers’ garden as a medicinal herb. Its flowers have antioxidant properties and using the plant may help improve the immune system. The long tap roots have a strong diuretic effect (pee-a-bed, wet-a-bed, pissenlit). In the past, dandelion roots and leaves were used to treat liver problems. It is high in vitamins A, B, C, and D, as well as minerals such as iron, potassium and zinc. Young leaves are eaten raw or cooked. Dandelion leaves add flavour to salads, sandwiches and teas. The roots are used in some coffee substitutes. Dandelion wine is made from the flower petals.

This perennial reproduces only by seed – asexually without pollination. All its offspring are genetically identical. The flowering head is composite, made up of many small florets. It was called doon-head-clock because its flowers open with the sun in the morning and close in the evening or on cloudy days. The seedhead or blowball disintegrates on a puff of wind. The breeze lofts each single-headed fruit on a parachute, dispersing the achenes far and wide.

Indigenous people and settlers shared knowledge and seeds, and soon nations across North America knew and valued dandelion. Algonquin people eat the greens to

purify the blood and use the leaves for poultices. The juice is used to treat cold, cough and skin diseases. The Anishinaabe (Ojibway) use the roots as blood medicine and to treat heartburn. They gather the young leaves in the spring and cook them as greens with pork or venison and maple sap vinegar, as do many other First Nations. The roots of this plant were also used to induce postpartum milk flow. The Nishnabek (Potawatomi) have considered dandelion sacred and tell legends and stories about this women's medicine. Women split the stem open and rub the white sap on their face to prevent wrinkles. The Odawa used it for birth control among other things. The Haudenosaunee (Six Nations) also adopted this plant as a medicine, often as a compound with other plants, for a

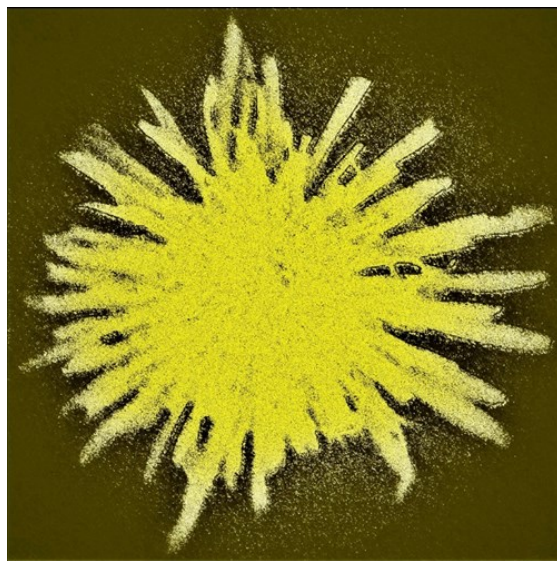
wide variety of aches, pains and ailments, from puffy eyes, kidney trouble, anemia and constipation, to swollen testicles. They chewed the flower stem to treat tooth decay.

Like many successful immigrants, dandelion does well in many different situations (habitats). It grows in openings in woods to farm fields, to gardens and lawns. However, like many of our neighbours and friends, it doesn't agree with everyone. Eating the plant can cause an allergic reaction. If you are allergic to

ragweed, chrysanthemums, marigold, chamomile, yarrow, daisies, or iodine, you should avoid dandelion. In some people, dandelion can cause increased stomach acid and heartburn. People with kidney problems, gallbladder problems or gallstones should check with their doctor before eating dandelion. Anyone who uses wild plants for food or medicine needs to do their homework because using them is always at your own risk.

And last, but not least, the seeds are an important food source for birds and the nectar feeds bees. I hope you've enjoyed learning more about a plant we all think we know.

Article and art by Joanne Doucette



*Let sleeping ducks lie
With heads tucked gently drifting
In this quiet cove*

Haiku by Elisabeth Gladstone

LESLIE STREET SPIT ENFORCEMENT UPDATE

Wildlife and nature face growing pressures across Toronto's parklands. Our parkland areas are not expanding at anything like the pace needed, given our city's rapid population growth. Tommy Thompson Park is an especially popular destination, and visitor pressures on this remarkable shoreline habitat have grown more intense with the pandemic.

Rules do exist to safeguard the "urban wilderness" character of Tommy Thompson Park: the park allows no dogs, no e-bikes, no motorcycles, no drones, no skating, no fires, no camping and no motorized skateboards/hoverboards. Removing anything from the park is not permitted. This includes plants, plant parts, sediment, bricks, or wildlife in any form. Enforcement of the rules has long been a challenge, however. With a rise in violations, City staff and the Toronto Region Conservation Authority have stepped up enforcement presence. Below is an update on enforcement at Tommy Thompson for early 2023, recently shared with the public by Councillor Paula Fletcher:

Over the weekend of January 21 and 22, TRCA staff did not encounter any dogs but reported one e-vehicle in the park. Nature interpreter staff spoke with approximately 85 visitors about wildlife and nature at the Leslie Spit.

On the weekend on January 28 and 29, TRCA enforcement staff reported one e-vehicle and no dogs in the park. The Nature and Education Interpreters spoke with 85 visitors to the park as well.

On February 4 and 5, TRCA staff spoke with one dog owner and reported one e-vehicle in the park. With the particularly cold weather that we experienced that weekend, Nature Interpreter staff noted only 25 visitors that they spoke with.

Over this past weekend, February 11 and 12, staff again reported one dog and one e-vehicle in the park while the Nature Interpreter team spoke with about 85 visitors to the park.

It is again great to hear that there have been very few instances of non-compliance in the park recently. As we begin to see more sunshine and the weather incrementally warms up, we know we can expect an increase in visitors to the Leslie Spit. I will remain in touch with the TRCA and the City of Toronto's enforcement teams so that we can ensure that visitors continue to use the park safely through the spring and summer.

I hope you continue to enjoy all that the Spit has to offer through the winter. I will continue to send updates each month on enforcement and activity in the park.

Ellen Schwartzel

WEATHER (THIS TIME LAST YEAR)

April 2022

April was a cool month, marked more by the near-absence of significant warm-ups than by any serious late wintry outbreaks. There were no days with highs below freezing, and no days with highs of 20° or above.

Light precipitation and temperatures just below 10° characterized most of the month. We had one snowfall on the 18th, which didn't last more than a day. Nonetheless, Toronto Pearson's monthly total of 8.6 cm of snow was sufficient to bring the seasonal total for the winter of 2021-2022 to a whopping 172.0 cm. This is 57.2 cm above the normal seasonal total of 114.8 cm, and it made this our snowiest winter since 2007-2008. Rainfall (and total precipitation) were well below normal with 44.8 mm downtown and 50.0 mm at Pearson Airport. This is about 25 mm below normal.



Crocus in April 2022.
Photo: Wendy Rothwell

A couple of times, warmer air tried to move in but its extent was dampened by the cold waters of Lake Ontario and the other Great Lakes. The warmest day was the 25th, with 19.2° downtown and 19.0° at Pearson. The warmest weather was found at inland locations away from the lakes. Buttonville Airport hit 20.3° on April 13th, and Collingwood soared to 27.0° on the 24th. The coldest readings were on the 2nd, with a relatively equable -3.8° at Pearson and -1.2° downtown. King City recorded -4.9°. Frost occurred as late as the 29th.

Under these circumstances, vegetation was slightly delayed compared to last year, with crocuses appearing at the beginning of the month and forsythia during the last week.

Gavin Miller

ABOUT TFN

TFN is a volunteer-run non-profit nature conservation organization. We connect people with nature in the Toronto area, helping them to understand, enjoy, and protect Toronto's green spaces and the species that inhabit them.

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NEWSLETTER

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Submissions deadline for May: April 3

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The password was delivered in the email notifying you that the newsletter is available online.

If you have misplaced the password you can request it by emailing

membership@torontofieldnaturalists.org.

TFN LECTURES

Each year TFN offers eight free Zoom talks by noted experts, exploring everything from nature in the city to global environmental issues. Talks are presented Sunday afternoons at 2:30 pm, from September to May with audience discussion time. Talks are usually 45 minutes in length. Visitors are always welcome. TFN Members have access to recordings of past lectures on the "for Members" web page.

Learn about this month's lecture on the back page. For the Zoom link, visit the Lectures page of our website. If you prefer, you can dial in to the April lecture by phone:

Dial in: +1 647 558 0588

Meeting ID: 862 4418 9748

Passcode: 027374

FOCUS ON NATURE – ABSTRACT

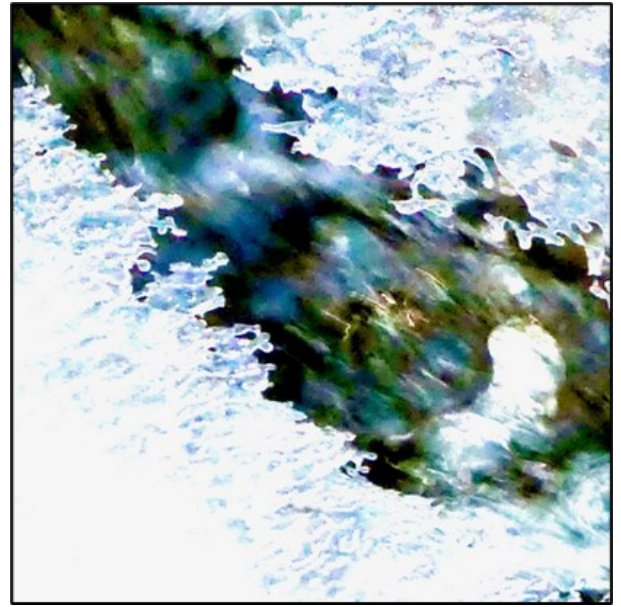
The February challenge for TFN's Photography Group was Abstract. This image, entitled *Icy Stream*, was submitted by Barry Severn.

From a bridge over the Don River, this ice with the crinkly edges looked abstract-ish. I cropped the photo to select the hole towards the right middle, and did some editing to disguise the appearance of what it was. Normally I would not change a photo but, because it was an 'abstract' challenge, I used Photos on a Mac to play with the brightness, contrast, brilliance, shadows, etc., which brought out the colours in the water.



Original photo

Barry Severn



If you would like to join the Photography Group, email photography@torontofieldnaturalists.org.

TFN LECTURE

Sunday, April 2 at 2:30 pm

See page 15 for information about lectures via Zoom

Ontario Turtle Conservation Centre: Fieldwork and Program



April DeJong, Research Coordinator, Ontario Turtle Conservation Centre, will describe the OTCC's field work program, including radio telemetry, notching and head-starting juvenile Blanding's turtles, and share data collected from their field study.

Upcoming lectures:

May 7: Underground Invaders: Centuries of Non-native Earthworms and the Recent Arrival of "Jumping Worms." Dr. Michael J. McTavish, Postdoctoral Research Fellow, Smith Forest Health Lab, U of T

June 4: Eastern Coyote – a Successful Eco-Influencer
Lesley Sampson, Co-founding Executive Director, Coyote Watch Canada