



Nature Notes

Todmorden Mills Wildflower Preserve

Your nature guide for the week May 31 - June 6

A walk around the oxbow trail at Todmorden Mills will reward you with some memorable sights and sounds. Remember to take your time—be prepared to make some quiet observations. To enhance your visit, we recommend binoculars.



Wildflowers

In the woodland, look for **Mayapples** with their distinctive umbrella-like leaves. Peer underneath and you will find the single white flower. Along the trail, in sunny, moist areas, you can find the lanky, and aptly named, **Tall Buttercup**. Its glossy yellow petals overlap slightly to provide a warm spot for visiting insects. Another wildflower species which prefers more open spaces in the forest is the **Virginia Waterleaf**, now covered in pink or white bell-like flowers which look “bristly”. Visitors always admire the tall pink spikes of **Dame's Rocket**, but unfortunately this species is invasive and can compete with native Ontario wildflowers.

Out in the meadow areas, a new wildflower making an appearance this week is **Goatsbeard**, which looks like a very tall Dandelion. The pretty yellow flowers can only be seen in the morning though, as they close up by afternoon.



Trees and Shrubs

In the swamp areas the **Red Osier Dogwoods** are flowering, and the creamy flat-topped floral clusters contrast with the deep-red branches. This dogwood prefers wet feet, but it tolerates a range of soil conditions and is a useful and popular garden shrub. Another understory shrub, **Chokecherry**, has almost finished flowering and is beginning to set fruit. On the edges of the Preserve in more disturbed areas, exotic invaders such as the **Tartarian Honeysuckle** have gained a foothold. These profusely flowering shrubs may be pretty to look at, but they are crowding out native shrubs and will have to be controlled.



Frogs

At the pond, check the shallows carefully for **Green Frog** tadpoles. These tadpoles were born last year and overwintered in the mud at the bottom of the pond. Most have now grown hind legs, but not yet front legs, and they still retain the tail. Adult males should start calling this week—they give loud “glug” calls to attract a female.



Birds

Some of the resident birds at Todmorden are well camouflaged and difficult to see, especially now that the trees have leafed-out. But two species are particularly conspicuous at present. In the woodland clearings, the bright-orange male **Northern Orioles** are hard to miss when they are chasing rival males or singing from prominent perches.

In the marshes at the pond and in the oxbow, look for **Red-winged Blackbirds**. You seldom see the secretive, mottled-brown females, particularly when they are incubating their clutch of eggs, but the males are noisy and belligerent. Their bright red wing patch is used in displays and is a status signal to neighbours.

More Info

For more information about the Todmorden Mills Wildflower Preserve, please visit the Preserve Web site (<http://www.hopscotch.ca/tmwp/>), or phone the Todmorden Mills Heritage Museum (416 396-2819).

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