



# TORONTO FIELD NATURALIST

Number 569, February 2010



Groundhog in Milliken Park, photographed by Augusta Takeda

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*Toronto Field Naturalist* is published by the Toronto Field Naturalists, a charitable, non-profit organization, the aims of which are to stimulate public interest in natural history and to encourage the preservation of our natural heritage. Issued monthly September to December and February to May. Views expressed in the Newsletter are not necessarily those of the editor or Toronto Field Naturalists. The Newsletter is printed on 100% recycled paper.

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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 March issue: Feb. 5**

### NEWSLETTER COMMITTEE

Jenny Bull (co-editor), Eva Davis, Karin Fawthrop, Nancy Fredenburg, Elisabeth Gladstone, Mary Lieberman, Ruth Munson, Toshi Oikawa, Wendy Rothwell (co-editor).

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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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## GET THE JUMP ON SPRING

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 20, 10 AM – 4 PM, TORONTO BOTANICAL GARDEN



Tulips in High Park photographed by Wendy Rothwell

Once again TFN will be participating in this annual festival celebrating horticulture, gardening and environmental issues. We need volunteers for our booth.

If you plan to attend, and can spare a few hours to help promote TFN, please contact the TFN office at 416-593-2656 or [office@torontofieldnaturalists.org](mailto:office@torontofieldnaturalists.org).

## TFN MEETING

**Sunday, February 7, 2010 at 2:30 pm**

### Toronto's Urban Forests

*Andy Kenney, Faculty of Forestry, University of Toronto.*

*This strong advocate for the protection and improvement of urban forests will discuss current programs aimed at protecting and enhancing Toronto's urban canopy*

**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. 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 Meetings

- |          |  |
|----------|--|
| March 7  | <i>Towards a Bar-coded World</i><br>Paul Hebert, Project Leader,<br>Canadian Barcode of Life Network<br>and Director, Biodiversity Institute of<br>Ontario   |
| April 11 | <i>Disturbing the Disturbed: Using<br/>Biological Control to Recover our<br/>Invaded Forests</i><br>Sandy Smith, Professor, Faculty of<br>Forestry, University of Toronto and<br>international expert on biological<br>control |
| May 2    | <i>The Appalachians and Their Margins</i><br>Peter Money, TFN member, retired<br>geologist, enthusiastic nature<br>photographer and amateur naturalist   |

For Grade 7 and 8 students!

### ONTARIO NATURE'S WRITING AND ART CONTEST

Submit an essay or story (up to 700 words)  
or artwork (on 8.5 x 11 sheet) about

"Wild species and wild spaces: why  
biodiversity is important to me."

**Prizes!** Plus, winning entries will be  
published in *ON Nature*.

Deadline: **February 26th, 2010**

Information: [www.ontarionature.org](http://www.ontarionature.org)

## 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 ([www.ttc.ca](http://www.ttc.ca) or 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.

### Wednesday, **SHERWOOD PARK**

Feb. 3

Leader: Janice Palmer

1:00 pm

Meet at the main entrance to the park at the east end of Sherwood Ave. TTC bus # 103 from the Eglinton subway stops at Sherwood Ave. and Mount Pleasant Rd. The park is 200 m to the east. Limited parking is available on the street and in a small lot outside the park. Can an urban park be loved too much? We will look for evidence of uses and abuses taken or contemplated to protect the natural heritage of this 16.2 hectare park. Bring binoculars if you wish. Duration: 2 hours

### Saturday,

Feb. 6

### **WINTER WATERFRONT WALK - Nature Arts**

Leader: Anne Byzko

10:30 am

Meet at the Queen's Quay Terminal Building in the 2nd floor Food Court. We will walk west to various locations depending on the weather. Bring what you need for sketching, writing or photography. Lunch at Pawsyway. Bring any work you wish to share with the group.

### Sunday,

Feb. 7

### **LECTURE: Toronto's Urban Forests**

Speaker: Andy Kenney, Faculty of Forestry, University of Toronto

2:30 pm

Emmanuel College, 75 Queen's Park Cres. E. See page 3.

### Tuesday,

Feb. 9

### **COLONEL SAMUEL SMITH PARK - Winter Birds**

Leader: Kerry Adams

10:00 am

Meet in the park at the bus shelter directly in front of Father Redmond Catholic High School, 28 Col. Samuel Smith Park Drive, south of the intersection of Kipling Ave. and Lake Shore Blvd. W. Bring binoculars and dress warmly. Morning only.

### Saturday,

Feb. 13

### **ASHBRIDGES CREEK - Lost Rivers and Tree Identification**

Leader: Joanne Doucette

1:00 pm.

Learn to identify trees in winter as we explore the route of this buried creek. Meet outside the Greenwood Subway Station (Linsmore Cres. and Danforth Ave.). Some stairs, hills. We will stop for a break to warm up, and there are washrooms along the way. We will end the walk at Queen St. E. where people can take the streetcar or, if they have cars, the Greenwood bus back to their vehicles.

### Tuesday,

Feb. 16

### **MOUNT PLEASANT CEMETERY - Nature and Heritage**

Leader: Pleasance Crawford

1:00 pm

Meet at the main entrance to cemetery, on the east side of Yonge St., two blocks north of St. Clair Ave. E. Dress warmly and bring binoculars. The walk will last 1½ to 2 hours.

- Saturday,  
Feb. 20  
10:00 am     **UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO GREENHOUSES - Botany**  
Leader: Nancy Dengler  
Meet at the 33 Willcocks St. entrance to the Faculty of Forestry, Earth Sciences Centre, University of Toronto (Spadina streetcar, half a block east of the Willcocks St. stop). Dress in layers for tropical conditions. Morning only.
- Sunday,  
Feb. 21  
2:00 pm     **WEST TORONTO RAILPATH - Lost Rivers**  
Leader: Scott Torrance  
Meet at the southwest corner of Lansdowne Ave. and College St. Join Landscape Architect Scott Torrance, the path's designer, and the Lost Rivers committee to walk the acclaimed new Railpath from Dundas St. W. to Cariboo Ave. Among other topics, we will learn of native seed collection and propagation during construction of the path and of future plans for the rail corridor. A joint walk with the Toronto Green Community.
- Tuesday,  
Feb 23  
10:00 am     **HUMBER BAY PARK EAST - Birds**  
Leader: Anne Powell  
Meet at the southwest corner of Lake Shore Blvd. W. at Park Lawn Rd. Bring binoculars. Morning only. Dress warmly.
- Saturday,  
Feb. 27  
10:15 am     **TORONTO ISLANDS - Birds**  
Leader: Ann Gray  
Meet at the ferry docks at the foot of Bay St. in time for the 10:30 am ferry to Ward's Island. We will return on the 2:45 pm ferry. Bring binoculars, lunch, money for ferry. Dress warmly.

## DON'T DELAY! WRITE TODAY!

*These still relevant words were written by Ilmari Talvila (see page 9) shortly after assuming the role of TFN newsletter editor (TFN 221, September 1966).*

For the one hundred and tenth time in my life I have come to realize again the truth of the old saying: "People in glass houses should not throw stones." Last year through the members' questionnaire this member gleefully threw some rather big rocks at the TFNC and the Newsletter. Today, much humbled and subdued, he is sitting in his own glass house in the editor's chair – hoist with his own petard.

Owing to his still numbed state, a clear editorial policy has not yet had time to evolve. The editor will speak with somewhat muted voice until all his natural garrulousness and perversity are restored. One policy however is already clear. This Newsletter must speak with many voices – yours, the members' – and not just those of the editor and his committee. Hence we urge our readers to write something for the Newsletter – anything which they feel might be of interest to other TFNC members. We are looking particularly for stories of your own experiences and observations of nature; these may be profound or humorous, gloomy or joyful – all are welcome. Help make this your Newsletter by contributing to it. Remember you do not have to be a "rara avis" like Richard Saunders or Gerry Bennett to be published in the Newsletter. All letters and calls, comments and brickbats, expressions of delight or despair will be gratefully received. Any suggestions as to what you would like to have included in your Newsletter will be carefully listened to. So don't delay! Write today!

## PRESIDENT'S REPORT

In this age of rapidly-changing technology, organizations such as ours are constantly being challenged to stay on the leading edge. The TFN website is a good example. We are grateful to Elaine Farragher, the trailblazer who set up our original site, and to Margaret McRae, webmaster from February 2007 until September 2009, who did extensive enhancements, as outlined in her report in the October 2007 newsletter.

If you have signed on recently, you will have noticed that the TFN website has a totally new appearance! Thanks to the imagination, expertise and hard work of our new webmaster, Lynn Miller, the site has been re-designed to incorporate a 'look' similar to our new brochure. All existing features have been retained, and new ones added. The site has been reorganized in a way that is appealing to the eye and, we trust, user-friendly, both for members and for individuals exploring the possibility of joining. It is easy to navigate among the following options:

**About Us:** an overview of the club and encouragement to join, a bulletin board of coming events, a display of our promotional flyer, a link to our Facebook site and an opportunity to donate.

**Take Action:** information about nature-related groups and volunteer opportunities.

**Walks:** general information about our outings, a list of selected walks to which newcomers are welcomed, and resources for outings leaders.

**Lectures:** a list of upcoming talks and directions to our meeting place.

**Photos:** the nature gallery which existed on our previous site.

**Nature Arts:** a new gallery of members' artwork.

**Resources:** TFN publications, and links to other nature organizations.

**Membership:** information of interest to potential new members, including the application form.

Thank you, Lynn, for the excellent job you have done, and for your continuing dedication in keeping our

website up-to-date. I'm sure Lynn would be glad to receive your feedback, any suggestions for improving the site, and your contributions of photos and artwork. Please send these to [webmaster@torontofieldnaturalists.org](mailto:webmaster@torontofieldnaturalists.org).

Many volunteers work faithfully behind the scenes contributing to the success of the TFN. One who stands out is Marilyn Murphy. A highly valued member of the newsletter editorial committee since 1999, she was a great help during the transition period after Helen Juhola retired. We regret that Marilyn has decided to step down from these responsibilities, and want to acknowledge her significant contributions. In addition to her skill as a knowledgeable and sharp-eyed proof-reader, Marilyn has taken on various special projects. For two years she selected the items for our *From the Archives* feature, a task now being ably done by Elisabeth Gladstone with assistance from Karin Fawthrop. Marilyn also undertook the exacting job of compiling the annual newsletter index. We need a detail-oriented person with computer skills to take this on. A talented writer, Marilyn has contributed book reviews and other articles, notably her current *Bird of the Month* series, which I so much enjoy. We are glad she plans to continue this at least until the end of the current season. Thank you, Marilyn, for all you have done in support of the newsletter, and we trust you will continue active involvement in the TFN.

With Mark Stabb's December lecture on the Oak Ridges Moraine fresh in my mind, it was a particular pleasure for me to receive, as a Christmas gift, a book entitled *Connecting with nature – Oak Ridges Moraine*. Published and edited by Herbert Pryke of Aurora, it contains beautiful paintings of the Moraine by local artists. The text tells of stewardship efforts to preserve this valuable natural area, and proceeds from the sale were donated to the TRCA. I encourage you to visit: [web.me.com/artcures/The\\_Moraine\\_Artists/Preserving\\_the\\_Moraine.html](http://web.me.com/artcures/The_Moraine_Artists/Preserving_the_Moraine.html)

Wendy Rothwell

### 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 Committee's report will be published in the May newsletter.

## MONTHLY MEETING REPORT

### **Aiming High (and dry): Conserving Biodiversity on the Oak Ridges Moraine**

Sunday, December 6. Mark Stabb, Central Ontario Program Manager, Nature Conservancy of Canada (NCC)

Mark brought us his enthusiasm for nature as well as for the Nature Conservancy and the Oak Ridges Moraine on this Sunday afternoon. Mark's prior work dealt with wetlands and now he is high and dry in the Oak Ridges Moraine. His talk focussed on the NCC's conservation efforts in two areas – Happy Valley Forest and Rice Lake Plains.

The Moraine was created when the glacier covering southern Ontario started melting at its 'toes', creating this ridge of sand and gravel many meters thick. It is now one of the last significant natural corridors remaining in Ontario. Lots of hard work has gone into preserving this significant natural area so close to Canada's largest urban landscape. As a result, the Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Act has been absorbed into the Green Belt Act. There is now a hiatus on development in the area until 2015, giving conservation groups the opportunity to protect the area and form partnerships with local communities.

The Nature Conservancy and the Ministry of Natural Resources have completed a Conservation Blueprint. Also known as an ecoregional plan, this blueprint documents the portfolio of sites that, if conserved, will ensure the long-term survival of all viable native species and community types of the ecoregion. The Blueprint for the Oak Ridges Moraine identified maple-beech forest in the west with a concentration of headwater streams for the GTA, and prairies and savannas in the east. These are the areas Mark described in his talk.

The Happy Valley Forest is a closed canopy forest located on the Moraine in King Township. It is an old growth forest-in-the-making with mature maple and beech, rich flora and at-risk species such as the Jefferson salamander and the Acadian flycatcher. It also contains the largest concentration of headwater streams in the GTA. From here, the Holland River flows north to Lake Simcoe and the Humber flows south to Lake Ontario. Historically rich as well, the area is known as the *Carrying Place*, the main travel route between Lake

Ontario and Lake Simcoe for first nations and early European settlers.

There have been many threats to the Happy Valley Forest from illegal ATVs, invasive species, erosion, potential for logging and development, and ecological isolation. In 2007, the federal government promised \$225 million over 5 years, enabling the NCC to increase its conservation efforts. Mark assured us there was no truth to the rumour that the forest is being renamed the "Harper" Valley Forest! Land donations have increased the acreages under protection. The target is a minimum 500 acres of heritage forest and currently sits at 322 acres.



Trilliums in NCC nature reserve, Happy Valley Forest, photographed by Laura Mousseau, NCC

Mark then took us east to the Rice Lake Plains in Northumberland County. Crown survey records describe what the land used to look like, as do the writings of people like Catherine Parr Traill. Clearly, it was an area of tall grass prairie and black oak savannah. Grassland birds and other rare species, such as the eastern hog-nosed snake, persecuted because of its bad (and undeserved) reputation, depend on this habitat to survive.

Black oak savannah is one of the most endangered ecosystems on Earth. Rice Lake Plains has been carved up over the years and conservation efforts to restore it are underway. Mark spoke of a very interesting one acre of land known as the Red Cloud Cemetery. Because the land here has never been tilled, it contains the original seed bank. Eleven acres around this land have been acquired to allow for expansion.

Mark spoke highly of the Alderville First Nations who have done great work in protecting the black oak savannah. NCC is working with these stewards of the land along with private landowners and conservation groups to restore the Rice Lake Plain. The conservation target of 2800 acres currently stands at 1716 acres.

For further information on the work of NCC, visit [www.natureconservancy.ca](http://www.natureconservancy.ca). The Oak Ridges Moraine Foundation website is at [www.moraineforlife.org](http://www.moraineforlife.org).

Corinne McDonald

## EXTRACTS FROM OUTINGS LEADERS' REPORTS

### **Nature and Birds in Colonel Danforth Park, Nov. 10.**

**Leader: Karin Fawthrop.** We walked approximately 4 miles from Kingston Rd. to Lake Ontario. The 17 species of birds we saw included a loon. Plants included a fairly large patch of Christmas fern. We didn't see any deer though they are in the valley, including a three-legged buck who appeared last winter and made it through the summer. His left hind leg is missing.

**Identification of fall and winter wildflowers in The Beach, Nov. 14. Leader: Joanne Doucette.** An amazing number of plants in flower given the time of year. Quite a diverse range of plants considering the heavy use the area receives. We discussed Toronto geology with particular attention to the Toronto Scarp and also the physics of waves. An intelligent crowd with good questions and discussion. [Joanne's plant list has about 100 species with approximately 30, mostly introduced species, in flower.]

### **Lost Rivers Walk, Ashbridge's Creek, Nov. 15.**

**Leaders: John Wilson and Richard Anderson.** We followed streets and parkland to trace the course of a long-obiterated creek, observing landfill sites, clay-quarrying and brick-making sites, and ravine lands on lost creek beds. The red oaks in Monarch Park suggest remnant savannah patches. There is a massive old beech and weeping willow along the creek bed on the Ashbridge estate.

**Nature Walk in High Park, Nov. 18. Leader: Pat Jones.** Birds included a flock of robins, cedar waxwings, hairy, downy and red-bellied woodpecker. On Grenadier Pond we saw shovelers, buffleheads, mallards and gadwalls.



Mallard photographed by Lynn Pady

**Nature and Birds, West Don, Nov. 21. Leader: Marcus Feak.** We had a discussion on the identification of accipiters. One participant photographed a perched mystery raptor and was able to show the distinctive rounded tail of Cooper's hawk, rather than the squared tail of sharp-shinned. A recent photo of a suspected goshawk showed the presence of vertical breast streaks and the lack of superciliary (over the eye) white line, revealing it to be a juvenile Cooper's. We also saw turkey tail and cheese polypore fungi as well as slugs and moths.

**Nature and Heritage in Mount Pleasant Cemetery, Nov. 25. Leader: Pleasance Crawford.** We passed the gravesites of H.A. Engelhardt, who designed the cemetery, and 5 Ontario premiers: Hearst, Mowat, Ross, Ferguson and Henry. We talked of the trees and shrubs in this fabulous arboretum of nearly 400 woody species and hybrids. The red-tailed hawk nesting in a tall pine west of the Massey Mausoleum flew back and forth above us, calling repeatedly. Ed Freeman gave colour commentary on the stone in monuments along the way.

**Birds in Humber Bay Park East, Nov. 28. Leader: Wendy Rothwell.** A red-tail posed high in a tree giving us excellent views.

We also saw quite a number of mocking-birds including one gorging on sea-buckthorn berries. Other birds included turkey vulture, American widgeon, northern shoveler, and redhead. Quite a number of young trees have been destroyed by a beaver. Belatedly, wire protection has been put around those that remain.



Red-tailed hawk at Humber Bay photographed by Augusta Takeda

**Trees in Prospect Cemetery, Dec. 17. Leader: Jack Radecki.** We looked at many arboretum trees including European hornbeam, lacebark pine, fernleaf beech, zelkova, sophora, larch, pioneer oaks, thorny honey locust, and bitternut. Nuts and shells of English walnut and Turkish filbert were found. We covered some points on tree ID and tree architecture and pruning.

## REMEMBERING ILMARI TALVILA



It is with great sadness that I am reporting the death of my father, Ilmari Talvila, on December 28, 2009 at the age of 81. He and my mother Anja were long-time members of the Toronto Field Naturalists. Over the years, my father was involved with the club in a number of capacities: a decade as newsletter editor (1966-1976); field trip leader; bird group leader for the Toronto

Junior Field Naturalists (late 1960's and again in the mid-1980's).

My father was passionate about the natural world and had extremely broad and deep knowledge of its habitats and inhabitants, gained through both meticulous personal observation and extensive reading. His life-long obsessions were for birds and botany, but he found all of nature fascinating and wonderful, and was ever keen to see and learn more. He had an intimate knowledge of Toronto and enthusiastically explored its many outdoor areas, whether it be to visit a single dawn redwood specimen on the University of Toronto

campus, roam the expanses of High Park, scan the lake with his telescope in search of ducks, or get a warming glimpse of the tropics by popping into Allan Gardens greenhouse.

Some of my happiest childhood memories are of my own apprenticeship as a naturalist, accompanying my father to nearby Lambton Woods, or tagging along with him on his walk about the cottage property during the first visit of the summer, to see what was new, what creatures were stirring, and check in on old favourites like the cardinal flower that poked up from a cleft in the pink granite shoreline. When my obsession with reptiles and amphibians struck, he indulged it by taking me to ponds all over southern Ontario. With me he shared his vast knowledge and passed on his great passion, and these have shaped my life to this day. I hope that some of you were also able to share earth's delights with him during his lifetime.

With the assistance of the Senior Alumni Association at the University of Toronto, a scholarship or prize is being established in memory of Ilmari Talvila. If you would like to contribute, please contact the Senior Alumni at [senior.alumni@utoronto.ca](mailto:senior.alumni@utoronto.ca). Thank you.

Tuula Talvila

I first met Ilmari Talvila in March 1954. I was trudging up Cherry Street after failing to identify the confusing black and white ducks in Toronto Harbour. He drove by with a group of Toronto Junior Field Naturalists, picked me up and told me what the ducks were. While I was already interested in birds, Ilmar, as we called him, was leader of the bird group of the TJFN and it was through him that I really got my start as a birdwatcher and naturalist. During the 50's and early 60's Ilmar was a mentor to several of us youngsters. He was very generous with his time, often loading us up in his car and taking us out to birding hotspots such as Rattray's Marsh, Frenchman's Bay, or Long Point for the swan migration. My first trip to Point Pelee was with Ilmar—I was held in a constant state of excitement by the number of birds we saw.

Ilmar had a great love of nature—I recall his delight one April day when he recognized the song of a ruby-crowned kinglet after an absence of one year. He had a great sense of humour, always maintained a positive frame of mind, and instilled a love of nature in his young charges.

Few people have as strong a sense of volunteerism as Ilmar. In the 60's and 70's, he edited the TFN newsletter, sometimes from Vancouver when work took him there. He was active for many years in the University of Toronto alumni association including a term as president. When, in the late 80's, I joined the newly-formed Field Botanists of Ontario, I was delighted to see he was a member and about to become Treasurer, a position he held for a dozen years. After several decades, it was a great pleasure for me to join Ilmar once again on field trips, the focus being now on wildflowers instead of birds.

Ilmar was an all round field naturalist, appreciating the study of prostrate sedges equally with that of soaring hawks. He was also a keen gardener, specializing in esoteric annuals which he grew from seed. He had strong likes and dislikes in this field and with little provocation would readily express his contempt for impatiens!

Ilmari died on December 28, 2009 at St. Joseph's Health Centre, Toronto, at the age of 81.

Farewell and thank you!

George Bryant

## BIRD OF THE MONTH – DARK-EYED JUNCO

Flocks of dark-eyed juncos are a common winter sight in Toronto. These lovely birds belong to the same family as our many native sparrows but are much more easily identified and, unlike most of that family, the males and females can be readily distinguished. It should be noted that the familiar house sparrow, an introduced European species, belongs to an entirely different family. The juncos we see in Ontario have eye-catching white outer tail feathers, a pale pinkish bill, and unstreaked grey backs and breasts sharply contrasting their white belly. The grey in the males is dark; in females, lighter with brownish tones.

What's in a name? In his 1731 book Mark Catesby, who saw juncos only in winter, called them snowbirds, a name still often used today. Based on Catesby's description, in 1758 Carl Linnaeus named them *Fringilla hyemalis* or winter finch.

In the 19th century the name "junco" was coined by Johann Wagler in reference to a related species found mainly in Mexico. Nowadays the American Ornithologists Union (AOU) rules on species designations for North American birds, giving them English and scientific names. In many older bird books "our" bird is listed as slate-colored junco and classified as a separate species from several others found mainly in western parts of the continent. In 1973 the AOU lumped several races or subspecies of juncos, including the slate-colored, into the species dark-eyed junco. Name and classification changes

continue, especially through ongoing DNA studies, and perhaps some day the experts will again decide to split the juncos. In Ontario, however, except for the very rare stray, the juncos we see are all the slate-colored "race" of dark-eyed junco. Of course the birds don't care what we call them, but the designation and naming of distinct species becomes increasingly important when studying population changes and legislating protection for threatened and endangered species.

*The Atlas of the Breeding Birds of Ontario 2001-2005* estimates the Ontario dark-eyed junco population at twelve million, one of the ten most abundant birds in

the province and top of the list for the Hudson Bay Lowlands. Even so, the Atlas reports "BBS (Breeding Bird Survey) data show that the species has declined significantly both across Canada and in Ontario since 1981." Toronto remains a good place to observe these birds during winter. The highest ever total of dark-eyed juncos (962) recorded on a Toronto Christmas Bird Count occurred in 2008; the second and third highest counts were in 1989 and 2006. Results for 2009 are not yet available as of this writing.

Dark-eyed juncos arrive in our area around October and while some overwinter here, others migrate farther south into the United States. In April they are on the move again, heading north to their breeding grounds. In Ontario dark-eyed juncos breed mainly in the forests of the Canadian Shield and Hudson Bay Lowlands,



Dark-eyed junco photographed by Norah Jancik in Lambton Woods

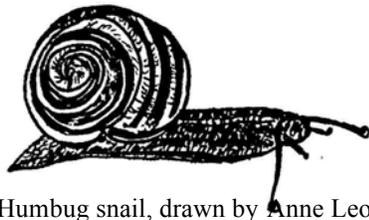
nesting on the ground. The males arrive in the breeding areas first and claim territories before the arrival of the females. Their choice of wintering grounds gives the males a head start in the northbound race. In their *Guide to Bird Behavior*, Donald and Lillian Stokes point out that "males tend to winter farther north than females, so the proportion of males in a winter flock will be higher the farther north it is." Look carefully at mid-winter flocks here and you may see mostly males. In spring, as northbound migrants move through the city, the proportion of females in the junco flocks should increase.

*continued on page 16*

## COPING WITH WINTER

Ah winter! We humans have various ways of dealing with its vicissitudes. Some flee to warmer climes, others revel in its beauty and the sports it offers while many hunker down and cope; so, too, in the animal kingdom. We marvel at the biannual migration of birds and some butterflies and know a number of animals that spend summer at high elevations and descend to lower levels during colder months. Some birds tough it out and add joy at our feeders during cold weather while many other creatures cope by sleeping through it or leaving fertilized eggs that hatch in spring. But what of little creatures that inhabit gardens, window boxes or balcony pots during summer months, some tolerated, others treated murderously; what do they do? Here I discuss methods that some use to cope.

**Snails** Most land snails are air breathers, live several years and become inactive during winter. They close the entrance to their shell with a door of mucus that hardens into a tough skin (epiphragm) leaving a tiny hole that allows air entry into an airspace between it and the animal's mantle. Depending on the habits of the species, the epiphragm may be glued to a rock, a wall, a tree branch or stem of a plant. The epiphragm's main purpose is to reduce water loss during inactivity. The animal's heart rate also slows and oxygen



Humbug snail, drawn by Anne Leon

consumption is reduced by 50%. Early in the spring most snails' shells show a "winter stop"—a line across their shells showing where the edge of the shell was the previous fall before they stopped growing and secreted the epiphragm. A mucus epiphragm is usually translucent and fairly elastic. Sometimes, several snails gather at a suitable place, which is mostly covered with moss, grass or leaves. If this cover is sufficient, they hibernate under the plant material. However, some bury themselves, turning so that their shell opening faces upwards.

**Slugs** Many slugs die as cold weather approaches. A few burrow several centimeters into the soil or disappear under rocks, large clumps of grass or boards. Generally slugs overwinter as eggs. These are white ovals found in clusters of up to two dozen which stay dormant in the soil until temperature and moisture levels are just right.

**Aphids** Aphids have an interesting life cycle. They hatch on a plant in spring, all of the hatched larvae developing into wingless females that feed on their host plant. Once these females mature, within seven to ten days, they start to clone themselves, giving birth to smaller versions of themselves known as nymphs. A female can give birth to about five to ten clones per day, creating large swarms. These nymphs mature quickly, molting about four times over seven days before they start producing their own clones within ten days. Thus, a swarm of aphids can develop quickly on a plant. If the host plant begins to die, many of the aphids grow wings and take off. However, they are unable to fly far on their own and rely on the wind to carry them to another suitable host for feeding. Aphids continue giving birth to multiple cloned generations over warm months, but when the weather begins to cool some females spontaneously become males. For the first time that year, male and female aphids mate sexually. The females lay eggs toward the end of fall as the temperature gets too cold for aphids to survive. The eggs resist the cold and hatch in the spring.

**Ladybugs** These nemeses of aphids often gather into groups and spend the winter in thick hollow stems, amongst leaf litter, around window and door edges, under logs or other sheltered corners. Take care not to disturb sleeping ladybugs if you find them when tidying up the garden. In the spring they awaken and begin eating aphid pests, which will also have reappeared.



**Bumblebees and wasps** New queens are the only ones to survive the winter under loose bark or in crevices, while the rest of a colony dies. The queens lay eggs in the spring to start a new colony.



Ladybug and yellow-jacket wasp, drawn by Diana Banville

**Earwigs** The European earwig is a common finding in homes and gardens. If present in large numbers, it may damage flowers, fruits and vegetables, but generally it is harmless to humans. Adults usually live for one year with many dying during winter months. However, some survive by digging into the ground as deep as six feet, while others hatch in the spring from eggs.

*continued on page 16*

## HAWK HILL

Continuation of *Bird Watching* series, Keeping in Touch, TFN 567, November 2009, page 10

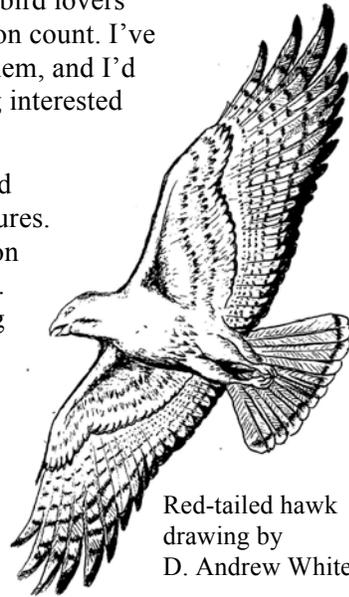
In my previous letter, I mentioned a place in High Park known as *Hawk Hill*. Directly north of the Grenadier Restaurant, it's a high point of land, perfect for viewing the fall migration of hawks along the north shore of Lake Ontario. Some dedicated bird lovers assist in the annual bird of prey migration count. I've learned a lot about birds of prey from them, and I'd like to share a bit with those just getting interested in birding.

Briefly, birds of prey come in four broad classes: hawks, eagles, falcons and vultures. Mostly, they migrate by hitching rides on thermals, or rising columns of warm air. Several may share one thermal, swirling to gain altitude, then breaking free and gliding to the west to pick up the next thermal. These swirls are given the name "kettle", I think because they suggest a bubbling witch's brew of sinister talons and threatening beaks – there are other theories. In any case, this conserves as much energy as possible on their journey. A good thermal can support scores of birds. But thermals are unpredictable over open water, so in the fall, hawks never venture south across one of the Great Lakes. They migrate along the north shores to the Detroit-Windsor area to make their crossing before heading south.

When I learned about the High Park group that meets every September, and heard how everyone is welcome, I thought I'd join in as a keen observer. As a novice, I took my place on the edge of the friendly group of avid birders, several of whom have been doing this for many years. Everyone goes about their business with calm *impatience*, friendly chatter, and eyes scanning the eastern horizon... a horizon remember, dominated by Toronto's financial district.

The leader is equipped with a radio to receive local weather information, and forms on a clipboard with columns for each of the species expected and rows for each of the days. At the end of the migration, the matrix of numbers indicates the number of each species seen on each day. The counts are as accurate as humanly possible because, when the wind and barometric pressure are just right, thermals are drifting in from the east, and birds are sighted ... well,

pandemonium (although carefully moderated by the experienced leader) ensues.



Red-tailed hawk  
drawing by  
D. Andrew White

As mentioned, the birders on the hill range from novice to expert, but all of them act like gleeful children at a birthday party when, after waiting sometimes a few hours, the birds start arriving. But, as the business is serious, the most experienced start their species identification and count in earnest, bolstered by others who detect birds slipping between the gaps. The numbers of each species are relayed to the leader. The leader, knowing that several birders may be counting the same birds, but knowing who is doing the counting, filters out, with astonishing accuracy (I've watched the process carefully) how many of each bird are in the kettle or fly over. This goes for the many eagles, falcons and many, many, TVs (turkey vultures) also on the move. It's a

rewarding experience to be the first to catch the next kettle on the horizon or see one to the south when everyone is analysing one to the north. I've returned home a couple of times feeling that I've helped a bit... it's a good feeling.

One thing I remember from my first day (as a hawk novice, remember) was hearing something to the effect: "It's flapping... an accipiter... Let's see, no, not a Cooper's, it's a sharpie." What was this all about? I approached the leader, who, with enthusiasm and attention to detail, explained that among hawks, there are four broad classes:

- the ones everyone sees, **buteos**, or soaring hawks
- those that almost nobody sees, the **accipiters**, or hunting hawks, of which there are many more than soarers,
- **kites**
- **harriers**.

Hold on! Hunting hawks! Hawks that use stealth and skilled flying to track down prey! Oh this sounds good!

My enthusiasm was piqued. "I have to find out more about these guys," I promised myself.

To be continued .....

Ken Cook

## PHAINOPEPLA STOPS TRAFFIC IN BRAMPTON

A very uncommon visitor from the southwest, a young male Phainopepla, was found in a previously quiet neighbourhood in Brampton on November 9, to the delight of local birders, and many not-so-local. The Phainopepla is the sole representative of the Silky Flycatcher family *Ptilogonatidae* (songbirds closely related to our waxwings, not to our flycatchers) found north of Mexico. Not uncommon in its home range, it



Phainopepla photographed by Margaret McRae

normally lives no closer than southwest New Mexico. I believe this is only the third time a Phainopepla has strayed northeast of Houston Texas. The first, and I believe only, previous occurrence in Ontario and Canada was on a Christmas bird count in Elgin county in 1974. The only other occurrence in the northeast indicated in the Sibley Guide to Birds (2001) was in southern Massachusetts.

The extremely generous discoverer of the bird, Dian Bogie, set up a table by the side of the road in front of her home offering free coffee and cookies to visitors

and, equally importantly, explaining the rarity of the bird and the curious phenomenon of birders to her neighbours. She also reported on the bird's status frequently (sometimes more than once a day) to [www.ontbirds.com](http://www.ontbirds.com), the Ontario rare bird website maintained by the Ontario Field Ornithologists (OFO.ca). Some of her neighbours also generously allowed birders access to their back yards.

Fortuitously, a symposium on the conservation of urban birds that was held in Toronto on November 19-20, attracted bird enthusiasts from as far away as Denver, as well as Washington, Baltimore, Philadelphia, Chicago, Detroit, and New York City. Many of these visitors were able to make the relatively short side trip to see this bird, a "lifer" for many of them too.

The bird was a young male nearing the end of transition to the beautiful glossy black adult male plumage. It was seen flying from house to house feeding on fruit in the various trees and bushes, particularly barberry, juniper cones, wild grapes, rose hips and mountain-ash berries, occasionally disappearing into thick bushes when harassed by the local mockingbird, and at least once by an overenthusiastic birder who forgot the birder's code of ethics displayed on the OFO website under *About Us*. But these seemed to be minor annoyances to the bird, as it continued to provide good looks to most visitors, after fairly short waits, for 30 days.

Unfortunately, the winter storm that brought fierce winds as well as cold and snow December 9 must have been too much for the young bird – it has not been seen since that day.

Bob Kortright

*Ed.* See [www.jeaniron.ca](http://www.jeaniron.ca) for more great photos of this bird.

### Help us publicize TFN!

Copies of the new TFN brochure are now in all Toronto public libraries.

Whenever you visit your local library, please check the community information racks and let us know when there are fewer than 3 copies and we will arrange to re-stock – see contact information on page 2.



## NATURE IMAGES EVENT

On Saturday, January 2nd, a bitterly cold day, it was heartening to see about 50 enthusiastic nature-lovers gather at the S. Walter Stewart Library in East York for this event. We are indeed fortunate to have, among our members, so many gifted artists and photographers who take delight in capturing images of nature in Toronto and elsewhere.

Digital photos and slides included:

- Lynn Miller's eye-catching images of local wildflowers
- A "tour" of Todmorden Mills Wildflower Preserve by Paula Davies
- Some seasonal High Park highlights by Wendy Rothwell
- Barry Mitchell's photos of the recent snowy wonderland near Huntsville
- Stunning bird photos taken by Margaret McRae in Florida
- Exquisite insect and bird photos by Norah Jancik
- Trumpeter swans at Col. Sam Smith Park by Ed Boucher
- Dragonflies and a groundhog by Augusta Takeda
- A "scene and sign" series by Susie Weiss, which challenged us to identify local parks
- Spring flowers on Pelee Island by Bob Kortright
- Fascinating fauna photographed by Peter and Francis Money in Brazil



*continued on next page*



Photo credits:

Canada thistle and chicory by Lynn Miller; praying mantis and argiope by Norah Jancik; trillium on Pelee Island by Bob Kortright, Cabot's tern and loggerhead shrike in Florida by Margaret McRae.

## FOR READING

### ***The Reluctant Twitcher: A Quite Truthful Account of My Big Birding Year***

By Richard Pope

Foreword by Graeme Gibson

Natural Heritage Books, The Dundurn Group, 2009, \$35.00

*300 Birds. Ontario. One Year:* That was the newly-retired Ron Pope's challenge for 2007. The story of how he got to 300 makes fun reading for those of us with lesser aspirations.

Plot lines include galoshes full of water, avian botulism, the Niagara flyby, and bitter tears at a missed glossy ibis in Cobourg. Characters besides our hero include Hugh (297 – but he missed four weeks on a trip to Peru) and Margaret (301 for the year). The book is set in various sewage lagoons throughout Ontario, plus well known birding spots such as Pelee (the point and the island), Rainy River, Cootes Paradise and

Presqu'île. By the end of the book I was cheering Richard on, and I think you will too.

The 20 bird photographs, one per chapter, are particularly beautiful, and the glossy paper on which the book is printed does the pictures full justice. An appendix lists every bird seen, with the date and location.

One warning: Chapters has seen fit to hide its copies of *The Reluctant Twitcher* under "Local Interest: Ontario," making a search for the book almost as difficult as finding that elusive #300.

Jean Paton

Note from Doug Paton: *The Reluctant Twitcher*, Richard Pope, describes his search for his 297th bird of the year, a yellow-breasted chat at Ashbridges' Bay. As he says, the sighting by "someone" was posted on Ontbirds. That "someone" was Carol Sellers on a TFN outing on November 20. The sighting was posted to Ontbirds by Bob Kortright. The chat was quite accommodating, and everyone on the walk that day got to see it – a lifer for some folks.

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### NATURE IMAGES EVENT *continued*

During the intermission we enjoyed refreshments provided by Penny Fairbairn, Margaret McRae and Gail Gregory, and had an opportunity to admire a variety of artwork and photographs displayed on tables. Contributors included: Nancy Anderson, Joe Bernaske, Ann Byzko, Penny Fairbairn, Gail Gregory, Cliffy Jenson, Nola McConnan, Yoshi Nagata, Wendy Rothwell, Barry Singh and Susie Weiss.

At the conclusion of the presentation, Lynn gave us a preview of TFN's re-designed website (see page 6).

Thank you, Gail Gregory and Margaret McRae, for all the work you did organizing this event, Lynn Miller for providing efficient technical support, and all who so generously shared their nature images. We hope you will also send samples of your art and photographs to the TFN office for use in the newsletter and on our website.

Wendy Rothwell



Photo by Wendy Rothwell

BIRD OF THE MONTH *continued from page 10*

Interesting insights into winter flock behaviour of juncos can be found in the Stokes' book mentioned above, on the website [www.birdsbybent.com](http://www.birdsbybent.com) based on Bent's *Life Histories of North American Birds* and on the Boreal Songbirds Initiative website [www.borealbirds.org](http://www.borealbirds.org). Based on sex, age and individual feistiness, a social hierarchy quickly develops within the flock, which maintains a defined feeding territory and roosts together at night. During the day, however, the flock does not always stay

together; birds may forage with some or all of the flock or even alone. As primarily ground feeders, they are very wary of possible threats. The Boreal Songbird Initiative website points out that the birds become "less vigilant with increasing light intensities (when predators are less likely to attack)." During the six months or so dark-eyed juncos are with us they offer us lots of enjoyment and food for thought.

Marilynn Murphy

Note: The Toronto Christmas Bird Count is conducted by the Toronto Ornithological Club. More information on projects and membership can be found on the websites of the Toronto Ornithological Club [www.torontobirding.ca](http://www.torontobirding.ca) and Bird Studies Canada [www.birdscanada.org](http://www.birdscanada.org)

COPING WITH WINTER *continued from page 1*

**Insect antifreezes** Insects and many other creatures that hibernate use a form of antifreeze to survive the cold. As the temperature drops, their cells produce glycerol, which prevents water crystals forming within them. At the same time, insects—and most of their cells—actively eliminate all waste products or other foreign particles that an ice crystal might form around. This two-step process, called supercooling, allows body fluids to remain liquid at temperatures far below their normal freezing point. Supercooling is highly effective. However, some insects have another strategy. They isolate ice crystals between cells and

allow them to form without danger of cell damage. These "freezing-tolerant" insects can withstand a limited amount of freezing, but the system is less effective than supercooling in extremely cold temperatures. It is of interest that some animal antifreeze proteins are being added to ice-cream and yogurt to make them *smooth* in texture.

Venketesh, S., Dayananda, C. Properties, potentials and prospects for antifreeze proteins. *Crit. Rev. Biotechnol.* 208 21-57-82.

Malcolm D. Silver

We commend TFN member Rita Bijons for her letter-to-the-editor, published in the *Toronto Star* on December 27, 2009

### NO JOY, NO PEACE

At this time of year when we traditionally turn our hearts to meditations on joy and peace, my heart is heavy with profound sadness.

In Copenhagen, our leaders have failed us, our companion species, and future generations. Grotesque and biocidal greed has sabotaged the urgent and collaborative efforts required to form a life-preserving agreement.

Stephen Harper, Jim Prentice, and Michael Martin betray us, our companion species, and future generations. They gloat over what they say they have accomplished, and spin it as "comprehensive and realistic." What is comprehensive and realistic is the looming catastrophe which they are failing to attenuate. Rather, their positions feed misery and discord.

There is no joy, no peace this year.

Rita Bijons

## FROM THE ARCHIVES

**Toronto Region Bird Records, December 1982**

From TFN Newsletter 354, March 1983

(Note: Explanation of initials in brackets is at the end of the article.)

Most of the birds included in this report are in addition to those reported on the Toronto Christmas Bird Count (Dec. 26, see TFN 353, Feb. 1983, pp 14-15.)

Malcolm Gilbert reported that "On Sunday, December 12 while walking along the spine of the Eastern Headland ... I happened to see on the southeast side a large waterfowl with dark body and mostly pale neck and head. Its head was large and its bill big and powerful. As if I needed any convincing to know that it was a *Common Loon* in winter plumage, it uttered one of its weird and distinctive cries." A *Great Blue Heron* was at Lynde Shores on Dec. 1 (HK) and one was seen flying over the Casa Loma area as late as Dec. 24 (JM).

Sixteen *Northern Shovelers* at the mouth of Mimico Creek on Dec. 25 (JK) were probably the remnants of those which lingered at Grenadier Pond for most of the month. A *Pintail* at Duffin Creek on Dec. 1 and a *Ring-necked Duck* at Mimico Creek the next day (HK) were both late migrants. The female *Harlequin Duck* which spent most of the month at Humber Bay Park was not found on the Christmas Census but was reported on Dec. 21 (TH) and two males and a female were observed there on Dec. 18 (MG).

A *Woodcock* in Vaughan Township on Dec. 5 (GB, AD) and one found dead in Pine Point Park about the same time were exceptionally late. *Glaucous Gulls* were more frequent than usual along the lakeshore and individuals were identified as far up the Humber as Sheppard and Weston Road on Dec. 24 and at Pine



Yellow-rumped warbler, drawn by Diana Banville

Point Park on Dec. 25 (MK). Three *Bonaparte's Gulls* were still at Whitby on Dec. 1 (HK) and a *Black-legged Kittiwake* was at Oakville on Dec. 3 (GB). Owl reports included a *Great Horned Owl* at G. Ross Lord Park on Dec. 31 (SC), a *Long-eared Owl* which spent all of Dec. 23 in a cedar hedge in Scarborough (KF) and a *Snowy Owl* throughout the month at Humber Bay Park.



Great-horned owl, drawn by A. Edmonds

*Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers* were still at Moore Park, Hogs Hollow and Port Credit at the end of the month (HK, JK). A *Varied Thrush* which regularly visited an Oakville feeder was the first ever for the South Peel Christmas Bird Count. The mild weather and lack of snow for most of December may have encouraged many birds to linger later than usual. Some of these late birds were a *Water Pipit* at Duffin Creek on Dec. 1 (HK), *Yellow-rumped Warblers* at Pine Point on Dec. 9 and 11 (MK), in Don Mills for a couple of weeks (JW) and in the Don Valley near the Domtar plant on Dec. 26 (JM). An extremely late *Blue-winged Warbler* was at Lynde Shores Conservation area on Dec. 1 (DR, HK) – the first December record for the Toronto Region. A *Rufous-sided Towhee* appeared at feeders on Warren Rd. on Dec. 9 and 10 (JD) and Dec. 13 (CS).

Contributors: Gerry Bennett, Sandy Cappell, Arnold Dawe, Jane Donnelley, Karin Fawthrop, Malcolm Gilbert, Ted Hauten, John Kelley, Harry Kerr, Mark Kubisz, John McDonald, Dave Ruch, Corinne Salsberg, Jim Woodford.

Additions: A *Tufted Titmouse* was seen in mid-November near Casa Loma by John McDonald and a *Carolina Wren* visited Jane Hill's feeder in West Hill on Dec. 18 and 21.

## 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.

### Get the Jump on Spring

Sat. Feb. 20, 10 am – 4 pm. Toronto Botanical Garden, 777 Lawrence Ave. E. (at Leslie St.). Information: [www.torontobotanicalgarden.ca/events/gtjos.htm](http://www.torontobotanicalgarden.ca/events/gtjos.htm) or (416) 397-1341. (See notice, page 2.)

### Toronto Entomologists' Association (TEA)

Sat. Feb. 27, 1:15 pm. Room 206, Victoria College. Complex Signals: What do spiders have to say? Speaker: Andrew Mason. Information: [www.ontarioinsects.org](http://www.ontarioinsects.org)

### Scarborough Historical Society

Tue. Feb. 23, 7:30 pm. Bendale Library, 1515 Danforth Rd. Toronto Rocks – Geological History of Toronto City. Speaker: Nick Eyles, Professor of Geology at U of T (and former TFN board member)

### High Park Walking Tours

2nd and 4th Sundays of each month, 10:30 am - noon. Meet at the benches across the road south of Grenadier Restaurant. Donations welcomed. Information: 416-392-1748 ext. 5 or [walkingtours@highpark.org](mailto:walkingtours@highpark.org) or [www.highpark.org](http://www.highpark.org)

Feb. 14. Winter Tree Identification, Toronto Urban Forestry

Feb. 28. High Park Through the Ages, Dave Berndorff

### Science on Sundays

Royal Canadian Institute, J.J.R. MacLeod Auditorium, Medical Sciences Building, University of Toronto, 1 King's College Circle, 3 pm. Free. Information: [www.royalcanadianinstitute.org](http://www.royalcanadianinstitute.org) or 416-977-2983.

Feb. 7. The Mathematics of Life, V. Kumar Murty, PhD., FRSC

Feb. 14. Is Minority Report Right? Reflections on 3D User Interfaces, Wolfgang Stuerzling, MSc, PhD

Feb. 21. Does Autoimmunity Drive Obesity? H. Michael Dosch, MD, PhD

Feb. 28. Secrets from the Stellar Nursery, Alison Sills, PhD

### Rouge Valley Guided Nature Walks

Sun. Feb. 28, 1:30 pm. Meet at the entrance of Milne Park located at 8251 McCowan Rd., just south of Hwy 7. Information: [www.rougevalleynaturalists.com/upcoming\\_events](http://www.rougevalleynaturalists.com/upcoming_events) or 416-282-8265.

### The Market Gallery

Until March 13, 2010. The St. Lawrence Ward – a pictorial view of Toronto's oldest neighbourhood. South St. Lawrence Market, 2nd floor, 95 Front St. E. Free. Gallery closed Sundays, Mondays and holidays.

### Ian Wheal Walk

Sun. Feb. 14, 2 pm. Allenby of Jerusalem: Memorial Horse Trail (Gen. Sir Edmund Allenby led the last cavalry charge of the British army in The Great War). Meet at Greenwood subway station entrance. A walk of Jewish landmarks in Toronto's Riverdale.

## TORONTO MEMORIES

This is one of a series of quotes from historic sources about life in Toronto, submitted by Joanne Doucette:

J. McPherson Ross's description of "the joy of skating" in *The Globe*, January 8, 1918:

*The main part of the bay, when the ice was clear, and before it was thick enough for the ice harvest, would be covered with hundreds of people skating, and the merry shouts of the boys as they skated and played "shinny" made a lively and tumultuous sight, while ever and anon would come a booming sound as the pent-up currents of water underneath surged heavily against the imprisoned top. Oh, the joy of those days that the writer recalls—to be young and strong, with a sharp pair of skates fastened to your top-boots and the long straps securely crossed and buckled tight, and a clear mile of smooth ice before you to go bounding over; a strong shinny and a puck of hard maple to knock, dodging and twisting over the glassy surfaces. The joys of the present youth have nothing on those bygone thrills.*

## WEATHER (THIS TIME LAST YEAR)

### February 2009

February brought changeable conditions, a couple of intense thaws, including a mid-month warm-up with heavy rain and snowmelt causing flooding. Snowfall was close to normal but felt light as bare patches appeared.

The month began with a continuation of January's cold conditions, as temperatures fell to  $-22.2^{\circ}$  at Pearson on the 5th. Snow cover was at or just over 30 cm. A strong warm-up arrived on the 7th and lasted to the 12th. Paired with heavy rain on the 11th, snow cover dwindled rapidly to a couple of centimeters and never recovered significantly. The remainder of the month

was near normal to slightly milder than normal, although it dipped to the minus teens on the last day.

Monthly mean temperatures were  $-2.0^{\circ}$  downtown and  $-3.7^{\circ}$  at Pearson Airport. It was about  $1^{\circ}$  above the long-term average. February was also on the wet side. Total precipitation was 73.6 mm at Pearson and 69.7 mm downtown. Snowfall was only 9.0 cm downtown but 24.4 cm at Pearson; the boundary between rain and snow during the storm on the 18th cut through the city.

Sunshine was abundant this month, with 145.8 hours, the most since 1987. Normal is 110.2 hours.

Gavin Miller



Ice-coated red-osier dogwood at Ashbridges Bay, photographed by Lynn Pady

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TFN outing, Mount Pleasant Cemetery, photographed by Margaret McRae