Unscripted: Wednesday Noon Hour Walks
Jason Chan

I would like to think of myself as an organized person. I love making lists, I like when everything is in its place, and I like planning out my day and its activities - it’s a delight to have order in my life. This organization clearly seems to have transferred to how I plan for the different educational programs I lead here at The Arboretum as the Interpretive Naturalist. From my summer Wednesday Night Walks, to the after-school Junior Naturalists programs we offer; I’m planning, brainstorming ideas, and making handouts weeks (even months) ahead of time. Oh the wonders of organization!

But when it came to the Wednesday Noon Hour Walks that are new this year, I was given the task and responsibility to lead unplanned, spontaneous, and unscripted walks for whoever decides to come out. This was incredibly uncomfortable for me because it went against how I worked and how I was wired, but I knew it was a positive challenge for me to learn how to think on my feet and to be more confident in my capabilities. One thing I’ve learnt is that it is only in uncomfortable and challenging situations that we grow.

The aim (and this has pretty much become the slogan) of the walk from the angle of the participants is “getting off the Promenade”; you know, that main road that everyone walks through? Now, there’s nothing wrong with the Promenade, but our hope is that these walks would help you explore and discover all The Arboretum has to offer, from our old growth forests, to the vast diversity of fauna and flora, to our conservation efforts.

It’s mid March now, and two-thirds of the walks will be over, but my initial discomfort from these walks has quickly become an ever-increasing joy. It’s always a pleasure to see the regulars again, and a pleasure to welcome newcomers to The Arboretum. Together we’ve delved into The Arboretum’s past and it’s origins, we’ve spotted signs and marks left by the largest woodpecker in the area, the Pileated Woodpecker, poked at some unknown scat, investigated turkey tracks, learnt how to identify some trees in the winter, and familiarized ourselves with The Arboretum porcupine.
We still have just over a month’s worth of walks left, and I hope you’ll come out and join us! Whether it’s to walk the dog, get some exercise, or explore the natural world, The Arboretum awaits! With nature being unpredictable and unexpected, who knows what we’ll find the next time we go for a walk into the woods - unscripted.

(inserted photos by Alan Watson)

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