



Nature Notes

Todmorden Mills Wildflower Preserve

Your nature guide for the week June 14–June 20

We are approaching the summer equinox and the longest day of the year.



Trees and Shrubs

The **Black Locust** trees, smothered in clusters of fragrant white flowers, stand out among other trees in the Preserve. A nitrogen-fixer, Black Locust was introduced from the southern United States and widely planted in the 1960s for erosion control. At Todmorden, it was likely planted also for honey bees by Charles Sauriol, champion of the Don Valley and an avid beekeeper. Look for the distinctive seed pods, still present from the fall, which show that the tree belongs in the Pea Family and has closer ties with sweet peas and clover than with other tree species in the Preserve.

It is rose blooming time, and Todmorden provides a good chance to view a variety of roses. Around the historic buildings, heritage English varieties are tended in the gardens. In the Preserve, the **Multiflora Rose** has invaded forest edges where it may displace native shrubs such as Grey Dogwood. And native roses have been planted along the trail, most notably a sprawling clump beside the stairs near the south end of the trail.



Insects

Monarch butterflies are back, and their larval foodplant, **Milkweed**, is now full grown, so start checking the underside of the leaves for eggs. Monarchs usually lay the creamy-white eggs singly on a leaf. The eggs are small (about 2 mm high) and are shaped like an aircraft nose-cone.

Leaf beetles and **aphids** are feeding high up in the Crack Willow trees. Their excretions, a mix of sugars and other plant chemicals, has rained down onto the plants below. Along the woodland trail, notice the fluffy poplar seeds stuck to the exudate on stinging nettle leaves. Near the parking-lot, low willow branches allow close examination of the beetle larvae which feed on the leaf surface but ignore the veins until just a “skeleton” of the leaf remains.



Birds

The increased insect activity has attracted **Barn Swallows** which are busy swooping over the meadows at Todmorden catching prey for their chicks. The swallows are resident at the Don Valley Brick Works, a short distance away for these speedy aerial acrobats.

At the south end of the meadow there are excellent opportunities to see a pair of **Baltimore Orioles** as they shuttle back and forth with caterpillars for their chicks. Binoculars will help you to see the intricately woven nest concealed at the end of a Carolina Poplar bough.



Wildflowers

In the woodland, the non-native **Dames's Rocket** continues to produce spikes of flowers of pastel shades of white, pink and lavender. Just beginning to flower is another non-native, **Urban Avens**, which has small yellow flowers sparsely arranged on long stems. The irises are still flowering, but likely this is the last week for you to catch the native **Blue Flag** and the non-native **Yellow Iris** around the edges of the Pond.

More Info

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

Nature Notes is researched and written by Mike Dennison and Alejandro Lynch, and is published in print and online formats by Hopscotch Interactive Inc. For more information on **Nature Notes** and other services provided by Hopscotch please visit their Web site (<http://www.hopscotch.ca>).