



TORONTO FIELD NATURALIST

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Red-spotted Purple Butterfly, 2023. Photo: Bill Cruttwell

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PRESIDENT'S REPORT

At the beginning of October during the City of Toronto's *Ravine Days*, we will be celebrating our 100th Anniversary with the *Then & Now* photo exhibit, to be displayed in the Rotunda at City Hall from October 2nd to 6th. Details of the opening party and daily viewing hours will be shared with members via email and the *Members Only* website. Thanks go to the volunteers from the photography group who contributed to this project and to members of the 100th Anniversary committee (Ellen Schwartzel, Jason Ramsay-Brown and Philip Jessup). I would especially like to thank Philip Jessup for taking the lead on coordinating this photo exhibit.

A total of 40 images were selected from our slide archives, a process led by Jason-Ramsay Brown. Of these images, 20 will be included in the photo exhibit alongside current photos of the locations. Eventually we will take current photos of all 40 locations and all photos will be available for members to view online via the *Members Only* website. We had hoped to put up an online preview of the exhibit for members in September. Unfortunately time constraints and limited volunteer resources prevent us from doing so. We hope to have the online version of this project available for members by November.

It is our intention to move this photo exhibit around the city after its initial showing at City Hall. We'll provide details as they are finalized.

We will continue to celebrate the centennial through our outings, lectures and stewardship, details of which will be shared with members via the newsletter, email and the *Members Only* website.

* * *

As part of our mandate, we seek to connect with the public about nature, what TFN is and the programming we provide. We have continued to do so this fall through

outreach events and walks. I would like to highlight a few that took place in September as we seek to engage with a more diverse range of communities:

- Speaking sessions on ethical nature viewing to Volunteer Stewards of the City of Toronto's Community Stewardship Program.
- A presentation on ethical nature photography to the Toronto Digital Photography Club.
- A speaking session on the ravines to Green Ummah (<https://greenummah.org/>), an organization founded by young Muslims to provide educational programming on green living.
- A guided walk along the Humber River for members of the Environmental Student Society at Centennial College.

In order for TFN to continue to evolve, better reflect the people of this city and fulfill our mandate, we need to be in touch with more groups and organizations that serve diverse communities and whose members interact with nature in a wide variety of ways.

We are looking for volunteers for our outings, lectures and outreach committees and our digital team. If you have an interest in learning more about opportunities, please visit the volunteer page on the *Members Only* website or send an email to 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 that we can preserve its beauty for all to enjoy.

Zunaid Khan

TFN ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Sunday, November 5, 2023 at 3:30 pm

In-person at Emmanuel College (following the 2:30 pm lecture)

and also via Zoom

We'll welcome our 2023/24 Board of Directors. We'll also thank our terrific volunteers and continue our ongoing celebration of TFN's 100th Anniversary.

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

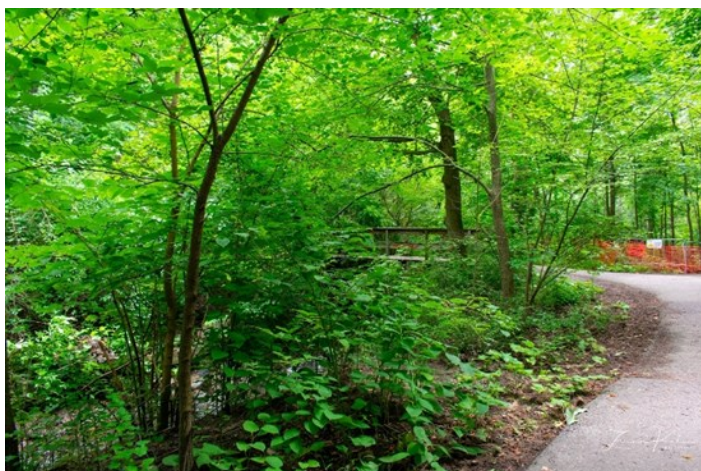
The Zoom link for the AGM will be available soon on the *Members Only* website.

THEN AND NOW – DAVID BALFOUR PARK WALK

David Balfour Park is located in the Deer Park neighbourhood of Toronto near the intersection of Yonge Street and St Clair Avenue. This park is made up of 20.5 hectares of green space including the greenery-covered Rosehill Reservoir and the entirety of the Vale of Avoca and its system of trails. One of the photos we selected from our slide collection for the *Then & Now* project was this one taken in the ravine by Stewart Stilts in 1964.



Since this photo was taken in the winter, and I went to visit the location in August, it was obvious that it would be quite difficult to effectively compare the current view showing a full tree canopy with the ‘then’ version. Consequently, we will not use it in the initial photo exhibit for this project. Here is my photo, taken in August. We plan to return in the winter to photograph this location.



As mentioned in my September President’s Report, I was planning a series of special President’s Walks that would be announced only in the newsletter, not in the walks list. As I was contemplating locations for this series, to be launched in October, it dawned on me that it would be great to structure them around locations from the *Then & Now* project that we would not include in the photo exhibit. This would give members an opportunity to visit these locations that have special meaning for TFN. Since I came up with the idea while in David Balfour Park, it will be the first location for a President’s Walk. Here are the details:

Thursday, October 12th at 10:00 am
David Balfour Park Then & Now 100th Anniversary Walk – Nature & Heritage

Walk Leader: Zunaid Khan

Meeting location: Park entrance near Pleasant Blvd and Avoca Avenue.

Walk description: A 2 hour 3 to 4-km circular walk over initial flat and even surfaces, followed by uneven surfaces with gentle and steep slopes as we make our way down into the ravine and back up.

Walk details: From the meeting point we will loop around the reservoir discussing features of the park and enjoying what nature has to offer as we walk towards an access point to the ravine trails. We will descend into the ravine towards the location of the photo from the slide collection before walking back up to the starting point.

Washrooms: Along the way.

What to bring: Water, snacks, binoculars and/or camera. Dress for the weather and wear comfortable walking shoes or hiking boots.

TTC: Line 1 to St Clair subway station. Use the Pleasant Blvd exit and walk east to the meeting location.

Parking: Paid Parking on Pleasant Blvd
https://parking.greenp.com/carpark/11_21-pleasant-blvd/.
 There are other lots in the area.

Looking forward to seeing members on this walk.

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 October outings you might like to consider.

Annual Hurricane Hazel Anniversary Walk

Leader: Madeleine McDowell

Saturday, October 14, 10:00 am

Meeting Point: Old Mill subway station

Walk Details: A 3-hour linear walk of 3 to 4 km. Some steep slopes and stairs. Mostly paved.

End Point: Lambton House, 4066 Old Dundas St.

Walk Description: We'll walk along Bloor Street and down the steps by the bridge to the ravine. We'll proceed along the river and road to Old Mill Bridge, then along the road west and north before returning to the floodplain. We'll then go along the road and grass lands, north to Dundas St W, over the bridge and down to Lambton House. We'll see the Humber and its flora and fauna, and numerous 1954 photos of 'this was where you are', including Fisher's Mill ruins. We may see some salmon leaping.

TTC: Take subway Line 2 to Old Mill station. At end of walk, #55 Warren Park bus goes to Jane subway station.

Washrooms: Available at end of walk.

What to bring: Water, binoculars, camera and snacks if desired.

Walk Leader's Cell Number: 416-767-7633.

Other information: The leader will be using a wheelchair. There will be a second Hurricane Hazel event later that may be of interest, with possible carpooling.



Hurricane Hazel Anniversary Walk, 2022.

Cottonwood Flats, A 100th Anniversary Walk

Leaders: Lillian Natalizio and Charles Bruce-Thompson

Tuesday, October 17, 9:30 am

Meeting Point: The junction of Beechwood Dr and O'Connor Dr.

Walk Details: A 2-hour, 4 km circular walk over mostly unpaved but even surfaces. There is one steep descent (and ascent) to and from Beechwood to the valley floor. As an option, you may park at the foot of Beechwood and wait for the rest of the group.

Walk Description: As we descend Beechwood Dr, we'll have a look at Beechwood Wetlands before arriving at Cottonwoods Flats – the site of an ongoing monitoring project to determine plant and animal biodiversity of the area over time. It is also the site for a TFN-staffed stewardship program with the City of Toronto's Natural Environment and Community Programs (NECP), all of which we'll discuss as we circumnavigate this small spot of meadow and wetland. If time allows, we'll also explore the lower reaches of Sun Valley. This is a public walk

TTC: Take the #100 bus north from Pape subway station to O'Connor Dr. Walk 0.25 km to the meeting point.

Washrooms are not available.

What to bring: Camera, binoculars

Walk Leader's Cell Number: 416-778-5340.



Songbird Meadow, Cottonwood Flats, 2017.
Photo: Jason Ramsay-Brown

LECTURE REPORT

How Plants Adapt to Urban Life

September 10, 2023

Lucas Albano and Sophie Breitbart,
PhD Candidates, University of Toronto

Urban naturalists often wonder about how organisms adapt to city life. We may observe plants hanging on despite inhospitable urban stresses, or marvel at animals thriving in unnatural habitats. As curious naturalists, we are free to propose theories on what might drive changes in organisms. Academic researchers also observe and set up hypotheses, but they must do much more besides: they must also show evidence. They must experiment and submit results to peer review.

Urban evolution has become the focus of a dynamic biology research team at U of T's Mississauga campus, where professor Marc Johnson has helped spearhead a huge collaborative project involving hundreds of scientists in 26 countries. Professor Johnson introduced this ambitious project to TFN in a 2019 lecture, summarized [in our newsletter \(May 2019\)](#). Since then, the research collaborative has had a study published in the prestigious journal *Science* using white clover – ubiquitous in cities globally – as their study organism. The research team found urban evolution can happen very fast; it can be observed within a human life-time. They were also able to show that plants can exhibit the same kinds of evolutionary changes repeatedly in different cities around the world.

On September 10, TFN invited two PhD candidates from Dr. Johnson's team to share their own research results in the study of urban evolution.

Sophie Breitbart is investigating how urbanization influences the monarch butterfly's favorite botanical partner, common milkweed (*Asclepias syriaca*). Sophie's research explored how reproductive success varies for milkweed along an urbanization gradient. She cautioned that, since plant reproduction also depends on interactions with predators and pollinators, the question is necessarily complex. For example, milkweed can be pollinated by at least 20 species of insects aside from monarch butterflies. One of her research projects tracked naturally growing milkweed plants along a transect in the Greater Toronto Area, from a very urban central site to a site far from downtown. She examined several indicators of reproductive success, including how many pollen sacs had been removed by pollinators and the number of fruit set by milkweed. The data showed that while pollen sac removal (a proxy for pollinator activity) was lower towards the city

centre, fruit set was actually higher. Even though her research found 60% fewer pollinators at the city centre compared to more rural sites, milkweed's overall reproductive success was higher in the urban area.

A follow-up research question explored the source of the differing reproductive success of milkweed (its "phenotypic divergence") along the transect. Was it due to evolutionary change? Using an experimental design called "common garden experiment", Sophie and her team germinated 1000 milkweed seeds harvested from the transect and then evaluated over 20 traits associated with plant defence, reproduction and growth/development. The results indicated that, genetically, the urban and rural plants were not very different. Other (environmental) factors must have been involved in the differing outcomes observed along the transect. Sophie reminded us that milkweed, as a long-lived perennial, can grow for decades clonally. Genetic change could be slower for plants with such a life history.

Lucas Albano, also a PhD candidate in Marc Johnson's lab, has focused his research on how variation in climate affects adaptation in white clover across latitudes and continents. He also used the common garden experimental design to evaluate white clover adapted to various latitudes (Mississauga Ontario, Montpellier France, Lafayette Louisiana and Uppsala Sweden) using seed samples from across North America and Europe. White clover populations have adapted to these locations. There is evidence of rapid local adaptation, especially in North America where white clover has been introduced – likely multiple times within the last 500 years – and has become invasive. The theory of local adaptation suggests that plants should do best when grown in their home environments. Thus, plants sourced from Lafayette should do best in Lafayette, and so on. His research observed, however, that plants from sites with climates 3 or 4 degrees warmer than Mississauga actually did best in Mississauga. One might say they "thought" they were growing in their home environment. This is termed a "spatial lag" in adaptation to climate change. An interpretation of the results suggests that the climate is warming faster than white clover can evolve.

Hats off to Sophie and Lucas for their resilient research work despite a global pandemic. You can watch the recording of this lecture at TFN's Youtube playlist online. You might also like to view a five-minute animation introducing the concept of [global urban evolution](#), created by Sherry An, a science and medical illustrator and designer from Mississauga.

Ellen Schwartzel

TREE OF THE MONTH: COMMON YEW (*TAXUS BACCATA*)

Three species of *Taxus* and one hybrid are common in Ontario but only one reaches tree size, the introduced common yew. A second cultivated species, Japanese yew (*Taxus cuspidata*), and its hybrid with common yew (*T.X media*), are always shrubs, albeit sometimes large ones, and together unavoidable as they are among the most popular foundation plantings in the city. Because these species are dioecious, your foundation yew will either always or never bear bright red “berries”, beginning in late summer. These characteristic “berries” (the *bacca* of *baccata*) are so unusual among conifers that, until fairly recently, they were often placed in their own taxonomic order (Taxales), separate from other conifers (Coniferales or Pinales).

We have a native species, Canada yew (*T. canadensis*), a creeping shrub that is common in moist forests throughout most of the province. It is unique among yews in being monoecious, individuals bearing both male and female cones. Aside from this, the various yew species are notoriously difficult to tell apart, differentiated primarily by the orientation of the needles and partially overlapping differences in the sizes of various parts, including the needles, seeds, and pollen cones, which otherwise look very much alike.

Among our trees, the flattened needles of common yew, though generally similar to those of many native and introduced conifer species, thankfully bear a unique assemblage of features that leave no room for misidentification. Alternately attached, leathery, dark

green needles, framed by parallel sides which constrict abruptly to a very fine petiole that then runs down onto the twig without the intervention of a woody peg, combined with broad, well-defined yellowish green stomatal bands on either side of the midrib beneath, are found together in no other tree here. This foliage, like almost all parts of the plant, is loaded with highly toxic taxane alkaloids, including the important, but debilitating, anti-cancer drug paclitaxel.

The greatest source of human taxane poisoning, however, is from the large, black seeds, structurally (if not culinarily) equivalent to pine nuts. They can never be made safe to eat, though they sit naked inside a harmless, insipidly sweet, red fleshy cup called an aril. (The spice mace, surrounding a nutmeg, is also an aril.) This “berry”, which promotes seed dispersal by birds and small mammals, looks completely unlike the seed cones of our other conifers but has been plausibly interpreted as a highly reduced cone in which the seed and aril represent the only remaining seed scale.

While superficially resembling those of other conifers, the pollen cones of yew are, like the seed cones, highly aberrant but in an almost opposite way. Here, the individual pollen scales are much more complex than those of other conifers. In one theory of their origin, the shield-shaped (peltate) pollen scales each evolved from a whole original cone and the modern yew pollen cone is a reduced representative of what was ancestrally a branched cluster of cones.

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Common yew, Glendon Campus,
York University.



Common yew needles from beneath showing narrow petiole and whitish stomatal bands.



Common yew female tree, red aril surrounding black seed.



Canada yew pollen cones showing peltate scales.

Photos: Ron Dengler

FOR READING

Swamplands: Tundra Beavers, Quaking Bogs, and the Improbable World of Peat

Ed Struzik, 2021

The first word of the title is misleading. A swamp is a wetland dominated by woody vegetation but most peatlands (bogs, fens, and marshes), which the book focuses on, are not. On page 3 (after the preface) the author defines peat to be 'partially decomposed plant material that builds up...in oxygen-starved, waterlogged conditions where decay can't keep up with growth,' i.e. not just peat moss.

Nevertheless, this is vivid writing on a vital topic. Peatland destruction can make the climate crisis much worse, and restoration of peatlands could sequester carbon at lower cost than many other actions to mitigate climate change. As well, wetlands provide flood control and protection from drought. And the biodiversity crisis is very much entwined with the climate crisis: as the author documents, peatland restoration depends on the animals as well as as the plants that inhabit these habitats.

Beaverland: How One Weird Rodent Made America

Leila Philip, 2022

There is a lot to like in this wide-ranging look at intersections between beavers and our history, culture, and future. Sequestering carbon in wetlands by protecting bogs and beavers must be one of the cheapest and quickest ways we have of reducing the current acceleration of climate change and its effects of flooding and wildfire.

However, an editor was needed. For example, the subtitle is inaccurate: the beaver was important in the history of

Canada and the USA, but not of Greenland, Latin America or the Caribbean, so just part of America, which is a continent (or two), not a country.

Transformer: The Deep Chemistry of Life and Death

Nick Lane, 2022

In *The Vital Question* (see review in the Nov 2017 newsletter), the author sketched out an accessible, plausible account of how life began – in cold alkaline vents in the seafloor. In this book he provides much detail that bolsters his theory of the origin of life and makes it even more plausible, while also explaining the biochemistry of photosynthesis, respiration, and the chemosynthesis that preceded them. Less accessible to the non-biochemist like me than *The Vital Question*, *Transformer* still communicates the fascinating history of knowledge development in this area, and its implications for cancer and aging.

Bob Kortright



American beaver, Lower Don River, Oct. 2007

Photo: Ken Sproule

TREE *continued*

These theories interpreting the highly distinctive seed and pollen structures of the yews bridge the apparent gaps between them and typical conifer cones and helped taxonomists become comfortable with the notion that yews really were conifers rather than belonging to a separate group. This placement in the conifers was later amply confirmed when DNA evidence showed that the yew family was linked particularly closely among the conifers with the redwood and cypress family Cupressaceae.

Few trees in Europe are as wrapped in folklore, legend, history, and associations as is common yew. Its sombre prevalence in the relatively undisturbed grounds of church graveyards, coupled with its inherent longevity, has led to records of many ancient individuals, often cited as thousand year old trees. At the other end of death, it yielded the wood of choice for making the longbows wielded by medieval and later yeomen ("yewmen"). The common yew trees we find in Toronto may all be spring chickens, but it's still nice to see the occasional older individual lording it over the more ubiquitous shrubby yews of foundation plantings

James Eckenwalder

NEW HOME FOR PURPLE MARTINS IN HIGH PARK

I've been looking after a Purple Martin house in High Park for a couple of years with a small group we call The Martineers. This year, I noticed our house was crumbling, especially the partitions inside.

At the same time, the number of martins in the area was increasing, after periods of few to no martins some years. Last year one pair was nesting in a broken light fixture in the park. Another pair actually nested in an ancient rotten house in a treed environment east of Grenadier Pond. The Purple Martins had abandoned that house years ago. Incidentally, that house still has a sign indicating TFN ownership, perhaps going back 40 or more years!

I requested two new houses from TRCA, not expecting approval for both. But Vince D'Elia approved both, and one is already up. The second will follow this fall. We had kind offers of help from TFN and Toronto Ornithological Club, but TRCA took care of everything. (They have great

public outreach, if you have ideas for projects! They help my parks group with cleanups, plantings, and swallow boxes. Just saying!)

I was very pleased to see Purple Martins move in this summer. Sometimes it takes birds a while to find, and trust, new structures. But, as you can see, this family is doing fine. The two chicks seen here later fledged and seemed perfectly healthy when last seen.



Residents of new Purple Martin house in High Park.
Photo: Monika Croydon

Aerial insectivores have been in decline, and are one of the worst groups in all of the avian world, with a 40% decline in numbers in the period 1966-2013 (Nicole Mortillaro, CBC News). Providing housing is one thing we can do locally to make a difference.

With a bit of luck, we'll be able to see Purple Martins around Grenadier Pond for years to come. This new house is on the eastern shore of the pond, about halfway up. The second house will replace the one The Martineers have been looking after on the south shore.

David Creelman

SEE WHAT'S GOING ON AT OUR NATURE RESERVE!

In June, TFN Stewards deployed three trail cams at our Jim Baillie Nature Reserve (JBNR) in Uxbridge. Curious about what they captured? Satisfaction guaranteed by more than a dozen images and some two minutes of video posted to our *Members Only* blog: <https://tfngo.to/campilot>



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.

- Oct 14: Spiders on the Meadoway, Don Scallen leading
- Nov 11: Mosses and Fungi at Lambton Woods
- Dec 2: Making baskets and mats from dried cattail leaves with Lynn Short 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

WHIMBRELS IN CHURCHILL

The beach at Churchill, Manitoba is a mysterious place. In the scene I am remembering, we are sitting on a sandy area covered with large patches of salt-resistant sea purslane and seaweed, for of course the great crashing waves of Hudson Bay below are salt water. On each side of the beach are massive, smooth boulders of ancient Precambrian quartzite. These rocks are a polar bear hangout. Even in July, the polar bears are lounging around on land with their young, and are hungry. Not far away, we could see the white arched backs of Beluga whales and hear their spouting.

As we sat there, drinking in the mystery and splendour of this place, we spotted some Common Goldeneyes, ducks we hadn't seen since they left Toronto the previous spring to fly up to the Boreal forest to nest. Eventually, we would see some species we weren't familiar with at all, such as Parasitic Jaegers, a Black Guillemot, and male and female Common Eiders.

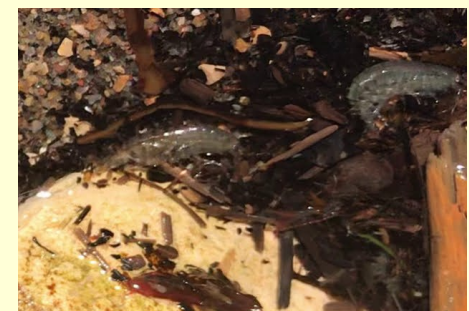
What I especially came to love in Churchill, however, were the Whimbrels. On the first day of visiting the Churchill Beach, 13 of them were busy digging at low tide with their long curved bills. We got curious enough to go and turn over some of the rocks at low tide, and found dozens of squirming invertebrates under a single rock - a good meal for a hungry Whimbrel. The curved beak comes in handy on their wintering grounds as well. Whimbrels survive on fiddler crabs in winter, and their bill exactly matches the shape of the fiddler crab burrow.



Whimbrel at Col. Sam Smith Park, Toronto, May 2014. Photo: Ken Sproule

The Whimbrels were everywhere we went in Churchill. This was very special to me, as they are fairly rare in Toronto. They breed on the shores of the Arctic Ocean and in Churchill, spending the winter on the coast of South America. Whimbrels fly thousands of kilometers between these destinations. They sometimes come down for a day or two in Toronto in the middle of this stupendous journey. When Toronto's birding community hears about a sighting, in late May, folks rush to Whimbrel Point at Colonel Samuel Smith Park or Tommy Thompson Park. We got to spend a whole week with them in Churchill!

Anne Purvis



At Churchill Beach, from top:
sea purslane,
seaweed,
Precambrian quartzite,
invertebrates under a rock.

Photos: Anne Purvis

RESCUE OF A RED-TAILED HAWK

When I pulled into my driveway late one afternoon in October 2022, a juvenile Red-tailed Hawk was perched on the railing of my front porch. A worker across the road told me he had watched the hawk walk across my lawn from the road. Possibly it had swooped down to catch some prey and flown into the side of a passing car. The hawk had no noticeable injuries but there was obviously something very wrong, as it didn't move from my railing. I knew I shouldn't disturb it and that it needed help from a person trained in wildlife rescue.

How the hawk got from my front porch to a wildlife sanctuary in less than two hours was a combination of luck and the kind intervention of some very caring people! The chain of events began with a call to my friend and neighbour Norma who has worked closely with the Toronto Wildlife Centre (TWC). She arrived within minutes and, after observing the hawk, contacted Andrew Wight, Rescue Team Leader at TWC. We sent him a photo of the hawk and described its apparent inability to move or fly. Andrew said it would take too long for him to get to my home on the Bluffs from the Centre's location in Downsview in afternoon rush hour, and suggested we ask a TWC volunteer who lives in Scarborough to help.

Ann Brokelman was that volunteer, and the hawk couldn't have had anyone better to come to its aid! Ann is a wildlife photographer as well as being trained in wildlife rescues. She was at my home within 20 minutes with a large net and a ventilated box with blankets in the trunk of her car. Without wasting any time she put on protective gloves and very gently lifted the hawk from my railing into her net. After carefully removing it from the net, keeping its talons firmly in her gloved hand, she placed it into the soft nest of blankets in the box and taped it shut.

Ann called Andrew at TWC again and they discussed possible next steps. Andrew felt the hawk needed urgent medical attention and suggested that Shades of Hope Wildlife Refuge near Pepperlaw was the most accessible

centre from the Bluffs. Ann happened to know that the founder and board president of Shades of Hope, Gail Lenters, who is the Wildlife Custodian for the refuge, just happened to be in Scarborough and would soon be driving to her home at Shades of Hope. Ann arranged to meet and transfer the hawk to Gail, who gave it a quick check before delivering it to the refuge. This beautiful hawk was in the best hands!



Rescue photos: Helen Smith
Release photo: Ann Brokelman



As fortuitous as all this was, the hawk's prognosis was not good. I called Shades of Hope the next day to inquire and was sent an email explaining that it had suffered serious brain trauma as well as having fractures in the bones of both wings. It was on oxygen and receiving medication for pain and swelling. Its wings had been wrapped to stabilize them after x-rays were taken. Only time would tell if the hawk could respond to treatment.

I received an email 10 days later to let me know that the hawk's head trauma was now less critical and that it was eating well. Its wings were still wrapped but x-rays showed that the bones were well aligned and were healing. The hawk would not be released from Shades of Hope for four months as it had to regain its strength and develop its ability to fly. In late January the hawk was transferred to Sandy Pines Wildlife Rehab in Napanee and placed in a large aviary where it could practise flight manoeuvres

and hunting skills.

February 20, 2023 was release day! Ann Brokelman returned the hawk to the Bluffs close to where it had been found. It flew out of its box and onto a tree branch before soaring high in the sky with wings outstretched. Ann made a video of this beautiful event: <https://tfngo.to/hawkrelease>

Both Toronto Wildlife Centre and Shades of Hope Wildlife Refuge rely on donations to allow them to provide needed care to injured and sick animals. Here are their web sites: www.torontowildlifecentre.com
www.shadesofhope.ca

Helen Smith

EXTRACTS FROM OUTINGS LEADERS' REPORTS



Grasshopper on black-eyed Susan at The Meadoway.
Photo: Sarah Kotsopoulos.

Evening Ramble, Glen Stewart Ravine, July 12.

Leaders: Bob Kortright and Rachel Gottesman. While Glen Stewart is notable for the many large trees, especially red oak, white oak and red maple, it is also known for uncommon plants including mountain maple, spikenard, sweet cicely, yellow birch, and swamp rose. On this walk we also noted prominent flowering of common elderberry, pagoda dogwood, hellebore, bittersweet and enchanter's nightshade, European gromwell, hairy willowherb, buttonbush, purple-flowering raspberry, and fruiting of black raspberry, witch hazel, and bicoloured bolete (mushroom). It was interesting to note the differences among the two raspberries plus wild red raspberry and common blackberry. In Ivan Forrest Gardens close to Queen St we noted dawn redwood and giant butterbur.

Photography, High Park, July 14. Leader: Zunaïd Khan.

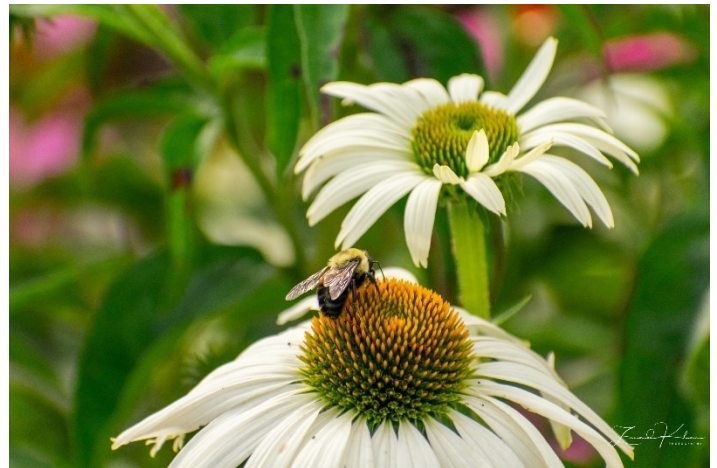
Starting from the Grenadier Café we walked to the west ravine trail observing the plants in one of the prescribed burn areas, then down to Grenadier Pond where we noted the impact of phragmites and saw great reflections. We headed south and then east to check out the ponds towards Parkside Drive where there were lots of great opportunities for photos of plants, reflections and birds. Birds observed included Wood Ducks, Canada Geese, Black-crowned Night Herons, Great Egret, Great Blue Heron, Belted Kingfisher, Rough-winged Swallows, American Goldfinch, Red-winged Blackbirds, American Robins, Eastern Kingbirds, Northern Flicker, Northern Cardinal, Song Sparrow, and Eastern Wood-Pee-wee. We also saw monarch butterflies on milkweed.

Restoration and Nature, The Meadoway, July 16.

Leader: Sarah Kotsopoulos. The Meadoway was in peak flower during this walk, and attendees were able to learn about The Meadoway project as a whole, the restoration work, and to see some interesting meadow plants, butterflies and birds. Notable observations included multiple vervain species, false sunflowers, Chimney Swifts, Song Sparrows, monarchs, black swallowtails and many other pollinators.

Hogg's Hollow, July 20. Leaders: Zunaïd Khan and Nancy Dengler.

From Yonge St and Old York Mills Rd we walked south on Yonge, crossing the Don River to Jolly Miller Park to view the pollinator garden and the Miller's Cottage re-creation. We discussed the history of this area and its connection to TFN's walk program. Proceeding south to the Mill Street Bridge, we viewed the Heron's Bridge Plaque and talked about the George Pratt house that dates back to 1886. We crossed Mill St into York Mills Valley Park, discussing and observing nature along the way to the Millstone Parkette to view a grindstone from the last mill to close in the valley in 1926. We viewed the York Mills School Monument for the two-room school built in 1925 and demolished in 2004. Bricks from the school were used in the monument. Proceeding further into the park, we viewed the C.W. Jefferies monument erected by the North York Historical Society. Nature observations included bees and red admiral butterflies in the pollinator garden, and bergamot, milkweed, coneflowers (*Echinacea*), and foxglove beardtongue. Birds seen included robins, House Finch, American Goldfinch, Yellow Warbler and Red-winged Blackbirds.



Bumblebee on coneflower in pollinator garden, Hogg's Hollow. Photo: Zunaïd Khan

continued on next page

EXTRACTS *continued***Photography, Rouge Urban National Park, July 28.**

Leader: Zunaid Khan. From the meeting point we walked down the access road crossing the Little Rouge Creek towards a wetland at the start of the Cedar Trail. We observed birds, plants, turtles and insects around the wetland, and followed the Cedar Trail around a series of wetlands towards the railroad tracks before returning via the access road to connect with the Orchard Trail. At the beginning of this we saw another wetland that is turtle habitat before continuing along the trail towards Twyn Rivers Drive to connect to the Vista trail. A new pedestrian trail is now complete so that you don't have to walk in the street to cross the Twyn Rivers Bridge. Bird sightings included: American Goldfinches, American Robins, Killdeer, Solitary Sandpiper, Canada Geese, Green Heron, Belted Kingfishers, Barn Swallows, Song Sparrows, Eastern Kingbirds, Indigo Bunting and Eastern Towhee. We also saw painted turtles, cottontail rabbits, white admiral butterfly, monarch butterfly, silver-spotted skippers, red soldier beetles and a short-winged meadow katydid.

Humber Bay, Aug 3.**Leader: Lillian Natalizio.**

We walked approximately four km along the Waterfront Trail, west from Palais Royale to Humber Bay Park East, passing open park lawns, beaches, river mouth, armour stones and wetlands, and enjoyed views of the city and lake. Planted and pioneer trees have grown significantly in the last 20 years, providing welcome shade on such a warm morning. We saw many Double-crested Cormorants, Ring-billed Gulls and Mute Swans gathered along the breakwaters at Sunnyside Beach, plus a Great Blue Heron and a number of Herring Gulls. On the west side of the Humber River, we observed cormorants and gulls feeding further out in the bay, a sandpiper passing by the lookout point, with a group of Hooded Mergansers and a pair of Red-necked Grebes much closer to shore. Several pollinator gardens provided splashes of colour, with cup plants and false sunflowers in abundance, and gave us the

opportunity to discuss stewardship activities at the Humber Bay Butterfly Habitat. We saw several monarch, tiger swallowtail, and cabbage white butterflies making use of the wildflowers here, as well as many bees and a number of goldfinches.

Butterflies, Leslie St Spit, Aug 19. Leader: Bob

Kortright. More than 50 people came to this public walk at the annual Butterfly Festival. Everyone got a good look at poison ivy growing on both sides of the road. In

addition to many monarchs heading south we saw a few least skippers, black swallowtails, common sulphurs, azures, one each of red admiral, question mark and orange sulphur, and numbers of cabbage whites (along with green darner dragonflies). In addition to the life history of the monarch butterfly, we talked of the history of the Spit, and about the trees and flowers observed along the way, especially the common and swamp milkweed (food plants for the monarch butterfly). Many thanks to Susan Blayney for expert help.

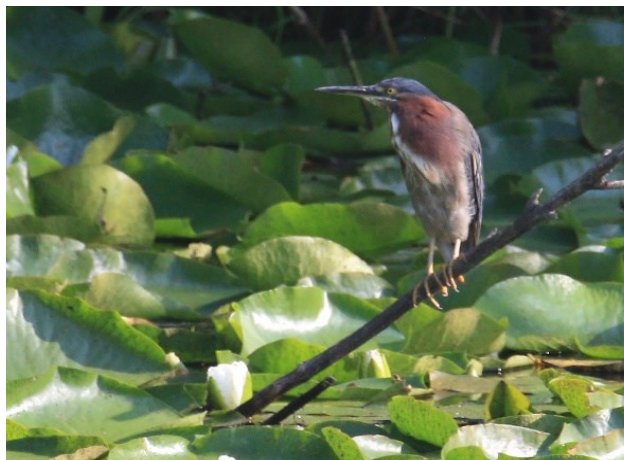
Leslie Street Spit, Aug 22.**Leaders: Zunaid Khan and Charles Bruce-Thompson.**

Walkers included Friends of the Spit, TFN members and unaffiliated attendees from Facebook. We visited Cells One and Two, the banding station (closed on weekdays), and Embayment D. The Spit was

bursting with luxuriant plant growth, of which the insects and birds were most appreciative. Among the more noteworthy birds we saw were an Osprey, several Trumpeter Swans, Cooper's Hawks, egrets, a Spotted Sandpiper, Wood Duck and a kingfisher. Most Tree Swallows, Double-crested Cormorants and Common and Caspian Terns had departed but a few were sticking around. The most common bird on the Spit appeared to be the Eastern Kingbird; we saw one feeding a young cowbird, a behaviour that none of us had observed previously. We saw other flycatchers that will have to remain of an undetermined species. Interesting plants: Virginia mountain mint, which is native to Ontario, and angelica which, I'm disappointed to discover, is not.



Eastern Towhee (above) Green Heron (below)
at Rouge Park. Photos: Bill Cruttwell



REMEMBERING RON PITTAWAY

TFN members who are keen birders will be sorry to hear that Ron Pittaway died recently.

Ron was a founding member of OFO (Ontario Field Ornithologists). For many years, the TFN newsletter printed or linked to Ron's annual Winter Finch Forecast. This forecast gave us an idea of which seed-eating bird species to expect to see locally over the winter, based on seed production in the boreal forest.

To read more about Ron's life-long involvement with birds and the Winter Finch Forecast, see <https://tfngo.to/winterfinchforecast>

Our condolences to Ron's family and his partner, Jean Iron. An obituary can be found at: <https://tfngo.to/ronpittawayobit>

KEEPING IN TOUCH

Memories of Eva Davis

I served with Eva on the TFN editorial committee many years ago. She was so happy to help, and enjoyed coming to the meetings. She lived in Brampton at the time and took nearly three hours to come in. We all admired her for that. Eva was able to make many contributions to the newsletter that were very descriptive and enjoyable to read. In particular, I will never forget her story about finding an "unknown" potted plant in a ravine and taking it home. On the subway young people kept looking at her and gave advice on how to make brownies. This was, of course, before marijuana was legal. I still laugh when I think about that.* I took a photo of a semi-tame fox in my garden and she drew a lovely sketch of its head. I still have that drawing. I was fortunate enough to visit with Eva during the last few years and found her to be her usual cheerful self. I will miss Eva and am glad the TFN will retain her newsletter contributions in their archives.

Karin Fawthrop

*Ed. You can read this humorous article entitled *A Rose by any Other Name* in the March 1987 newsletter (<https://tfngo.to/nlmar1987>).

Strange Raccoon Behaviour

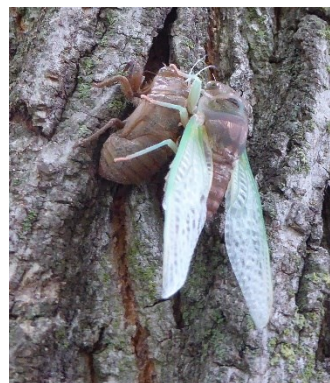
About 2 a.m. on August 14th, I was watching a juvenile raccoon foraging, and after a while he/she went over to a forsythia bush, ate a few of the leaves, and then rolled around on his/her back for 5 or 10 seconds, like a cat who is high on catnip. Has anyone else observed this behaviour? (And no, I haven't tried the leaves myself.)

Don Roebuck

A Different Take

While watching a cicada hatch recently, a curious family came up to investigate. Mom lifted up her three-year-old daughter who wanted to 'see too.' I explained what was happening – that the hard brown casing had broken open, and the cicada had leaned out backwards to let the green wings unfurl as they filled with air like a butterfly. When it was ready, it would move out of the hard brown home where it had been living and climb up the tree. It only takes about 20 minutes from start to finish, and with the wings long and blowing in the breeze, all five of us were staring in anticipation. Slowly it stepped away from the case and clung to the tree. 'LOOK,' said the child, 'IT'S OUT OF ITS PYJAMAS!' The magic of transformation through the eyes of a three-year-old girl!

Lynn Pady



Taking Off



"Pyjamas"

IN THE NEWS

Creeping bellflower – a deceptively pretty invasive plant

Theresa Moore drew our attention to this article by Samantha Edwards published in the *Globe & Mail* on August 28.

<https://tfngo.to/gmcreepingbellflower>

Creeping bellflower is an invasive weed that's known to overtake gardens and front lawns, choking out other plants. It can reproduce by seed and by its rapidly spreading root systems and, although its flowers are pollinated by insects, in the absence of pollinators it can self-fertilize. It is very difficult to eradicate, ... can grow in any light conditions and survive long periods of drought.

The article recommends the following strategies for dealing with it:

1. When you first notice the flower's heart-shaped leaves, pull them up and as much of the root as possible. Pulling out the weed pre-bloom can help prevent seed production.*



2. Since it can also reproduce through its creeping root system, focus on digging up the weed's white, fleshy rhizomes with a garden fork. Some gardeners swear by digging up to 15 inches of soil to reach the deepest roots.

3. Do not compost or dispose of the weed in yard waste bags. Instead, throw out the weed in black garbage bags so the roots do not regrow plants.

4. If you're planting wildflower seed mixes, double check that it does not contain *Campanula rapunculoides*.

5. Remain persistent in your battle against the creeping bellflower. It can take up to 10 years of regularly

pulling out the weed as it appears to fully eradicate it.

*Advice from a TFN gardener: One has to be strong-minded about removing the pretty flowers, and not say "I'll pull them up when they've finished flowering". Before they're out and once they're over, it's really hard to notice the plant, but removing the flowers is crucial to avoid massive seed production.

WEATHER (THIS TIME LAST YEAR)

October 2022

A sunny, dry month with seasonable temperatures. October felt relatively cool because of the warmth that prevailed through the majority of September. Cool spells prevailed on the 2nd-3rd, 7th-10th, and 13th-21st. Temperatures dropped close to, but not below, freezing in the downtown and inner suburbs on numerous occasions. The lowest temperature at Pearson Airport was 0.1° on the 29th (but down to 0.8° as early as the 8th). Downtown's coldest reading for the month was 2.0° on the 21st. Georgetown had the lowest GTA temperature with -3.0° on the 21st. It rose into the low twenties on a few days, with Georgetown also showing the maximum GTA reading of 25.5° on the 6th. With the dry sunny conditions, mean maximum temperatures were slightly above normal and mean minimums slightly below normal. The monthly mean temperature was 11.2° downtown and 10.4° at Pearson: exactly the average for the last 30 years.

Rainfall was below normal by about half, with downtown having 32.0 mm and Pearson having 36.6 mm. It was the driest October since 2016. Official records show no snowfall, but graupel (snow pellets) were observed in places on the 17th.

These conditions (in combination with a year that did not have outbreaks of spongy moth or other defoliators) led to one of the best displays of fall colour in years.



Cemetery, October 2022.

Photo: Cynthia Lundhild

Gavin Miller

ABOUT TFN

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

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NEWSLETTER

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

Submissions deadline for November: Oct 1

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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: 842 4911 0840 Passcode: 943692

FOCUS ON NATURE – BLUE

The August challenge for TFN's Photography Group was Blue. This stunning image of an eastern tailed blue butterfly was submitted by Marlene Duhig.

One of my favourite places to photograph birds and insects is the Rouge National Urban Park. Each area has its own unique environment, providing a variety of opportunities for nature photography.

This photo of the eastern tailed blue butterfly was taken in the meadow near the parking lot at the Zoo Road Day Use area on August 26. I used my birding telephoto lens, forcing me to stand well back from the butterfly and resulting in the soft background. I had to significantly crop the photo.

Marlene Duhig



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

TFN LECTURE

Sunday, October 1 at 2:30 pm

In person & via Zoom. See page 15 for information

An amazing journey through Ontario's Old-growth Forests



Michael Henry, forest ecologist and lead author of *Ontario's Old-growth Forests*, will share stories and photos of old-growth forests and remarkable trees throughout Ontario, with an emphasis on forests in the GTA and Greenbelt.

Upcoming Lectures:

Nov 5: (In person and via Zoom) ***Nature's Clean-up Crew: Opossums in Canada***
Dr. Suzanne MacDonald, York U.

Dec 3: (via Zoom only) ***Arctic Foxes, Hares and Biodiversity***
Dr. Dominique Berteaux, Canada Research Chair on Northern Biodiversity,
Université du Québec

Feb 4: (format TBD) ***Wetland Restoration in Toronto: 30 Years of Experience***
Ralph Toninger, Associate Director, Restoration and Resource Management, TRCA