

THE TAYLOR MASSEY PROJECT

Celebrating and Protecting Taylor Massey Creek

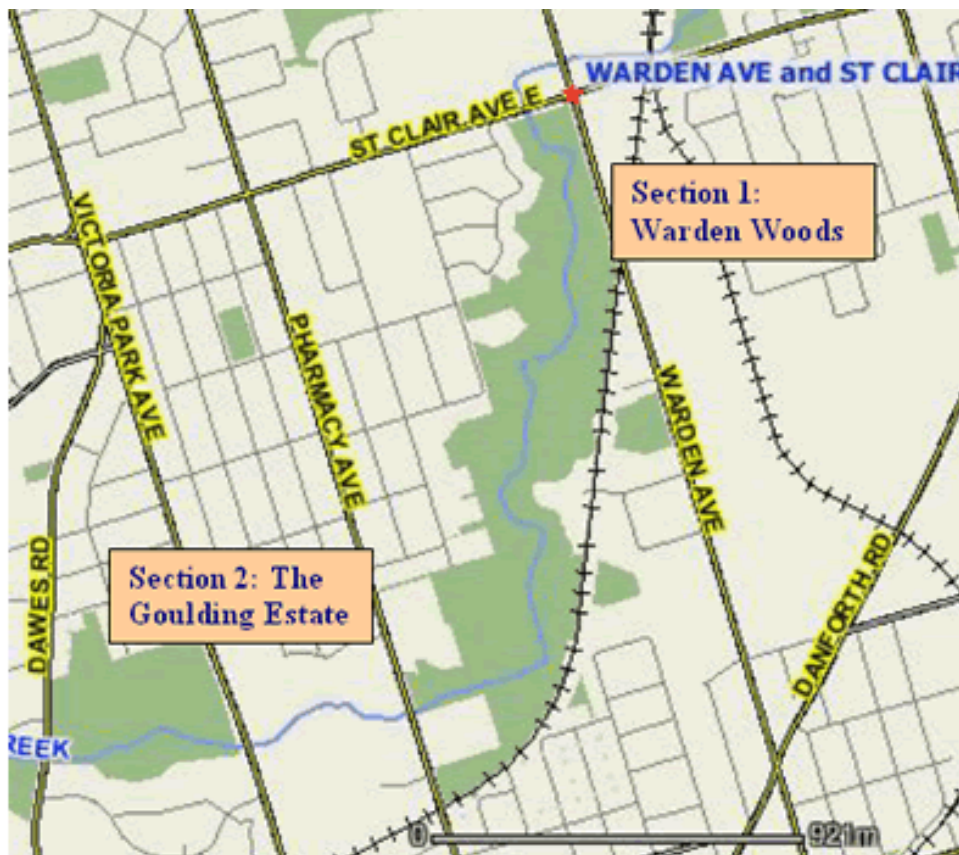
Self-guided Tours

Tour 4: Warden Woods and The Goulding Estate

Reach Partners: The J. Walton House
Clairlea Neighbourhood Association
Warden Woods West Neighbourhood Assoc'n

Introduction

This tour passes through some of its best natural heritage areas along the Creek, but it will also orient hikers to two significant challenges: stream-edge erosion and the damage being caused by non-native invasive species. The tour should take one hour and forty-five minutes one way, although exploratory detours could add more time, while a quick walk back to the beginning can be done in about thirty minutes.



Note: *Be safe. Dress properly. Take only pictures and leave only memories. Take water to drink and be aware that there are no washrooms along this tour. Please also note that The TMP accepts no liability what-so-ever for anything happening to anyone taking a voluntary hike along one of these Tours.*

Section 1: Warden Woods Park (60 minutes)

If you are not walking or cycling to Warden Woods, take the subway to Warden station or park your car in the subway station's commuter lot. Enter Warden Woods from the south-west corner of Warden and St Clair avenues. Just after you descend the stairs, you'll see a meadow on your right, noted on the aerial photograph as Item 1, where community groups have conducted numerous plantings since 2000. Above the meadow, note the fairly high sand cliffs on the opposite bank of the Creek, with evidence of the erosive power of stormwater along their base.

On the near-side of this eroded bank, you will be standing on new trail, re-constructed on a high wall of armour-stone (Item 2 on aerial photo). This wall was re-constructed in 2006, replacing the old-style gabion baskets that were washed out by years of storms. Significant erosion continues downstream, and there are many places where strollers will be able to see either falling baskets or slumping natural banks beside a deeply-eroded channel. In these locations, this main stream channel is in an un-natural "U" shape, caused by urban stormwater run-off from impervious surfaces. In natural areas where trees and other vegetation delay the seepage of rain and meltwater into a watercourse, channels tend to be in the shape of a side-ways "C". Along natural channels, streams often overflow their banks, creating the seasonal or temporary wetlands that are so important to biodiversity and healthy stream edges.

As you head south of the armour-stone wall, you will now be well into Warden Woods, one of the largest wooded areas in Scarborough. As you move further south along the paved footpath, the park becomes quieter, and the vistas more expansive. On the west side, the narrow ribbon of coniferous trees gradually widens, with majestic hardwoods towering along the elevated ridge on the west. On the east side, hard to see as you walk beneath it, are abundant maples, oaks, and areas of beech.

Halfway through the park, you will come to a dramatic ox-bow, Item 3 on the aerial, where the Creek takes a sharp turn away from the path and toward another tall, sandy cliff, then turns back again, creating a long, narrow point.

Many species of bird are common in Warden Woods, from chickadees, sparrows, ducks, and ovenbirds to orioles, scarlet tanagers, and hawks, as well as season warblers such as migrating Magnolia, Nashville, and Blackburnian. In fact, the TMP believes that Warden Woods has one of the largest varieties of birds within the City of Toronto. A list of many of the species found in the Woods is contained in the [Warden Woods Ecosystem Inventory](#).

One of the best places to view birds can be found on the west side of the Creek, using the one and only bridge, Item 4, about 300 metres north of the south entrance. Note the small plaque on the bridge, turn right, walk 100 metres, skirt the large and well-kept fire pit, and head onto the small ridges just north of the pit. Amidst the conifers, you can see many bird species, especially in the spring, but best leave tarrying here for another day. Instead, continue along the path that loops a short distance northward on the west bank.

After the exposure of the paved path on the eastern bank, this path is earthen, sheltered, and shaded.

Along the walk, you'll come to an informal BMX area carved out by the local youth, then come to the final loop through a huge plantation of Siberian Elms, Item 5, another non-native species that has pushed out the indigenous species that provide food for the native birds, before returning south to the bridge.

Returning to the paved path, continue south, noting the extensive dog-strangling vine that lines the path. This stubborn creature represents a real challenge to our natural areas. See if you can find one whose vines are beginning to strangle a sapling, and observe their long, pea-like seed pods. Ignore the subway passing by: it's a minor inconvenience in a huge area compared to the threat of invasive species.

Pass through the parking lot and head for Pharmacy. Cross at the light, and head toward the apartment buildings on the other side of the street. Before you get to them, a small pathway will open up on your left. This walkway takes you to a catwalk along the outside of the Victoria Park subway station, providing the most direct route around Dentonia Golf Course. If you dallied in Section 1, you can hop on the subway here or re-trace your steps to your car.

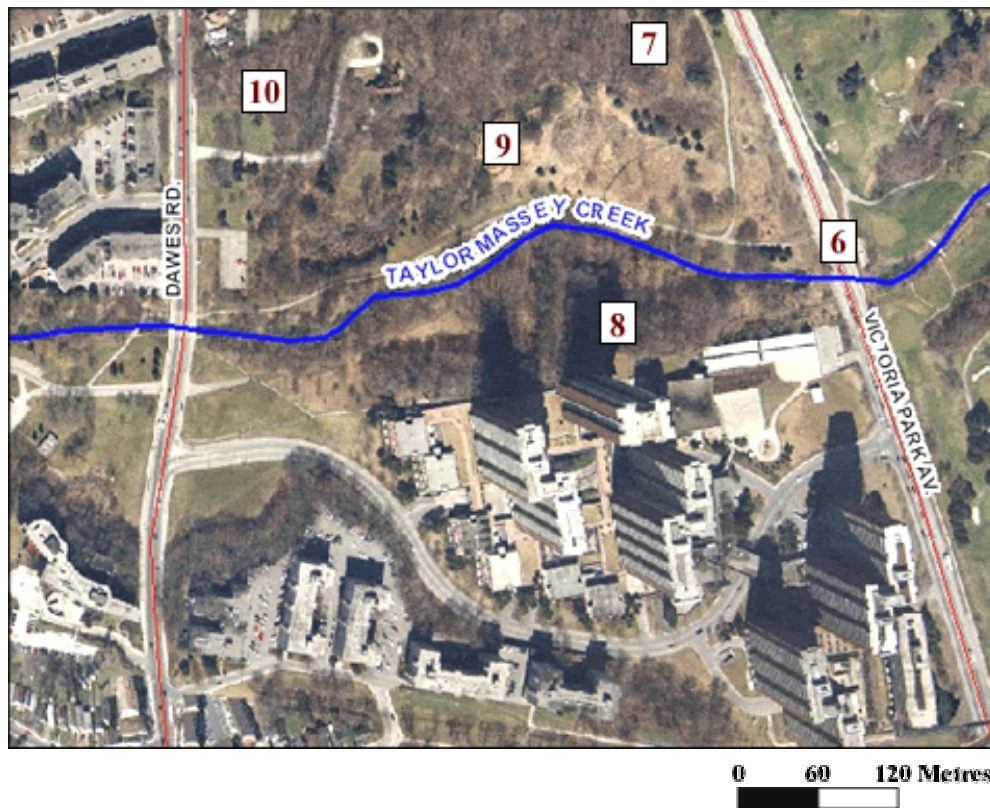


Note: Although the section above the apartment buildings in the lower portion of this aerial photo looks a lot like the next section of the Tour, overleaf, this area is Dentonia Golf Course. Please follow the instructions in the text to get around Dentonia.

Section 2: The Goulding Estate (45 minutes)

To get to the Goulding Estate, walk north along the east side of Victoria Park to the traffic light - do not try to cross at the subway station. After crossing, walk a bit further north on the west side of the street until you can see the stairway, Item 6, leading down into the Estate. As you head down the stairs, you are entering the last remaining vestige of Dentonia Park Farm, once owned by the Massey family. They lent their name to the Creek, and helped pioneer pasteurization in dairy farming at this location.

The crest of the northern ridge, Item 7, boasts some of the largest Oaks to be seen along the Creek. On the southern slopes, across the Creek and below the apartment buildings, is a large crop of Norway Maples, Item 8, another non-native invasive species. This one sends out odours that kill competing under-story growth, leading to bare soil and erosion on the southern slope. As a result, the City is considering a plan to cut down all of the Norways and re-plant this area.



A bit further along, at the western end of the small meadow on your right, well back from the path and nestled around a series of natural berms, you can find many berry-bearing trees and shrubs. These form a migratory songbird habitat, Item 9, started in 1997 and continued afterward with several community plantings.

At too many locations along this reach, where the trail approaches the Creek, you can see once again the impact of excessive storm flow: gabion baskets twisted sideways and washed into the Creek, slumping banks, and several trees being undercut yet still standing. Approach the bank with caution if it's raining or there is rushing water: the banks may not be stable. They will need extensive repair under the City's Wet Weather Flow Master Plan.

As you near Dawes Road, there is no need to brave the traffic, for the trail goes under the bridge and flows smoothly into Taylor Creek Park. It's a full hour downstream to the Forks of the Don, a section described in Tour 5 - so best save that for another day.

Instead, head uphill before crossing under Dawes Road, cross the parking lot, come to the driveway to the Goulding Estate itself, and head right. The roadway, Item 10, takes you to the last building in the Massey legacy - designated a heritage site in 1995 – and its garden amphitheatre.

To end your tour, follow the driveway back to Dawes Road and catch the TTC - south to the Danforth and the Main subway station or north to St Clair, Eglinton, and other connections.

If you left a vehicle at Warden and St Clair, it's about 30 minutes back there at a fast pace.

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