

TORONTO FIELD NATURALIST

Number 555

April 2008



Eastern Grey Squirrel drawn by Monica Lee

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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 May issue: April 4, 2008.

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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.

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OPPORTUNITIES FROM BIRD STUDIES CANADA

Baillie Birdathon: Want to have a *lot* of fun and help birds and nature at the same time? Do a Birdathon this May! More than 7,000 people from across Canada participate in and/or sponsor Birdathon every year. During a 24-hour period, they attempt to find as many bird species as they can, sponsored at a flat rate, or on a per-species basis. Canada's Baillie Birdathon is the oldest sponsored bird count in North America. It was established in 1976 as a national fundraiser to support the research and conservation of wild birds. Funds raised by participants benefit the work of Bird Studies Canada as well as designated bird observatories, the James L. Baillie Memorial Fund, which provides research grants to amateurs across Canada, and participating conservation and naturalist clubs. All contributions to Birdathon are tax-creditable.

The Doug Tarry Young Ornithologists' Workshop, held each August at Long Point Bird Observatory (LPBO), fosters the development of ornithological interests in Canadian teenagers. The Doug Tarry Bird Study Award covers direct costs of the 10-day workshop for the six selected applicants (aged 13-17), who participate in hands-on training in field ornithology. Applications due April 30, 2008.

Canadian Lakes Loon Survey: Survey any Canadian lake at least once in June (for loon pairs), once in July (for newly hatched chicks) and once in August (for the number of young that survive). Your report will join hundreds of others from across the country to support the conservation of loons and lakes. Registration \$35 (includes membership in Bird Studies Canada).

FOR INFORMATION: www.bsc-eoc.org; 1-888-448-2473; Bird Studies Canada, PO Box 160, Port Rowan, Ont. N0E 1M0. For Birdathon, email birdathon@bsc-eoc.org. For Doug Tarry Awards, email lpbo@bsc-eoc.org.

TFN MEETING

Sunday, April 6, 2008, at 2:30 pm

**Flying Whimbrels and Soaring Spirits:
An examination of Presqu'ile and Petroglyphs Provincial Parks**
David Bree, Naturalist, Ontario Provincial Parks

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

May 4 *Fathom Five National Marine Park* – List Tutty, University of Toronto

Clean-up Day!

As part of Earth Day celebrations, April 19, 2008 is designated by the City as the day for citizens to clean up litter in our parks. Since TFN members derive so much pleasure from walking in Toronto parks, this is an ideal project for us to participate in. So we urge you to join the TFN work party in High Park.

Meet at 10 a.m. at the first parking lot along West Rd. just south of the main gate at High Park Ave. and Bloor St. W. We recommend that you bring plastic grocery bags, and gardening gloves if you have them. Large garbage and recycling bags and plastic gloves will be provided. We'll have lunch together and either continue working or, if our designated areas are cleared, take time to enjoy the beauty of the park in early spring.



TFN clean-up party at Todmorden Mills in the 1980s, photographed by Muriel Miville

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.

- Thursday
Apr. 3
1:30 p.m. **CEDARVALE PARK – Nature Ramble**
Leader: Ruth Munson
Meet at St. Clair West subway station, Heath St. exit. Low-lying land may be wet
- Saturday,
Apr. 5
10:30 a.m. **RIVERDALE FARM – Nature Arts**
Leader: Susan Weiss
Meet at the southeast corner of Winchester St. and Sumach St. Bring what you need for sketching, painting, photography or writing. Bring any work you wish to share with the group after lunch
- Sunday,
Apr. 6
2:30 p.m. **LECTURE – Flying Whimbrels & Soaring Spirits: Presqu'ile & Petroglyphs Provincial Parks**
Speaker: David Bree
Emmanuel College, 75 Queen's Park Crescent E., Toronto. See page 3
- Thursday,
Apr. 10
9:45 a.m. **TORONTO ISLANDS – Birds – Early Migrants**
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 \$ for ferry
- Saturday,
Apr. 12
10:00 a.m. **GERMAN MILLS CREEK – Nature Walk**
Leader: Theresa Moore
Meet at the northeast corner of Leslie St. and Steeles Ave. E. Duration about 2 hours. Bring binoculars
- Thursday,
Apr. 17
1:00 p.m. **TAYLOR CREEK – Early Spring Flowers**
Leader: Melanie Milanich
Meet at Victoria Park subway station, on Victoria Park Ave. A long walk is planned from Victoria Park to end at Thorncliffe Park (TTC bus connection)
- Saturday,
Apr. 19
10:00 a.m. **HIGH PARK – Clean-up project**
Leaders: Rita Bijons and Wendy Rothwell
Meet at first parking lot along West Rd. just south of the main gate at High Park Ave. and Bloor St. W. Bring lunch. See details on page 3
- Sunday,
Apr. 20
2:00 p.m. **LESLIE ST. SPIT – Beaches & the Lakeshore, past present & future – Lost Rivers Walk**
Leaders: John Wilson (Lost Rivers) and Joanna Kidd (facilitator for community engagement, Lake Ontario Park)
Meet at the entrance to Cherry Beach at the foot of Cherry St. Duration 2 hrs, ending at the entrance to Tommy Thompson Park. Learn about proposed plans for Lake Ontario Park. This is a joint walk with Toronto Green Community in celebration of National Wildlife Week and Earth Day

- Tuesday,
Apr. 22
10:00 a.m. **YORK CEMETERY – Birds**
Leader: Carol Sellers
Meet at the cemetery entrance at Beecroft Rd. and North York Blvd. Bring lunch and binoculars
- Saturday,
Apr. 26
10:00 a.m. **SCARBOROUGH BLUFFS – Nature Walk**
Leader: Bob Kortright
Meet at the southwest corner of Chine Dr. and Kingston Rd. Bring binoculars. Morning only
- Sunday,
Apr. 27
10:00 a.m. **WARDEN WOODS – Birding and Natural Heritage Protection – Lost Rivers Walk**
Leaders: Andrew McCammon and Christine Greenlaw of the Taylor-Massey Project
Meet at the Warden subway station. Duration 90 minutes, ending near Pharmacy Ave. Participants can walk on to the Victoria Park subway station or walk back to Warden station. This is a joint walk with Toronto Green Community
- Sunday,
Apr. 27
1:00 p.m. **TORONTO ISLANDS, 150 Years – Lost Rivers Walk**
Leaders: Ian Wheal, George Hume, Ed Freeman
Meet at the ferry docks, foot of Bay St. In celebration of the 150th anniversary of the storm which turned the Toronto peninsula into a group of islands. Bring \$ for ferry. This is a joint walk with Toronto Green Community

85TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION

Nature Arts Exhibit – Show and Sale

We are happy to announce plans for an Exhibition arranged to celebrate the 85th anniversary of the TFN. It will be mounted at the Papermill Art Gallery, Todmorden Mills Heritage Museum and Arts Centre. The exhibition and sale will be open to the public from August 27 to September 14, 2008.

It will showcase the work of TFN member artists and photographers relating to nature in Toronto, parks, TFN activities and the Nature Reserves. We plan to pay a special tribute to Mary Cummings, Eva Davis and the late Diana Banville, whose artworks are familiar to all Newsletter readers.

We are currently developing an entry kit for TFN members who would like to participate. It will include detailed information on all the requirements. More news of this will be in the Summer Issue of the newsletter in May. The entry deadline will be Friday, July 4. A selection committee will review entries in the form of digital images, slides, or snapshots (up to 6 items per exhibitor). Please await full instructions in the exhibitor's kit.

We hope that many members will take part in this exciting opportunity and that many more will come to enjoy the show!

Gail Gregory for the Exhibit Committee

MONTHLY MEETING REPORT

The Galapagos and Ballestas Islands, Sunday, March 1, 2008, Peter Money

It was “standing room only” at the TFN monthly lecture when Peter Money took us on a conducted tour of two unusual groups of islands in the Pacific Ocean: the Ballestas, near the coast of Peru, and the more famous Galapagos, further off the coast of Ecuador. Peter’s skills as a photographer and naturalist were evident throughout his presentation, although he modestly claimed that the birds and animals showed little fear of humans and were happy to pose for his camera.

The Ballestas Islands trip provided marvelous photographs of Peruvian Boobies, Peruvian Pelicans, Guanay Cormorants, Incan Terns and Humboldt Penguins. Life on the Ballestas Islands is dependent on the incredibly productive seas that surround the islands, a productivity that results from the upwelling of the cold Humboldt Current. Another aspect of this productivity is the large quantity of guano produced by the birds that nest on the islands. This guano is



Santa Cruz subspecies of Galapagos Tortoise

collected and shipped from a rather strange looking platform that hangs out over the sea. In addition to the large bird population, the Ballestas are also home to a thriving colony of sea-lions, well represented in Peter’s photographs. There were also photos of the interesting arches that have eroded through some of the islands.

The more famous Galapagos Islands are well known for their role in the development of Charles Darwin’s theories on evolution. It was interesting to learn, however, that “Darwin Finches” did not appear in Darwin’s *The Origin of Species*. Apparently, Darwin was unable to account for the remarkable differences in finch beaks on the various islands, and a better understanding of the evolution of the different finch species had to await research done in the 20th century. The Galapagos Islands are numerous and I found it very helpful to have the Moneys’ progress through



Espanola subspecies of Marine Iguana

them shown on a slide with names and numbers. All the photos of the many birds, iguanas (land and marine), lizards, and tortoises were outstanding and Peter’s commentary made the differences between this species and that species quite clear. Among my favourites were the Red-footed Boobies, birds with flexible webbed-feet who actually roost in trees (Peter had the photos to prove it), and their Blue-footed relatives whose feet cannot manage this feat. Birds! So many birds! In addition to the finches and boobies already mentioned, Peter had photographs of Flightless Cormorants, Frigatebirds (both the “Great” and the “Magnificent”), Waved Albatross, the Lava Gull (very few), the Galapagos Hawk (with chick, apparently a very rare occurrence) and a great picture of a small owl in a hole in the rocky surface. An unexpected species near the equator is the Galapagos Penguin. This latter bird is the most northern of the penguins and Peter explained that it has only survived so far north by evolving into a bird that is about one-half the weight of its more southern relatives. For each bird, Peter had an excellent photograph and interesting additional information.



Santa Cruz species of Land Iguana

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

As I write this report on March 5th all I can see out my window is white. Happily, there are a number of "green" events that are happening in the near future.

Toronto will join cities around the world for Earth Hour on March 29 at 8:00 pm. Millions of people are turning off their lights for an hour as a symbolic statement about taking action against climate change. The real benefit will be an awareness that, when we all work together, we can make a difference.

Another initiative that involves turning off lights is the "Lights Out Toronto" campaign which will launch on April 7. (see Coming Events for details). During spring and fall migration, night migrating birds are lured by city lights into urban areas. In this unfamiliar territory they often fatally collide with glass windows in buildings. Save migratory birds while you save energy and money by turning off unnecessary lights at work and home.

Everything you need to "green" your life will be on display at the Green Living Show in April at Exhibition Place (see Coming Events). The Toronto Field Naturalists will be there on display too, thanks to Somerset Entertainment who produce the Solitudes CDs and who have generously sponsored our exhibit booth. If you plan to attend, drop by to say hello or better still, stay for a few hours to help promote the TFN, in which case we'll give you a free pass to the show. Call the office if you're interested.

The power of the written word...after extolling the virtues of the lectures in my report last month, there was standing room only at Peter Money's lecture on the Galapagos and Ballestas Islands... and justifiably. It was full of wondrous sights and fascinating facts. My advice for April's lecture? Come early.

Pinky Franklin

TFN BOARD NOMINATIONS INVITED

The TFN is looking for people with initiative who are willing to devote time to working as members of the Board of Directors.

Please send your suggestions to the Chairman of the Nominating Committee, c/o TFN, 1519 - 2 Carlton St., Toronto, ON M5B 1J3. The report of the Committee will be published in the May newsletter.

MONTHLY MEETING REPORT *continued*

Then, of course, there were the tortoises and we heard the stories of "Lonesome George", the last of the Pinta tortoises, and the more upbeat story of Diego, a tortoise brought from the San Diego zoo to take part in a very successful breeding program to build up the numbers of Espanola tortoises. The tortoises are just one of the species at risk in the Galapagos Islands. In the 19th century many exotic species were either deliberately put on the islands (pigs and goats, for example) or arrived via visiting sailing ships (rats and cats). Efforts are now underway to rid the islands of these alien species but it is a very difficult task

The Marine and Land Iguanas have been shown by DNA evidence to have evolved from a common ancestor about 8 million years ago. The marine species is the Earth's only iguana that feeds at sea.

Peter's background in geology allowed him to explain very clearly the origin of the Galapagos Islands. A "hot-spot" on the ocean floor periodically erupts in a volcano which forms an island. Over a period of

millions of years, the formed islands move with the earth's crust until another part of the sea is over the hot-spot; then, another volcano....another island. The islands, of course, begin as very inhospitable lumps of rock, but are gradually colonized, with the creatures evolving to suit the conditions and food sources on each island. A remarkable display of the processes that have created the Earth and its varied species!

So, should we go to visit the Galapagos Islands while these unique species still exist, or should we boycott them from some desire to "leave them alone"? Peter told us that this is still a very controversial issue, but he believes that a carefully controlled tourist industry is the only way the Ecuadorian government can afford to manage the islands as a National Park. I am sure that I am not alone in saying that Peter's photos and commentary inspired me to put the Galapagos Islands back on my personal travel "wish-list."

Barry Mitchell
Photos by Peter Money

ARE AERIAL INSECTIVORES BEING 'BUGGED OUT'?

Extracted from an article by Jon McCracken in BirdWatch Canada, Winter 2008, with permission from Bird Studies Canada

Early results from the second Ontario Breeding Bird Atlas indicated some startling declines and even range contractions for 'aerial insectivores' – birds that specialize in feeding on flying insects. Now that the 2001-2005 Atlas is complete, the plight of aerial insectivores is gaining increasing attention.

The magnitude of the declines, especially within the past 20 years or so, is alarming. In the last two decades alone, populations have fallen by over 70% in the case of Bank Swallow, Common Nighthawk, Chimney Swift, and Barn Swallow, and by over 50% for Cliff Swallow, Olive-sided Flycatcher, Eastern Wood-Pewee, Northern Rough-winged Swallow, Eastern Kingbird, and Purple Martin. Declines have been so severe that Chimney Swift, Common Nighthawk, and Olive-sided Flycatcher were recently designated as nationally Threatened species.

Evidence suggests that the declines are more pronounced to the north and east. Stronger declines have been detected in Canada than in the U.S., and eastern North America rather than in the west. Declines are likely influenced by multiple causes, depending on the species. For example, changes in the availability of nest sites help explain, at least in part, declines of some species.

Loss of artificial nesting substrates (open chimneys, wooden barns, gravel rooftops) can be linked to declines of Chimney Swift, Barn Swallow, and probably Common Nighthawk, but this does not appear to explain why these declines should be more pronounced in Canada than in the U.S. Moreover, if loss of artificial nesting sites was a primary factor, one would expect that Tree Swallow and Purple Martin populations should be relatively healthy as a result of widespread nest box programs, but they too are declining.

Habitat changes across the landscape also play a role. Open country habitats have been declining in some parts of eastern Canada, owing to retirement of non-productive farmlands that then revert back to forest. This would affect swallows, martins and Eastern Kingbird but cannot explain population declines of the many species of aerial insectivores that occur in forested habitat.

Among aerial insectivores, there are *hawkers*, such as swifts, nighthawks, swallows and martins, which remain aloft to feed. Then there are *salliers*, such as flycatchers, which typically have a wait-and-see approach to foraging. Within any given zone of air space over any given habitat, the species composition and abundance of insect prey varies with time of day, season and weather conditions. Far from our earthbound field of vision, there is a whole airborne 'ocean' of insects flying around above us. Ranging from nearly ground level to heights of several hundred metres, this 'aerial plankton' is a critical food resource for aerial insectivores. Species differences in foraging height could well be an important consideration.



Barn Swallow drawn by Geraldine Goodwin from a photo in Birders' World

High-flying hawkers, like swifts and nighthawks, are above about 20 metres while the Purple Martin is a mid-level hawker that forages mostly above 10 metres. Generalist hawkers (swallows) cruise all air spaces. The salliers, likewise, divvy up vertical air space. Forest-dwelling species (Olive-sided, Least and Great Crested Flycatchers and Eastern Wood-Pewee) feed mainly at moderate heights of about 5 to 15 metres. Eastern Kingbird forages in this height range too, but also feeds right down to ground level. Others (Yellow-bellied, Alder and Willow Flycatchers and phoebes) are strictly low-altitude foragers and seldom feed at heights more than 3 metres. Preliminary examination suggests that species that forage within moderate to high strata are declining most strongly. Those that forage exclusively at heights less than about 3 metres tend to be faring much better.

If we find compelling evidence that aerial insectivores are being 'bugged out' owing to changes in food supply, there are potentially very large ecological and socio-economic ramifications, particularly if pollinators are part of the picture. The plight of aerial insectivores is not only food for thought, but a call to action. No large-scale programs are in place to monitor population levels of aerial insects, and we know little about their population dynamics or trends. Still there is growing concern among entomologists and others that aerial insects are in decline. Concern is also being

Continued on page 18

HISTORY OF THE TFN NEWSLETTER

This continues our celebration of the Newsletter's 70th anniversary. In the past two issues, we recognized the valuable contributions made by editors Richard M. Saunders and Ilmari Talvila

Helen Juhola assumed the role of Newsletter Editor with the December 1976 issue. The original team helping her consisted of Diana Banville, Mildred Easto and Florence Preston. Diana worked closely with Helen, helping with design and selection of material as well as providing artwork. The Editorial Committee gradually expanded to include, over the years, Jean Macdonald, Bruce Parker, Emily Hamilton, Alexander Cappell, Eva Davis, Mary-Louise Stewart, Eileen Mayo, Louise Herzberg, Toshi Oikawa, Harold Taylor, Jenny Bull, Nancy Fredenburg, Joan O'Donnell, Karin Fawthrop, Patricia Brind, Robin Powell, Marilynn Murphy and Elisabeth Gladstone.

In those pre-computer days, there was a lot of manual work: typing, cutting and pasting as well as careful proof-reading. At first, volunteers also handled the mailing, but Helen arranged for this to be done professionally, reducing the workload and ensuring that all newsletters went out at the same time. Until the TFN moved to its current office in 1998, the editorial group met in Helen's apartment.



Joan O'Donnell, Eva Davis, Nancy Fredenburg and Helen Juhola prepare the newsletter at Helen's apartment

Under Helen's leadership, the newsletter continued to publish articles about flora and fauna in the Toronto area, which were of particular significance in the early days when few field guides were available. Articles on geology were also included, as many of our presidents were geologists. Helen encouraged members to submit material, such as newspaper clippings, emphasizing that it should pertain to *Toronto* nature. She began including Outings reports to promote interest and participation in TFN walks, and put more focus on "Coming Events" in order to encourage other nature



The Editorial Committee at work: Helen Juhola, Eva Davis and Toshi Oikawa

organizations. She arranged exchange of newsletters with other nature clubs and, by reading their issues, was made aware of trends. In the late 1970s there were groups within TFN focusing on Botany, Birding, Environmental Issues, etc. and these were reflected in the Newsletter. Reviews of nature-related books were a regular feature.



TORONTO FIELD NATURALISTS

NEWSLETTER

Number 317

September, 1978



A new plant for Toronto

See Page 14

The appearance of the newsletter changed over the years, as more illustrations were included. The first illustrated cover was a drawing by Diana Banville of *Petasites japonicas*, "a new wild plant for Toronto" in September 1978.

Continued on page 16

KEEPING IN TOUCH

Diana Banville's sister, Grace Somers, wrote:

Thank you so much for the copy of the March newsletter. Such a beautiful section dedicated to remembering Dida. She would be so honoured. Dida loved the TFN and its members. So many wonderful feelings expressed. I was so pleased to receive the newsletter and am enjoying reading it.

* * *

I was most pleased to see the retrospective issue of Diana Banville's art. For 20 years I was editor of Wildflower magazine and during this time I had numerous occasions to ask Diana for the use of her art work, to review books and write articles. She always cheerfully accepted, delivered on time with a professional product and never received a cent for her efforts, as we had nothing to offer. She was indeed a Steward of Nature and an example to all who follow.

Jim Hodgins

* * *

The March newsletter is great. Keep this up! We need the Action Items! The Naturalists' News articles on the Dunlap Observatory, Friends of the Spit, and The Escarpment Biosphere Conservancy were action oriented. The Trouble With Kitty was similar. Do you know that Aurora, Ontario and Newmarket, Ontario have cat tethering bylaws?

Al Roffey

* * *

I read about having "junk mail" stopped (TFN March '08). Please be aware that your mail carrier could get into trouble with his employer by not delivering your fliers. I found that the best way to deal with this is by contacting Canada Post at 1-800-267-1177. The person answering my call sent an e-mail to the post office in my area to have any unsolicited mail stopped, and the problem was solved. He gave me a reference number for my request in case something unsolicited was delivered. I still keep a sign on my mailbox for the fliers delivered by private companies.

Rosemary Sheppard

* * *

On Saturday, Feb. 23, I took a late afternoon walk in the Lower Don and was amazed to see *eleven* Black-crowned Night Herons sleeping on the riverbank near the Brickworks. There were 7 adults and 4 juveniles. This bird is common on the Don but I have never seen so many together other than at their breeding grounds

on the Spit. I also saw a cardinal, Downy Woodpecker and kingfisher that afternoon, and the next day observed a pair of Wood Ducks and a Bufflehead along with the usual Mallards near Beechwood.

Margaret McRae

* * *

Norah Jancik photographed this male Harlequin Duck on a TFN walk led by Doug Paton at Humber Bay Park East on February 21st:



The following e-mail was received from Freda Thompson of the North Leeds Birders: Yesterday, in Port Credit, we witnessed a good fight between a peregrine and an unidentified hawk (no binoculars, sun in our eyes, of course!) that occurred on top of a high rise building on Lakeshore Blvd. The hawk (outline looked like a red-tail or rough-leg) perched on an antenna on top of the building and the peregrine dive-bombed it and attacked with its feet. I reported this to my birding group, and we are left with these questions. Do the peregrines stay in downtown Port Credit all year (as family reported to us)? I understand hawks are seen north of that area, but are not ordinarily seen at the waterfront - understandably. What would the hawk be after? Would the peregrines have territory or nests this early? We would appreciate any information you could provide.

Bob Kortright replied: Red-tails are found all over the GTA, including many places along the waterfront - wherever they think food might be. Roughlegs concentrate in agricultural areas where mouse populations are high. The Canadian peregrine foundation tracks peregrine nesting sites - their website www.peregrine-foundation.ca/sightings has links to all kinds of information about them, including a pair nesting in Clarkson near Port Credit, and the fact that southern Ontario peregrines often stay on territory all year. Good birding.

PROJECTS

- **Parks and Trails Map**

From TFN member, Jerry Belan. [We hope you receive your newsletter in time to meet this deadline. Ed.]

The City of Toronto, Parks, Forestry & Recreation Division is in the process of updating the 2001 Parks & Trails Map which highlights the many walking trails in Toronto's parks, ravines, gardens and waterfront. If you don't already have a copy, you may be lucky and find the odd remaining map at one of the city's civic centres. It can also be found at www.toronto.ca/parks/brochures/parks_trails_1.pdf (Front Page) and [/parks_trails_2](http://www.toronto.ca/parks/brochures/parks_trails_2.pdf) (Back Page). We welcome your review comments on the map's content, graphics and images including usability. Please submit your comments by March 28, 2008 to Jerry Belan at jbelan@toronto.ca or by phone at **416-392-7264**.

- **Save Our Boreal Birds Petition**

Ontario Nature is conducting an online petition for citizens to show their concern for the future of Canada's Boreal Forest and the billions of birds that rely on it. Sign this letter urging government leaders to protect the Boreal today at www.saveourborealbirds.org.

- **Tracking Cormorants**

Forwarded from Canadian Wildlife Service (CWS) and Ontario Ministry Natural Resources (OMNR)

CWS and OMNR have been cooperating with various researchers in the Great Lakes Basin and adjacent waters to colour-band as many Double-crested Cormorants as possible. At present more than 18,000 cormorants have been colour-banded in Lakes Ontario, Huron, Superior, various Great Lakes rivers and adjacent waters from Lake of the Woods to James Bay to Lake Champlain and New York harbour. We are asking Ontario birders to keep watch for cormorants with plastic coloured leg-bands. All plastic bands also carry a combination of numbers and/or letters. If you see a colour-banded cormorant, please make every effort to record the colour of the plastic band and the characters on it. Sightings are of particular interest during the spring migration period because of the wide range over which cormorants have been banded and because we are particularly interested in movements of birds. Please send all observations to chip.weseloh@ec.gc.ca. Whenever possible we will reply with banding details of your observation.

- **TRCA Cormorant Advisory Group Update**

From Toronto Ornithological Club newsletter, March 2008. TOC has membership on the Advisory Group.

...The group agreed that the colonies on Peninsulas A, B and C at the Leslie St. Spit should be allowed to continue unmolested. The spread of colonies to Peninsula D will be discouraged through the establishment of a bird banding station and by allowing people to hike in the area. Cormorants will not typically nest in areas disturbed by people. A public meeting to review the issues will be held April 3, 6:30 to 9 pm at 1774 Queen St. E.

See also www.trca.on.ca/cormorants. To attend this meeting, RSVP with number of people attending to TRCA at 416-661-6600 ext. 5770 or ttp@trca.on.ca.

- **McGuinty Government Outlines Criteria To Expand Greenbelt Boundaries**

From a government press release, Feb. 21, 2008. See also the website of Ontario Greenbelt Alliance at www.greenbelt.ca

The Ontario government wants to hear Ontarians' ideas on how to consider requests to expand the Greenbelt's boundaries and further protect countryside areas. The government has developed draft criteria that, once finalized, would be used to consider requests from regional, county and single-tier governments to expand the Greenbelt's boundaries. Requests to reduce the size of the Greenbelt or remove areas from it would not be considered. The draft criteria are available for review and comment on the ministry's website at www.greenbelt.ontario.ca. Comments must be received by April 30, 2008.

- **City of Toronto, Zerofootprint Launch Website to Fight Climate Change**

From a City news release at www.toronto.ca, 29 Feb. 2008

Zerofootprint Toronto combines a carbon footprint calculator with an interactive web site designed to encourage partnerships and competition towards reaching Toronto greenhouse gas reduction goals. To calculate an estimate of *your* annual carbon emissions visit www.toronto.zerofootprint.net.

IN THE NEWS

2008: Year of the Frog

Extracted from an article by Ian McIntosh in Amphibian Voice, Winter 2007

2008 is the Year of the Frog at zoos and aquariums around the world. After more than 360 million years of survival, one third to one half of the world's approximately 6000 known amphibian species could become extinct in our lifetime. Habitat loss is the main threat, but the rapid dispersal of amphibian chytrid fungus is an urgent concern because it kills frogs quickly, driving many species to extinction.

In 2006, the World Conservation Union, and the World Association of Zoos and Aquariums formed Amphibian Ark (AArk) with a mission to work in partnerships to ensure the global survival of amphibians – focusing on those that cannot be safeguarded in nature. To implement amphibian conservation projects, the Amphibian Ark has launched the global campaign “2008: Year of the Frog.” Launch day was Feb. 29 in recognition of the *leap* year.

For events focused on amphibian conservation, see Toronto Zoo's website: www.torontozoo.com. Click on “Conservation” and “Reptiles and Amphibians” for information on frog and toad conservation programs the Zoo is involved in. See also www.amphibianark.org and click on Year of the Frog and www.zoaction.ca for a kid-friendly site about conservation projects in zoos and aquariums across Canada.

Progress in Protecting Wildlife and Their Habitat is Unsatisfactory

From a press release from the Office of the Attorney-General, 6 March 2008.

The report is at www.oag-bvg.gc.ca/internet/English/aud_parl_cesd_200803_e_30125

The 2008 Status Report of the Commissioner of the Environment and Sustainable Development makes the following observations:

- While Environment Canada has identified significant gaps in its management of protected areas – including national wildlife areas and migratory bird sanctuaries – management plans are seriously out of date and its own analysis indicates that it has not allocated the resources necessary to address the most urgent problems.
- The federal government has not met the deadlines required by the *Species at Risk Act* to prepare recovery strategies for species at risk. It still lacks complete and reliable information needed to develop action plans for the protection of species at risk on federal lands.
- Efforts by Fisheries and Oceans Canada to assess the risks of invasive aquatic species are being far outpaced by the discovery of such species in Canadian waters. In 2006, Transport Canada took a major step forward in regulating ship ballast water – the main entryway for aquatic invasive species – but the regulations are not yet being enforced consistently across Canada.
- After 20 years, environmental quality has been restored to only two of Canada's 17 areas of concern around the Great Lakes. Contaminated sediments and overloaded sewage treatment facilities remain the major problems, and it is not clear who is responsible for cleanup action, who will pay, and when it will be completed.

Canada at crossroads: Government must seize opportunity to address environmental concerns

From a press release issued by Environmental Defence, Sierra Club of Canada and other groups.

Concerned about the lack of political leadership on urgent issues such as climate change, 11 of Canada's largest environmental and conservation organizations have issued the report *Tomorrow Today: How Canada can make a world of difference*, a roadmap for action on climate change, energy use, food production, toxic substances, water, forests and oceans. The report calls for a charge of at least \$30 per tonne of CO₂ (or equivalent) in 2009 escalating to \$75 per tonne in 2020 as the most efficient way to send a signal across our society about the seriousness of the climate change threat we face and Canada's seriousness in seeking solutions.

For the full report see: www.tomorrowtodaycanada.ca

See also the report *Big Steps Forward* released by the Green Budget Coalition at www.greenbudget.ca. This coalition is made up of 19 environmental groups including Bird Studies Canada.

Parks as Dog Toilets

The Globe and Mail reported on Feb. 20, 2008 that a City Parks' Committee is still looking for a solution to the problem of 2,500 tonnes of dog poop deposited into park garbage bins. The issue was deferred to another meeting. Sandy Cappell, who sent in this news item, pointed out that the article did not mention the considerable white staining of the bark on the trees seen in the accompanying photograph – likely caused by dog urine.

NATURE IMAGES EVENT

Hosted by Peter Money and Margaret McRae

An enthusiastic crowd of about 40 people gathered at the Northern District Library on March 1st to enjoy the artistic talents of their fellow TFN members. A variety of media were represented:

- Gail Gregory displayed water colour paintings of tropical vegetation in the greenhouse at Allan Gardens and of a Red-tailed Hawk
- Heidi Holmes showed oil paintings of winter and autumn scenes and a delightful raccoon
- Frances Money brought some impressive prints of birds, snakes, and flowers photographed in southern Ontario and dramatic ice formations on Toronto Island
- Susan Weiss shared her fascinating illustrated journals, recording over 300 TFN outings
- Joyce Givens brought an album of photos taken on trips to Baffin Island and Antarctica
- Siglinde Van Der Grinten shared photos of TFN events in the 1980s, including a work party building the outhouse at the Jim Baillie Reserve
- Peter Money showed us superb nature slides, including a surprising variety of wild mammals photographed in Toronto parks, and stunning pictures of cormorants, herons, egrets and many species of waterfowl
- Barry Mitchell shared digital photos of nature subjects spotted on his travels around Ontario, including a Common Loon in Algonquin Park and some good shots of painted turtles
- Margaret McRae shared some highlights from her vast collection of digital photos, including birds, insects, a deer and a beaver in the Don Valley, and beautiful butterflies, including the life stages of Monarchs, photographed in her garden
- Although Norah Jancik was not present, Margaret showed us some of Norah's superb bird photos

Thank you to all these people who provided such an interesting and enjoyable afternoon. We know there are many other talented photographers and artists among TFN members. We encourage them to participate at future events of this type, and to submit their work for inclusion in the newsletter or on our website.

Wendy Rothwell



Susan Weiss with her Journals, Peter and Frances Money, Margaret McRae, photographed by Wendy Rothwell

FOR READING

Uncover a Frog, by Aimee Bakken, published by Silver Dolphin Books, ages 8 and up.

Extracted from the publisher's website: www.silverdolphinbooks.com/catalog/details.asp?ISBN=1592234569

Uncover the secrets of this amazing animal layer by layer. Young frog fans will love dissecting all the weird and wild facts, cool illustrations and diagrams, and unique 3-D layered model of a frog. With every turn of the page, the frog is deconstructed before their eyes, as the model demonstrates the hidden workings of the frog's body. Perfect for curious kids, ages 8 and up.



American Lady butterfly photographed at Eglinton Flats by Margaret McRae



Mallard photographed at Humber Bay Park East by Norah Jancik



Watercolours by Gail Gregory and oil paintings by Heidi Holmes



Building the outhouse at Jim Baillie Nature Reserve, April 1986, photographed by Siglinde Van Der Grinten



Muskrat at Humber Bay Park East photographed by Peter Money



Painted Turtles photographed by Barry Mitchell

NEWSLETTER HISTORY *continued from page 10*

Other talented artists among TFN members, such as Mary Cumming, Eva Davis, Joanne Doucette, Geraldine Goodwin, Anne Leon, Mary Anne Miller, Mary Smith, Susan Weiss and Andrew White frequently provided attractive artwork to enhance the beauty of the publication, and also accurate representations of plants and animals to complement articles. In the late 1970s a commercial artist by the name of Jacobson drew imaginative headers for various sections of the newsletter.



Christine Hanrahan submitted many haiku and, in issue #361, February 1984, wrote an article explaining that a haiku is an unrhymed Japanese poem of three lines containing 5,7,5 syllables respectively, referring in some way to one of the seasons of the year. She said “it nearly always deals with the world of nature and, by reflecting on nature (and by extension on our own kinship with it) draws us closer to nature’s very essence.” She encouraged TFN members to try writing their own haiku, and these continue to be a distinctive feature of the newsletter.

*Tiny green leafbuds
Weaving a veil overhead
Filter spring's sunshine.*

Haiku by J. Kenneth Cook, May 1990 newsletter

There were many articles about environmental concerns. The following excerpt from a Ravine Group report by Paul Scrivener is as apt today as when published in March 1979. “During the next few years, landmark battles will be fought over the preservation of urban natural areas in Metropolitan Toronto.... The Toronto Field Naturalists has a key role to play in that it can be a central rallying point for those concerned about the preservation of urban natural areas. Because of its past expertise in opposing developments in natural areas, TFN must help provide the leadership and inspiration to those interest groups and members of the public who want to conserve urban natural areas.”

In September 1984, Gavin Miller wrote an article about *Phenological Observations* “such as times of first-leaf, blooming, and leaf-fall of certain species of plant, the arrival and departure of migrant birds, etc. which can then be compared to weather records.” He explained that these observations should be taken year after year over a long period, on an individual plant at one site, or of animals in one locality, so that only climatic factors are involved. Gavin had already been collecting weather records for Toronto covering a number of years, and asked members to let him know of their phenological observations. This was the origin of Gavin’s column “Weather – this time last year” which started with the October 1984 issue and continues to this day – an incredible 283 monthly records to date! It would be interesting to know if any TFN members are using this weather information in conjunction with their own phenological observations.

When Helen became editor, the TFN didn’t have all the back issues, so a concerted effort was made to assemble them. The first Index was done covering the period 1938 to 1978 with the help of Christine Hanrahan, Bruce Parker, Mildred Easto, Anne Landry and Emily Hamilton. It boggles the mind to think how this was achieved without the aid of a computer! They also arranged for complete sets of *Toronto Field Naturalist* to be available at Archives of Ontario, Metropolitan Toronto Library, Robarts Library (Fisher Rare Book section), Royal Ontario Museum Library and York University (Stacie Science Library). While browsing through the old issues to research this article, I came to realize what a valuable resource they are, recording the history of TFN, memories of individuals who have played important roles, environmentally significant developments in our city, changes in the flora and fauna to be found here, etc. We owe a debt of gratitude to Helen and her team for ensuring that this material has been preserved and made available to the public.

Helen retired in May 2005, having served as editor for a remarkable 30 years. Under her leadership, the newsletter served a valuable purpose by fostering relationships among TFN members, educating them about many aspects of natural history, keeping members abreast of important local environmental issues and promoting action to preserve our natural heritage, enabling members to share their writing and artistic talents, promoting and publicizing TFN activities, and building connections with other nature organizations. Many of the features introduced during her time as editor continue to be valuable aspects of the newsletter today.

Wendy Rothwell

FROM THE ARCHIVES

APRIL EVENINGS

Extracted from TFN Newsletter No. 212, April 1965 and presumably written by Richard M. Saunders, Newsletter editor 1938 to 1965.

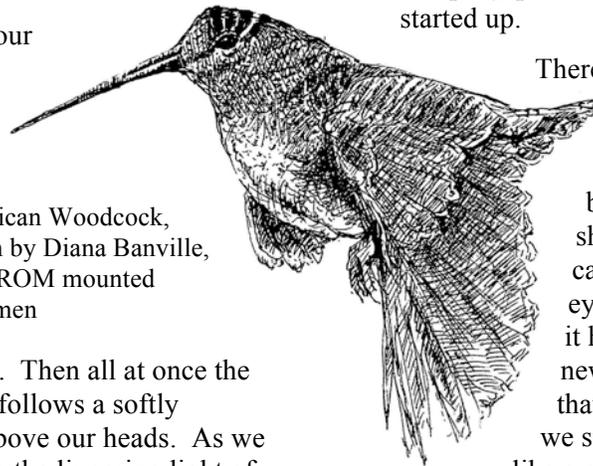
Between the setting of the sun and rising of the new moon these April evenings the old pasture lies in a mysteriously deepening haze. Hawthorn and wild apple, raspberry tangle and sweeps of last year's goldenrod take a new and eerie shape. Suddenly in the settling dusk a sound like the ripping of heavy cloth cuts through the still dark. Loudly at first, then fainter and fainter again, then loudly once more. Who or what can be stirring in the descending purple of night?

On and on the pattern of ripping sound is repeated. Soon, more faintly yet quite distinguishably, there comes to our ears a similar sound from farther across the pasture. Then in another corner the refrain is taken up; and at last there are four of the rippers sounding back and forth. The creatures of the night are truly stirring, calling and talking to each other. Then all at once the one nearest to us ceases. There follows a softly whirring sound which mounts above our heads. As we look and strain our eyes to see in the lingering light of the sky a black ball spirals upward in ever-widening arcs. Picked up in our binoculars we see it rise a hundred feet, maybe two hundred, when abruptly the upward surge ceases and for an ecstatic moment the bird circles and a melody, almost finchlike, floats down out of the purpling sky. From the farther corners of the pasture hints of answering refrains reach us, as before had the ripping sounds. Then it is all over. Our black ball plunges earthward, braking its descent as it nears the ground by rapidly-beating wings, finally landing in an open, grassy spot amongst some hawthorns not many yards away.

As it came down we could see a long, protruding spike on the ball and this told us for sure that it was a woodcock we were watching. We were, in fact, on the nesting-ground of a pair of these birds and in the pasture were three other pairs, the four males of which we had heard performing, proclaiming to each other the measure of their bounds.

Once on the ground the ripping or beeping sounds began again. For the nearest bird they were repeated,

always in the same pattern of alternating loud and faint, some sixty times before the bird once more spiralled into the sky. Taking advantage of this flight we rushed in nearer to the opening where it had beeped so that this time when it came down it almost brushed our heads. Keeping as still and silent as we could we waited. The bird, doubtless sensing something out of the ordinary – indeed, it probably saw the new shapes at the edge of its plot as it descended – so waited. Finally, it seemed to decide that nothing dangerous was happening and it took to beeping, possibly because its rivals had already started up.



American Woodcock,
drawn by Diana Banville,
from ROM mounted
specimen

There was still light enough so that at this close distance we could through our binoculars see the long-billed woodcock bouncing up and down on its short legs and occasionally casting a glance from its huge eyes in our direction. Then when it had satisfied itself about us a new sound occurred, a note so soft that it was only just audible where we stood a few yards away. It was like a cup-cup-cup, or iccup-iccup-

iccup, or just up-up-up, and always preceding the beeping. Perhaps the bird was taking in breath in order to produce the latter. The beeping was accompanied by a bouncing and bowing motion and now we could see why there had been a pattern of loud and soft in its delivery. With almost each beep the bird turned about a quarter-circle and delivered the next beep from the new direction. In this way it steadily turned round and round during its performance. Presumably it does this in order to warn all possible rivals in every quarter. To a listener in any part the offering would sound louder and quieter as the bird turned toward him and away. After more than fifty beeps the woodcock rose from the ground once more to its climactic song-like affirmation. The "song", incidentally, though it sounds vocal and, as we have mentioned, almost finchlike, is produced, it would seem, mechanically by air being forced in some way between the wings and the body.

This springtime drama is one that I have seen many times in many places over the years. It is one that every
Continued on page 19

WEATHER (THIS TIME LAST YEAR)

APRIL 2007

April was cool and cloudy. It featured one of the coldest Easters in memory, and what was probably the most intense Arctic outbreak in North America during this month since 1982 (very cold but not exceptional in our immediate locale). The cold eased slowly, and it was fairly cool for nearly two weeks. Because there had been a strong warm spell in March in the Ohio Valley and the southeastern United States, there was severe frost damage to trees fully leafed-out. However, there had not been sufficient warmth in Toronto to break the dormancy of most vegetation. Thawed-out ponds did re-freeze for a few days, and early spring frogs that were just beginning halted their choruses for about 7-10 days.

The cold spell in Toronto wasn't extreme in itself. It brought continuously below-freezing temperatures from the 4th to the 6th, with only slow recovery thereafter. Cool and often rainy conditions prevailed until the 18th. This has happened as recently as 2003. Neither did the cold spell bring snow to speak of – as happened in 2003

and in other memorable Aprils like 1975 and 1979. We readily forget that winter weather can happen as late as the 10th of April, even these days.

A distinct warm spell followed from the 19th to the 23rd, making spring's arrival definitive. But it was the coolest April since 2003. The monthly mean at Pearson was 7.4°, 0.2° below the 1971-2000 mean, and downtown had a mean of 6.9°, 0.7° below normal.

Precipitation was 60.8 mm, almost all rain. This was slightly below the long-term average. The snowfall of 2.4 cm confirmed that this winter was exceptionally light in snowfall: the 60.3 cm at Pearson Airport was the second lowest on record (1952-1953 had just 53.9 cm). It was the cloudiest April since 1955, with 127.5 hours of sunshine, almost 60 hours less than usual and more typical of February.

Gavin Miller

AERIAL INSECTIVORES *continued from page 8*

expressed about the status of bat populations, which also specialize in flying insects.

The overall abundance of aerial insects may be declining and at the same time shifts may be occurring in their geographic ranges. Perhaps the timing of seasonal emergence of some insects is changing. Nocturnal species are sensitive to light pollution. Artificial lights disrupt insect behaviour, which could result in effects on population levels. For light-sensitive species, life is too short to spend even a few nights whirling aimlessly around a street lamp.

Many kinds of flying insects have an aquatic stage. Marked increases in UV radiation, large fluctuations in water temperature, increased acidification, changes in stream flow, increased water turbidity and pesticide runoff can have significant deleterious effects on their populations.

Most insects are also sensitive to climatic variation,

especially temperature and precipitation extremes. For many species, seasonal patterns of insect emergence occur within particular climatic thresholds. If these thresholds shift to earlier or later dates or become less predictable, how will this affect bird species that have evolved to time their life-history schedules to coincide with the expected availability of food resources? If these events become out-of-phase, population level effects on aerial insectivores could be expected.

Of all the factors that could be affecting insect populations, perhaps the most obvious is the exceptionally widespread use of pesticides across the modern agricultural landscape. After all, pesticides are specifically designed to control insect populations. It is reasonable to think that their application could have a cumulative population-level effect.

All told, there is good reason to suspect that insect populations are changing.

SwiftWatch, a project of the McIlwraith Field Naturalists of London, aims to protect remaining swift habitat. Last summer 46 London chimneys hosted Chimney Swift nests, 6 at the University of Western Ontario. SwiftWatch encourages chimney owners to “act proactively” by exercising benign neglect and not capping or lining chimneys. Chimney protection is one way that an institution can become involved in the conservation of a species at risk.

Extracted from *The Cardinal*, August 2007.

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.

Green Living Show

Fri. Apr. 25 to Sun. Apr. 27. Simple and practical consumer “Greenovations.” Direct Energy Centre, Exhibition Place. Information: www.greenlivingshow.ca. See President’s Report on page 6 re TFN involvement.

Lights Out Toronto campaign launch

Mon. Apr. 7, 4:30 pm. Members Lounge, City hall. Confirm details by visiting www.toronto.ca/lightout

Toronto Entomologists’ Association (TEA)

Sat. Apr. 26, 1:15 pm. “The Demise of the Green Drake Mayfly: What it tells us about the health of southern Ontario trout streams” Speaker: Henry Frania, Royal Ontario Museum. Room 006, Northrop Frye Hall, Victoria College, 73 Queen’s Park Cres. E., University of Toronto. Information: www.ontarioinsects.org

Rouge Valley Guided Nature Walks

Sun. Apr. 27, 1:30 pm. Meet at the Rouge Marsh, 195 Rouge Hill Drive, east end of parking lot, east of Port Union Road at Lawrence Ave E. Information: 416-282-8265, www.rougevalleynaturalists.com/news

High Park Walking Tours

2nd and 4th Sundays, 10:30 am to 12 noon. Meet at the benches across the road south of Grenadier Café. Free. Information: 416-392-1748 ext. 5 or www.highpark.org

- Apr. 13. Spring Babies at the Zoo, led by Zoo Staff
- Apr. 27. Lost Waterways, led by Leo De Sorcy

Earth Day at Downsview Park

Sun. Apr. 20, 11 am – 4 pm. Environmentally friendly activities, entertainment and exhibits. Admission Free. Information: www.earthday.ca

The Market Gallery

Until June 15: History of Clothing Manufacturing on Spadina Avenue. In partnership with Beth Tzedec Museum, this exhibit features historical photographs, artifacts and stories focusing on one of Toronto's main industries in the 20th century. South St. Lawrence Market, 2nd floor, 95 Front St. E. Free.

Party for the Planet: GreenFest.

Sat. Apr. 19 to Sun. Apr. 20, 11 am to 3 pm. Toronto Zoo Education Auditorium. 2008 theme: Water Conservation. “Get involved with 2008 Year of the Frog and learn what YOU can do to help save amphibians.” Admission charge.

Darwin: the Evolution Revolution

Mar. 8 to Aug. 4. Royal Ontario Museum. Admission charge. Organized by the American Museum of Natural History.

FROM THE ARCHIVES *continued from page 17.*

field naturalist should try to see and hear. And it is not too difficult to find suitable spots in or near the Toronto region where this may be done. What is needed is a swampy or very wet wood or bush area adjoining open fields or in which there are good-sized grassy openings. The woodcocks prefer to nest in the sheltering woodland or bush but the males insist on open areas in which to carry on their territorial performances. In the pasture which I have described there are three or four

very wet and muddy areas caused by springs. These provide feeding spots for a bird that probes in the mud with its long bill for worms and other food. In this case they adjoin both openings and patches of scrubby bush. Consequently, cover for nesting, grassy openings for performances, and feeding spots are closely combined. It is ideal woodcock country. To enjoy this wonderful experience is one of the discoveries in nature that you can make a glorious springtime adventure.

Ed. With the loss of so much suitable habitat for American Woodcock in the Toronto region since 1965, it is now more difficult, but still not impossible, to observe their displays in our area. Care should be taken to avoid disturbing the birds.

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Grenadier Pond, High Park photographed by Wendy Rothwell