



Since 1923

# TORONTO FIELD NATURALIST

Number 676 May 2023



Blue Vervain, July 2022, Rouge Park. Photo: Zunaid Khan

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## PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Starting this June through June 2024 we will be celebrating our 100th anniversary. We will kick off these celebrations with a special June issue of our newsletter dedicated to this special anniversary, which will include articles on the history of our programs along with lots of other great content. Members will also get an insight into our celebration plans for the anniversary year.

The themes of these celebrations will be key moments in our history, how we have evolved over the years, our long-term commitment to nature, and how we are building for the future. We will be holding special events, recreating historic walks, and organizing gatherings of volunteers and members to celebrate the 100th year. I would like to thank all our volunteers past and present who have made and continue to make TFN such a great organization – one that has contributed to the protection, conservation and restoration of nature in the Toronto area, and will continue to do so well into the future.

One of the ways we are ensuring there will be great naturalists in the future to carry on our mandate is through

our wonderful Junior Naturalists program. This amazing program under the leadership of Anne and Jim Purvis is, in my opinion, unique in our city. In May, Anne and Jim will be taking the kids and their families to Rouge Urban National Park to learn about Blanding's turtles and songbirds. To learn more about this program please visit <https://tfngo.to/juniornaturalists>

Lastly, please be sure to check out the great program of outings that we have on offer for May. There are opportunities to explore spring migrating birds along the waterfront, trilliums in the Don River watershed and wildflowers along the Humber River. Please visit the Members Walks page on our website <https://tfngo.to/memberwalks> where you can download or print the list of outings for May and each month during the summer.

Let's get outside, enjoy nature, and remember to speak up for nature when the opportunity arises, so we can preserve its beauty for all to enjoy.

Zunaid Khan

## REPORT OF THE NOMINATING COMMITTEE

The nominating committee recommends this slate of nominees to the Board for the year 2023-2024:

**President:** Zunaid Khan      **Vice President (acting):** Laren Stadelman  
**Past President:** Ellen Schwartzel      **Secretary-Treasurer:** Fatima Abrar

### **Directors:**

Due to retire in 2024: Philip Jessup, Lillian Natalizio, Laren Stadelman, Ellen Schwartzel, Diana Wilson

Due to retire in 2025: Donata Frank, Jessica Iraci, Lynn Miller, Lynn Short

TFN by-law No. 1, Section 5(g) provides that *“any three members may submit, in writing, to the Secretary-Treasurer by July 15 the name of a candidate accompanied by the written consent of the nominee. Such nominations shall be published in the September issue of the newsletter and the names of such nominees shall be added to the list of candidates submitted by the Nominating Committee.”*

Nominations should be sent to the TFN mailing address: Toronto Field Naturalists, 2 St. Clair Avenue West, 18th Floor, Toronto, Ontario, M4V 1L5

According to TFN by-law No.1, Section 5(b), *“If an election is required it shall be by ballot mailed to all members. Ballots may be mailed to the auditor or deposited at the Annual General Meeting prior to the commencement of the meeting. The ballots will be tabulated by the auditor who shall announce the results.”*

## IMPORTANT NEWS: MEMBERSHIP UPDATE

As mentioned in our April issue, renewing your TFN membership this year will be a bit different – but membership fees will remain the same! In preparation, shortly after you read this we'll temporarily suspend our online join and renewal forms as we prepare to launch the new process, and with it a much more valuable online experience for our Members.

Here are a few highlights:

- **No more June 30th renewals!** TFN membership will now be valid for one full year from the date you joined or last renewed. This way we can better ensure that each Member gets everything they paid for.
- **Automatic renewal!** So long as the billing information we have on file is accurate, you won't miss a thing when your renewal time comes. Naturally, you will have the ability to opt out of automatic renewal at your leisure.
- **Your own private password!** No more trying to remember a password we set for you. You'll choose your own, can change it whenever you like, and reset it yourself should you forget it.
- **Update your information at your leisure!** Moving? Changing your email address? You'll have direct control over the personal information that we have on file and can change it whenever you need to.
- **Easier to find stuff!** We're replacing the old "Members-Only" section of our public website with a completely new "Members-Only" private website that is more robust, provides easier access to walk lists and lecture information, and is full of features and content crafted just for you!

- **More space for content!** As Members will be renewing at different times of the year, there's no longer a need for all those pesky reminders cluttering up the newsletter, *Communications of the TFN*, or taking up valuable time at lectures!
- **Members-Only Blog!** No more hunting through general blog posts to find important updates meant just for Members. Posts in this new blog will be written just for you, making them easier to read and easier to write.
- **A Members Directory!** By default, your information will be totally private, but you will have the option to let current TFN Members see your profile. This way our entire community can more easily connect with friends both old and new.

The above is just the beginning. This new system will allow TFN to deliver more value to our Members than ever before, and to grow that value over time – and we have big plans to do exactly that!

Rest assured that all your current membership benefits will continue during this transitional period. Starting with our special 100th Anniversary issue of the newsletter, over the month of June we will provide practical information, instructions and support to ensure that renewal of your membership is as effortless as possible, including an "offline process" for those of our Members without reliable access to email/internet. Now or then, should you have questions or need assistance, our Member Services volunteers are here to help. Just email [membership@torontofieldnaturalists.org](mailto:membership@torontofieldnaturalists.org) or leave a phone message at 416-593-2656 and we'll get back to you as soon as possible.

Jason Ramsay-Brown



## MESSAGE FROM THE EDITOR

Thank you to all who have generously contributed articles, images, reports, book reviews and nature stories to the newsletter this year. And thank you, members of the newsletter committee, for the care you give to ensuring an accurate and attractive publication. We hope members will enjoy our special 100th Anniversary issue in June.

I wish you a happy summer enjoying nature. Please remember to share your experiences with fellow members. Submit your stories and photos to: [newsletter@torontofieldnaturalists.org](mailto:newsletter@torontofieldnaturalists.org)

Wendy Rothwell

## 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 May outings you might like to consider.

### Colonel Samuel Smith Park, Spring Migrants Part 1

**Leader: David Creelman**

**Wednesday May 3, 10:00 am**

**Meeting Point:** Southeast corner of Lake Shore Blvd W and Kipling Ave/Col Sam Smith Drive.

**Walk Details:** A 2- to 3-hour, 2 km linear (but essentially circular) walk over mostly flat, paved surfaces

**Walk Description:** A casual but observant walk through the park including areas adjoining Humber College. We'll search for spring migrants throughout the park. TTC is always nearby if you need to leave early. We'll end up only a few hundred metres from the starting point.

**TTC:** Take #501 streetcar (or bus) running along Lake Shore Blvd W, the Kipling #44 or the express #944 buses running from Kipling subway station. All stop at our meeting place.

**Parking:** There are paid and unpaid parking lots around Sam Smith Park and the Humber College Campus. The numbered side streets can also provide free parking.

**What to bring:** Binoculars, water, snacks/lunch, layered clothing, appropriate footwear, and cameras if desired. Even on a warm day, winds off the lake may make it colder near the water. If there has been rain, grassy areas and some paths will be wet.

**Washrooms:** are available at the beginning

**Walk Leader's Cell Number:** 647-772-1953



Tree Swallow. Photo: Lillian Natalizio

### Lower Highland Creek Park

**Leader: Danielle Pellatt-Hall**

**Sunday May 7, 1:00 pm**

**Meeting Point:** Southeast corner of Beechgrove Dr and Lawrence Ave E, where the trail begins.

**Walk details:** A 3-hour, 4 km circular walk over mostly paved surfaces with a few gentle slopes.

**Walk Description:** This location features a lovely assortment of native spring ephemeral wildflowers. If conditions are good, we can hope to see bloodroot, Canada wild ginger, mayapples, trilliums and more! We will walk down the trail until it meets the lakefront, where we'll take a 20-minute break before starting the return journey to our original meeting location.

**TTC:** Take the #86 bus from Kennedy subway station.

**What to bring:** Solid footwear, water, snacks, tree ID book.

**Washrooms:** Not available

**Walk Leader's Cell Number:** 647-444-2925



Bloodroot. Photo: Edward O'Connor

## LECTURE REPORT

## Ontario Turtle Conservation Centre Fieldwork and Program

April 2, 2023

Lisa Browning and April DeJong

The Ontario Turtle Conservation Centre (OTCC) is a not-for-profit facility in Peterborough. Lisa Browning is their Education Coordinator. April DeJong, as Fieldwork Coordinator and General Technician, is primarily responsible for overseeing and carrying out their fieldwork which includes radio telemetry, notching and head-starting juvenile Blanding's turtles.

Lisa started the lecture by taking us through the OTCC facility consisting of a turtle hospital, education centre and gift shop. The hospital takes in turtles from all over Ontario and has vets and physiotherapists. It currently has 45 patients and 3000 baby turtles. OTCC has secured land and is raising funds to build a larger facility, as the current one is at maximum capacity.

If you find an injured turtle, OTCC is there to help. It is important to note where you found it, as the hospital's goal is to return turtles back into the wild near the same location. OTCC volunteers transport injured turtles to the hospital in "turtle taxis." Upon arrival, the turtles are given fluids and painkillers, and are x-rayed to assess injuries and look for eggs that can be moved to incubators. Ninety percent of turtle injuries are from car incidents.

There are eight species of Turtles in Ontario

- Blanding's – Threatened in Ontario
- Eastern Musk – Special concern in Ontario
- Northern Map – Special concern in Ontario

- Painted – Special concern in Canada
- Snapping – Special concern in Ontario
- Spiny Softshell – Endangered in Ontario
- Spotted – Endangered in Ontario
- Wood – Endangered in Ontario

April told us about OTCC's Head Start program, designed to improve the success of turtles being reintroduced into the wild. Researchers have been conducting a field study since 2012 with an overall goal to aid in the bigger picture of conservation and to fill knowledge gaps, aiding turtle conservation programs worldwide. The long term objective of this study is to evaluate the conservation viability of head-started juvenile Blanding's turtles compared with their wild counterparts. Head-started turtles are kept over the winter or even longer before being released into the wild.

There are currently 32 Blanding's turtles in the study, equipped with radio transmitters to assist in tracking. Turtles are collected weekly to determine reintroduction success. Turtles encountered in the wild are captured and measured. Wild turtles are identified by notches in the shell creating a unique identification number.

To access interesting studies, videos and articles about OTCC, or to donate to the centre, visit their website: <https://ontarioturtle.ca/>.

Thanks so much, Lisa and April, for the tour and information about the head start study.

Peter Smith

TFN members can view this lecture at: <https://tfngo.to/april2023lecture>



## TREE OF THE MONTH: KENTUCKY YELLOWWOOD (*CLADRASTIS KENTUCKEA*)

One of the rarest native trees in eastern North America, Kentucky yellowwood (hereinafter just yellowwood, though that name is used for various completely unrelated trees around the world) is known from a scattering of individual sites on either side of the Mason-Dixon line, reaching its greatest concentration in the Ozark region of northwestern Arkansas. The most northerly natural population is protected in Brown County State Park in south-central Indiana, some 200 km from the nearest populations in patronymic Kentucky.

Despite its somewhat southerly natural distribution, yellowwood is perfectly hardy here and might well have lived here during previous interglacial periods, like its slightly more northerly legume family relative, black locust (*Robinia pseudoacacia*). We might expect that, as a near native having a long association with the species of our deciduous forest region, yellowwood would support local wildlife better than a tree introduced here from Eurasia. On the other hand, yellowwood has no close relatives in eastern North America, the other legume trees in our area all belonging to other subfamilies or tribes. It certainly doesn't seem to host any specialized insect herbivores or fungi that I am aware of.

Happily for us, Toronto has added yellowwood to its street tree list since there is no more splendid ornamental tree here. While it only flowers every two or three years, when it does flower it is spectacular, forming a broadly spreading dome enrobed with cascading masses of sweetly fragrant white pea flowers, not unlike those of wisteria. Flowering is in June and is too soon followed (from the standpoint of enjoying the display) by myriad, initially moderately inconspicuous slender pods some 5 to 10 cm long and about 1 cm across. These are papery in texture, a rather pale greyish tan at maturity, typically pointed at both ends, with varying swellings depending on how many seeds mature (from one to six). These fruits become more

noticeable as they persist into the winter, long after the leaves have turned a wonderful clear yellow and fallen in the autumn. Next spring's seedlings don't seem to last very long, so yellowwood doesn't appear to have much tendency to become naturalized or invasive.

Inflorescences are terminal but, even in non-flowering years, the shoot tips die at the end of leaf growth. (Despite that, vigorous shoots can reach a metre or two in length before their tips abort and bring growth to a halt.) Thus, there are no true terminal buds. Instead, the uppermost lateral bud develops as a pseudo-terminal bud right next to the scar of the aborted shoot tip. These buds, and all the rest of the laterals, are rather extraordinary when examined. They are totally naked (in the conventional sense that there are no bud scales), so the few arrested leaves that will begin next year's growth are completely exposed to the full force of winter, protected only by some short hairs.

How do they survive? Perhaps not all of them do. The bud pictured is fairly typical for yellowwood, and further close inspection reveals that it is not a single bud at all but a very tightly packed stack of five superposed buds, smoothly and progressively larger towards the top one. Come spring, only the largest, uppermost bud or two in the group will grow out as new shoots and the others will die. The tendency for two adjacent buds to develop as shoots, particularly in leaders, partially explains a weakness in the tree's architecture that can lead to a forking branch pattern and later to splitting and loss of limbs in the crown. (*Cladrastis* means brittle branch.) Although the leaves of the largest bud are arrested at an early stage of development for the winter, you can still easily make out the outlines of individual leaflets, ready to begin expansion with bud "burst."

*continued on next page*



Yellowwood tree in flower in early June.  
Photo: James Eckenwalder



Yellowwood tree in fall colour in October.  
Photo: James Eckenwalder



Pseudo-terminal bud stack with scar of aborted terminal bud.  
Photo: Ron Dengler

## ETHICAL NATURE VIEWING – WHAT IT IS, WHY IT MATTERS AND WHAT WE CAN DO

On March 29, Zunaid Khan presented this lecture via Zoom for TFN members to help us, as nature lovers, viewers and photographers, to adopt ethical practices so that we do not harm or endanger the species that give us so much pleasure. Zunaid commended an organization called *Nature First* (<https://naturefirst.org/en/>) whose first principle is “prioritizing the wellbeing of nature over photography” – a principle that Toronto Field Naturalists shares.

There are many pressures contributing to species’ vulnerability and decline including habitat loss, pesticide use, climate change, pollution, invasive species, bird collisions and increased park use. We do not want to add to these pressures.

The aim of this lecture, which will also be presented to other nature, birding and photography groups, is to raise awareness and support changes in behaviour that will make a difference. We are all being urged to learn more

about the effects of wildlife and habitat disturbance, and to adopt ethical photography and viewing practices. Getting too close to a bird or other animal, or drawing a crowd by sharing location information about rare or nesting birds, causes stress that interferes with the animals’ hunting, feeding and sleep or endangers the lives of nestlings. We need to become familiar with an animal’s normal behaviour so we can recognize when our presence is causing a stress-related change in its behaviour. Three harmful practices that interfere with normal animal behaviour should be avoided: playback of bird calls, following or flushing from cover and baiting with food. It is also important to minimize disturbance to habitats relied upon by wildlife.

To learn more about what you can do to respect and protect wildlife as you enjoy photographing or viewing nature, listen to this lecture at: <https://tfngo.to/ethicalviewing>. Also see this blog on the TFN website: <https://tfngo.to/wildlifedisturbance>

Wendy Rothwell

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### TREE *continued*

The typically seven to nine, smooth-edged leaflets of each leaf are proportionately broader than those of most of our other pinnately compound-leaved trees. They also differ from them in having the side leaflets often alternating along the length, rather than being very closely opposite to one another. Leaves of yellowwood are one of our most dramatic examples of juvenile leaves becoming conspicuously smaller as the tree matures.

Another unusual feature of yellowwood is the very thin, smooth bark, which remains so even on large trees. One consequence of this bark style is that, when sap is running in the early spring, there is no disguising the fact that yellowwood is a bleeder. Because the bark is so thin, every little nick cuts into the phloem, releasing a continuous flow, quite visible against the bark’s pale grey.

Not surprisingly, yellowwood has yellow wood, at least when freshly cut, though this darkens to light brown with air exposure and drying. Despite yellowwood’s rarity, roots of trees felled for cabinetry in early colonial times were sometimes used for dyeing. When the beautiful (dare I say magnificent) yellowwood that spanned and shaded our back garden for twenty years succumbed to a root infection, however, we chose not to excavate and exploit its roots. Instead we left the three metre tall, candelabra-like framework of major limbs as a sculptural element, as perches for avian self-expression, and as food for brown and/or white rot fungi, wood-boring beetles, and the grub-eating birds that feed upon them. Our beloved yellowwood, while no longer the showy summer and fall spectacle it once was, is thus still full of life.



Pinnately compound summer and fall leaves.

Photo: James Eckenwalder

## COME GET YOUR HANDS DIRTY HELPING NATURE!

Come and help TFN protect and restore habitat at Cottonwood Flats by planting trees, casting seeds, pulling invasives, picking up litter and more! 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!

No previous experience or tools are required. Volunteers only participate in activities they feel comfortable doing, and may attend as many or as few sessions as they like!

STEWARDSHIP SESSIONS WILL BE HELD 10 AM – 12 NOON  
EVERY SECOND TUESDAY, STARTING MAY 2, 2023.

REGISTER TO JOIN THE TEAM HERE: <https://tfngo.to/cspreg>

If you have any difficulty with the City's registration process, please just reach out to [volunteering@torontofieldnaturalists.org](mailto:volunteering@torontofieldnaturalists.org) and we'll help facilitate the process.



## SPRING SCHEDULE OF JUNIOR NATURALISTS' EVENTS

Please join us to explore Toronto's wonderful parks and ravines and encounter the wildlife that make them their home! Our programs, for children age 6 to 14, run from 10:00 am to 12:00 noon on Saturday mornings unless otherwise indicated. A parent must stay with the children for the duration of the program.

May 13: Rouge National Park to see Blanding's turtles and migrating and nesting songbirds.

June 10, 2:00 pm: Bee walk with Sarah McKell, lead botanist at Wildlife Preservation Canada. Kids will safely capture and release bees. This event is paid for by the PollinateTO grant obtained by the Girl Guides of East York and TFN's Junior Naturalists to install a pollinator garden at 905 Coxwell Avenue.

If you wish to attend these events, please email [juniortfn@torontofieldnaturalists.org](mailto:juniortfn@torontofieldnaturalists.org). You will receive an invitation email a week before the event to which you RSVP. This is followed up by a reminder email with detailed location instructions.

\* \* \*

We hope families will consider joining a stewardship group this summer and help to restore our ravines. There are many opportunities to do this. TFN has a group at the Cottonwood Flats and Toronto Nature Stewards has 32 approved sites, so there could be one close to your home. And Community Stewardship Program, a City of Toronto program, has nine sites. At all of these sites there will be removal of invasive plants and, at some of them, planting of native species.



## JUNIOR NATURALISTS

### MILKWEED: MORE THAN MONARCHS

We see milkweed everywhere — in specialized pollinator gardens, traditional perennial gardens, ravines and parks. Several varieties — butterflyweed, swamp milkweed and common milkweed — are plentiful, and all are very beautiful. The blossoms of common milkweed have a lovely fragrance. The other two varieties wow us with their stunning colours. Milkweed (especially common milkweed) is also a fantastic spreader. It spreads by its seeds, which blow long distances, and also by its rhizomes (underground stems). Because of this, it used to be considered a noxious weed.

No longer. Now it is the first native plant we want in our gardens! One reason, of course, is that milkweed is the larval host of the monarch butterfly caterpillar. They cannot survive without it. We are very familiar with this image.



Many other insects also depend on milkweed — moths and butterflies, beetles, bugs, wasps, and flies. Here are some that I have encountered:



The milkweed tussock moth caterpillar (left) feeds on it. The pugworm caterpillar (right), a generalist feeder, appears to be taking advantage of it as well.



Here the eastern tailed blue (left) and one-lined Sparganothis moth (right) are using a milkweed leaf as a launch pad, maybe after gathering nectar.



Many adult butterflies, including banded hairstreak (left) and Baltimore checkerspot (right) harvest nectar from the blossoms.



Two-lined grasshoppers (left) feed on it. Ants (right) farm aphids on it.

Bees, including this sweat bee, feed on the nectar and also help to pollinate milkweed flowers.



It is a lot of fun to pick one species of plant for a whole summer and see who comes to visit!

Anne Purvis

## VOLUNTEER PROFILE – ELLEN SCHWARTZEL

Nature and the environment have been long-standing themes in Ellen Schwartzel's life. She grew up not far from High Park and fondly remembers year-round walks around the park with her father. Her interest in nature led her to complete undergraduate and graduate degrees in botany at the University of Toronto. She became actively involved in TFN in 2018, the year she retired from a lengthy career in environmental policy.

Over the past five years Ellen has enjoyed being involved in TFN in many capacities: as a walk leader, as part of the lecture committee, and as part of the stewardship team at Cottonwood Flats. Ellen joined TFN's board of directors in the fall of 2018, has since served as Vice President and was TFN's President from 2020 to 2022. In early 2022 she led the formation of the advocacy committee.

Ellen is positive and upbeat about her experience with TFN, as well as about the state of nature in Toronto. Ellen says her favourite Toronto nature walk is the one she has just led or is preparing to lead. She describes leading walks as satisfying because it's wonderful to see how people respond and appreciate new things, and to change their preconceptions about a site, or help them "give a place another chance." She feels good about "giving people a part of their city back".

Ellen has also become a sought-after speaker about Toronto's nature. She has reached more than 1000 people with two virtual presentations that she offers free of charge to local groups. One is about Toronto's ravine systems and the other advocates for more nature within the city fabric.



Ellen shares the hopeful message that Toronto still has remarkable biodiversity. While about 370 species of birds have been documented in Toronto, putting it on a par with other birding hot spots, Ellen points out that many people don't find statistics like this meaningful. The best way to spread the message of Toronto's biodiversity, she says, is to find ways to connect with people emotionally about nature, such as through walks and stories.

Ellen points out that we are responsible for protecting Toronto's natural heritage for future generations, but that it is challenging to do this in a growing city. The solutions, in Ellen's view, are densification, sophisticated planning and careful stewardship, which can allow nature to immeasurably improve city life. Ellen says that it is important to realize that there is no such thing as a maintenance-free landscape in a populous city like Toronto. Maintenance is required everywhere, including in the

ravines. She believes this idea needs to be better absorbed and implemented. Ellen says that stewards are currently playing a critical role in Toronto's ecosystem; holding invasive species at bay, even reversing invasions in some cases, as well as planting native species. Ellen feels it is important to recognize the care and thoughtfulness that go into stewardship activities.

Reflecting on the 100th anniversary of TFN, Ellen notes that Toronto was very different in 1923 when TFN was founded, adding, "You really have to admire the previous generations who saw the big picture and had the vision that we're benefiting from today."

Tracy Garner

*Bright butterflies drift*

*Through summer's sun-filled meadows*

*Rich with wildflowers*

Haiku by Elisabeth Gladstone

## EXTRACTS FROM OUTINGS LEADERS' REPORTS

**Centennial Park Conservatory and Pond, Mar 1.**

**Leaders: Martin Chen, Lillian Natalizio.** Our first hour was spent in the conservatory, comparing travel notes, trying out a couple of different plant ID apps, and marveling at the diversity of plants in the collection. In the tropics house we saw shrimp plant, floss-silk and Norfolk Island pine trees, oranges, bananas, and a bird of paradise plant as tall as the building. In the arid house we saw aloe, bunny ears cacti, yucca, pineapple, and Barbados gooseberry, among others. The seasonal display house was a visual feast of colourful spring bulbs: narcissi, daffodils, tulips and crocuses. The sun was bright as we walked to the pond, but the ground was covered with a blanket of fresh snow. Ring-billed Gulls, a couple of Herring Gulls, and a set of mysterious tracks on the frozen surface were the only signs of wildlife at the pond.



Bird of paradise at Centennial Park Conservatory  
Photo: Lillian Natalizio

**East Point Park, Mar 8. Leader: Charles Bruce-Thompson.** This is one of Toronto's lesser-known parks, despite being ideally positioned on top of Scarborough Bluffs. We got superb views of the lake, placid and brilliantly lit. The park is relatively peaceful, especially at this time of year. Although very little of the vegetation is over thirty years old, there is an interesting mix of meadow, wetland, scrub and aspen groves. We saw only a few birds, including White-breasted Nuthatches, Downy and Hairy Woodpeckers, Common Ravens and American Goldfinches. We heard, but did not see, Song and White-throated Sparrows. Red-winged Blackbirds can't be far behind! Among a large raft of mixed waterfowl far out from land we were able to identify Long-tailed Ducks, Common Goldeneyes, Buffleheads and Red-breasted Mergansers. The identities of other birds floating and diving remain a mystery. Another mystery is why the sumac berry clusters, plentiful and apparently untouched, were not being eaten by birds.



Walkers at Todmorden Mills Park.  
Photo: Paula Davies

**Betty Sutherland Trail Park, Mar 12. Leader: Zunaid Khan.** We enjoyed a lovely walk in nature following the

Betty Sutherland trail along the Don River from Leslie and Sheppard to Duncan Mills Road and back. While there was still quite a bit of snow on the ground, there were signs of spring with robins singing and male Red-winged

Blackbirds staking out territory. We discussed the impact of the removal of buckthorn along the trail. Other birds sighted included Belted Kingfisher, Canada Geese, Mallards, Black-capped Chickadees, and Red-tailed Hawks.

**Lower Don River and Corktown Common, Mar 16. Leader:**

**Vivienne Denton.** It was a lovely sunny morning, though paths were a little icy in some places. Red-winged Blackbirds were back and made themselves heard. We also saw robins, starlings, chickadees, grackles and a couple of Red-tailed Hawks. Many Rock Doves were at Broadview

subway station and under the Queen Street Bridge. Along the river bank we saw Mallards, Common Mergansers and Black-crowned Night Herons and heard a kingfisher. At the end of the walk we enjoyed peace away from the noise of the parkway, the beauty of the landscaping (even at this bare time of the year) and native plants in Corktown Common.

**Winter Plant Identification, Todmorden Mills Park, Mar 18.**

**Leader: Stephen Smith.** The weather varied from warm sun to blowing snow and wind. We walked around the property learning to identify species that are easy to recognize from winter characteristics. Beginning near the bridge we reviewed old-field species like common milkweed, tall goldenrod, asters, chicory, Queen Anne's lace, and white pines and nannyberry. We noted common buckthorn, green ash, silver and Manitoba maples, red raspberry with unusually coloured stems, red oak and bush honeysuckles. Along the forest

trail we saw chokecherry and alternate-leaved dogwood (the most common shrubs of our forests), eastern sycamores, bur oak, and checked out the fertile fronds of Christmas, ostrich and sensitive ferns. We contrasted the buds of Norway maple and sugar maple in a grove of

*continued on next page*

EXTRACTS *continued*

salvaged sugar maples that were planted by kids in 1993 and are now close to 25 feet tall. In the meadow we saw the stems of cup plant and invasive black locust with its sharp thorns. The group took a picture beside the TFN 90th anniversary white oak that was planted in the meadow.

**Architecture, Building materials, Sculpture, PATH underground walk, Mar 21. Leader: Ed Freeman.**

Beginning in the Great Hall of Union Station, we looked at the stone used there, saw a fossil, and observed the new sculpture installation of the servants/slaves of the Baby House before proceeding through the Royal York Hotel and into the Albert Lambert Galleria. The Galleria, Heritage Square, Outdoor Courtyard, and reconstructed Commercial Bank of the Midland District façade all contribute to the interconnectedness of the two office towers of this complex. Proceeding underground, we saw the new style of food court being installed as a result of COVID. At the TD South Tower sculpture, both Inuit and a memorial to Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, attracted much attention. Then to the site of the April 1904 fire that burned down to the waterfront and northward to see *Dreaming*, the large head of a young girl giving a sense of peace amid the busy corporate life in this active business district. We ended the walk at the Sheridan Hotel where some examined the display about bees and bee life – a reference to the hotel's own bees.

**Trillium Park and Ontario Place, Mar 25. Leaders: Zunaïd Khan and Francesca Bouauoun.** A hearty group joined us for a walk through Trillium Park and Ontario Place despite wet and windy conditions. We discussed the natural features of the area, the wildlife and how this location is on a bird migration path. Stopping on the West Island, we discussed how the proposed redevelopment of the site, including a private spa involving elimination of the existing tree canopy, will impact nature, heritage features and public access. Bird sightings included Ring-billed Gulls, male Red-winged Blackbirds, Mallards, Long-tailed Ducks, Buffleheads, Red-breasted Mergansers and Goldeneyes.

**Nature and Heritage, Ward's and Algonquin Islands, Mar 26. Leader: Paul Overy.** We began by exploring the geological and hydrological processes over the past 15,000 years that created the sandy peninsula which became the Toronto Islands when an intense storm broke the link to the mainland in 1856. From the beach on Ward's Island we spoke about how the creation of the Leslie Street Spit has impeded the flow of new sand to shore up the Islands. This, together with major floods in 2017 and 2019, has necessitated shoreline protection actions. We discussed the development of the Ward's and Algonquin Islands communities and the creation of parkland on most of the Islands by Metro Toronto in the 1950s and beyond.

## HELP MONARCH BUTTERFLIES WITH THE CANADIAN WILDLIFE FEDERATION!

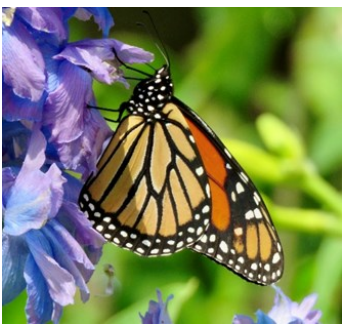


Photo: Cynthia Lundhild

The Canadian Wildlife Federation is looking to build a team of community volunteers to help gather information about monarch butterfly migration in Ontario. The data collected through this study will aid them in better protecting and conserving monarchs and the irreplaceable habitat needed for their long journey south!

They are looking for individuals and groups who can volunteer as Monarch Ambassadors to frequently monitor local shores of Southern Ontario's Great Lakes during Monarch migration (mid-August to mid-September), and are inviting TFN members to join this team.

This short video <https://tfngo.to/cwfm monarchs video> demonstrates what being a Monarch Ambassador is all about!

Benefits of being a Monarch Ambassador include:

- Free access to training and webinars about monarchs, other pollinators and habitat restoration
- Contributing to vital province-wide conservation research
- Building connections with the Canadian Wildlife Federation

If you are interested in registering as a Monarch Ambassador, learning more, or being notified of future information sessions visit <https://tfngo.to/cwfm monarchs registration>.

## WEATHER (THIS TIME LAST YEAR)

### May 2022

May was, on average, a warm dry month, mostly due to an extended period of moderate heat and sunshine from the 10th-15th. Otherwise, it was changeable with brief hot and cool spells alternating in quick succession.

The monthly mean temperature was 15.7° at Pearson Airport (2° above the 30-year average) and 16.1° downtown (1.7° above the 30-year average). Rainfall was 46.8 mm at Pearson (normal is 73.9 mm) and 28.6 mm downtown (normal is 73.5 mm). Rainfall was reasonably frequent, but light and of short duration.

The month started fairly cool but mostly sunny, with a monthly low of 3.7° at Pearson on the 9th (and 6.9° downtown on the 1st). Gradually, the high pressure built into a warm blocking ridge from the 10th-15th. Temperatures rose into the upper twenties, with Buttonville Airport in Markham attaining 29.7° on the 15th. This was followed by a few thunderstorms and then a sharp cooldown, which lasted until a warm front arrived on the 20th. Areas away from the lake approached 30°, with 29.9° at Pearson on the 21st.

This warm spell brought the most significant weather for the month. That very day, a cold front brought a violent squall line, a long line of thunderstorms called a derecho which features severe straight-line winds over a large area. All of southern Ontario from Windsor to the Quebec border was affected (and even well into Quebec). Pearson recorded a wind gust of 121 km/h. Reports in eastern Ontario and Quebec were of winds in the 150-190 km/h range. There was extensive tree and building damage and 11 people were killed (mostly by falling trees). The storm moved very quickly; no sooner had it arrived than it had passed. The severe storm brought only 6.2 mm of rain to Pearson.

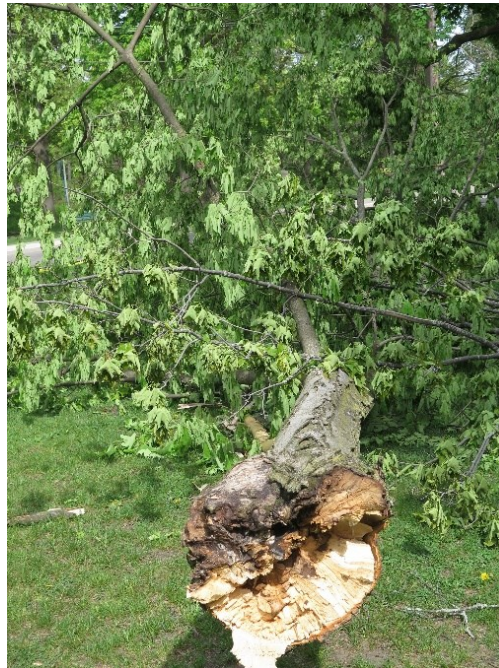
There was another period of seasonal to cool temperatures, and then a final brief heatwave to close the month's last

two days. On the 31st, it reached 32.8° at Pearson and 32.2° downtown.

### June, 2022

June featured near normal temperatures but with some wide swings as very hot air masses lurked to the southwest and occasionally made forays into southern Ontario. Precipitation was slightly below normal. The monthly mean temperature was 19.6° both downtown and at Pearson Airport. This is pretty much exactly on the thirty-year average (0.2° above normal at Pearson and 0.2° below average downtown). Total rainfall was 60.9 mm downtown and 40.4 mm at Pearson. This is distinctly below the long-term average of around 80 mm. It did not amount to severe

drought in the context of the previous winter and spring, but conditions became notably dry later in the month. Almost all of the rain fell in the first nine days, with half of it falling on the 7th. Although the latter part of the month featured strong frontal activity, rainfall was very sporadic and mostly missed local weather stations. Less than 10 mm fell from June 10th – 30th both downtown and at Pearson.



Tree in High Park brought down by the May 21<sup>st</sup> wind storm.

Photo: Wendy Rothwell

The first part of June stayed cool and pleasant with abundant sunshine, mostly low humidity, and occasional rain. From the 15th-22nd, extreme heat lurked just to the southwest of the Toronto area and made a couple of brief inroads. A warm front on the 15th brought temperatures a couple of degrees above 30° on the 16th. This was broken by a strong cold front that evening. A stronger push came on the 21st-22nd, with temperatures soaring to 35.8° downtown and 35.5° at Pearson. Even Toronto Island hit 34.9° due to winds coming off the land. These are within a degree or two of all-time June records (36.4° in 1964) and the hottest readings in Toronto in almost ten years (July 2012). This heat was also short-lived with seasonal or slightly cool conditions prevailing the last week of the month into the very beginning of July.

*continued on next page*

WEATHER *continued***July 2022**

While extreme heat, drought (and sometimes floods) in various parts of the world made headlines in July, Toronto had a rather moderate month with near to slightly above-normal temperatures. However, most of the Greater Toronto Area was in mild drought conditions, at least until the 18th. Monthly mean temperatures were 22.8° downtown (30-year-average is 22.7°) and 22.7° at Pearson Airport (30-year average is 22.2°).

Sunny, slightly cool, and very pleasant weather prevailed until the 18th. The core of the hot weather remained well to our west. A warm front on the 18th brought welcome rain but initiated our only heat wave for the month. Temperatures rose to the mid-thirties on the 19th. Downtown reached 35.2°. (Interestingly, this coincided exactly with the unprecedented record heatwave across the pond: London Heathrow Airport hit 40.2° on the 19th, a value which Toronto itself has only ever exceeded in 1936.) Toronto's heatwave was far from unprecedented, however, and was brought to an end by another quick line of storms on the 24th.

As for minimum temperatures, downtown dropped to 14.4° on the 10th and Pearson 13.1° on the 3rd. A few outlying locations such as Georgetown briefly dropped below 10° on the 10th or 11th. The low humidity of the droughty early part of the month facilitated lower nighttime temperatures during that period.

July rainfall totals were 58.8 mm downtown and 43.6 mm at Pearson. Normal is around 73 mm. The growing season

shortfall so far was significant: it had been the driest May to July period since 2016.

**August 2022**

August brought slightly warmer-than-average but not extreme conditions. It was often humid. Rainfall was uneven across the GTA but fairly close to normal.

The mean temperature was 22.9° downtown and 22.5° at Pearson Airport. This was 0.8° above normal downtown and 1.1° above normal at Pearson. The hottest weather was from the 6th-8th, with a high of 33.9° at Pearson on the 7th. Temperatures were near or just above 30° again on the 3rd, 20th, and 29th. There wasn't much real cool weather, with temperatures dipping briefly on the 12th-13th and again on the 27th. The lowest temperature was 13.6° downtown and 12.9° at Pearson on the 13th. The only sub-10° degree reading near Toronto was 8.0° at Georgetown on the 12th (such readings were fairly common in summer cool spells until the 1990s).

Mean summer (June to August) temperature was 21.7° downtown and 21.6° at Pearson. This was fractionally above normal, but summer 2022 was the coolest since 2019.

Rainfall was 64.5 mm downtown (30-year average is 66.7 mm), and 80.0 mm at Pearson (30-year average is 65.4 mm). This came from scattered thunderstorms, with higher amounts to the north and west. Overall, there remained a seasonal shortfall of about 30-50 mm for the period June to August.

Gavin Miller

## NATIVE PLANT SALES 2023

Please note there will **not** be a native plant sale at High Park this year. Here are some other recommended sources:

**Evergreen Brickworks Garden Market.** The garden centre is fully stocked with Toronto's widest selection of Ontario native flowers, plants and trees. Daily 10 am to 5 pm

**LEAF** has many garden kits including native plants, shrubs and trees available for sale. Order early as they run out quickly.

**North American Native Plant Society.** NANPS Sale at Toronto Botanical Gardens, May 20, 9:30 am to 2:30 pm. Pre-order to April 30

**Parkdale Horticultural Society,** Plant Fair, May 27, 10 am to 12 pm.

**Project Swallowtail** at Allan Gardens, May 28. Orders will be accepted in May for pickup. Please Register for their May 4 Zoom session and sign up for newsletters and links to plants to order. Plant Sale guides (pdf)

**Toronto Botanical Gardens** Plant Sale, May 6 and 7, 10 am to 4 pm.

## 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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Views expressed in the newsletter are not necessarily those of the editor or Toronto Field Naturalists.

Members are encouraged to contribute letters, short articles and digital images. Please email to: [newsletter@torontofieldnaturalists.org](mailto:newsletter@torontofieldnaturalists.org)

**Submissions deadline for September: Aug 1**

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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](mailto: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 lecture by phone:

May:	Dial in: +1 438 809 7799	Meeting ID: 825 6069 1247	Passcode: 622620
June:	Dial in: +1 778 907 2071	Meeting ID: 818 0614 0901	Passcode: 867961

## FOCUS ON NATURE – SIMPLICITY

The March challenge for TFN's Photography Group was Simplicity. This image, entitled *Kingfisher Contemplation*, was submitted by Luke Reece.

I took this photo in High Park one evening in late March. As a relatively new birder and nature photographer, I'm always happy to be surprised by the fluttering of wings and calls of birds that I didn't know were in Toronto. This encounter with the Belted Kingfisher was one of those moments. The sun was setting and I was facing west, so the lighting was not ideal. However, the silhouette of the bird and branches played nicely into the theme of simplicity for this month's challenge. Later, using Lightroom, I adjusted the exposure a bit to bring to light a few more details on the subject without making the image too busy. I cropped it so the framing highlighted the bird and a few branches. I wonder if I should have edited out some of those foreground branches and only had the perch, but I almost always keep them to show depth. In the end, I'm happy with the image, and even more so with the surprise encounter!



Luke Reece

If you would like to join the Photography Group, email [photography@torontofieldnaturalists.org](mailto:photography@torontofieldnaturalists.org).

### TFN LECTURES

See page 15 for information about lectures via Zoom

Sunday, May 7 at 2:30 pm

#### **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, will give an overview of earthworm invasion in Canada and describe the recent discovery of "jumping worms" in the Toronto ravines, including the threats they pose to these sensitive ecosystems and what you can do to help!*

Sunday, June 4 at 2:30 pm

#### **Eastern Coyote – a Successful Eco-Influencer**



*Lesley Sampson, Co-founding Executive Director, Coyote Watch Canada, will share insights into the behaviour, ecology and family life challenges of coyotes, as well as human misconceptions about this vital keystone species, and explore ways to apply salient science, humane and effective best practices to minimize human-coyote interactions.*

#### Upcoming lectures:

TFN's lecture team is assembling a terrific line-up of talks for fall/winter with topics including urban opossums, arctic biodiversity and wetland restoration at Leslie Street Spit. Stay tuned for details and dates!