

TORONTO FIELD NATURALIST

Number 551

November 2007



Linden Tree, Toronto Harbourfront, drawn by Mary Cumming

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IT'S YOUR NEWSLETTER!

We welcome contributions of original writing, up to 500 words, of observations on nature in and around Toronto, reviews, poems, sketches, paintings, and photographs of TFN outings (digital or print, include date and place). Include your name, address and phone number so submissions can be acknowledged. Send by mail or email. Deadline for submissions for December issue: Nov. 1, 2007.

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MEMBERSHIP FEES

\$30 STUDENT, SENIOR SINGLE (65+)
 \$40 SINGLE, SENIOR FAMILY (2 adults, 65+)
 \$50 FAMILY (2 adults – same address, children included)

No GST. Tax receipts issued for donations. Send membership fees and address changes to the TFN office.

Please note: TFN does not give out its membership list.

Toronto Field Naturalists

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Young Eastern Kingbird. Drawing by Diana Banville
 In *Silence of the Songbirds*, Bridget Stutchbury writes that, according to the North American Breeding Bird Survey, 1955-2005, Eastern Kingbird is one of more than two dozen migratory songbirds that have suffered continent-wide decreases in population size since 1966.

TFN MEETING

Sunday, November 4 at 2:30 pm

Migratory songbirds – canaries in the coalmine?

*Bridget Stutchbury, Professor of Biology, York University
and author of “Silence of the Songbirds” (see review on page 5)*

VISITORS WELCOME!

SOCIAL: 2:00 - 2:30 pm

Room 001, Emmanuel College, University of Toronto, 75 Queen’s Park Cres. East

Emmanuel College is just south of the Museum subway station exit (east side of Queen’s Park). Enter at south end of building, down a few steps on outside stairwell. **Wheelchair entrance:** Second door south on Queen’s Park (no automatic opener). Elevator inside to the right. Room 001 is one floor below street level.

For information: call 416-593-2656 up to noon on the Friday preceding the lecture.

Upcoming TFN Monthly Meeting

December 2

Toronto Waterfront Projects and Natural Habitats
Brenda Webster, Project Manager – Planning and Design,
Waterfront Toronto (formerly Toronto Waterfront Revitalization Corporation)

THE PERFECT CHRISTMAS/HOLIDAY GIFT

- * doesn't need to be gift wrapped
- * is delivered directly to the recipient
- * comes 8 times in the year, not just in December
- * gives access to over 100 outdoor experiences
- * promotes good fellowship with like-minded people
- * is informative, educational and entertaining

GIVE A TORONTO FIELD NATURALISTS MEMBERSHIP

TFN OUTINGS

- TFN events are conducted by unpaid volunteers.
- The club assumes no responsibility for injuries sustained by anyone participating in our activities.
- Children and visitors are welcome at all TFN events. Children must be accompanied by an adult.
- If you plan to bring children in a stroller, be aware that there may be steps or other unsuitable terrain.
- Please do not bring pets.
- To get to outings on time, check TTC routes and schedules by calling 416-393-4636.
- Outings go rain or shine: check the weather by calling 416-661-0123 so you will know what to wear.
- Wear appropriate footwear for walking on trails which may be muddy, steep or uneven.

- Saturday,
Nov. 3
10:30 a.m. **SUNNYBROOK PARK - Nature Arts**
Leader: Eric Lin
Meet at the northwest corner of Leslie St. and Eglinton Ave. E. We will walk through Sunnybrook Park to Glendon Forest. Bring your camera or art supplies for sketching or painting. Bring lunch and anything you'd like to share with the group when we review after lunch.
- Tuesday,
Nov. 6
10:30 a.m. **CHERRY BEACH TO LESLIE ST. – Weed Identification**
Leader: Evon Turko
Meet at the TTC stop at Cherry Beach. Morning only.
- Saturday,
Nov. 10
1:30 p.m. **HIGH PARK – Trees**
Leader: Bohdan Kowalyk
Meet at the park entrance on the south side of Bloor St. W. at High Park Ave.
- Tuesday,
Nov. 13
9:45 a.m. **TORONTO ISLANDS – Birds**
Leader: Doug Paton
Meet at the ferry docks at the foot of Bay St. for the 10:00 a.m. ferry. Bring lunch, binoculars and money for ferry.
- Saturday,
Nov. 17
10:30 a.m. **GUILDWOOD PARK – Birds**
Leader: Carol Sellers
Meet on the south side of Guildwood Parkway opposite Galloway Rd. Bring lunch and binoculars.
- Sunday,
Nov. 18
2:00 p.m. **A WALK TO CELEBRATE WORLD FISHERIES DAY – Lost Rivers Walk**
Leader: Christine Tu, Toronto Region Conservation Authority
Meet at the southwest corner of Pottery Rd. and Broadview Ave. Visit weirs on the Don River and discuss the impact of the environment on fisheries. This is a joint outing with Toronto Green Community.
- Tuesday,
Nov. 20
10:00 a.m. **ASHBRIDGE'S BAY - Birds**
Leader: Doug Paton
Meet at the southwest corner of Queen St. E. and Lee Ave. We will stop for lunch at a restaurant for those who wish. This will be a circular walk. Bring binoculars.

- Saturday,
Nov. 24
10:00 a.m. **ASHBRIDGE'S BAY – Birds**
Leader: Bob Kortright
Meet on the trail at the southwest corner of Coxwell Ave. and Lake Shore Blvd. E. Bring binoculars and lunch.
- Sunday,
Nov. 25
1:30 p.m. **PROSPECT CEMETERY – Trees and Shrubs**
Leader: Pleasance Crawford
Meet at the cemetery gate on the south side of Eglinton Ave. W. (roughly opposite Montcalm Ave.). We will look for brightly coloured barks, berries and boughs. Walk will end at the cemetery gate on the north side of St. Clair Ave. W.
- Wednesday,
Nov. 28
11:00 a.m. **CROTHERS WOODS, NESBITT RAVINE – Nature Walk**
Leader: Roger Powley
Meet at the southwest corner of Bayview Ave. and Moore Ave. Bring lunch and binoculars.

FOR READING

Silence of the Songbirds

Bridget Stutchbury, Harper Collins Publishers Ltd., 2007. Hard cover, 255 pages, illustrated with delightful sketches and colour photographs. \$32.95

I have just finished reading this exceptional, multi-faceted book. While grounded in years of scientific research, it is expressed in language that non-academics can readily understand and enjoy. With rich prose, poetic descriptions and personal anecdotes, Bridget Stutchbury shares with the reader her profound love of nature and fascination with birds. From their wintering grounds in South and Central America, through their amazing yearly migrations, to their breeding activities in the boreal forest, she makes us aware of the birds' reliance on environments to which they have adapted over hundreds of years, and the disturbing changes introduced by humans which threaten their survival.

As TFN members, we experience the joy of watching birds on our nature walks and cannot help but be saddened at the thought of species being lost. But Dr. Stutchbury brings to our attention reasons for everyone, not just birders, to be seriously concerned. Like canaries in coal mines, dwindling bird populations warn us of environmental hazards which threaten our own survival. Furthermore, we need birds because they directly contribute to the preservation of

our ecosystems by controlling insects, pollinating plants and dispersing seeds.

Having evoked in us a genuine concern for the birds, Dr. Stutchbury suggests ways we can help by making wise life-style choices. I heartily recommend this book, which is not only an enjoyable read, but also a wake-up call which needs to be heeded.

Wendy Rothwell

Last Child In The Woods: Saving Our Children From Nature Deficit Disorder

Richard Louv, Algonquin Books of Chapel Hill, 2006, 334 pages

"Nature – the sublime, the harsh, and the beautiful – offers something that the street or gated community or computer game cannot. Nature presents the young with something so much greater than they are." – Richard Louv

No Student Left Indoors: Creating a Field Guide to Your Schoolyard

Jane Kirkland, Stillwater Publishing, June 2007
A guide for K - Grade 8 teachers to create an interdisciplinary nature-study in any schoolyard.

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

The environment has taken centre stage again this week as Al Gore, Oscar winner for his documentary film *An Inconvenient Truth*, was announced co-winner of the Nobel Peace Prize. Mr. Gore was cited by the Nobel committee as "...the single individual who has done most to create greater worldwide understanding of the measures that need to be adopted to curb global warming" (Globe & Mail, Oct.13, 2007, p. A3). The other Peace Prize co-winner was the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), a United Nations collection of about three thousand experts who have publicized the human contribution to rising temperatures. Canadian environmentalist Sheila Watt-Cloutier was jointly nominated with Mr. Gore for her tireless defence of the Arctic and Inuit rights in the face of climate change. When asked if she was disappointed at not winning, Ms. Watt-Cloutier was quoted as saying, "...the issue has won... Our own planet Earth is a winner in all of this." This remark brought to my mind's eye the image of the Earth appearing like a big blue and white marble suspended in space, as portrayed in the iconic photo taken by the astronauts of NASA's Apollo 8 mission. As the astronaut Bill Anders later put it in a documentary about the mission, "We came all this way to explore the moon and the most important thing is that we discovered the Earth."



Field sketch of Jerusalem Artichoke by Joyce Cave

Closer to home, the results of our provincial election were noteworthy. The Green Party tripled their popular vote to eight percent, gaining support in the rural and agricultural regions faster than in the cities, where it began.

While leading an outing this fall in Taylor Massey Creek, Melanie Milanich pointed out a cheery display of Jerusalem artichokes (*Helianthus tuberosus*). We learned that the plant is native to the area and its tubers were a staple in the diet of indigenous peoples. A cultivated strain of Jerusalem artichoke is grown by local farmers. Coincidentally, I came across an article in the Globe & Mail titled "To market - the freshest thing to buy right now - Jerusalem artichokes." I have never eaten a Jerusalem artichoke nor, to my knowledge, seen them for sale in my local supermarket. Since reading "*The 100-Mile Diet, A Year of Local Eating*," I am more aware of the environmental impact of food production and transportation. How fitting that a TFN outing introduced me to the native forerunner of a nutritious food with an exotic name. Think globally... eat locally.

Despite the current popularity of environmental issues it is both timely and crucial that TFN continue to press all levels of government for protection and preservation of our natural heritage.
Pinky Franklin

Ed.: The Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs' website states that Jerusalem artichoke is not an artichoke and did not come from Jerusalem. Many consider the name to be a corruption of the Italian "girasole articiocco," meaning sunflower artichoke. It's a member of the sunflower family and native to North America. It has been cultivated both as an ornamental and for its edible tubers. The cultivated strains of Jerusalem artichoke produce large tubers and shorter, thicker stems than the wild types.

Caribou Country – Our Shield Against Global Warming

Monday, November 5, 2007, at Hart House, University of Toronto
Reception 6 pm. Presentation 7 pm.

This fall scientists and CPAWS Wildlands League showcase the little known role of wild forests in staving off the worst impacts of global warming. Featuring new footage from a recent canoe trip down the Albany River in the boreal forest, this multimedia show reveals the intimate connection between caribou, carbon and climate change.
For tickets (\$15.00): www.theglobalwarmingshield.org Information: 416-971-WILD

MONTHLY MEETING REPORT

Saving Canada's Boreal Forest – the Case of the Woodland Caribou, October 14

David Pearce, Forest Conservation Officer, Wildlands League – a chapter of Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society (CPAWS)

Can we save the caribou?

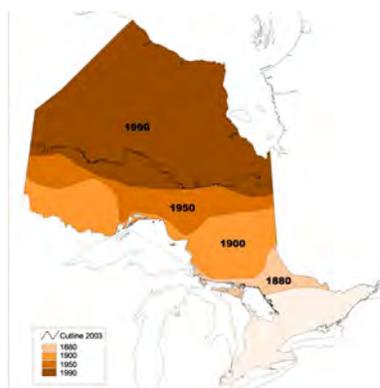
According to Dave Pearce, the short answer is, “yes, we *can* save the caribou” ...and the wolverine ...and the breeding habitat for millions of migratory birds ...and the traditional life of thousands of native people. But TFN members who attended Pearce's lecture may feel that the real question is, “*will* we save them?”



Photo by Bruce Petersen

The Wildlands League seems resigned to the opening of the northern forest to development, but it argues that if we permit this development to employ current practices, we will sacrifice the boreal forest, and the rich mix of flora and fauna that depends on this unique natural setting for its very existence. Although the northern Russian forests and the Brazilian rain-forest are also surviving remnants of the forests that covered much of the earth until a few hundred years ago, it is Canada's forest that has the best chance of being saved. Or so we would like to believe. Our lecturer asked a very pertinent question: “If Canada doesn't save its forests, where on earth will they be saved?”

Dave Pearce showed land-use maps to demonstrate the damage we have already done south of the boundary of currently allocated forest lands, i.e. south of the “cut-line” in northern Ontario. The vast area north of this “cut-line” is being eyed hungrily by forest and mining companies, hydro-electric power developers and planners who want to push all-weather roads to the most isolated northern communities. These activities will fragment habitat, poison the water (mercury poisoning is a good example) and will result in the decline, then disappearance, of animals such as the caribou and the wolverine. These two species need large, unbroken territories to reproduce and maintain populations. Maps showing the retreat of the range of both species provided dramatic evidence



Caribou Range Recession map from CPAWS Wildlands League

that conventional development will cause their “extinction in slow motion” within one hundred years.

What are the changes that the Wildlands League believes could save a significant part of the northern boreal forest? The League outlines its approach in its “Boreal Forest Conservation Framework.” The Framework proposes

building an agreement between resource companies, First Nations, conservation groups and governments to legally protect at least half of the entire boreal forest region. It also calls for world-leading best practices in resource extraction activities in boreal areas that remain open to industrial use.

In the meantime, groups such as the Wildlands League (and the Toronto Field Naturalists) must pressure the provincial government to fulfill the commitments it has already made respecting the protection of the boreal forest. The government must ensure that comprehensive land-use planning precedes any further resource allocations or development decisions, including road building, in this area. Their handling of the De Beers' Victor diamond mine is not a happy precedent. Approval of this project was given without any consideration of the cumulative effects of development or the future of caribou, while the fate of the wolverine was not even addressed.

The boreal forest is a long way from Toronto's ravines and parks, but failure to protect the northern forest in an effective way will eventually affect us all. We should view the government's action on this issue as a test of its intentions with respect to the protection of all of Ontario's natural environment.

Barry Mitchell

OUTINGS REPORTS

TFN Nature Reserves—September 29

It was a typical globally-warmed late September day—hot and sunny—when 24 TFNers gathered to tour our nature reserves near Uxbridge. Using aerial photographs from a viewpoint atop the drumlin east of Uxbridge Creek, we could discern the boundaries of the TFN properties stretching south through the vast Uxbridge Creek wetland. By motoring east to the Brock County property we made TFN history—the first field trip to inspect all four nature reserves!

Fall colours, while not at their peak, were excellent. Red maple, alternate-leaved dogwood and Virginia creeper glowed scarlet while brilliant pink and orange foliage distinguished Canada plum. The fruit of wild grape, black elderberry and northern wild raisin tempted even the strictest of tame food consumers. While goldenrods were past their peak, asters had reached their zenith. We identified some of the latter—panicked, heath, swamp and New England (with both typical purple and less common rose blooms).

Bird activity was subdued, but we did note westbound sharpies, Cooper's* and a high-flying harrier as well as a skein of southbound Double-crested Cormorants

probably migrating from Lake Simcoe to Lake Ontario or hopefully all the way to the eastern seaboard.

Some other interesting observations included:

- A greyish water-milfoil like plant in the ditch—actually not a vascular plant but stonewort aka *Chara*, a green algae that becomes encrusted in lime.
- Piles of earth beside the road were the work of moles; by reaching into the earth we could discern their tunnels.
- A well-trod game path across the reserve parking lot had me guessing. Was it groundhog, racoon or beaver? Not a mammal at all I discovered a day later but a wild turkey trot!

Many thanks to Jerry Spevak for mowing the reserve road and parking lot, to Sandy Cappell for orchestrating the car-pooling and to the drivers and their passengers for making this a very successful outing.

George Bryant

* Sharp-shinned Hawks, Cooper's Hawks.

Nature Reserves Committee—A Call for Volunteers

The TFN board has re-activated the Nature Reserves Committee. Its purpose is to manage our existing nature reserves and to acquire additional land for stewardship. We are looking for a few members to volunteer some time to this rewarding task.

The mandate of the committee is to:

- Monitor nature reserves for management issues (e.g. access, neighbour relations, washrooms, and signage)
- Lead negotiations to acquire additional properties
- Update species list
- Revise and reprint Guide to the Toronto Field Naturalists' Nature Reserves.

Most committee meetings will be by email; there will be at least one face to face meeting annually, at the nature reserves.

For further information, call George Bryant at [REDACTED] or email [REDACTED]



Photos of the TFN Nature Reserves outing, September 29th, taken by Wendy Rothwell

OUTINGS REPORTS *continued*

Extracts from leaders' reports

Birds – Humber Bay Park East. September 4.

Leader: Doug Paton. At the lakeshore we saw a small immature beaver on one of the small islands. We all had a good look as he sat on a rock for quite a while. We crossed the bridge to Humber Park East and saw several vireos and a number of warblers. On the path we ran into a mink that skidded to a stop in front of us, then back-tracked and climbed into a tree. He chased a squirrel out of the tree and followed it towards us. The squirrel shot between the leader's legs but the mink veered off and we didn't see them again. On our way back we saw several kinds of ducks and shorebirds, yellowlegs, Killdeers, Least Sandpiper and ended just over the bridge.

Mink were also seen on the TFN Humber Arboretum walk on 18 September led by Carol Sellers.

Hawk Watch and Count – Rosetta McClain

Gardens. September 11. Leader: Ruth Munson. This park is on the Scarborough Bluffs with lovely gardens and many trees, some crying out to be sketched: gnarled trunks, limbs twisting around each other, etc. Saw a good selection of migrating birds. Our host, Frank Butson, is at the park most days and is always glad to talk Birds.

Following this outing, Frank Butson wrote:

Hello...thanks to the hardy and patient TFN members who persevered through some slow times at Rosetta McClain Gardens Raptor Watch today. I was glad we shared at least some good birds. As the day progressed the viewing improved immensely. While the bulk of the group was present we saw a Turkey Vulture very well, several Sharp-shinned Hawks and a nice close-up Osprey. I enjoyed chatting with everyone and hope to see a few folks back on a day that is good from start to finish. As the last person left about 2 pm, by 2:15 pm, 31 Sharp-shinned Hawks came through. Two of your other members arrived somewhat late, taking a chance that anyone would be there. Fortunately, I had stayed and the birds came. Excitement for the day, aside from a few close-up Osprey, included a crow attacking a Broad-winged Hawk at low level through the park and later a local Cooper's Hawk attacking a different Broad-winged Hawk. Twice a Merlin and a Sharp-

shinned Hawk had runs at each other...serious attacks. The Merlin showed its explosive speed in both cases. I was glad to share all of these experiences. The final count was 156 raptors consisting of:

1 Turkey Vulture	4 Broad-winged Hawks
6 Osprey	7 Red-tailed Hawks
1 Northern Harrier	5 American Kestrels
126 Sharp-shinned Hawks	4 Merlin
2 Cooper's Hawks	



Osprey photographed by Frank Butson

I look forward to future visits by any or all TFN members. Thanks for your help, camaraderie and support. BIGFRANK (Frank Butson)

Trees for Beginners – Mount Pleasant Cemetery.

September 19. Leader: Roger Powley. Everyone tasted the fruit of the pawpaw tree and we looked at the fruit of the sweet gum, walnut, hickory and chestnut (*Castanea*). We looked at the defining features of maples, oaks, elms and spruce. We all saw a young Red-tailed Hawk which sat on a low branch.

Nature Walk – East Don Parkland. September 22.

Leader: Phil Goodwin. Showed participants where salmon spawn. They are not expected to arrive now till early October because of low water levels (due to dry summer) and warm temperatures, especially warm evenings. Identified two old mill sites on the Don.

KEEPING IN TOUCH

In late September my wife, Frances, saw a great egret fishing in the Humber off Etienne Brulé Park. The next day I went there and saw the same (?) egret catch a small fish.

When disturbed by fishermen wading in the river it flew up-stream. I followed

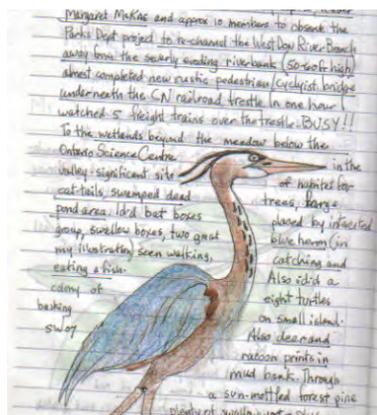


and was surprised to see FOUR great egrets sitting together in two adjacent trees a short distance above the first weir on the Humber. Solitary Great Egrets have become fairly common sights in High Park and on the lower Humber, but I have never before seen them gathered in a group. Is this behaviour unusual for this species? It would be, I think, for the closely related Great Blue Heron.

Peter Money

Susan Weiss submitted this recent entry from her journal re the TFN outing on September 30th 2007 in E.T. Seton Park:

WETLANDS AT REAR OF ONTARIO SCIENCE CENTRE. MEMBERS OBSERVED TWO GREAT BLUE HERON, STANDING, THEN WADING, FISHING AND FEEDING. RENDERED MY VERSION



FROM PETERSON'S FIRST GUIDE TO URBAN WILDLIFE.

A TFN member who especially enjoyed *Toad Acre or Skunk Hall* in "From the Archives," May 2007, sent us a newsclip headlined "A million tiny toads make trek"

from *24 hours* (Sept. 4, 2007). In order to move from wetlands to winter habitat, these Vancouver Island toads have to cross a four-lane highway. Because of a population explosion, estimated at 1 million, there are thousands risking their lives. As a result, Ministry of Transportation employees are catching the 1 inch toads in pit traps, buckets sunk into the ground, and are carrying the toads across the road.

We didn't renew our membership because we moved and retired to Quebec City in August. We are grateful to the TFN members who introduced us many years ago to the birds, bees, wildflowers, etc... and with whom we had great times and outings! In recent years we became too busy to follow TFN activities even though we kept our membership. Now that we are retired, we will have more time – we hope – to rediscover nature in and around Quebec City after 31 great years of living in Etobicoke.

Raymond Morin

Norah Jancik sent us this photo of a juvenile Rose-breasted Grosbeak, taken at the Toronto Brickworks in September.



Roger Powley sent in an article about katydids in Toronto from "The Fixer" in the *Toronto Star*. The article reports on night-time noises in Scarborough that have made people curious. A reader had suggested that the noise was made by the "common true katydid." Roger notes that, according to *Kaufman Field Guide to Insects*, true katydids are only found south of the Great Lakes and therefore must be expanding their range. He has heard them in Mount Pleasant Cemetery. Roger consulted Carol Sellers, one of TFN's insect experts, who says she has seen them but thought they were bush-katydids rather than the "true" variety.

Keeping in Touch continued on page 18

HYGROPHORUS COCCINEUS - CAP UP TO 4" ACROSS
STEM 3" TALL



STROPHARIA AERUGINOSA - BLUE-GREEN STROPHARIA
CAP 1" ACROSS, STEM 3" TALL



AMANITA CAESAREA - CAESAR'S
MUSHROOM



AMANITA VIROSA - THE DESTROYING ANGEL



AMANITA MUSCARIA - THE FLY AGARIC

GYMNOPILUS LUTEFOLIUS - ORANGE-RED CAP 4" ACROSS
STEM 6" TALL



CESPITOSE HABIT, i.e. SPECIMENS GROWING CLOSE
TOGETHER



CORTINARIUS VIOLACEUS - PURPLE CORT
CAP UP TO 6" ACROSS - STEM UP TO 5" TALL

THE AMANITAS AND OTHER COLOURFUL MUSHROOMS

The amanitas are a large family of mushrooms ranging from “Edible” to “Deadly.” The key to checking whether one has found a species of amanita is to dig around the base rather than cut the stalk at base. If it is an amanita, the fungus will sit in a cup-like container or volva, from which it sprouts. It will also carry a ring on the stalk.

Amanita virosa, the Destroying Angel, is usually the culprit in amanita poisonings. It is a beautiful, snow-white creature so similar to the edible *Leucoagaricus naucina* (a lepiota) that mistakes in identification have ended in death. Ingestion will not bring trouble for several hours, or even a day or two, by which time irreversible damage has been done to liver and kidneys. Just as deadly is *Amanita pantherina*. According to Barron,* a Dr. Bastien in France has saved several people by giving intravenous ascorbic acid (vitamin C) as soon as possible after ingestion. So, if you think you have absorbed even a minute amount of these amanitas, don't wait to find out – get to a hospital immediately. One case of *Amanita virosa* survival is recorded by an American whose wife immediately went into coma. She was taken to hospital and had her stomach pumped which saved her life, as it did her husband's once the doctors knew what they had eaten. The American was grateful, but regretful. “Best damned mushrooms I ever ate,” he recorded.

Amongst those listed as edible is Caesar's Mushroom, *Amanita caesarea*, which has an orange-yellow cap, yellow gills, yellow ring, white volva. It nevertheless carries the warning “With Caution” or merely the statement “Nonpoisonous.” Legend has it that Messalina fed this to the Emperor Claudius with intent to murder him by including poisonous mushrooms in the dish.

Commonplace and much scattered around from spring to fall is the beautiful *Amanita muscaria*. It is both poisonous and mildly hallucinogenic. It is also called the Fly Agaric because, according to folklore, if it were broken up in a saucer of milk all the flies that plagued pre-air conditioned kitchens would flock to it and drown. Instead, the flies appeared to become slightly tipsy and returned for more.

A. muscaria is deep orange in Ontario; deep scarlet in B.C. and Europe. I used to find brilliant red samples on my local Welsh mountain, *The Wenallt*. All specimens bear whitish warts, the remains of the “universal veil” from the volva through which they emerge. A new book by Andy Letcher, *Shroom: A Cultural History of the Magic Mushroom*, focuses on “man's fascination with *Amanita muscaria* above and beyond all other mushrooms.”

Most people think of mushrooms as dun-coloured brown or off-white. That is, after all, what they see in the marketplace. Those who hunt wild mushrooms know better, but even they don't often come across the most colourful members like these four spectaculars:

Amongst the *Hygrophorus* group, most of which are small vermilion mushrooms, is the striking *Hygrocybe coccinea* – two inches tall, with a brilliant red fluted stem. “Widespread and common” reads Barron, but I have found this beauty only once, and that with great delight. To come across a massing of the brilliant orange-red *Gymnopilus luteofolius* takes some beating. It is poisonous, but who would want to pop anything so gorgeous into the frying pan in the first place? In colour contrast, *Stropharia aeruginosa*, the Blue-Green Stropharia, with its champagne-coloured gills and stalk, is a lovely sight. I have only found this beauty once, and in the rain, which made its blue-green colouration even more startling. Perhaps the most unlikely find of all is the royal hue of *Cortinarius violaceus*, the Purple Cort. Nearly everything about this fungus is purple: cap, gills, stem and flesh. Only its spore print differs, being rust-brown. This mushroom is rated as “Edible” (I wouldn't dare!) and “Common,” but I have only found it twice and it lives royally up to its name.

Eva Davis

**Mushrooms of Ontario and Eastern Canada* by George Barron, Lone Pine Publishing, 1999

Remember! Don't eat any mushrooms unless you are an expert in their identification. *Eds.*

THE SNOWY

By Elaine Farragher, former TFN member and pioneer of the TFN website. Elaine continued to maintain the website for some time after moving to Kingston. This article was originally printed in *The Blue Bill*, Quarterly Journal of the Kingston Field Naturalists, March 2007.

My very first visit to Amherst Island in the early '90s was accompanied by perhaps unreasonable expectations. In Toronto where I was living at the time, Amherst was spoken of almost with reverence. You would have to be practically blind not to see owls on Amherst, a friend had assured me. Even relatively inexperienced birders like me should have an easy time. I had visions of flocks of owls like starlings, massing on trees, pretty much littering the landscape. But on this, my maiden visit, my sister Mary and I had been creeping around in the car at twenty kilometers an hour, scanning the flat pastoral terrain for 45 minutes, and so far had seen nothing.

"Look low," I advised Mary. "There are no trees in the Arctic so look for snowies on the ground and fence posts, no higher." My sister was beginning to ignore me and look everywhere. We were wondering now if the island's owls congregated in one small secretive area known only to seasoned birders, such as the one now tramping up the road towards us, festooned with binoculars, tripod and spotting scope. His purpose wasn't hard to identify and, noting his friendly wave, I knew he had us pegged as well. I stopped and rolled down the window.

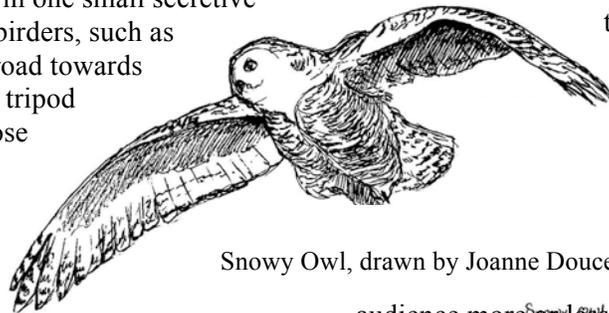
"Looking for the owl?" he asked immediately, getting right down to business. *The owl?* That sounded awfully specific. *An owl, any owl* was more like it. "The snowy?" he prodded. "Have you seen it yet?" We admitted we hadn't. In my experience, most birders are eager to share their sightings with others and this one was no exception. He proceeded to give us detailed instructions on where the owl had last been sighted by him, almost two hours ago. Turn right, then over the bridge, past the church and the cemetery and then a little bit beyond the dip to the right. We thanked him, then proceeded skeptically on our way. Surely the owl would have moved on by now, and we were a little disheartened at the implication that this snowy had the whole island to itself.

We were well past the church, assiduously examining every snow bank and fence post, when my sister exclaimed excitedly, "There it is!" "Where?" I asked,

perplexed, observing the field as bare, open and owl-less. "Up, up, up!"

And there it was, sitting high in a large tree, at least forty feet off the ground, in full view, in all its large, fluffy, magnificent splendour, calm, stately and completely unperturbed at the ten or so gawkers gathered reverently around its perch, like worshippers at an apparition. I wondered, of all the spots it could have chosen on this picturesque little island, why it had picked a location no more than 50 feet from a public works yard. Perhaps it had a talent for self-promotion, since the yard provided lots of parking and an even surface for setting up tripods. Several photographers were now peering through telescopic lenses, clicking away enthusiastically.

"I thought you said Snowy Owls stayed low," Mary commented. I shrugged dismissively, though this bird's choice of perch had threatened my tenuous claim as an authority.



Snowy Owl, drawn by Joanne Doucette

On its lofty perch the snowy looked confident in its superiority but gracious in granting us a truly excellent view. It faced its

audience more or less dead on, but occasionally twisted its head at a completely impossible 180 degrees to take in the view in the opposite direction. It blinked its eyes in a wise owl-like way, but mostly it just sat there, Buddha-like, its feathers slightly ruffled by the wind. I drank in its beauty, revelled in its perfection. Then I'd had enough, and so had my sister. Like spoiled kids at a party, we wanted to see more.

"Any other owls around here?" I asked the photographer next to me. He obligingly launched into a lengthy description of the whereabouts of Long-eared Owls on the east side of the island. While we were conversing, a collective sigh of appreciation escaped the onlookers. The owl had reared up, spread its gorgeous wings, and flapped them slowly up and down a few times as if getting the kinks out. It was a stunning sight. Every feather was visible. The brilliant white of the wings reflecting the sun against a backdrop of blue sky created a picture of unparalleled

beauty. Or it *would* have. The photographer, dismayed, scabbled back to his camera and frantically peered through his lens. But it was too late. The owl had settled back to his immobile stance. My sister and

I hurriedly thanked him for the information and slunk away. We never did find the Long-eared Owls. But the snowy truly was *the* owl.



The Snowy Owl

According to TFN Library material, the Snowy Owl nests in rolling tundra. It is circumpolar as a nesting species, and winters far enough south to obtain sufficient daylight for hunting, not being among the nocturnal owl species. Some individuals migrate as far as Toronto, or even further south. The number of these birds which seek out Toronto headlands, beaches, and fields, depends on the populations of small mammals further north.

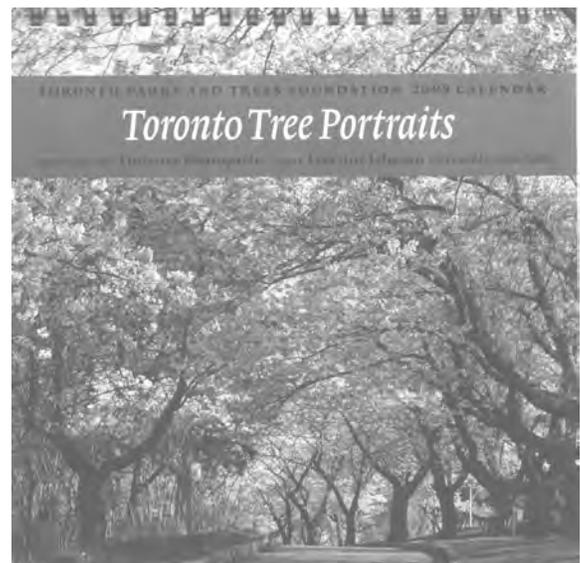
Drawing by Diana Banville, from a photo by Dr. G. Peck in *The Arctic Coast*, by Douglas Wilkinson

Toronto 2008 Tree Portraits Calendar

A continuing celebration of the importance and uniqueness of our city's tree heritage, the 2008 edition of the Toronto Tree Portraits Calendar explores the many benefits that trees provide – including their glorious beauty in full colour! Internationally renowned photographer Vincenzo Pietropaolo has collaborated with writer Lorraine Johnson to produce the calendar.

The 2008 calendar is conveniently formatted as a self-standing desk calendar, measuring 7" by 7". All proceeds from the sale of the calendar go directly towards preserving and enhancing Toronto's trees in parks, natural areas and other public spaces.

To order, phone 416-397-5178 or e-mail parksandtrees@toronto.ca. Cost is \$15 plus \$3 shipping for orders of fewer than three.

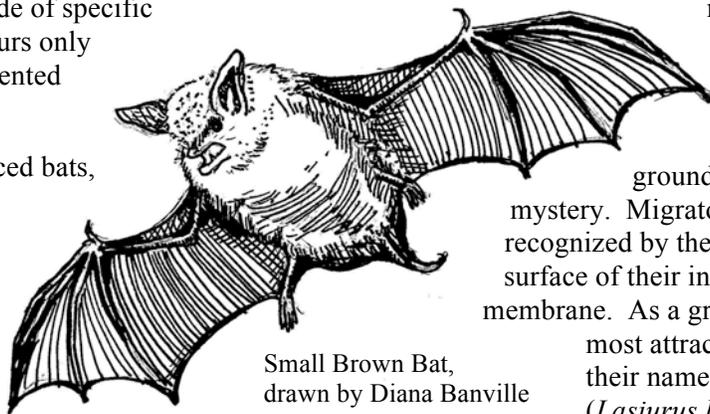


FROM THE ARCHIVES

LES CHAUVES-SOURIS D'ONTARIO by John Gregory Woods first appeared in TFN Newsletter no. 225, January 1967.

Literally translated the word "chauve-souris" means "bald mouse," and that is what the French call a bat. Bats are, however, neither hairless nor rodents but rather an insectivorous group of mammals which comprise one of the most fascinating facets of Ontario's fauna. They are members of the order *Chiroptera* (meaning winged-hand) and are unique among the mammals, for only they can attain true sustained flight. In all the world there are seventeen living families of bats and a multitude of specific forms, but here in Ontario there occurs only one family, *Vespertilionidae*, represented by eight species.

Of our *Vespertilionidae*, or plain-faced bats, there are five species biologists call hibernators. When the weather turns cold in the fall and flying insects diminish in numbers, the hibernators seek a cool, moist, adit mine or cave in which to pass the winter. These hibernation sites must have temperatures above freezing because a bat will die if ice crystals form in its tissue. It must also be sufficiently moist to prohibit excessive dehydration. Here the bat lies in a restless sleep until the arrival of spring, when the winter quarters are vacated. The bats take up new residence behind shutters, in hollow trees, under roof boards and in an infinite variety of similar locations. It is at this time that their young are born. We may easily recognize one of our hibernating bats from the fact that the dorsal surface of their interfemoral membrane is naked. [A membrane connecting the back legs. Ed.] These five hibernating *Vespertilionidae* are, in order of their apparent abundance: Little Brown Bat (*Myotis lucifugus*), Big Brown Bat (*Eptesicus fuscus*), Eastern Pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus subflavus*), Keen's Bat (*Myotis keenii*), and Least Bat (*Myotis subulatus*).



Small Brown Bat,
drawn by Diana Banville

The second group of plain-faced bats in Ontario are migratory and are represented by three species. Of these bats we know very, very little. They are solitary, hang in trees, do not form colonies, and are seldom encountered. We know only that they move out of Ontario some time in the fall and that concentrations of Red Bats at Point Pelee in early September seem to occur. Although they are banded with aluminum tags to help trace their movements, none of these marked

individuals has ever been recaptured and their exact wintering ground remains a mystery. Migratory bats are easily recognized by the furred dorsal surface of their interfemoral membrane. As a group they are the most attractive of our bats, as their names suggest: Red Bat (*Lasiurus borealis*), Hoary Bat (*Lasiurus cinereus*), and Silver-haired Bat (*Lasionycteris noctivagans*).

We may thus see our bat fauna as an interesting group of relatively unknown mammals. At the present time (1967) there are studies being conducted on our bat population by the University of Toronto. Thousands of hibernating and a handful of migratory bats have been banded in Ontario with hopes of increasing our knowledge of their intricate lives. Bats are beneficial, important members of Ontario's wildlife, well worth a naturalist's respect and interest.

Ed.: Up-to-date information on bats can be found in the 2006 edition of the Peterson *Field Guide to Mammals of North America*, 4th edition by Fiona A. Reid.

From the Archives *continued on page 17*

Photo Field Guide to Bats of Ontario

Recently published by St. Thomas Field Naturalists. Packed with high quality colour photographs, an identification key, bat box plans and bat ecology. To order, contact [redacted] or [redacted]

STOWAWAY ROBINS GO ON FIRST CANOE TRIP

Tessa Edward sent us this delightful article by Amy Flynn which appeared in Caneroots magazine, Fall 2007 www.canoerootsmag.com. They have kindly given us permission to reprint it.

Three Ottawa-area canoeists have one more reason to fish with live bait after a May canoe trip on which they could have used a few extra worms.

Chris Dowdell, Ian Stimson and Roly Saul started their weekend jaunt on the Madawaska River by loading a borrowed canoe onto their car. The canoe was stored upside down at shoulder height so the men simply shifted it onto their roof racks and tied it on. After a bumpy drive, the paddlers arrived at their put-in. As they flipped the borrowed boat off the car, a bird's nest dropped out from under the seat, and out tumbled two tiny robin chicks. "I've always said we should be bringing chicks on our trips, but this isn't what I meant," said Dowdell.

The trio decided they couldn't bear to leave the displaced robins at the mercy of the local wildlife. So, they took them along for the paddle. "We felt we could at least try feeding them and see what happened," said Dowdell.

At their campsite, they kept their guests comfortable with a gourmet menu of steak bits and tablespoons of water—filtered, no less. Both evenings, they placed the nest in a tree, sheltered by a makeshift tent of paper towel and twigs. To ward off carnivorous climbers, they booby-trapped the tree's base with utensils. The robins warmed easily to their new surroundings. They lazed in their nest, gazing out at the water and squawking loudly when one of their guardians approached with food. "They adjusted well to their new moms, and seemed to enjoy the view," said Dowdell.

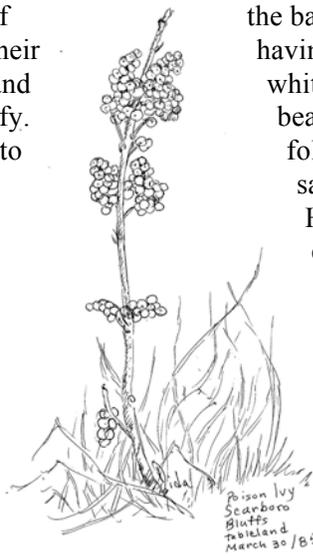
But no good adventure tale is complete without a happy ending. At trip's end, the men returned the canoe to its owner. Waiting for the chicks, worm in mouth, was the mother robin, who put the lie to the myth that mother birds reject chicks that have been handled by humans. Two weeks later, the chicks left their nest again, this time flying instead of floating.

FROM THE ARCHIVES *continued.*

POISON IVY by E.H. (believed to be Emily Hamilton) first appeared in TFN Newsletter no. 266, March 1972.

To some it is . . . To others it is just another plant. On a field trip recently a group of would-be botanists were astonished at their leader who picked a leaf of poison ivy and held it up for everyone to see and identify. He is one of the lucky ones not allergic to this dreaded plant.

On another field trip, held earlier in the season when the snow was still on the ground, many twigs with clusters of white berries were found standing above the snow. These were identified as poison ivy and word was passed around the group to BEWARE, but the lads at the rear of the file did not hear the warning and arrived at our destination with a handful of white berries – most anxious to know what they were!



Poison Ivy in winter, drawn by Diana Banville

While walking the dog by the railroad track we found the bank quite covered with *Rhus radicans*, the leaves having dropped off and only the twigs with the lovely white berries remaining. We remarked on how beautiful these particular berries were. The following day on the same mission with the dog we saw a man on the bank bending over the plants. He was cutting the stems and putting them carefully into a large carton. We called out to him, and quoted the books that "all parts of the plant are poisonous at all seasons to those who are allergic." "Oh," came the reply, "I am a florist. I thought the nice white berries would look good in my winter bouquets."

Ed.: Thirty-five years later, with so many of our native wild plants vanished and vanishing, we may see some retribution in this foolish harvesting, especially for commercial purposes.

WEATHER (THIS TIME LAST YEAR)

November 2006

November was fairly mild, particularly later in the month. There were frequent frontal passages and changes in weather throughout, however.

The overall pattern: A generally cool and sunny start gave way to an unsettled middle part of the month, and then a warm high pressure system prevailed towards the end. El Nino was active and made some contribution to the mild Pacific air that prevailed. There were no extreme temperatures, but the monthly mean of 5.2° at Pearson Airport was 2° above normal and downtown's 6.4° was 1.6° above normal – the warmest since 2001.

Rain, fairly well-distributed through the month, was in the 70 – 80 mm range in the Toronto area. This precipitation total was slightly above normal, even though only traces of snow fell.

November is never the brightest of months, as low sun angle, short days, and persistent cloud cover are characteristic of it in general. This year we had 71.7 hours of sunshine – fairly dark but tolerable. Early and late in the month did better in this department. The long-term average is 83.9 hours, but there appears to be a trend in recent years to increased sunshine (3 of the last 10 years had over 100 hours).

Gavin Miller

Keeping in Touch continued from page 11

A wonderful trip on September 29 to properties north of Uxbridge! On a warm sunny morning, after heavy rain in the area, we decided a walk on the roadway was in order. A bear had been sighted the evening before, but it stayed in hiding as George Bryant and his associate, Syd, guided us along the roadside identifying asters and other plants we knew by sight but couldn't perhaps identify by proper name. What a glorious adventure, so simply done



Photo by Wendy Rothwell.

but awakening the wonders of this country we need to secure for ourselves and future generations!

After collecting picnic lunches from our cars, we entered the first property, took a privy stop and then straggled along on "beaver boards" to the shelter, where we lunched and later visited three plaques identifying individuals after whom our nature reserves were named [Jim Baillie, Emily Hamilton and Aarne and Helen Juhola]. No long walks through the dense brush for most of us, and we returned to our cars. Stalwart Phoebe took some on a trail to see more ground works, meeting us at the drumlin – a place of peace and glorious fall splendour looking out over the hills and valleys of the moraine towards the Juhola reserve. Catch your breath – heaven must be like this!

Stamina depleted, my companion and I returned home and did not venture to the Charles Fell area. Thank you, Sandy, who arranged my ride with Corinne, a grand new friend, to George and especially Syd who enjoyed it too.

Sheila Ryan

COMING EVENTS

If you plan to attend any of the following events, we recommend that you contact the organizing group beforehand to confirm time and place.

Toronto Entomologists' Association (TEA)

Sat. Nov. 24, 1:15 pm. Fungous Diseases of Insects. Speaker Dr. Bill McIlveen. Northrop Frye Hall, Room 006, Victoria College. Information: www.ontarioinsects.org

High Park Volunteer Stewardship Program

Sundays, 10:30 am to 1:00 pm. Meet in front of Grenadier Cafe. Information: 416-392-1748.

- Nov. 11 Buckthorn control near Parkside Drive
- Nov. 25 Buckthorn control near Parkside Drive/seed collecting

High Park Walking Tours

Sundays at 1:15 pm (approx. 1.5 to 2 hrs.). Meet at benches across the road south of Grenadier Café. Donation: \$2. Information: 416-392-1748 ext. 5 or www.highpark.org

- Nov. 4 Photo Buffs Photography Walk (bring a camera, digital or film)
- Nov. 18 The Green Giants Tree Tour

Rouge Valley Hikes

Sundays at 1:30 pm (approx. 2 to 2.5 hrs.). Information: 416-282-8265

- Nov. 11 Meet at Rouge Valley Conservation Centre (Pearse House), 1749 Meadowvale Rd., Scarborough.
- Nov. 25 Meet at Glen Rouge Campground (north of Kingston Rd. between Sheppard Ave. E. and Albion Rd.).

Science on Sundays

Sundays at 3 pm. Royal Canadian Institute, J.J.R. Macleod Auditorium, Medical Sciences Bldg., University of Toronto, 1 King's College Circle. Free. Information: 416-977-2983.

- Nov. 4 Embryonic Stem Cells: Misconceptions, Hypes and Promises. Speaker Andras Nagy
- Nov. 11 Mathematics with Eye and Hand: Applied Practices and Proposals for Education. Speaker Walter Whiteley
- Nov. 18 Hey! There are Cockroaches in My Chocolate Ice Cream! Speaker Joseph Schwarcz
- Nov. 25 Alzheimer's Disease: Current Perspectives on Causes, Treatments and Possible Prevention. Speaker Maire Percy

Ian Wheal Walks

- Sun. Nov. 11, 2 pm. Memorial Military Walk of The Great War (1914-18), Long Branch Camp Site. Meet at the corner of Queen St. W. and Roncesvalles Ave. to re-enact Toronto Radial Railway route (now TTC) to Long Branch Loop by soldiers (1914-18) and school cadets. Free.

Friends of the Don East

- Sun. Nov. 4, 1:00 pm. Bruce Trail Club Hike. A level hike through the Upper East Don Valley. Meet at the trail entrance on Moatfield Dr. Information: John Routh, 416-694-4680.

What is Botanical Art? A showcase of contemporary work.

Oct. 30 to Nov. 23. John B. Aird Gallery, Macdonald Block, 900 Bay St. (at Wellesley). Gallery hours 10-6, Mon.-Fri. Opening Reception: Thurs. Nov 1, 6-8 pm. Information: 416-928-6772.

Caribou Country – Our Shield Against Global Warming.

Monday, Nov. 5, 7 pm. Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society (CPAWS). Hart House, University of Toronto. For tickets (\$15.00): www.theglobalwarmingshield.org Information: 416-971-WILD. See more details on page 7.

Abilities Photography Exhibition

Oct. 25 to Nov. 11. Joseph D. Carrier Art Gallery, 901 Lawrence Ave. W. (west of Dufferin). Information: 416-789-7011.

East Point Park Restoration Tour

Nov. 3, 10 am to noon. Toronto and Region Conservation and City of Toronto. Meet in the parking lot at foot of Beechgrove Dr., south of the tracks and next to the treatment plant. Free. Information and to find out if cancelled due to bad weather: 416-661-6600 ext. 5754. www.trca.on.ca

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TFN Outing at Scarborough Bluffs, March 1986, photographed by Helen Juhola (from TFN slide collection)