



TORONTO FIELD NATURALIST

Number 678 September 2023



White-throated Sparrow. Watercolour by Eva Davis

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PRESIDENT'S REPORT

I hope everyone has had a great summer despite the periods of bad air quality due to forest fires. We have had a busy summer with the kick-off of our centennial celebrations, starting with the special June issue of the newsletter. We hope everyone enjoyed this great issue put together by the newsletter team led by our editor, Wendy Rothwell. For those members who do not subscribe to the print version of our newsletter, this fall you will be able to purchase a copy of the special centennial issue through our new *Members Only* website. I would like to take this opportunity to thank Jason Ramsay-Brown for the tremendous amount of time and effort he has put into building, delivering and supporting the launch of this great new website. We look forward to using it to deliver more to members.

TFN is blessed to have a phenomenal group of volunteers who enable us to deliver our programs. In a time when people are less willing to volunteer, it is critical that we recognize, appreciate and respect the efforts of all our volunteers. Thanks to all of you for what you do. We plan to host a special event during our centennial celebrations as one way of showing our appreciation.

An update on the centennial celebrations:

Outings: As president, I am leading or co-leading at least one centennial walk per month from June 2023 to June 2024. These walks will be in locations that have had special connections to our outings program over the years. To date, we have done walks in Glendon Ravine to celebrate the first urban nature trail created by TFN; in Hogg's Hollow, a popular meeting location in the early years of the program; and on the Leslie Street Spit, a very popular walk location and a place that TFN has a history of helping to protect. In September we will do two centennial walks, one on the Toronto Islands and the second in Milne

Hollow and Charles Sauriol Conservation Area. Check our walks list on the *Members Only* website for these and future centennial walks. In addition, this fall we will launch a series of President's Walks, each with a special guest, which will be listed only in the newsletter. Keep an eye on future newsletters for these walks.

Then & Now Photo Exhibit: A digital preview of this photo exhibit featuring photos from our slide collection and current photos taken by members of our photography group will be available on the *Members Only* site this month. The photo exhibit itself will take place during the first week of October as part of Ravine Days. We are in the final stages of planning for this event and will share details with members via email and the *Members Only* site.

Stewardship: We are finalizing plans for a special stewardship event: planting butternut trees at Jim Baillie Nature Reserve. In addition, we are planning an event for the spring of 2024 with the City of Toronto's Community Stewardship Program. Details for these events will be provided by email and on the *Members Only* site.

Lectures: The lectures team has yet again put together a great calendar of lectures for members and the public. This fall sees the return of hybrid lectures offered in-person at Emmanuel College and streamed live via Zoom. In addition, we are seeking to bring back the lecture film screening series from years past. We hope to do a screening this fall and, based on interest from members, will decide whether to do more in the winter. Stay tuned for details once our plans have been finalized.

Advocacy: The advocacy team is continuing to engage with city councillors. I joined the team in speaking with Councillor Ausma Malik via Zoom. We were able to discuss the issues around Ontario Place and the Toronto Island Master Plan. In July, Ellen Schwartzel and I had the

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BIRDING CHANGES THE BRAIN!

The University of Toronto/Baycrest Hospital are conducting research to determine how learning about nature influences the brain. Several TFN members participated in their Neuroplasticity & Learning Study three years ago.

This article from Audubon magazine <https://tfngo.to/audubonbirdingdoeschangebrain> provides fascinating information about findings to date.

The researchers are now seeking volunteers for a new brain imaging study that looks at learning about nature across all ages. If you are an experienced birder, or if you are interested in birds but do not have much prior knowledge about them, you can help with this research. Here are details of what is involved: <https://tfngo.to/baycreststudy>

LIFETIME TORONTO FIELD NATURALISTS AWARD

On behalf of the board I am happy to announce that, as part of our centennial celebrations, we are launching the Lifetime Toronto Field Naturalists Award. The purpose of this award is to recognize volunteers who have made significant and sustained contributions to TFN and its mandate over a period of at least 10 years. Recipients of this award will become lifetime members of TFN.

TFN members may submit nominations for this award. The process on how to do so will be announced in the November newsletter. The president, in consultation with board members, will review nominated candidates for approval at the February board meeting, and the names of selected candidates will be announced in the newsletter. The board is not bound to select candidates for this award every year if no suitable candidates are nominated.

The inaugural recipients of this award are Alexander (Sandy) Cappell, Alex Wellington and Corinne MacDonald.

Sandy Cappell held the fort at the TFN office for over 30 years, helping out a succession of TFN presidents. He has been a member even longer than that, since 1981. His cheerful presence and reliable attention ensured that members' queries were always answered. Thank you, Sandy, for everything you have done for TFN and your continued support. I have fond memories of chats with you in the office when, as a new board member, I was navigating my way learning about TFN.

Alex Wellington is a past president who has served multiple terms on the board and, as chair of Lectures Committee, ensured that we have had a vibrant lectures program. In more turbulent times, Alex was crucial in steering TFN through troubled waters, ensuring we are still here to celebrate our centennial. Thinking back to the days when the board still met in person, I very much enjoyed working with you and hope to have the opportunity to do so again. I am grateful for your contributions to TFN and its future.

Corinne MacDonald provides membership services. Over the years she has helped members navigate their way through a wide variety of issues – how to become a member, renew membership and, most recently, how to access our new *Members Only* site. She has been a stable, steady hand who ensures our members get the help they need. Thank you, Corinne, for what you have done and continue to do for TFN.

In closing, I would like to say that I always try to move in nature in awe of my surroundings. The more time I spend being involved with TFN, the more I am in awe of the people who have committed themselves to this organization over the years and continue to do so. I am extremely grateful to all of you and look forward to meeting more of you in person during the remainder of my term as president.

Zunaid Khan

PRESIDENT'S REPORT *continued*

opportunity to engage with Councillor James Pasternak on a walk organized by a coalition of community, environmental and active transportation groups which TFN supports. This took place in Earl Bales Park to discuss a proposed multi-use year-round trail connecting the park to York Mills subway station via the Don Valley golf course. (See article on page 10.) It is critical that we continue to engage and partner with other community groups to improve access to green spaces, enable safe connections between them, and ensure that the conservation, protection and restoration of nature is part of the conversation.

Outreach: I am very happy to say that TFN is back to doing in-person outreach events. We have participated in an Earth Day event in Downsview Park, a shoreline cleanup event at Cherry Beach, a guided walk and a Junior Naturalists event at The Bentway, and the TRCA Butterfly Festival in Tommy Thompson Park.

In addition, I have been doing speaking sessions with the City of Toronto's Community Stewardship program on the

topic of ethical behaviour in nature. I hope to continue these sessions this fall and would like to expand them to other stewardship and community groups across the city. This fall I will begin doing presentations to photography groups and clubs on ethical nature photography.

Finally, we are looking for volunteers for our Outings, Lectures, and Promotions & Outreach Committees. To learn more about these opportunities, see Volunteer Opportunities on our *Members Only* website. If you are interested in participating, please email volunteering@torontofieldnaturalists.org.

I look forward to meeting more members at our upcoming events and/or on our centennial walks.

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

TFN OUTINGS INFORMATION

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

Toronto Islands: Ward's and Snake Islands. A 100th Anniversary walk.

Leader: Zunaid Khan

Thursday, September 7, 9:00 am

Meeting Point: Ward's Island ferry dock.

Walk Details: A 2½ hour, 3 to 5-km circular walk over mostly unpaved, even, flat surfaces.

Walk Description: We will walk east towards the channel between Ward's Island and Cherry Beach, then towards Ward's Island beach before following the boardwalk west, then cross the inner channel over to Snake Island. We will explore all that nature has to offer on the islands and possibly see some migrating birds. We will also discuss TFN's connection to the islands.

TTC: Here is a link to the ferry schedule: <https://tfngo.to/ferryschedule>. If they are still running on the summer schedule, take the 8:15 am ferry to Ward's Island. If they have switched to the fall schedule, take the 8:30 am ferry to Ward's Island. I will meet you on Ward's Island. You can purchase your ferry ticket in advance at: <https://secure.toronto.ca/FerryTicketOnline/tickets2/index.jsp>

Getting there: Take Subway Line 1 to Union Station, then #509 Harbourfront or #510 Spadina streetcar to the ferry terminal stop. Exit to street level and walk south to Jack Layton Ferry Dock.

What to bring: Snacks, water, binoculars and/or camera.

Washrooms: Available at the beginning.

Walk Leader's Cell Number: 416-716-6464



The Meadoway Walk

Leader: Sarah Kotsopoulos

Saturday, September 16, 10:00 am

Meeting Point: Bendale Junior Public School (61 Benshire Drive, Scarborough).

Walk Details: A 2-hour, 2 km circular walk over mostly paved, flat surfaces with a few gentle slopes.

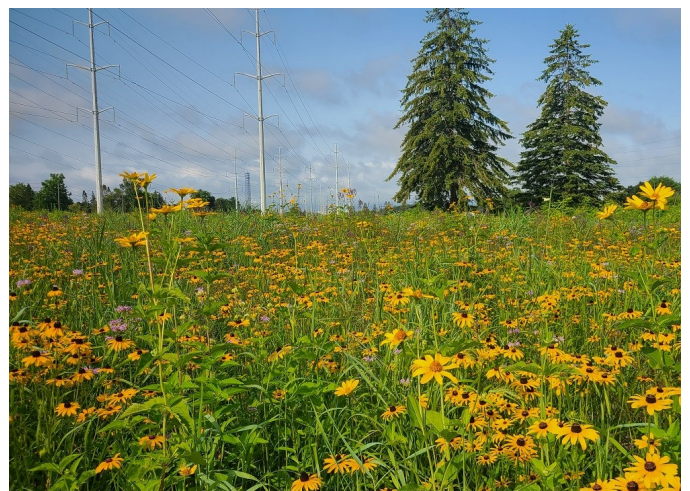
Walk description: Walk participants will tour a section of The Meadoway and learn about the meadow restoration project while viewing the wildflowers, birds and pollinators.

TTC: take the #16 bus from Warden subway station to McCowan Rd at Bellechasse St.

What to bring: Camera, binoculars. Long pants and closed-toe shoes recommended.

Washrooms: None

Walk Leader's Cell Number: 416-456-484



The Meadoway. Photo: Sarah Kotsopoulos

LECTURE REPORT (MAY)

The Worm Turns in Toronto Ravines

May 7, 2023

Dr. Michael J. McTavish, postdoctoral research fellow, Smith Forest Health Lab , U of T.

Jumping Worms are the latest addition to a rogues' gallery of invasive creatures making a home in ravines and gardens of the Toronto area. Dr. McTavish shared his team's latest findings about this development with TFN's lecture audience.

"Jumping worms" is a general term applied to an assemblage of 16 species of earthworms, all originating in Asia. So far, five of these species have been identified in Ontario gardens, parks and conservation areas. Several attributes make jumping worms remarkably effective invaders of new ecosystems – even in places with cold winters. They have an annual life cycle; they overwinter as cocoons, and they are parthenogenetic, meaning they can reproduce asexually.

Before focusing on jumping worms, Dr. McTavish sketched out the broader context of

earthworm ecology, reminding us that the familiar garden earthworm is itself an introduced species for North America, likely brought over with settlers' garden plants perhaps as early as the 1500s. Earthworms have long been studied and regarded as "ecosystem engineers". Charles Darwin focused his last-published book on the behaviour of earthworms. Darwin concluded, "It may be doubted if there are any other animals which have played such an important part in the history of the world as these lowly organized creatures." Apparently Darwin's earthworm book was a best-seller in its time.

Recently arrived jumping worms can be distinguished from previously naturalized earthworm species both by their behaviour and by the altered habitats they create. Their common name comes from their characteristic rapid thrashing when exposed or held. Once established at a site, jumping worms produce abundant castings (worm poop) that can build up to a depth of centimetres. The castings resemble loose, dry coffee grounds – a strong clue to look for in ravines and gardens. These concentrated castings increase soil erosion on slopes and make it harder for native vegetation to recover. Increased soil erosion and



Jumping Worm. Photo: Michael McTavish

impacts on native plants are key reasons we should be concerned about jumping worms.

Have jumping worms arrived in your garden or neighbourhood ravine? Chances are pretty good. As of the spring of 2023, researchers have assembled 31 confirmed records for southern Ontario, including in the GTA, Hamilton and towards Georgian Bay. A sampling survey done in 2022/23 by Esther Tang, a member of Dr. McTavish's team, found jumping worms in four out of 11 sampled ravine sites in the GTA. At Blythwood Ravine Park, for example, jumping worms have been present for several years already. As Dr. McTavish noted, they are not yet ubiquitous, but they are not rare either.

The hard fact is that jumping worms have arrived, and there are no realistic hopes of controlling or eliminating them. As Dr. McTavish advised, our best approach is to slow down their spread in order to reduce the cumulative stresses already burdening urban ecosystems. Poisons cannot be used because of the inevitable impacts on other soil dwellers, including many beneficial organisms. Local worm-eating predators have not yet figured out jumping worms as a food source. Small infestations can be managed by solarizing soil with black plastic mulch to heat

the soil to over 40 degrees C for at least three days. Best practices include avoiding sharing plants and inspecting the soil of any new plants very carefully. Some groups are practising bare-root sharing of plants. Other preventative practices include using heat-treated mulches, and washing boots and tires, especially after being in areas where jumping worms might be present.

For TFN observers interested in checking local areas for jumping worms, Dr. McTavish recommends uploading photos and videos of their sightings to <https://www.eddmaps.org/> – a web-based mapping system for documenting invasive species and pest distribution.

Thanks to Dr. McTavish and his team for their extensive public awareness work on jumping worms. Awareness will need to grow quickly among Toronto's gardeners, landscapers, nature communities and ravine stewards.

Ellen Schwartzel

TFN members can view this lecture on the *Members Only* website.

LECTURE REPORT (JUNE)

Eastern Coyote – A Successful Eco-Influence

June 4, 2023

Lesley Sampson, Co-founder, Executive Director, Coyote Watch Canada

Lesley Sampson is a graduate of Brock University and has a diploma in Education from D'Youville College. Her work centres on canid behaviour and nonlethal coexistence methodologies. Coyote Watch Canada is a non-profit organization that focuses on resolving, in a positive manner, conflicts between humans and canids. Their coyote and fox response framework is based on four cornerstones:

- Investigate in the field – human origin, direct or indirect feeding, compliance with dog leash laws and habitat/den sites
- Prevent clashes by looking at early indicators of conflict and taking preemptive action
- Educate the public on the presence of canids and demonstrate pet safety tactics and deterrents
- Enforce restrictions on unleashed dogs and feeding wildlife.



- Coyotes mate for life and are very committed to their families. They have litters of five to 10 pups in the early spring. Both parents are responsible for their protection and feeding until the fall. Coyotes are adaptive omnivores. They serve an important role in the ecosystem by controlling the rodent population and cleaning up carcasses. They are highly social animals that communicate by body language, scent marking, yips, barks and howls.

Sightings of coyotes are increasing as a result of humans directly or indirectly providing food sources. Overflowing bird feeders and fallen fruit attract prey species, and coyotes return to sites where they can obtain frequent food. New infrastructure disturbs their range or den, causing more frequent encounters. Trapping or killing

coyotes typically does not work, as new coyotes fill the ecological niche. Human behaviour needs to change, reestablishing safe and healthy boundaries between humans and wildlife.

The most important actions you can take to avoid encounters is never feed a coyote and ensure all food is inaccessible. Dogs should always be kept on a non-retractable leash. Dogs frequently chase coyotes or foxes, causing them loss of valuable calories, injury and death. Of coyote interactions with dogs, 92.3 percent were from dogs off their leash. If you see someone feeding a wild canid, report it to the municipal bylaw agency or Coyote Watch Canada or, in Toronto, phone 311.

What to do if you encounter a coyote or fox:

- Pick up small children or pets
- Never run or turn your back on a coyote/fox/wolf or aggressive domestic dog
- Wave your arms above your head, stomp your feet or clap your hands; be assertive
- Be big and loud
- Slowly back away while maintaining eye contact

What Coyote Watch Canada does:

- educates the general public to dispel the many myths around coyotes and foxes
- builds compassionate citizens who understand the canids' role in the ecosystem
- educates first responders on how to deploy effective aversion conditioning so the coyote understands human communication and intentions
- investigates hot spots where canids are commonly present and determines concrete actions that can be taken to mitigate issues.

For more information, to volunteer or provide donations to Coyote Watch Canada, visit <https://tfngo.to/coyotewatch>.

The Ontario Government is attempting to pass Bill 91 with a proposal that allows the issuance of new train and trial dog licenses and the transfer of current licenses to new owners. Dog train and trial areas are used by hunters to train dogs to hunt wildlife. Operators purchase wildlife from trappers and release them into enclosures where dogs are trained to track and hunt them. To voice your concerns visit <https://tfngo.to/saynotobill91>.

Thank you, Lesley, for your informative lecture.

Peter Smith

TFN members can view this lecture on the *Members Only* website.

TFN MEMORIES

We were happy to receive from Jack Gingrich this interesting account of how TFN acquired its first nature reserve. Jack was our president from 1968 to 1970.

During the last few months of my presidency, the board of directors decided the Toronto Field Naturalists Club should become incorporated so that we could buy property, and so that we could issue receipts for donations.

One of our members, a lawyer named Doug Wilkins, agreed to assist us in becoming incorporated. It was he who recommended that the word “club” be removed from our name, as this would make it easier to get incorporated. (‘The word club suggested something such as a gambling or drinking club.’) Thus we became incorporated as Toronto Field Naturalists.

An author named Ian Adams had purchased two old log houses, and used the logs to build a larger log house on his 90-acre property spanning Uxbridge Creek. He apparently ran out of money, because he wanted to sell the 60 acres on the left side of the creek while continuing to live in his log house on the 30 acres on the right side.

The area had been logged around 1900 but had become a mature forest, and Ian wanted it to remain that way. He wanted to sell this property to someone, or some organization, that would keep it in the same condition. The

only person Ian could think of was author Fred Bodsworth, whom he had met only once. He phoned Fred and Fred, a past president of TFNC and a friend of mine, phoned me.

Fred, his wife Margaret and I drove to Ian’s home, and we were not the only visitors. Another author, Farley Mowat, and his wife Claire were weekend visitors. I felt somewhat out of place with these three famous authors. Ian took Fred and me around the property. There was too much snow to really see what it was like, but I thought it was worth considering.

After lunch Ian and I worked out an option agreement. He agreed to a price of \$300 per acre, which was what he had paid for it. We had 60 days to decide, during which time he could not sell the property to anyone else.

I took members of the board of directors to the property in two groups on different weekends, and they agreed that we should buy. We waited until after the annual meeting, which was within the 60 days, so that the new board of directors and a new president would be the ones to decide, since they would have to deal with the ownership of the TFN’s first nature reserve.

Jack Gingrich

Thank you, Jack, for sharing these memories. It is fitting that we learn about this history during our 100th Anniversary celebrations.



Uxbridge Creek at Jim Baillie Nature Reserve
Photo from TFN slide collection



Volunteers building boardwalks at Jim Baillie Nature Reserve.
Photo from TFN slide collection

Bright butterflies drift

Through summer's sun-filled meadows

Rich with wildflowers

Haiku by Elisabeth Gladstone

REMEMBERING EVA DAVIS

We were sorry to learn that Eva Davis passed away on August 4th, at the remarkable age of 103. We extend our condolences to her son, Paul, and other members of the family.

As recorded in the October 1989 newsletter, Eva regarded it as her lucky day when she found the Toronto Field Naturalists. As another member aptly commented, "It was certainly a lucky day for the TFN." It is hard to imagine anyone who, for over 30 years, contributed in so many ways to the objectives of our organization.

Eva served on our Board of Directors from 1987 to 1994. She joined the Outings Committee in 1985, co-ordinating walks and leading many herself to such places as Warden Woods, Wigmore Ravine, Eastern Beaches and Guildwood Park.

Eva was a valued member of the Newsletter Committee from 1984 until 2009. Even at the age of 90 she continued to enthusiastically make the arduous trip from Brampton each month to attend editorial meetings, usually bringing along a new article for publication. Her interests in nature were extensive, including wildflowers, moths, birds, mammals and, most especially, mushrooms. A prolific contributor to the newsletter, she enjoyed sharing her knowledge and enjoyment of these through her remarkable talents as an artist and writer. We read her articles, not just to learn,

but to be drawn into the delight and wonder she felt about her nature encounters. I think this one from the September 1984 newsletter is a good example.

[During a solitary ramble near Parry Sound] "my eyes glued ground-wards for fear of missing both my path and any potholes thereon, I stopped dead. "That twig", I thought, "looks just like a lizard!" (To be exact, a salamander) perfect ruby brooch which sat unmoving in the palm of my hand. A red eft turned deepest crimson by the science fiction twilight. I carried it from the middle to the side of the roadway and had to tickle it to make it leave me. It seemed stunned by the atmospheric change and moved at a snail's pace."



But Eva's interest in nature was not sentimental. She cared passionately about conservation issues and, as a member of TFN's Environment Group, used her writing ability and wry sense of humour to draw attention to important issues such as: a protest against the use of plastic shopping bags (March 1988); SCOW (Stop Contaminating Our Waterfront), calling for a moratorium on lake-filling in Ontario (May 1993), and protesting the spraying of herbicides in a futile effort to eradicate dandelions (Sept 2003).

Eva was involved in advocacy work. In March 1993 she and Fred Bodsworth represented TFN at a meeting with the Parks and Recreation Department to discuss initiatives to preserve the natural heritage of Glen Stewart Ravine (May 1993). That newsletter also contains an

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Red fox



Blue-green stropharia

MANY THANKS TO ALL OF YOU!

It was a very busy summer for the volunteers who develop and maintain TFN's websites, social media accounts and the digital infrastructure that our organization depends on! Helping members gain access to our new *Members Only* website and renew their memberships for another year was no small feat – but one made all the more pleasurable thanks to the support and warm words so many of you sent. On behalf of all of TFN Digital's volunteers, please know how deeply we appreciate your compliments, cheerleading and, in some cases, patience!

Over the next several months, our volunteers intend to take full advantage of the exciting opportunities the new *Members Only* site affords us in enhancing the benefits of TFN membership. To this end, we'd like to encourage participation from all of you!

Here are three things we hope you'll consider:

1. Please opt in to our Members Directory! TFN is a community, not just an organization. Connecting with new friends and learning from and sharing knowledge with your fellow members is one of the greatest benefits of TFN membership, and our Members Directory is here to help! Please see <https://tfngo.to/mdir> to learn more.

2. Make suggestions! We'd love to hear your ideas about what we could do to enhance your membership experience. Please send your thoughts to webmaster@torontofieldnaturalists.org

3. Volunteer with TFN Digital! Fancy yourself a writer? Own a scanner? Know your way around Google Drive? Have a bit of experience with WordPress – or are eager to learn? You are exactly the kind of volunteer we're looking for! For more information, please reach out to volunteering@torontofieldnaturalists.org.

Jason Ramsay-Brown

REMEMBERING *continued*

article that regales us with the frustrations of dealing with various levels of government to protest the spraying of the herbicide 2,D-4, as well as an exceptionally good article protesting “Forest Management” (clear-cutting) in the Temagami area, and a third opposing game hunting in Provincial Parks.

Eva also took a humorous approach to urging TFN members to help clean up the garbage in Toronto parks (May 1986) resulting in two successful “Scavenger Hunts.”

As if this were not enough, Eva was also a member of TFN's Nature Arts Group, creating countless sketches and paintings, now a treasured part of our archives. A few samples are provided here.

To read her articles and view more of her artwork, you can browse back issues of the newsletter on our *Members Only* website. Members who knew Eva may like to read a lovely article about how her love of nature began during her childhood in Hong Kong and Wales. See *Beginnings* in the October 1985 newsletter. <https://tfngo.to/oct1989newsletter>

Wendy Rothwell



Life cycle of common milkweed



Mute Swan

OPENING THE GATES TO RAVINE CONNECTIVITY

Let's imagine for a moment: a leafy ravine trail connecting Earl Bales Park and York Mills Subway station. It would offer walkers and cyclists in the Bathurst-Sheppard communities a safe, green, active transportation link and would help whittle away our city's car dependence. With exactly that in mind, an enthusiastic crowd of advocates, including TFN's President Zunaid Khan, gathered in Earl Bales Park on the last Sunday afternoon in July. The group accompanied municipal Councillor James Pasternak on a tour to showcase their vision. In addition to TFN, supporting groups included Cycle Toronto, Walk Toronto, The Centre for Active Transportation, FoodShare and others. Coordinating the whole initiative was TENBLOCK, a residential development company committed to improving ravine trail access.

If you're familiar with the location of Earl Bales Park, you will already have deduced the barrier to this vision. Don Valley Golf Club is firmly gated from public access during golfing season. The funny thing is that the gates are open in winter, so intrepid winter hikers have an enticing taste of what trail connectivity feels like.

During the July 30 tour, Zunaid spoke compellingly about the ecological significance of ravines and the many benefits of greenspace. He also noted TFN's century-long work to connect Torontonians with local nature. Other



Earl Bales Stormwater Management Pond

Photo: Zunaid Khan

advocacy leaders also shared their passion for better citizen access to greenspaces and trails.

The group gathered at the gated entrance to the golf course and discussed ideas for routing a year-round pathway along the edge of the golf course, while keeping pedestrians and golfers safely separated. Future plans are to take this idea to City Council for discussion and a vote. Let's hope that, by next summer, this vision of ravine connectiveness can become a reality.

Ellen Schwartzel

FALL 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. Parents must stay with their children for the duration of the program.

Sept 9: Dragonflies and Butterflies at Bluffers Park Pond

Oct 14: Spiders on The Meadoway.

Nov 11: Mosses and Fungi at Lambton Woods

Dec 2: Making baskets and mats with dried cattail leaves with Lynn Shortt at the Church of the Resurrection

If you wish to attend these events, please email 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.

JUNIOR NATURALISTS

DRAGONFLIES AND DAMSELFLIES

Visit any lake or river in the summer, and you will see dragonflies and damselflies swooping and darting, skimming the water's surface like colourful little helicopters!

Dragonflies and damselflies are members of the order Odonata, which means the "toothed ones" for the serrated ridges they have on their mandibles. There are a lot of similarities between the two types of insect. They are both predators with similar life cycles, hatching out of the egg into their aquatic larval stage where they are called "nymphs". These hunt insect larvae, tadpoles and even small fishes for years until they eventually emerge as adults.

Today I'm going to share a few ways that you can tell the difference between these two types of insects.

Dragonflies. These are some of the earliest flying insects that have ever existed, first seen in the fossil record 300 million years ago. There are about 5000 species of dragonfly around the world; 144 species are found in Canada.

Dragonflies have large, thick bodies that range in size from 2.5 to 10 centimeters long. They are strong fliers, able to move all four wings independently at 30 flaps per second, which allows them to hover and to fly at speeds over 48 km per

hour! When dragonflies are at rest, they hold their wings out horizontally from their bodies.

Dragonflies have exceptional vision, with two large compound eyes containing 30,000 lenses which can see a full 360 degrees. If you find a dragonfly nymph in the water, you can tell it is a dragonfly because the tail ends in 5 points.

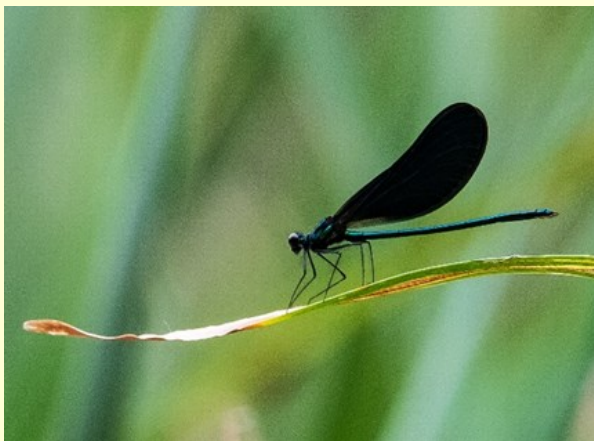


Twelve-spotted skimmer dragonfly.

Photo: Margaret Hall

Ebony jewelwing damselfly.

Photo: Luke Reece



Damselflies. These delicate fliers are another ancient group of insects, originating over 200 million years ago! There are almost 3000 species of damselfly worldwide, with 69 species living in Canada. While very similar at first glance, damselflies are smaller and more delicate than dragonflies, with an average size of 1.5 to 5 centimeters. Their wings beat up to 16 flaps per second, and they can fly at speeds of 5.4 km per hour.

Unlike dragonflies, damselflies can fold their wings together above their abdomen instead of leaving them pointed out horizontally. While damselflies have very good vision, their eyes are not as large and do not take up as much headspace as with dragonflies because

damselfly eyes are positioned at either side of the head. Damselfly nymphs are easily distinguished by the three delicate gills at the end of their abdomen.

The Junior Field Naturalists will be meeting on September 9 at Bluffers Park Pond, to study damselflies and dragonflies!

Vanessa McMain

TREE OF THE MONTH: OSAGE ORANGE (*MACLURA POMIFERA*)

Some might find it modestly ironic that a tree that was arguably the most important living fence on pre-barbed wire 19th century farms across temperate eastern North America is one of our handful of trees with a strongly tropical heritage. Among eastern trees, it is uniquely suited to this role because of its small stature and ferociously thorny twigs. Besides their position, nestled above the leaf scars, the thorns occasionally further confirm their origin as modified axillary branches by having tiny suppressed buds on their own flanks. Armed in this fashion, Osage orange was brought into cultivation from the pinelands of the western Gulf coastal plain in the south-central United States west of the Mississippi River following the Louisiana Purchase. Then, displaying its versatility and adaptability, it quickly spread from its fairly limited original range and climatic conditions to the full span of the eastern United States and adjacent Canada, encompassing a broad range of climates, soil types, and original vegetation. It is not much deliberately cultivated today, but can be found in collections, as a remnant in hedgerows, and naturalized in southwestern Ontario and in lands along the north shore of Lake Ontario.

For a long time after its original scientific description, Osage orange was thought to be the sole species in its genus, but more recent investigations added ten additional species that were once thought to be generically distinct from it. It is now seen as one of two temperate outliers (the other is from Korea and northeastern China) in an otherwise predominantly tropical genus. It is also a member of the overwhelmingly tropical mulberry family, Moraceae, with over 1100 species, all containing milky sap (latex) from which rubber can be produced, and almost 80% of which are figs (*Ficus* spp.), one of the most ecologically important groups of trees in many tropical habitats.

Within Moraceae, however, mulberries are closer relatives than figs, the extraordinary Osage orange fruits being structurally like gigantic mulberries, though superficially resembling warty green oranges 10 to 15 cm in diameter. They are completely unlike oranges internally, however, with dense, white, non-juicy flesh and larger, smooth, shiny black seeds. These fruits join those of Kentucky coffee-tree as subjects of suggestions that they were formerly dispersed by now-extinct Pleistocene megafauna, like mastodons, mammoths, or giant ground sloths. Certainly, no living North American wildlife can efficiently consume the fruits and effectively disperse their seeds.

If you look closely at the surface of the Osage orange, the thin lines that cross the warts are a clue to an unexpected feature of their construction. The whole surface is made up of persistent, swollen sepals of a huge number of individual, separate flowers, making this a multiple fruit, the product of a whole inflorescence, an organization it shares with mulberries (and one of the ways that they differ from raspberries, which grow from a single flower). All this is reinforced by the appearance of the male inflorescences which, of course, are shed soon after pollen release and are borne on separate trees from the female inflorescences and fruits. Thus, like many of our tree groups, Osage orange is both wind pollinated and dioecious.

Perhaps the most tropical aspect of Osage orange is found in the leaves. Superficially, they are a bit like those of black cherry, though often a little broader, and they lack glands on the petiole at the base of the blade and rows



Above: Axillary thorn, mature fruit.
Photos: Ken Sproule.

Below: Fallen male inflorescence.
Photo: Ron Dengler



FOR READING

The Sounds of Life

Karen Bakker, 2002

219 pages, not including 134 pages of notes, references and index

<https://tfngo.to/tplsoundssoflife>

This is a fascinating account of acoustic communication among animals and plants, most of which science was not aware of before about 1950! This was usually because the sounds were too faint, too high (ultrasound), too low (infrasound) or in places we did not listen (such as under water). Many of us have heard of whale sounds, known to Inuit for centuries and to whalers in the days of wooden sailing ships. But once noisy metal steamships replaced sail, the whales were no longer heard by commercial whalers, and knowledge of whale sound was forgotten by most until World War II. Then navies listening for enemy submarines heard a lot of other sounds, many of which turned out to be from whales.

Since sound, in contrast to light, travels much better through water than air, it makes sense that marine organisms might use it more than landlubbers do. Whales use it for echolocation and social communication, and some sing, probably to attract mates. *Songs of the Humpback Whale* (1970) became the best-selling natural history recording ever, and was a factor that led to a moratorium on commercial whaling in 1982. It also led, in 1978, to a ban on subsistence whale hunting in the Arctic, to protect the bowhead whale population. The international whaling commission estimated this was down to 600 but the Inupiat, whose culture is centred on the bowhead, proved the scientists wrong. They heard the whales passing by under the ice while the scientists relied on visual counts, not believing the Inupiat explanations.

Gathering the acoustic proof in the late 1970s was hazardous and difficult, involving heavy recording equipment in shelters on shifting sea ice. Now digital recording devices can be left on the seabed, attached to whales, or placed in drones to gather sounds continuously over large areas. AI is used to analyze the large volume of recordings to determine what creatures made which sound where.

People were similarly skeptical about acoustic communication among elephants (infrasound), turtles (faint and infrequent), fish and coral (under water), and bats (mostly ultrasound) until scientists proved that such communication does happen, and to an unexpected extent. Even plants can respond to sound, with roots growing toward the sound of running water (in a tube so there was no humidity gradient) rather than white noise at the same frequency. Some plants detect sound through hairs on their leaves. Research is progressing and agricultural applications have been implemented. Bees famously communicate the direction of and distance to food through the waggle dance. Since the dance is done in the darkness of the hive, it is thought to be a vibrational signal, not a visual one.

Recent advances in understanding acoustic communication in the environment, enabled by robust and inexpensive digital recorders, are not only fascinating but also useful – for example: for population monitoring, protecting whales from ships, distinguishing one species from another, attracting fish and coral polyps to a reef, and other uses documented in the book's Appendix C.

Highly recommended.

Bob Kortright

*continued on page 17*TREE *continued*

of hairs on either side of the midrib underneath. They have a prominent drip tip, are glossier above, a little thicker in texture and, most strikingly, have completely smooth, untoothed or lobed edges, a feature common among tropical trees but shared with just a handful of our simple-leaved species, including a few of our other tropical waifs, like pawpaw and northern catalpa. All of our trees of tropical heritage have been part of the temperate tree flora here for millions of years, and so have had plenty of time to adapt to the climate and become full-fledged members. Nonetheless, each of them, like Osage orange, shares features with their tropical relatives that are otherwise rare among our trees and gives us clues to their heritage.



James Eckenwalder

Characteristic leaves.
Photo: Ken Sproule.

EXTRACTS FROM OUTINGS LEADERS' REPORTS

Beare Hill Park, Apr 3. Leader: Charles Bruce-Thompson. This was the first TFN walk in this recently opened 75-hectare park. Since the landfill was closed in the 1980s and capped with 1.5 m of clay, natural regeneration and volunteer tree planting have created rich, natural areas of forest, wetland habitats and, a precious rarity in the GTA, extensive meadowlands. We walked the perimeter of the park, and climbed to the 60 m summit from which we were rewarded with a spectacular view of the lake and greater Toronto. We also visited the Rouge Park wetlands. Those who made the long journey to the park were rewarded with some exceptional sightings including a pair of Eastern Bluebirds and a pair of Eastern Meadowlarks. A loitering Pileated Woodpecker gave us ample time to observe it. On the wing we saw Turkey Vultures, a Cooper's Hawk, a Red-tailed Hawk and a distant Osprey. In the wetlands we saw a flotilla of Hooded Mergansers, Killdeer and a very vocal Belted Kingfisher. We also saw a pair of white-tailed deer. Newly arrived Red-winged Blackbirds and Song Sparrows supplied a constant background din.

Earl Bales Park – Miles Hearn Memorial Walk, Apr 15. Leader: Bob Kortright. About 70 people gathered to share reminiscences of past walks with Miles, both with the Toronto District School Board and with TFN. Rachel Gottesman outlined the history of the park. Dozens of bloodroot and coltsfoot, a few violets, and hundreds of trout lilies were blooming. We heard a Belted Kingfisher, a Northern Flicker or Pileated Woodpecker, and saw Song Sparrow, Red-winged Blackbird, Canada Goose, Mallard, cormorant, pigeon, gull, House Sparrow and robin. Some trees and shrubs were in stages of growth that posed identification puzzles to me but participants were helpful, some with plant ID apps. Thanks to Kayoko Smith for shepherding us around.



Miles Hearn Memorial Walk. Photo: Rachel Gottesman



Mount Pleasant Cemetery Walk. Photo: Kathy Chung

Mount Pleasant Cemetery, Apr 22. Leader: Ellen Schwartzel. Earth Day at the cemetery: catkins trembling, leaves unfolding every imaginable hue of green, blossoming trees and shrubs glowing through the mist. It was our luck to encounter Mount Pleasant Cemetery in its most perfect day of spring. Steady light rain interspersed with heavy rain added to the grand experience, and we soaked it up. A White-throated Sparrow sang just out of sight, and we all heard the Northern Flicker calling from a high branch. Crows watched us silently from above. Forsythia thickets shone from a distance – undeniably lovely, but also undeniably invasive, as we observed in the adjacent ravine of Yellow Creek. We considered the variability of leafing out among trees: the white oak revealing tiny new leaves, the ginkgo's emerging spur leaves, the narrow spiky buds of beech, and the stern silhouettes of black walnut and catalpas – still resolutely dormant. A Canada plum tree in radiant blossom drew us to admire and left us wondering, "Why aren't we all planting this wonderful small tree?"

High Park – Birds, History, Apr 27. Leaders: Kayoko Smith, David Creelman. In the black oak savannah we searched for warblers and other migrants. It was quiet on that front, but we were treated to a pair of resident Red-tailed Hawks, active on their nest in a white pine, very likely incubating eggs. We proceeded to Ridout Pond and adjacent Howard Pond where we talked about the history of High Park. Wood Ducks were enjoying sunny, warm weather on the pond. Later we were lucky to find an Eastern Screech Owl (gray morph) tucked into a crevice in a dead tree. It was a good opportunity to discuss proper etiquette when viewing wildlife. We observed and discussed the results of the annual prescribed burns in High

continued on next page

OUTING EXTRACTS *continued*

Park. New growth was emerging from burnt black soil. Robins were back and flipping burnt leaves looking for food. As the City of Toronto website explains, *Before European settlement, prescribed burns were used by Indigenous People to manage and maintain fire-dependent ecosystems, including the black oak savannahs in High Park. In recognition of this history, the City is engaged with Indigenous representatives to incorporate Indigenous knowledge into the High Park burn and ensure that an Indigenous ceremony will be an essential part of the burn day activities.* Near the regency style house, Colborne Lodge, built in 1836, we found a colony of may-apples, some trilliums and Yellow-rumped Warblers fluttering in tree branches. On the hillsides above Grenadier Pond we saw magnificent cherry blossoms (known as sakura in Japan) in full bloom. It was a great people-watching experience too, as hundreds viewed and posed for photos with the blossoms.

Bestview Woods and East Don Parklands, Apr 29. Leader:

Theresa Moore. On this rainy morning we saw several species of spring ephemeral wildflowers including trout lily, violets, spring beauty, wild ginger, trilliums and a large colony of Virginia bluebells. With the recent heat wave, the coltsfoot and bloodroot had finished blooming. We were serenaded by many Northern Cardinals and Song Sparrows and heard a Belted Kingfisher. There was a flock of robins feeding on the rain-soaked grass along with starlings, Chipping Sparrows, and Canada Geese. We also saw several Red-winged Blackbirds, a Mourning Dove, and a Ruby-crowned Kinglet. A Great Blue Heron flew overhead and a male Wood Duck swam in the TRCA-created wetland. We discussed the influence of the early settler family of Jacob Cummer who, among other things, built three area mills, a church and Cummer Avenue, and held large Bible camps attended by hundreds of settlers as well as Indigenous People from Lakes Simcoe and Scugog.

Tommy Thompson Park – Birds, May 9. Leader: Raspberry Yow-Fairs. It was a warm sunny day with lots of birdsong coming from the wet woods where we lingered for a while watching Yellow-rumped Warblers and Song Sparrows. A few highlights were a Spotted Sandpiper, a

Cooper's Hawk flying off with prey, a very vocal Common Raven, and an aerial fight among three Trumpeter Swans. There were lots of Tree and Barn Swallows, numerous American Robins and Double-crested Cormorants, Common and Caspian Terns, a few lingering Long-tailed Ducks and Buffleheads and a raccoon sleeping in a tree. After the walk, some people continued to Pipit Point where there was an enormous feeding frenzy of cormorants, a Common Loon, and Spotted Sandpipers.

Trillium Park and Ontario Place – General Nature and Advocacy, May 27. Leaders: Zunaïd Khan and

Francesca Bouaoun. On a beautiful morning we walked through Trillium Park observing birds, discussing how the spring migration relates to this section of our waterfront and noting recent removal of phragmites. There is a pending closure of this trail into the east island of Ontario Place, but luckily it was still open for our walk. We

stopped by the wetland where we observed a couple of painted turtles. In the marina area we watched Barn Swallows feeding on insects and building nests. In the forested area of the west island we stopped to listen to many birds including Yellow Warblers, Song Sparrows, a Blackpoll Warbler, Red-winged Blackbirds, Northern Cardinals, robins, and Baltimore Orioles. Other birds seen included House Finch, Brown-headed Cowbird, and Eastern Phoebe. Throughout this walk we discussed the plans for proposed development of this site – where things currently stand, what comes next in the decision-making process, the potential impact on nature, and how people can voice their concerns about this project.



Spring beauty, Crother's Woods, May 2009. Photo: Ken Sproule

G. Ross Lord Park, June 10. Leaders: Robert Bean and Kayoko Smith.

Robert is an avid conservationist who has been involved with the monitoring program tracking nesting birds at G. Ross Lord Park for over 10 years. He records nesting bird behaviour focusing on White-breasted Nuthatch, House Wren and Black-capped Chickadee. He also makes nesting boxes for conservation purposes. We had a good opportunity to learn etiquette related to observing wildlife, especially breeding birds in the wild and in urban environments, and came away much more informed about the importance of respecting wildlife. We saw Brown-headed Cowbird, House Wren, Great Blue Heron, Mallard, Killdeer, Double-crested Cormorant,

continued on next page

OUTING EXTRACTS *continued*

Black-capped Chickadee, Barn Swallow, American Robin, Red-winged Blackbird, Cardinal and Song Sparrow. Plants noted included: hairy beard-tongue, Virginia waterleaf, white wild rose, Jack-in-the-pulpit and may-apple. Black locusts still had beautiful white flowers and lindens had just finished blooming.



Lillian Natalizio leading High Park walk. Photo: Jessica Nelson

High Park, June 14. Leader: Lillian Natalizio. Between periods of sheltering from the rain, we explored black oak savannah restoration sites in the northeast and tablelands areas of the park, discussing some of the differing histories and changes these sites experienced in the last 200 years. We also discussed the development of High Park's stewardship program, the threats of invasive species and trampling, and the importance of the reintroduced prescribed burn regimen. Along the way we saw a large colony of New Jersey tea nearing its blooming period, while several patches of native bush honeysuckle were already in flower. Showy tick-trefoil was widespread, as were the wild lupines with a few flowering stalks still in evidence. Smooth rose, dewberry and Canada hawkweed were also flowering.

Guild Inn and Scarborough Bluffs, June 17. Leaders: Vera Bigall and Charles Bruce-Thompson. We had a pleasant walk through the east side of the Guild Inn property looking at some of the architectural remnants and sculptures in the beautiful, well-kept grounds. We learned a bit about the history of the property which was run as an arts centre from 1932 to the 1970's by Rosa and Spencer Clark. Our group then split up so that some people could take a safer route down a construction access road and others climbed down a ravine path to meet near the bottom of the Scarborough Bluffs. We observed many species of

birds, including, robins, Red-winged Blackbirds, a Northern Flicker, an oriole, Turkey Vultures, Ring-billed Gulls, Song Sparrows, Bank Swallows and Northern Cardinals. We examined some vegetation including two kinds of vetches, and compared European swallow-wort (dog strangling vine) to milkweed. We explored a secluded beach just east of the Guild Inn property.

Glendon Ravine – The first of our 100th Anniversary walks, June 25. Leaders: Zunaid Khan and Nancy Dengler. Upon entering the Glendon campus of York University on this beautiful summer morning, we stopped to discuss the first urban nature trail created by TFN in 1930 and the history of the area including Glendon Manor, the botanical gardens and Sunnybrook farm. Continuing these discussions, we descended into Glendon Ravine observing native and non-native trees and plants. We discussed efforts by York University to protect the Glendon Forest by fencing off a large section on the other side of the West Don River. Proceeding along the ravine, we observed the nature around us including trees, plants, wetlands, birds and butterflies. We discussed the impact of storm surge on the river and the ravine, as well as how the area came to be declared an Environmentally Significant Area. Bird sightings included Red-eyed Vireo, Northern Flicker, robin, Chipping Sparrow and Baltimore Oriole. Insects spotted included northern crescent butterfly, common wood-nymph butterfly and jewel damselfly. The most interesting sighting was a black garter snake on the branch of a cedar tree.



Black garter snake, Glendon Ravine. Photo: Zunaid Khan

SEPTEMBER 2022 WEATHER

September featured a sharp transition from summer to fall two-thirds of the way through the month, corresponding with the autumnal equinox. The first 21 days were consistently warm, although most parts of the GTA failed to reach 30° (Oakville being an exception with one day, the 3rd, reaching this value). Sunshine, sometimes with haze or mist in the morning or evening, prevailed. Pearson Airport reached 29.7° on the 3rd and 29.5° on the 21st. Rainfall was minimal, with a few hit-and-miss thunderstorms. It really was a continuation of summer conditions.

However, change was brewing when a huge typhoon (Merbok) moved north from the Pacific towards Alaska. When this happens, it often pushes warm air into Alaska while the downstream effect eventually forces cold air south into eastern North America. The cold front

associated with this change arrived on the evening of the 21st. There was no violent weather, but a drastic temperature drop, with most of the rest of the month not getting out of the teens. Pearson hit a low of 5.0° on the 23rd, while King City dropped to 3.6°. Downtown Toronto had a low of 6.7°. Summer 2022 was gone for good.

Generalized troughiness brought more rain, with most of the month's rainfall coming between the 25th and 27th. Monthly totals remained below normal, especially at Pearson, which recorded a monthly rainfall of 39.4 mm. Downtown had 60.8 mm. Monthly normal is 69 mm.

The growing season for 2022 was drier and slightly warmer than the long-term average. It was the driest May to September period since 2016, with slight shortfalls most months.

Gavin Miller

FOR READING *continued*

Yardwork: A Biography of an Urban Place

Daniel Coleman, 2017

<https://tfngo.to/tplyardwork>

Hamilton, Ontario is not the first spot one might choose as a portal to nature. Author Daniel Coleman came to the Steel Town 20 years ago to take up an academic position. He brought keen eyes and ears, a love of stories and attentiveness to place. Standing in his own backyard, he wondered what was digging holes under the flagstones. Who was his street named after? And what role does Cootes Paradise play in the region called the *Dish with One Spoon*? Coleman has woven such questions, and many others, into this book. He has assembled insightful riffs on biodiversity, people and landscape based on his ramblings along the Dundas Valley, ruminations about winter juncos, and rummaging in the murky history of Hamilton Harbour.

A prominent theme for Coleman is the deep human history of the “head-of-the-lake” area, and how much remains unknown. Tools of archeology can tell us only so much about the comings and goings of innumerable Indigenous communities, including Algonquian hunter-gatherers and Iroquoian agriculturalists, followed in winding succession by Huron-Wendat and Haudenosaunee confederacies. Coleman muses on how often we get local histories wrong or cheat ourselves with overly simplified versions. He stresses that the names we give to places – or to peoples – can hide as much as they show.

Language is another recurring theme of *Yardwork*, or rather the many Indigenous languages that have co-evolved and mingled throughout the Great Lakes region. Coleman takes care with his words. He knows that the beginners' class he took in Mohawk language does not equip him to speak with authority. He has fascination and reverence for creation stories of the Six Nations in which, for example, the humble muskrat provides an essential pawful of earth for the first plants. But, as Coleman explains, these are not his stories. He notes, “I’m caught, therefore, because a settler society like ours is built on both erasing and glass-boxing the stories of the people who were here before us.”

Yardwork also shares insights on Hamilton's large and hungry deer population. The deer are crowded into very limited habitat by highways. Local public opinions on resolving the deer issue run hot and fractious. Coleman thoughtfully explores his own conflicted relationship with deer, both as a frustrated gardener and as a fascinated naturalist. Well-told anecdotes reveal his own journey toward becoming a student of deer.

Coleman's writing style is personal and playful, gliding engagingly from theme to theme and back again. One never feels there's a natural history lesson underway, but clearly the book is built on extensive research, walks in all weather and personally experienced epiphanies. An extensive bibliography encourages further exploration. Inevitably, I imagined how good it would be to read a comparable set of reflections about Toronto's green places and deeper history.

Ellen Schwartzel

KEEPING IN TOUCH



Red admiral butterfly



Eastern comma butterfly

On July 10th, Lynn Pady shared these photos and observations of recent sightings in David Balfour Park.

There are few butterflies this year. Fingers crossed the numbers will increase soon. A group of red admirals hatched last week and have dispersed throughout the park. The Icelandic poppies (common eastern, I think) are bee magnets. Hillsides left unmown are alive with wildflowers, grasses, weeds and cabbage white butterflies. Marvelous!

It was a shock to pick up an old tent bag lying in the grass and find a huge dark fishing spider – Ontario's largest spider! Last week I glimpsed a fledgling Chipping Sparrow on a path. There are fascinating fungi of all types. Very small and fascinating bees – nomad and alfalfa leaf-cutter on one plant – *scabius* perhaps?

The big excitement in the neighbourhood this year has been a pair of ravens that nested atop a tall building. Two youngsters successfully fledged, and an 'auntie' joined the foursome, so now there are five. There are always the aerobatics of Chimney Swifts, dazzling as they fly at speed in formations that would put snowbirds to shame.

It is such a gift to have David Balfour Park available again after a long wait of nearly four years.

Lynn Pady



Dark fishing spider



Fungi trio



Alfalfa cutter bee

During a recent walk in High Park, a friend and I were puzzled to see numerous mounds of sand in a grassy area. While wondering what might have created them, we became aware of several unusually large wasp-like insects flying about. Armed with photos, we did some research online and learned that these insects are *Bembicini* or sand wasps.

According to Wikipedia, *it is common for numerous female sand wasps to excavate nests within a small area where the soil is suitable, creating large and sometimes very dense nesting aggregations which attract various species of parasitic flies and wasps. Their nests are typically short, simple burrows, with a single enlarged chamber at the bottom which is stocked with freshly paralysed prey items for the developing wasp larva. In some cases, the sand wasps prey on their own parasites, a surprisingly rare phenomenon in the animal kingdom.*



Despite many years exploring the park, I had never noticed these insects before.

Wendy Rothwell

It is always exciting to discover something new in nature. While some TFN members are very knowledgeable about the flora and fauna to be seen in our city, many of us are just beginning to scratch the surface, so are more likely to experience the thrill of making a new discovery. When you do, please share your stories for our *Keeping in Touch* page. Ed.

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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CONTACT US:

Telephone: 416-593-2656

Email: office@torontofieldnaturalists.org

Website: <http://www.torontofieldnaturalists.org>

See email addresses for specific queries at: <https://torontofieldnaturalists.org/about-tfn/contact-us/>

Address: 2 St. Clair Avenue West, 18th Floor, Toronto, ON M4V 1L5

TFN LECTURES

Each year TFN offers eight free 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. They are usually 45 minutes in length followed by discussion. Visitors are always welcome. TFN Members have access to recordings of past lectures via our *Members Only* website.

Learn about this month's lecture on the back page.

You may attend in person at Emmanuel College, Room 001, 7 Queen's Park Cres E (just south of Museum subway station exit on the east side of Queen's Park Cres). There is an accessible entrance, the second door south on Queen's Park, and an elevator inside to the right. Room 001 is one floor below street level.

Or **you may join the lecture via Zoom**. The link will be posted on the Lectures page of TFN's *Members Only* and public websites. If you prefer, you can dial in to the lecture by phone:

Dial in: +1 438 809 7799 Meeting ID: 873 6130 3028 Passcode: 232974

FOCUS ON NATURE – CLOSE-UPS

The July challenge for TFN's Photography Group was Close-ups. This image, entitled *Pollinator*, was submitted by June D'Sousa.

Duncan's Creek is a haven for insects, as it is planted with many species of wildflowers. The camera lens shows so much more detail than the human eye. I use a long lens to keep away from the insects so they are more relaxed. For bees, I wait to see their flight pattern and often they will land on the edge of a flower, giving a nice bokeh*. In this case the bee's wings were still damp, so it was very slow-moving. They move backwards when exiting the flower, so you can also get them in flight.

June D'Sousa



*soft focus in the background

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

TFN LECTURE

Sunday, September 10 at 2:30 pm

In person (come at 2 pm to socialize with fellow members) & via Zoom.

See page 19 for information

Two speakers on Urban Ecology: How Plants Adapt



***Asclepias in the Annex:
How City Life Impacts the Ecology and
Evolution of Common Milkweed***
by Sophie Breitbart, PhD Candidate, U of T

***The White Clover Takeover:
Fast Adaptation in an Invasive Plant***
by Lucas Albano, PhD Candidate, U of T



Upcoming Lecture:

October 1 (in-person and Zoom):

Old Growth Trees in Ontario, Michael Henry, forest ecologist and author