



TORONTO FIELD NATURALIST

Number 680 November 2023



A foggy morning in High Park, Autumn 2020. Photo: Charlotte Broome

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PRESIDENT'S REPORT

As we move into winter, we continue to work on additional ways to celebrate our Centennial throughout the remainder of this year and into next spring and summer. Thanks to all the volunteers who helped us with the *Then & Now* photo exhibit at the Rotunda in Toronto City Hall during Ravine Days. I hope you were able to see it. If not, stay tuned for our plans to tour the exhibit around various locations during the coming months. Details will be posted on the *Members Only* website. Later this month we will post some of the photos from the exhibit on the *Members Only* site.

We continue our outreach efforts through events and walks with nature groups, community organizations, student groups and the City of Toronto. I would like to highlight a series of walks I led in Downsview Park focusing on ethical nature viewing and photography. These were the result of ongoing engagement between TFN and Parks staff on how to engage with park users on the issue of wildlife

disturbance. It is a great example of how positive engagement can lead to on-ground programming that has the potential of bringing out positive change in minimizing our impact on nature. It can be easy to be negative about the issues facing our green spaces and the perceived lack of action by those who manage and maintain these spaces. Being negative, antagonistic and/or aggressive in our interactions with others about these issues does no one any good. In fact, it creates barriers that makes achieving positive change all the more difficult. We remain committed to speaking up for nature and educating people about our green spaces and the species that inhabit them.

We have a great selection of walks on offer this month including a Centennial walk to Todmorden Mills. The full walks list is available on the *Members Only* site.

Zunaid Khan

REMEMBERING AARNE JUHOLA

TFN members were saddened to learn that Aarne Juhola passed away on September 13th at the age of 88.

For 30 years, Helen and Aarne Juhola played vital leadership roles in the TFN – she as editor of the newsletter and very active in advocacy work, while he assumed less visible, yet vitally important, administrative roles. In addition to serving on the board for many years, in 1982 he was appointed Secretary-Treasurer, a role in which he applied rigorous cost-benefit thinking. Pinky Franklin told me how she respected Aarne for his dedication after seeing the ledgers in which he kept meticulous handwritten records – a painstaking task in those days when TFN had no computer. Over the years, Helen and Aarne frequently led botany outings together.

In 2005, when they announced their decision to retire, then-President Robin Powell applauded “the unparalleled extent, duration and quality of their volunteer work that had made them both the very foundations of the Toronto Field Naturalists as we now know it.” TFN decided to pay tribute to this remarkable couple by naming a portion of our Nature Reserves near Uxbridge in their honour. In May 2006 a large group of members gathered at the reserves to celebrate the occasion, and a plaque was installed as a permanent record of our appreciation for their valuable contributions to our organization over so many years.



Helen and Aarne showing the plaque that designates the Helen and Aarne Juhola Nature Reserve.

Photo by Robin Powell

We extend condolences to the family. Aarne's nephew, Colin Devine, advises that Helen is being cared for in a nursing home. There is to be a Celebration of Life for Aarne in November (date to be confirmed).

You may access the obituary at: [Aarne Oliver Juhola Obituary - Toronto, ON \(dignitymemorial.com\)](https://www.dignitymemorial.com/obituaries/toronto-on/obituary-for-aarne-oliver-juhola).

Wendy Rothwell

“THEN & NOW” RECEPTION



On October 2nd, TFN members gathered in the Rotunda at City Hall to celebrate the opening of our *Then & Now* exhibit. The reception was a great opportunity for us to see this impressive presentation featuring 20 “then” photos from TFN archives together with images of the same locations taken in 2023 by members of TFN’s Photography Group. The exhibit was expertly coordinated by Philip Jessup. The reception was also an enjoyable occasion when we could renew acquaintance with fellow TFN members and meet new ones.



These images were provided by Andrew Interisano and Lillian Natalizio.

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 November outings you might like to consider

Fall in the Humber Arboretum: Nature and Heritage

Leader: Lynn Short

Thursday, November 9, 1 pm

Cherry Beach and Villiers Island: Nature and Heritage

Leader: Charles Bruce-Thompson

Wednesday, November 22, 9 am

Meeting Point: Welcome Kiosk at main entrance to Humber Arboretum, Humber College, North Campus, 205 Humber College Blvd.

Walk Details: A 2-hour, 5 km circular walk over mostly unpaved, even, flat surfaces, with a few steep slopes. There are stairs.

Walk Description: The walk will be conducted on trails through a Maple/Beech forest and an open meadow. There is also a portion of the trail that is paved alongside the West Branch of the Humber River, which is a designated Heritage River.

Getting there: The Arboretum is accessible by car or transit. Parking is free for Arboretum visitors; just check in at the Parking Kiosk at the front of the college for directions.

TTC: Take the #927 bus from Kipling subway station or the #996 bus from York Mills subway station.

Washrooms: Available at the beginning.

What to bring: Binoculars, camera, water.

Walk Leader's Cell Number: 647-273-5966



A TFN outing in autumn. Photo: Ron Dengler

Meeting Point: The pavilion at the entrance to Tommy Thompson Park/Leslie Street Spit, 1 Leslie St.

Walk Details: A 3-hour, 8 km circular walk over mostly flat, paved surfaces.

Walk Description: We'll walk along Cherry Beach to have a look at whatever waterfowl may be present. Then it's up Cherry St to have a close look at the massive engineering project, including changes to the course of the Don River, that's well underway. You may have noticed the smart new bridges and the mountains of dirt to the south when driving along the east end of the Gardiner. Now's a chance to get a better, closer look. We'll end on Leslie St to return to our starting point. The latter portion of the walk is along dusty streets, bordering what is essentially a huge building site.

TTC: The #83 bus from Donlands subway station will drop you at Commissioners and Leslie. Walk 500 m south to the park entrance.

What to bring: Binoculars and a snack. Dress for the blustery lakeshore weather.

Washrooms: Available at the meeting/destination point.

Walk Leader's Cell Number: 416-778-5340 (call, don't text)



Long-tailed Ducks, November 2016. Photo: Ken Sproule

LECTURE REPORT

An Amazing Journey through Ontario's Old-Growth Forests

October 1, 2023

Michael Henry, forest ecologist and author

Despite forest clearance by European settlers and forest management through use of fire by indigenous peoples, old growth trees have survived in southern Ontario; the challenge is how to recognize them.

Michael Henry, forest ecologist and author of *Ontario's Old-Growth Forests*, explained that trees can be regarded as 'old growth' when their growth rate slows, much like human teenagers becoming adults. For trees, this usually occurs after around 140 years of growth. Old growth trees typically have a 'celery stalk' growth form, with an unbranched trunk and a cluster of large limbs near the top of the crown. The base of the trunk may appear bald from over 100 years of bark shedding. Trunks of old growth trees often have a twisted appearance (although this might reflect that twisted trees were less desirable for the logging industry). Forests of old growth trees typically have sunlit gaps and plenty of logs lying on the ground.

Lambton Park holds some of the oldest trees in Toronto, with natural stands of red pines that have been dated (from counting the rings on dead trees) as over 200 years in age. Black oaks in Lambton Park have similar ages and, like red pines, are fire-resistant. Another GTA example occurs along the Seaton Trail, which follows West Duffins Creek (northwest of Pickering), and has hemlocks and other trees reaching more than 180 years old. Land directly adjacent to the trail is owned by developers and recently was slated to be removed from the Greenbelt by the Ford government. Fortunately, for now, this land continues to be protected.

Ancient white cedars hold Ontario's record for longevity: individual trees growing on the cliffs of the Niagara escarpment at Lion's Head, Bruce Peninsula, have been documented as having lived for more than 1300 years. One important factor for this long lifespan is that the trees are protected from fire by growing on the limestone cliffs. Also, cedar trees are 'virtually immortal' because each root



sector feeds a branch sector directly, making it possible for part of the crown to remain alive even when fed only by a narrow strip of bark.

Michael has documented stands of extremely old hemlocks along Hurdman Creek in northern Algonquin Park, with the oldest tree dated at 427 years. This extensive grove illustrates the importance of recognizing the characteristics of old growth trees (and actually counting rings!), as the trunks of the oldest trees are not necessarily the largest in the forest. Michael reminded us that only 35% of Algonquin Park is protected as wilderness area, and argued for the importance and urgency of protecting these precious groves from logging.

Ontario's forests face many threats from climate change and invasive species, including hemlock woolly adelgid, emerald ash borer beetle, butternut canker fungus, and Asian long-horn beetle. Global trade using wooden pallets is the source of some of these diseases and destructive insects, and stricter controls on import of disease-carrying wood (fumigation, use of metal pallets, stringent inspections) would slow or prevent disastrous consequences.

On the hopeful side, natural resistance to imported diseases may allow some of our old trees to grow older. About 5% of beech trees appear to be naturally resistant to beech bark disease. If you spot a beech tree with unmarked bark in the midst of beeches with cankered bark, consider submitting your sighting to the iNaturalist project on beech bark disease resistance, (<https://inaturalist.ca/projects>).

The elm recovery project at the University of Guelph Arboretum grows cuttings of Dutch elm disease-resistant trees in large orchards, allowing them to interbreed and produce disease-resistant offspring.

Michael opened and closed his talk with the words of Ernest Thompson Seton, who described the experience of a flight of passenger pigeons over the Don Valley when he was 16 years old (in 1876) as a 'smoke-like trail that took hours to pass' and the feeling of being 'shaken by a living wind'. One hundred years ago, those passenger pigeons went extinct, but some of our oldest trees, like the red oaks in Sunnybrook Park, would have experienced that living wind as young trees and, unlike the pigeons, are still with us today.

Nancy Dengler

“THEN AND NOW” LAMBTON PARK WALK

Lambton Park is a 13.5-hectare park on the banks of the Humber River, west of Scarlett Rd on Dundas St W. It features a children's playground and many trails that connect to the Humber Recreational Trail. The Lambton Arena can be found just inside the park entrance. This is one of the locations we selected from our slide archives for the *Then & Now* photo exhibit. Here is the photo from the archives.



Lambton Park, 1976. Photo: Robin Powell

In preparing for the photo exhibit, our volunteers had not been able to duplicate this photo but we hope to do so this fall. I have selected this location to be the subject of my second special President's Walk.

I look forward to seeing you on this walk.

Zunaid Khan

Lambton Woods and Park 'Then & Now' 100th Anniversary, Nature and Heritage

Thursday, Nov 16th at 10 am

Walk Leader: Zunaid Khan

Meeting point: James Gardens parking lot, 99 Edenbridge Dr, Etobicoke.

Walk Description: A 2-hour circular walk along mostly even and paved surfaces with gentle slopes.

Walk Details: We will walk through James Gardens following the Humber River recreational trail as it winds through Lambton Woods and into Lambton Park. We will pause at the trail bridge over the Humber River and discuss TFN's connection to the area, then cross the bridge following the trail to the Dundas Bridge before returning to our starting point. Members will have the option of exiting the trail at Dundas.

Washrooms: At beginning of walk in James Gardens. (Hopefully they are still open.)

Parking: James Gardens parking lot

TTC: Line 2 to Runnymede subway station, Scarlett #79 bus to Edenbridge Drive, then cross to the west side of Scarlett Rd and walk along Edenbridge to James Gardens.

What to bring: Water, snacks, binoculars and/or camera. Dress for the weather

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

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 in the *Members Only* website.

VOLUNTEER PROFILE: NORMA HENRIETTA CARSWELL FORD

As part of our 100th Anniversary celebrations, we are publishing a series of articles about remarkable individuals whose volunteer efforts have shaped and sustained TFN during its history. This is the second in that series. The first, about Dr. Dick Saunders, appeared in the Anniversary issue of the newsletter.

Born in St. Thomas, Ontario on September 3, 1893, Norma Henrietta Carswell Ford received her PhD in Zoology/Entomology from the University of Toronto in 1923, the very year the Toronto Field Naturalists got its start. So it is, perhaps, not surprising that our history records Norma present at the very inception of our organization, as co-leader of TFN's entomology group, and described only a few years later as an officer.

What is surprising, however, is that she even had the time to spare for our little upstart club. In 1924, Norma became the first female instructor hired by the U of T's biology department despite the apprehensions of then chair, Benjamin Arthur Bensley, whom the University's own magazine notes "objected to women teaching" [1]. During this time, she was also making routine trips to Canada's Rocky Mountain range in search of *Grylloblatteria* specimens, an entirely new genus of organism co-discovered by her friend, colleague, and fellow TFNer, Dr. Edmund Murton Walker.

Possessed both by immense scientific curiosity and a passion for education, Norma would not be restrained either by her entomological laurels or by the social norms of the time. Her biology courses "for the teacher, social worker, nurse and mother" introduced her students to even the most controversial aspects of evolutionary biology, and such fledgling fields as dermatoglyphics (the study of skin imprints) and cytogenetics (the study of chromosomal

inheritance). Almost 60% of her PhD students were women, as were a full two-thirds of her Masters students.

On May 28, 1934, the now-famous Dionne quintuplets were born in Callander, Ontario, an event which would have a radical impact on Norma's professional trajectory. Three years after their birth, Norma took on the shared responsibility of determining whether these five girls were genetically identical. Her efforts not only helped prove that they were, but were considered pioneering in the development of medical genetics as a research field – so much so that she was made the first Director of Genetics at Toronto's Hospital for Sick Children in 1947.

Norma helped found the American Society of Human Genetics in 1948, the Genetics Society of Canada in 1955, and was awarded the title of Fellow of the Royal Society of Canada in 1958. Her substantial contributions to the field of genetics also earned Norma

an honorary degree from Queen's University, just two years prior to her death on August 9, 1968.

At TFN we often mention that the benefits of membership are more than just experiences in nature. We're a community – meeting new friends and developing relationships with other members is part of the package. So I'd be remiss if I didn't mention that Norma Ford and E. M. Walker married in 1943. I'd like to think their time with TFN gave them opportunity to step out of the halls of academia, put aside their mutual professional commitments, and get to know one another just a little bit better.

Jason Ramsay-Brown



1. <https://www.magazine.utoronto.ca/campus/history/history-of-zoology-u-of-t-reverend-william-hincks>

FROM THE ARCHIVES

Past TFN newsletters are a source of fascinating information about the natural history of Toronto. One example is this article by Richard M. Saunders in the January 1939 issue about our most prevalent dabbling duck – the Mallard.

Of all the people who go down to Sunnyside during the winter to feed the ducks, how many ever stop to ask themselves whether these birds are wild or tame? Toronto bird observers may be divided into two groups: those who record these ducks in their observations as regular wild birds, and those who refuse to enter them on their lists since they regard them as tame or as living under unnatural conditions.

The original stock from which these ducks have sprung was raised and loosed several years ago by the Toronto Zoo. They were encouraged to stay in this area, and to breed, by protection and feeding. They all nested originally in High Park but the number has so increased that they have spread out to occupy nearly all the marshes in the Toronto region. The wintering flock, made up almost entirely of blacks and mallards – and it is with these two species that we are here concerned – now numbers about three hundred. Although Toronto is well within the breeding area of these species they were not known to breed here – in the records now existent – before this stock was loosed. They are not therefore introduced species like the starling and house sparrow, but rather native birds liberated within an area natural to their kind.

That these birds have chosen to stay is understandable, just as other species, of whose wildness there is no

question, have stayed and prospered when protective sanctuary and food have been offered them. These birds are free to go wherever they choose, and that they can take care of themselves is in no doubt, as they have settled in marshes distant from High Park and any artificial conditions. They have, however, cross-bred on a large scale so that specific types have been blurred and the distinction between black and mallard has become impossible to determine in many cases. Crossbreeding between these two species is by no means unknown, but it has here reached a very intense stage. Some of the products are rather ludicrous.



A pair of Mallards on Toronto Island.
Photo: Ken Sproule

The wintering of these ducks in this area is more astonishing than their breeding. Would they stay here without the great amount of food that is given them by the visitors at Sunnyside? Probably not, but then other birds swarm about feeding-stations too, and are eagerly watched as wild birds. Could they survive a winter in this area without such feeding? Again, probably not; but they would almost certainly migrate in that case. Nearly all of them have been banded, and a number bearing these bands have been shot in the southern states, proving that a proportion of them do migrate now. The ones that migrate and return can hardly be counted as tame birds, but they are difficult to tell from the others that remain. And are those that remain any less wild for staying? Perhaps you can decide.

UPCOMING 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 their children for the duration of the program.

Nov 11: Mosses and Fungi at Lambton Woods

Dec 2: Making baskets and mats with 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 by a reminder email with detailed location instructions.

JUNIOR NATURALISTS

FUNGI

Fall is a wonderful season to go for a hike in the woods and, while it is tempting to spend most of your time looking up to enjoy the changing colours of the leaves, take a moment to look down and see what is poking out of the grass or growing out of tree trunks or stumps, because autumn is also a perfect time to look for fungi.

The area in and around Toronto is home to more than 500 species of fungi. Toronto even has an unofficial species, the dryad's saddle — a bracket fungus that grows on dead and dying deciduous (leafy) trees like elm, ash, maple, walnut, poplar and willow.

Fungi come in a variety of shapes. Those called mushrooms take the form of a domed cap on a stalk. While they might look like plants, they are in fact members of an entirely different and ancient fungi kingdom — vitally important in the ecosystem, and in medicine (like penicillin).

The mushrooms you see for sale in the grocery store, or fungi visible in the forest, are not the complete organism. In fact, they are only what are called the fruiting bodies, producing the spores that are released via the gills or small holes on the underside. The rest of the organism lives underground, or in rotting wood, as microscopic threads (called hyphae) that can grow incredibly long. The largest organism in the world is in fact a 2500 year old honey fungus

in Oregon that spans nearly 10 square kilometres underground.

Unlike plants, fungi do not have the ability to convert sunlight into food, so they need to get their food from the environment. Some form beneficial



Dryad's Saddle. Photo: Ken Sproule

networks between themselves and the roots of trees and other plants, helping the plants absorb water and nutrients from the soil, and in return, absorbing the sugars stored in the plant roots; some become recyclers,

breaking down dead plant matter; while others attack living organisms, causing disease.

So remember to look down when you are out for a hike, and realize that you are not just walking on soil. Under your feet are huge mats of organisms connecting the trees to one another like a nutrient highway, and others that are slowly breaking down old plants to provide nutrients and space.

Don't miss our Juniors event learning about mosses and fungi on November 11.

Vanessa McMain

WARNING: While some fungi are good to eat, others are extremely poisonous, and it is hard to tell them apart. You should never eat fungi you find growing wild unless you know for sure they are edible species.

TREE OF THE MONTH: EUROPEAN BUCKTHORN (*RHAMNUS CATHARTICA*)

In November, fall colour in our deciduous trees is well past its peak, especially for native species. In contrast, colouring and leaf fall in many introduced Eurasian hardwoods is often much delayed by comparison – in none more so than in European buckthorn. The delay in turning yellow carries on to the bitter end. While some introductions, such as Siberian elm or white mulberry, sometimes have their leaves killed by an early frost before they have turned, European buckthorn is almost always caught with its leaves green when death strikes. Even at the height of the growing season, its leaves are about the darkest green of any deciduous tree in our landscapes. This is a trait associated with shade tolerance, which itself reflects an ability to harvest and photosynthesize with the sparse, dim light that manages to get past the forest canopy, which European buckthorn (a small, often shrubby tree usually under eight metres tall) never reaches. This has helped it, like similarly dark-leaved Norway maple, to become one of the most invasive introduced trees here, capable of establishing itself even in relatively intact forests that resist penetration by the many alien invaders that rely on more disturbed sites.

The fruits, whose effects when ingested live up to the scientific species name as well as to an alternate common name in the U.K., “purging buckthorn”, also contribute to the invasive potential of the tree by way of fruit-eating birds. These fruits – one- to four-seeded, black-skinned drupes (not the berries they resemble because each seed is surrounded by a hard stone or pit rather than flesh) – are also irritating to the ingestive and digestive system of mammals, including us, and the emetic quality of most parts of the tree is the basis for some medicinal uses. The drupes and dark (almost blackish) bark also both yield strong dyes that vary in colour from green or yellow to purple depending on how they are prepared and applied.

The drupes develop from small, yellowish green, four-parted flowers only three to four millimetres across. These flowers are individually inconspicuous but are presented in a conspicuous inflorescence of one to a few dozen that open for business simultaneously and remain receptive for just a few days. This arrangement lies near one end of a spectrum of flower and inflorescence size that can be seen as representing two broad but intergrading “strategies” that different insect-pollinated tree species use for attracting their pollinators. At the other end of this spectrum, in contrast, cucumber magnolia and tulip-tree each have very large flowers that are borne singly rather than massed.

Besides purgative fruits, European buckthorn’s defenses against herbivory, at least by large browsing mammals like deer, include thorny twigs, borne at the tips of short side shoots whose growth potential is brought to an end by conversion of its shoot apex into a thorn. These thorns are nominally arranged in opposite pairs, like the leaves. However,



From top: Shrubby European buckthorn tree; mature drupes and leaves; clusters of four-parted flowers; maturing drupes and thorn-tipped twig. Photos: Ken Sproule

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KEEPING IN TOUCH

In anticipation of our upcoming lecture about opossums, new TFN member Lynn Simmons has shared this delightful poem.

Opossum by moonlight by Lynn Simmons

*Two broom-lengths away,
behind wisteria blossoms
that dangle when she moves,
pink nose sniffing danger—
step-and-peek,
step-and-peek;
she no longer trembles
at the sight of me.*

*The gods have not been kind:
withholding weapons,
bestowing no beauty.
Coarse fur,
scruffy.
Rat-like tail.
Black eyes, ghost face, swine snout, teeth.
Oh! So many crammed into one mouth.
And a hiss—ferocious façade.
If it fails all that's left
is a feigned gruesome death.*

*Be safe, I whisper and beware the dogs.
Before I sleep, I'll gather greens to leave
beneath the garden shed
—my nightly gift to help her feed
the bee-sized babies in her pouch*

NOMINATIONS FOR LIFETIME TORONTO FIELD NATURALISTS AWARD

In September, as part of our centennial celebrations, we were happy to announce this new award to recognize volunteers who have made significant and sustained contributions to TFN and its mandate. (See page 3 of the September newsletter for details.)

If you would like to nominate a member for this award, you can do so by email to office@torontofieldnaturalists.org or by mail to 2 St Clair Avenue West, 18th floor, Toronto, ON, M4V 1L5. Please address your correspondence to the Nomination Committee and include "TFN Lifetime Award" in your subject title.

Please note the criteria for consideration for this award are:

- Currently a member.
- A volunteer who has made significant and sustained contributions to TFN and its mandate over a period of at least 10 years.

This year's deadline for nominations is December 31st, 2023

TREE *continued*

among all our opposite-leaved trees, European buckthorn has the greatest tendency to have a subopposite arrangement, with the leaves in a pair well separated from each other along the twig rather than being attached precisely across it. This is one big difference between the foliage of European buckthorn and that of dogwoods, which share similar, otherwise rarely encountered, arcing venation but are (with the exception of alternate-leaved pagoda dogwood and its closest relatives), almost always strictly opposite-leaved. Another obvious difference is that

leaves of European buckthorn are toothed along the edge while those of dogwoods are completely smooth and toothless. And, as might be surmised from earlier remarks, dogwood leaves are lighter green than those of European buckthorn. These differences reduce the risk of accidentally rooting out native dogwoods when removing invasive buckthorns from natural habitats, particularly for more easily confused young plants.

James Eckenwalder

EXTRACTS FROM OUTINGS LEADERS' REPORTS

Newtonbrook Ravine, Sept 2. Leader: Ellen Schwartzel. The morning offered perfect walking; not too hot, but sunny. We admired a sequence of small perched wetlands along the Newtonbrook Creek Trail, marked by cattails and purple loosestrife. Goldenrod and boneset were among the many fall blooms. Stewards are busy in this ravine, and we were lucky to get updates from the local Toronto Nature Stewards team and Bayview Village Association volunteers. We heard Blue Jays and nuthatches, and noted bends in the creek where herons sometimes hunt. A characteristically rectangular tree-hole suggested the work of Pileated Woodpeckers, which are often seen by local walkers. A couple of basking turtles (a painted and a snapping turtle, side-by-side) along with a muskrat were happy highlights of the morning.



Muskrat in Newtonbrook Ravine.
Photo: Gary James

100th Anniversary walk, Toronto Islands – Ward's Island and Snake Island, Sept 7. Leader: Zunaid Khan. As we walked, we discussed the connection of the islands to TFN's outings over the years. Proceeding towards Ward's Island beach and the boardwalk, we observed some unique natural features and discussed the impact of flooding in previous years on the birch trees. We noted the spread of phragmites that a local steward group is trying to address. Before crossing onto Snake Island, we enjoyed great views of the lake and Tommy Thompson Park from the boardwalk. Birds seen included a Downy Woodpecker, Northern Cardinals, Blue Jays, Double-crested Cormorants, gulls, Mallards, Wood Ducks, Great Egret, Great Blue Herons, and a Belted Kingfisher. We also

observed green frogs and pink gerardia (*Agalinis* sp) plants on Ward's Island.

Rouge National Urban Park, Sept 12. Leader: Charles Bruce-Thompson. The rain stopped shortly before the end of the walk, but otherwise it was quite a soggy experience. At least we had the trails more or less to ourselves. Most birds were somewhere else, keeping dry, but we did see a pair of American Kestrels high up on the hydro wires and a Pileated Woodpecker. We also saw a number of (very) confusing fall warblers. We found a young painted turtle loitering on Zoo Road. Figuring this wasn't the healthiest place for it to hang out, we relocated it to the adjacent wetlands.



Rescuing a painted turtle in Rouge Park.
Photo: Patti Lane

Miles Hearn memorial walk, Birch Cliff Quarry Lands, Sept 18. Leader: Bob Kortright. Since Miles Hearn led us through the area in 2019, the western half of the quarry lands have been bulldozed in preparation for construction, but an entrance off Gerrard just west of Rathmore Rd provides access to a wildflower meadow with woods that extend east almost to Clonmore Dr. In addition to common weeds like dog-strangling vine, ragweed, horseweed, thistles, sow-thistles, common milkweed, burdock, viper's bugloss, tansy, Japanese knotweed, wild carrot, daisy fleabane, toadflax, wild lettuce, catnip, grape, chicory, buckthorn, black locust, mulberry, Siberian elm, Norway and Manitoba maple, creeping bellflower, lamb's quarters, mullein, and

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EXTRACTS *continued*

mugwort, there were a lot of heath and New England asters as well as some panicked, heart-leaf, purple-stemmed and pale blue asters, Jerusalem artichoke and pale-leaved sunflowers, flat-topped and Canada-type goldenrods, roadside peppergrass, field pennycress, evening primrose, nodding knotweed, and sandbar willow. In the woods we saw red and white oak, cottonwood and large-toothed aspen, black walnut, black cherry, green and white ash, blackberry, both false Solomon's-seals, hog peanut, elderberry, wild currant, cow parsnip, Boott's rattlesnake root and white lettuce, and moonseed vine. Beside the Gerrard St sidewalk, there were two velvetleaf plants with a couple of leaves on one. Butterflies seen included eastern tailed-blue, red admiral as well as many monarchs, common sulfur, and cabbage white. Among many goldfinch and robins we found a Black-throated Blue Warbler, a White-throated Sparrow, Downy Woodpecker, crow, flycatchers and Blue Jays, and heard the call of a Red-bellied Woodpecker.

Birds – Fall Migrants, Colonel Samuel Smith Park, Sept 20.

Leader: David Creelman. It was a lovely sunny day featuring some early maple leaf colours and New England asters everywhere. The park and adjoining Humber College is a lovely, accessible birding spot. Many Victorian buildings and mature trees survive from its past life as Lakeshore Psychiatric Hospital. There is a continuing, rare for Toronto, juvenile Yellow-crowned Night Heron in the storm water pond at the west end of the marina. Everyone had a chance to see it. All recent sightings of this species in the Toronto area are from Col Sam's, about one every couple of years. That's a bit puzzling, as they have a choice of many good sites for herons throughout the GTA.

We also saw several similar Black-crowned Night Herons for comparison and a couple of Great Blue Herons. Also

hanging around the park's extensive shoreline were a Pied-billed Grebe, an out-of-season Common Goldeneye and numerous Red-necked Grebes. Other species were all 'commoners' – Canada Geese, Mute Swan, Mallard, etc.



Examining heath asters at Birch Cliff Quarry.

Photo: Charlotte Broome

Raptors are migrating now, but we saw only one Cooper's Hawk, likely local, harassing a migrating Sharp-shinned Hawk. Likely the 'Coop' does not like to see other raptors on its turf. Everyone wants to see the beautiful warblers, and we did find a few. Magnolia, American Redstart, Cape May, Northern Parula, Nashville, Bay-breasted and Black-throated Green were seen in the northern parts of the park, where there are many mature trees. There were also many Ruby-crowned Kinglets, and some of us saw a Blue-headed

Vireo. Other species seen included Northern Flicker, Downy Woodpecker, Belted Kingfisher, Blue Jay, Brown Creeper... and more!

Milne Hollow, Sept 26. Leaders: Emily Heidendahl and Zunaid Khan.

Starting at the trail head close to Milne House, we discussed TFN's connection to the area both as a popular walk destination over the years and our members' involvement in stewardship. Emily Heidendahl from the City for Toronto's Community Stewardship Program (CSP) told us the history of restoration and stewardship of the area, which goes back 20 years. She also gave insights into recent restoration done by the TRCA and the stewardship efforts of the CSP volunteers, including a new pollinator garden. This location is one of the eight CSP sites across the city. Proceeding to the Rainbow Tunnel beside the East Don River, we continued discussing restoration



Yellow-crowned Night Heron at Col Sam Smith Park, August 2014. Photo: Ken Sproule

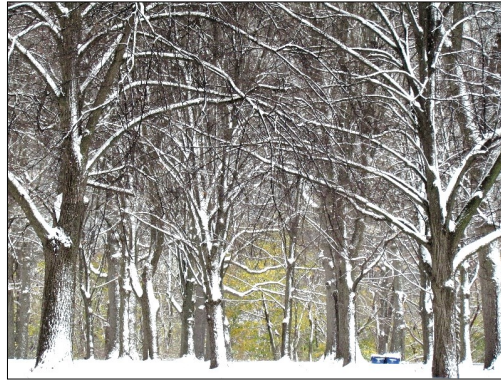
and stewardship work. We saw lots of beautiful fall colours, New England and white panicked asters, and Canada goldenrod. As we moved out of the area under stewardship, we immediately noticed an increase in dog-strangling vine and buckthorn. On the way back we paused on the bridge over the Don and, as the light faded, were lucky to spot some salmon making their way up the river.

WEATHER (THIS TIME LAST YEAR)

November 2022

November began with spectacularly warm weather (reminiscent of two years ago), turned sharply to a wintry pattern for about ten days, then turned fairly mild again. The peak of the warmth was on the 5th, the warmest November day on record at Pearson Airport with a high of 25.1°. This would technically be a rough tie with November 1, 1950 that reported a high of 25.0° – a rounded figure). Downtown reported 23.1°. The warmth persisted with a reading of 21.3° on the 10th.

Thereafter a strong cooling trend set in with near-or-below freezing temperatures. On the 15th, the first snowstorm of the season hit, with 9.2 cm falling. On the 19th and 20th, it stayed below freezing and massive lake effect snows hit Buffalo. Toronto's total snowfall was 13.0 cm (Pearson). This is 4.5 cm above the long term average of 8.5 cm. By the 23rd, temperatures were above normal again, though not near the record-breaking levels of early month.



High Park after the November 15th snowfall.

Photo: Charlotte Broome

Occasional rains came, and the snow cover, which had lasted just over a week, vanished.

Despite all the changeable conditions, there appeared to be more sunshine than normal for November (though this weather parameter hasn't been measured for about ten years). About 12-13 days were mostly sunny, which included both the warmest and coldest periods of the month.

The overall outcome was a month that was about 1° above normal with a mean temperature of 6.1° downtown and 5.4° at Pearson. Record warmth was largely but not completely offset by a later significant wintry spell.

Precipitation was near normal (give or take 10 mm) with 70.0 mm downtown and 55.4 mm at Pearson.

Most of this fell during the mid-month snow and during a soaking rain on the 30th.

Gavin Miller

IN THE NEWS

You may recall a TFN lecture by Gail Fraser of York University in November 2017 about efforts to control populations of Double-crested Cormorants on the Leslie Street Spit. TRCA's goal was to attain a healthy, thriving colony of these birds there while preventing destruction of trees. Their primary strategy was to encourage the birds to nest on the ground rather than in trees. (See lecture report here: <https://tfngo.to/dec2017newsletter>.)

An article by Francine Kopun in the October 3, 2023 issue of the Toronto Star draws attention to an unintended consequence of these efforts – cormorants have begun nesting on the Toronto Islands, dropping their acidic poop on trees and raising concerns that they could disrupt the fragile ecosystem there.

Kopun reports that TRCA's efforts on the Spit have proved successful in that 88% of the 8860 cormorant nests there in

2022 were on the ground. However, there were 1667 nests on the Toronto Islands that year, all of them in trees. TRCA was able to reduce that number to 902 this year, but Andrea

Chreston, the TRCA expert charged with managing the colony in both locations, conceded that the remaining birds on the islands have spread out, which may make it appear as if no progress has been made.

In the spring, TRCA is hoping to erect scaffolding on the Spit as an alternative roost for the cormorants, to persuade them to stay there rather than moving to the islands. Their goal with cormorant management at Toronto Island Park is to have zero nesting cormorants because there are provincially significant wetlands in the area.

You can read Francine Kopun's article at: <https://tfngo.to/starcormorants>

Wendy Rothwell



Double-crested Cormorants, Leslie Street Spit, 2007. Photo: Ken Sproule

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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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.

Note: The November lecture will be immediately followed by the AGM. See page 6

You may attend the November lecture 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: +1 204 272 7920 Meeting ID: 835 4805 5521 Passcode: 506711

FOCUS ON NATURE – FRUITS AND SEEDS

The September challenge for TFN's Photography Group was Fruits and Seeds. This dramatic image of spruce cones was submitted by Margaret Hall.

I love the monthly photography challenges as they help me direct my attention to nature with a clear objective, making my viewing of nature more mindful and focused.

On my way to Smythe Park, one of my favourite city parks, I came across this tree laden with cones on a residential street. Although I had a DSLR with a macro lens in my knapsack, I used my I-phone camera to capture this bumper crop of cones. Shooting from below, I was struck by the extraordinary design of the individual cones with their geometric repetition of scales where each shadowed crevice concealed two tiny seeds to be released, consumed and dispersed, possibly reproducing the tree. It wasn't until I met with the TFN Photography Group that I learned these were spruce (not pine) cones. I'm so grateful for the opportunity to participate and learn from people who share a love of photography and nature.

Margaret Hall



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

TFN LECTURE

Sunday, November 5, at 2:30 pm

In person & via Zoom. See page15 for information

Nature's Clean-up Crew: Opossums in Canada



Dr Suzanne E MacDonald, Professor, York University, will explore what we know about opossums in our city, how they live alongside us, and why we should appreciate these misunderstood newcomers.

Upcoming Lectures:

Dec 3: (via Zoom only) **Arctic Foxes, Hares and Biodiversity**

Dr. Dominique Berteaux, Canada Research Chair on Northern Biodiversity

Feb 4: (format TBD) **Wetland Restoration in Toronto: 30 Years of Experience**

Ralph Toningner, Associate Director, Restoration and Resource Management, TRCA