



This Week in the Annex:

March 08, 2023

Close Encounters

It was especially cold several weeks ago when Merrijoy Kelner exited the lobby doors at 55 Prince Arthur to take her regular constitutional. The nonagenarian makes a habit of daily exercise, fair weather or foul, in the mood or no, and while she often doesn't have a destination in mind, she's likely to head for Taddle Creek Park.

She was walking quite briskly, somewhat oblivious to her surroundings, when she was caught totally off guard by a raccoon standing directly in her path – not an encounter one expects at 11:00 am. Then, rather than running off as would be the usual course, the animal charged at her, leapt onto her left leg, and started a frenzy of biting.

The shock was palpable. "I didn't even think to hit it with my walking sticks," Merrijoy recalls. But the reaction from others nearby was thankfully immediate.

A Posse of Good Samaritans

In an especially heroic gesture, one gentleman had the presence of mind to rush in, yank the animal off her leg, and fling it away. Other passersby clustered around solicitously, offering handkerchiefs to stem the bleeding. The crossing guard, Susan, ran over, looked at the wounds and called for an ambulance. Everyone was convinced the beast must have rabies.

Sarah Potts (who alerted us to this misadventure) delayed her ride to work to stay with Merrijoy until EMS arrived. And a close friend, Clara, who just happened to be driving by, spotted Merrijoy's signature red hair and insisted on following her ambulance to the hospital emergency where she kept her company.



A crossing guard's work has its share of adventure. Earlier that morning Susan had spotted Merrijoy's assailant wandering erratically in the park and had already alerted 311 to its troubling behaviour.

Doctor's Orders

Turns out rabies vaccine isn't typically stocked in ERs. So Merrijoy had to wait several hours until the Department of Public Health could deliver the goods. It wasn't fun – an injection in each of the five punctures – with the prospect of four more rounds in the coming weeks. But a few days later the welcome news came from Public Health: the raccoon did not have rabies and further treatment was consequently unnecessary.

"I'm a good healer," says Merrijoy. So with the support of neighbours who brought meals and ran small errands for her, she was soon back on her feet, ready to resume her walks.



Photo courtesy Merrijoy Kelner

Merrijoy's joie de vivre is as apparent in her smile as it is in her name. Fellow resident Hugh Furneaux told us that, "at 95, she is the most stylish and well-dressed woman in the building, not to speak of being extraordinarily accomplished – just Google her!"

The Comfort of Community

Reflecting on the misadventure now that some weeks have passed, Merrijoy remarks how overwhelmed she still feels by the kindness of those strangers. It confirms her affection for life in the Annex where she has lived since 1986, one of the original owners at 55 Prince Arthur.

As she says, "I love being here. It was one of the smartest things I did." And given everything she's done in life, that's saying something!

RaccoonTO

[#DeadRaccoonTO](#) became a thing back in July 2015 when Toronto politico Norm Kelly joined in the twitter feed pleading for the removal of an expired raccoon

from a Yonge Street sidewalk. It wasn't until midnight that Animal Services came to collect the body, by which time the poor thing had been thoroughly commemorated and its image gone viral. It was even memorialized in butter at that year's CNE.

All well and to the good, but what should you do when you encounter a raccoon?

Wildlife in the City

Dozens of raccoon videos circulate online (one of our favourites being [the picky donut thief](#)). But the advice from Toronto Animal Services on [how to deal with wildlife](#) is pretty straightforward: don't approach it, don't feed it, don't touch it, and – if it's acting weirdly – don't stop to make a video. Instead, you should call 311.

Of course that's hard to do if you're in Merrijoy's position, startled by Rocky in full attack mode. But the quick thinking of the gallant gentleman who grabbed the beast was dead on – as long as he immediately gave his hands a thorough washing.



Photo courtesy Ken Bartlett

The danger's still out there. This woozy raccoon was seen at high noon last week at Bernard and Avenue Road. Solution? Report the sighting to 311.

Canine Distemper

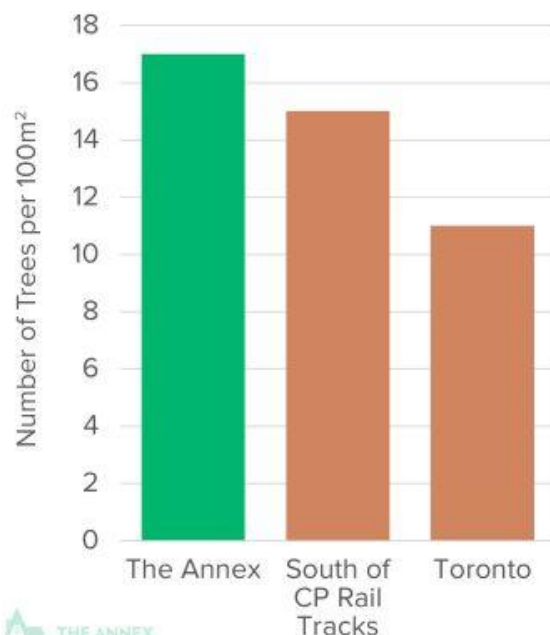
The recent uptick in abnormal raccoon behaviour in Toronto is due to an epidemic of canine distemper. This virus affects the central nervous system, causing animals to appear lethargic or unafraid of people and leading them to wander about in daytime when they should be asleep. Sadly, it is nearly always fatal.

And while, unlike rabies, distemper does not pose a danger to humans, it most certainly is harmful to dogs and other domesticated animals. That's just one more reason why Animal Services wants all of you pet owners to keep your dogs on a leash and your cats indoors.

The Annex by Numbers

This week it's all about trees and green spaces. Alex Topp did a deep dive into the City's database to come up with the average number of publicly owned trees in the Annex after taking park areas out of the measure. We know that developers like to tout our leafy streets. And the proof is in the pudding if you check the following chart.

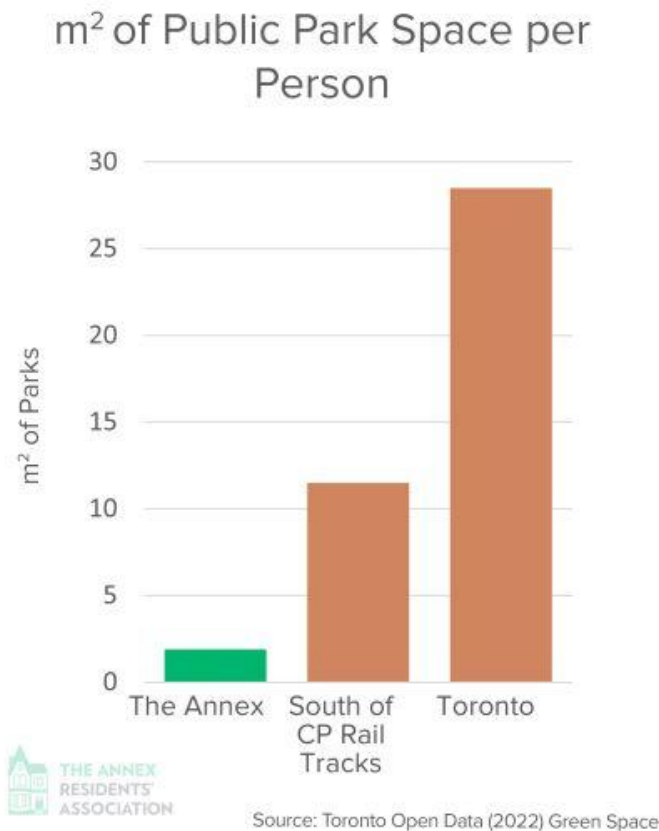
Average Number of Public Trees
per 100m² (Outside Parks)



Source: Toronto Open Data (2023) Street Trees

The Annex averages 17 street trees per 100 m² versus only 11 for Toronto as a whole. But the picture's not quite so rosy when we look at our share of public

parks.



The fact that we have so little public park space in the Annex is clearly mitigated by the fact that many of our apartment buildings have generous but private outdoor space (for example the Uno Prii apartment on Prince Arthur) giving the feeling of plentiful green space. As David Sisam notes:

It is important to maintain those ancillary green spaces. What is happening in the Yonge Eglinton area where these private green spaces are being taken away by over-development is a cautionary indication of the threat that exists.

Notes and Queries

Thundersnow?

Well last Friday's snow dump was one to remember — not only for the amount and weight of moisture that dropped from the sky, but also for the rather startling combination of thunder and lightning. The aftermath was equally newsworthy: parents dragging children on sleighs down the middle of snowy Annex streets, a snowperson or two, the inevitable impassable sidewalks. But we like best of all Henry Wiercinski's snap taken at the northeast border of our

'hood as Bernard feeds onto Avenue Road. Was the snowplow driver making a statement?



Promoting Public Art

We've had quite a few dreary weather days recently, but perhaps your struggles on snowy sidewalks and icy roads have been punctuated by a bit of joy in the form of one of the colourful murals in our neighbourhood — works like Joseph Sagaj's celebration of Indigenous creation myths (in Paul Martel Park) or Nick Sweetman's eyepopping tribute to the honey bee (on Howland at Bloor) or even something comparatively small as Alex Calder Karagianis' save-the-whales Bell box (on Admiral, pictured below).

If this art has given your spirits a lift, and if you value how art can animate public spaces, you might want to attend the webinar hosted this **March 16 at 1:00 pm** by [the Laneway Project](#). The webinar title is rather a mouthful, but says it all: *Public Art and its Potential: Reclaiming Underutilized Spaces for People*. If you're interested in attending, register [by clicking here](#).



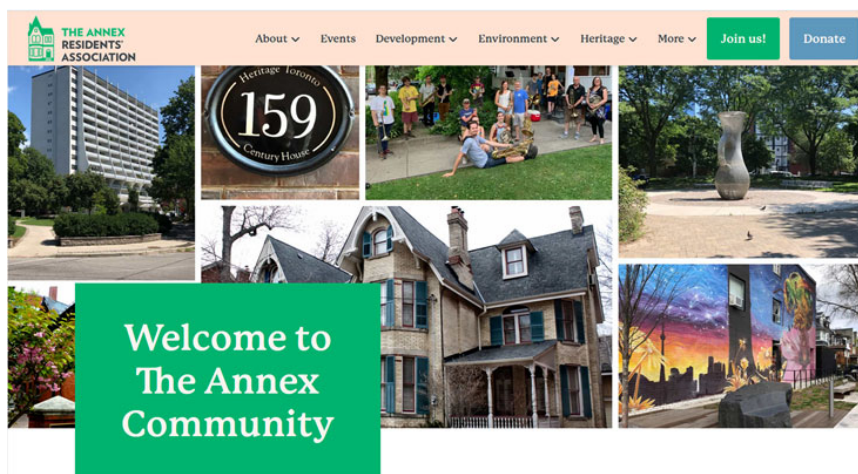
Meet n' Eat March 15 at 6:00 pm

As of Monday past, 22 members have signed up for next week's re-launch of our Meet n' Eat socials, this time at [Famosa](#) on Bloor at Dalton. Membership Secretary Tija Dirks has reserved the whole back section of the restaurant — so there's still room for more to join in the fun. If you're free to gather with neighbours next Wednesday, it would be great if you'd reserve a spot. That way we can give the restaurant a sense of the numbers they can expect. To RSVP, [click here](#) and then scroll down. And if you've nimble enough fingers to be doing this on a smart phone, you'll then need to tap on the Meet n' Eat event box to access the reply form.



ARA Board Meets Tomorrow

There's a chance to see your Board at work tomorrow evening from 7:00 to 9:00 on Zoom. If you're at all inclined, tune in to listen to the discussion. Just email your request to our Secretary, Micky Fraterman, at info@theara.org **by noon** on Thursday, and she'll send you the link. And if you're new to the association, why not [browse our website](#) beforehand just to get familiar with our committees, concerns, and colleagues?





The Annex Residents' Association is a volunteer organization of residents committed to improving and preserving the distinctive character of our neighbourhood. Our strength depends on our base of support in a well-informed community.

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The Annex Residents' Association