



What's Growing On? The Fletcher Wildlife Garden Newsletter

Summer is coming!



With the temperature changing dramatically from day to day, it's difficult to know what season we're in, but the FWG is teeming with activity right now. Orioles singing, Red Admiral butterflies laying eggs on nettles, frogs basking next to the pond.

In a May workshop, we learned to make mason bee nests, and the ones at the FWG were immediately used by our Blue Orchard Mason Bees.

Join us for a nature walk on Sunday afternoons: June 7 and 21, July 5 and 19. We've been finding toads, enjoying the wildflowers, especially flowering trees, and delighting in the surprises.

All spare time is devoted to our annual plant sale coming up on June 6, 9:30 am to 12:30 pm. Hope to see you there.

In this issue of our newsletter, we explore the concept of "nodes" at the Garden, how spring has come to the Backyard Garden, and how many birders in the area are dedicated to their feathery hobby. There's also a call for volunteers – we need help and there are jobs for everyone at your favorite garden!

Finally, in our Nature Notes, we learn about *Nomada* bees and the ever-present, but well camouflaged, Gray Tree Frog.



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Our Photo Blog: www.pbase.com/fwg/root
On Twitter: @FletcherWildG
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It's Just a Plant Sale

Text by Ted Farnworth

When you mention to your friends that the Fletcher Garden is holding a plant sale, I'm sure many of them don't appreciate how much time and effort goes into our one-day event. Set up a couple of signs on the road a few days in advance to attract people, arrange a few tables in the parking lot, put out the plants, and then sit back and collect money.

Little do people know that our plant sale preparation actually starts the fall before the actual sale. Seeds from plants in the Backyard Garden and other locations are gathered, labelled, and stored. Some plants are separated, potted, and placed in our outdoor nursery to overwinter. Then early in the new year, the seeds are planted in large flats. Emerging plants are put under glow lights,

and watered regularly. Plants can't be left to get too dry, the light cycle of the grow lights has to be checked, and the temperature in the Interpretation Centre has to be maintained all through the coldest part of an Ottawa winter. Even if the temperature outside is -25. Or the road to the Centre hasn't been ploughed. Especially if there has been a power outage. If something were to happen and the plants die? No plants, no plant sale!

From January to April the Interpretation Centre glows with the light from fluorescent light bulbs all on timers to simulate outdoor light patterns that encourage good growth. Once the weather warms up, many hands are used to pot and repot plants as they grow in the weeks leading up to the sale. Much care is taken to properly label pots so that when someone buys it they know exactly what they are getting and can plant it in a proper place in their garden. Keeping the potted plants healthy until the day of the sale is a labour intensive but important job.

After all of this? We put out road signs, set up the tables, bring out the plants and then sit back and collect money. And start thinking about next year's plant sale!



Sandy provides some TLC to plants for this year's sale



Jardin écologique
Fletcher
Wildlife Garden



Annual Native Plant Sale

Saturday, June 6, 2015

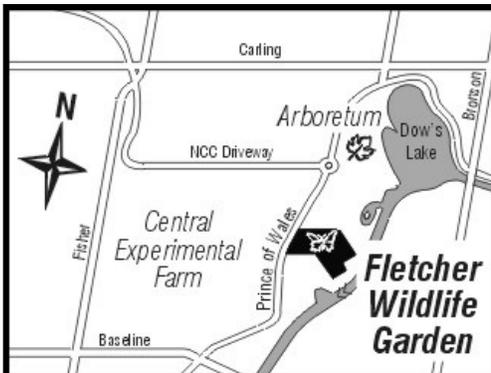
9:30 AM to 12:30 PM

Fletcher Wildlife Garden, Ottawa
(Prince of Wales Drive, south of the Arboretum)

Hundreds of beautiful wildflowers are native to the Ottawa region. We can tell you which ones suit your backyard. Plant a wide variety of native plants for a garden that changes from month to month and attracts birds, butterflies, and other wildlife that will bring your garden to life.

See our demonstration backyard garden. Pick up free plant lists and “how-to” info on gardening for butterflies, attracting birds, building a backyard pond, and more!

Please help by donating your empty 4-inch SQUARE pots.



For more information or if you have any questions, please contact Sandy at 613-730-0714 or fletcher@ofnc.ca



©FWG, Christine Harahan



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www.ofnc.ca/fletcher

Fletcher Wildlife Garden is a long-term project of the Ottawa Field-Naturalists' Club

Jardin écologique
Fletcher
 Wildlife Garden



Vente de plantes indigènes

Le samedi 6 juin 2015

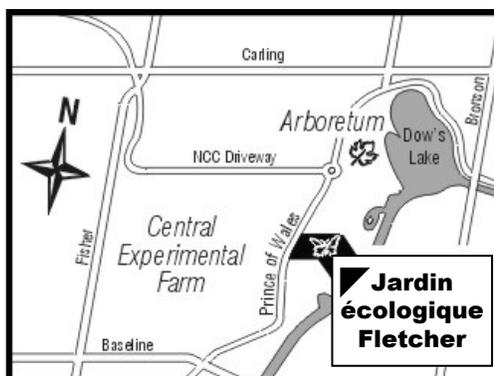
9h30 à 12h30

Jardin écologique Fletcher, Ottawa
 (Promenade Prince of Wales, au sud du rond
 point de l'Arboretum)

La région d'Ottawa est riche de centaines de plantes indigènes plus belles les unes que les autres. Nous vous aiderons à trouver celles qui se plairont dans votre jardin. Vous verrez votre parterre fleurir et se transformer au fil des saisons, sans engrais ni pesticides. Les plantes indigènes feront aussi revenir les papillons et les oiseaux.

Visitez notre jardin, derrière le centre d'interprétation, pour vous faire une idée de ce que votre cour arrière pourrait devenir. Des fiches techniques sont à votre disposition pour vous aider à créer une haie, jardiner pour les papillons, composter, etc.

Merci de nous aider en donnant vos pots carrés de 10 cm.



Si vous avez des questions à formuler ou plus d'informations, merci de contacter Sandy au 613-730-0714 ou fletcher@ofnc.ca



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Le jardin écologique Fletcher est un projet à long terme du Club des naturalistes d'Ottawa

Statistics Canada Environmental Fair

Text & photo by Elizabeth Moore



Elizabeth Moore & Barbara Riley at the Fair

We were delighted to receive and accept an invitation to present the Fletcher Wildlife Garden to the staff of Statistics Canada at their annual Environmental Fair held in connection with Earth Day. It is heartening to learn that StatsCan is making an effort to inform their employees about what various organisations do to help protect the environment and what they can do themselves to make positive changes in their own lives.

On April 21, 2015, we set up our display among a select group of organisations promoting practices ranging from the use of environmentally friendly transport to responsible garbage disposal. The amount of interest shown in our presentation was extremely rewarding. Having been encouraged by the organisers to be

environmentally responsible ourselves and not waste paper, the relatively modest number of handouts we had taken rapidly diminished. "Gardening for Butterflies" was particularly popular, closely followed by "Gardening for Birds" and "How to Compost". The popularity of the latter may have been, at least in part, due to the fact that our booth was next to that of the City of Ottawa Environmental Services Department which was promoting composting!

Many people expressed interest in our Plant Sale and we hope to see them all, together with their friends and neighbours, on June 6.

Beautiful with Birds

Text & photo by Judith Miller

The Interpretation Centre at the Fletcher Wildlife Garden (FWG) on a sunny afternoon in May — a perfect place to have the vernissage for a book of reflections on a birding life, *Beautiful with Birds*, from the non-profit publishing project, Stonegarden Studios (www.stonegardenstudios.ca).

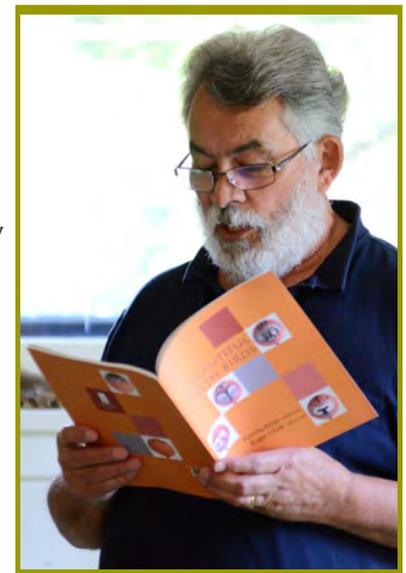
On Sunday, May 17, children and adults visited, explored the centre's resources, looked through beautiful books, and enjoyed ceramic sculpture. Many had never been to the FWG or to its Backyard Garden.

"This is Ottawa's best kept secret," people said. "It is so beautiful here," they remarked, enjoying the oasis of peace.

Roger Clark, resident of Ottawa and citizen of the world, read to the attentive audience about birding adventures in familiar and far-away places. Bright green plants for the June 6 plant sale surrounded him.

Pamela Rojas, resident of Waterloo, Ontario, and also a citizen of the world, told delighted listeners that her ceramic "heads" celebrate human connections to the earth and to birds around the world.

As an educational and fundraising event, it was very effective.



Roger Clark, reading an excerpt from his book "Beautiful with Birds".

Lis Allison awarded OFNC President's Prize

Text by Isabelle Nicol



It was a great pleasure to see Lis Allison receive the President's Prize at the OFNC's yearly Awards Ceremony recently for her creation of a fern garden at the Fletcher Wildlife Garden. The fern garden was four years in the making and was established to commemorate a long-time member of the Ottawa Field-Naturalists' Club, Bill Cody. Bill was a fern specialist, and worked for Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada for many years. He was a long-time supporter of the Fletcher Wildlife Garden and visited the area many times over the years, supporting it when there was some controversy over its establishment. He took great delight and interest in its paths, flowers, and wildlife.

Why did it take four years to establish a fern garden? Originally it was started in the Ash Woodlot. But, unfortunately, the Emerald Ash Borer had infested the ash trees in the area to the point where many of the trees were dying. Therefore, it was decided to move the fern garden to the Backyard Garden next to our Interpretive Centre last summer.

Four years ago, someone was needed to take on this project, someone with a background in the growth of ferns, their habitats, and care. Not an easy task for just anyone. Ferns love to grow in all kinds of places - dry woods, damp woods, wetlands, around ponds, and on wild rocky walls. A volunteer was needed who not only had a wide knowledge of all the different ferns in our area, but how to grow them in diverse habitats. The person who stepped forward to take on this task was Lis Allison.

When the decision was made to use the Backyard Garden as a new place to establish the fern garden, Lis had to move many of the ferns that had been planted in the Ash Woodlot. She had to recommence work from scratch. However, without batting an eye, she rolled up her sleeves, and took on the job. In this new area she had plenty of shade for shade-loving ferns, but needed a place to grow rock-loving ferns, as well as a place for ferns that need wet feet. Lis set about modifying the area for the differing needs of all these ferns.

First, she dug a huge hole, used a pond liner in which she punched holes, put it into the hole, and backfilled it with all the necessary elements to create a wetland habitat. Next, she moved on to create a lovely stone wall on which to accommodate rock-loving ferns. And there was plenty of shade for all the ferns that love filtered light. She donated many of the ferns we now have from her own fern gardens, as well as a number that had been given to us by Dan Faber.

Voila! We now have a fern garden with up to about 39 ferns of the 43 that grow in the Ottawa area. Along with the ferns, many of our beautiful native wildflowers will also be interspersed amongst them. The fern garden will only grow more beautiful with time as the ferns begin to fill in the open spaces around them. So, thanks to the energy, work, and thoughtful design of Lis Allison, we now have a truly beautiful area in our Backyard Garden, a fern garden in memory of Bill Cody who loved this area so much. It is most certain that he himself would be very proud of this area created in his name. One can only agree that Lis Allison was an excellent choice for a President's Prize. Bravo Lis!



A Dedicated Birder

Text by Ted Farnworth

How do you know if you are a really dedicated birder? Yes, you probably have one of those fancy guide to birds books. The kind with all the nice coloured pictures and maps of where you will find a Canada Jay in the summer. That's always a good start. It's when you pay big money to buy a good pair of binoculars that you show your commitment.

And then of course there is the "life list." Many dedicated birders do not admit to having one, but how else can they tell you that they saw a male wood duck at Mud Lake at seven ten a.m. on May 2, 2010? Maybe it is just good record keeping, but it sure sounds like a life list.

But there still remains a level of commitment to birding that exceeds having the guide book, the binoculars, the life list. You know you are a really dedicated birder when you participate in a winter bird count.

Over the years, various members of the Fletcher community have dutifully participated in the Cornell winter bird count. The aim to get as many people as possible to report. This is an example of "citizen science." The data submitted by many amateurs can eventually accumulate to allow the professionals to come to useful conclusions. There is also a "feeder watch" program as well as various bird counts throughout the year.

Bird counts are valuable records of the year-to-year variation in the actual number and variety of birds visiting a particular site. Bird counts are held at various times of the year, but it is the winter one that separates the eagles from the wrens. Why? Well even though this is Canada and we are supposed to be used to the cold, this past winter was just too darned frigid for most people. But not for some.

It was a very cold day in February when a small group of FWG people did a walk about of the garden to do a count. The temperature and the wind meant that even several layers of clothes didn't prevent the cold from getting through. Although the sun was bright, hands and feet got cold very quickly, and adjusting the binocular focus with bare hands was painful.

The count was completed, but you had to wonder if the low numbers observed were due to the fact that the birds were smart enough not to be out on such a cold day. Too cold for the birds. Not too cold for a really dedicated birder.



Marilyn and David – real dedicated birders



Spring Fling, April 26th 2015

Text by Barbara Riley

The long, cold winter meant a late spring but finally on Saturday, 26 April, FWG volunteers got together over a potluck lunch to welcome the new season (at least two weeks later than last year). Over good food and a glass of wine and surrounded by shelves of tiny plants under grow-lights, we traded tales of winter, everything from snow-shovelling horror stories to birding in southern climates. We took time to remember former volunteers from both FWG and OFNC: Charles Clifford, Bill Cody and Laurie Consaul. Updates on the Bill Cody Fern Trail and the new bird feeder in the Backyard Garden, a proposal for encouraging volunteers to "adopt" a favourite spot, plans for summer workshops and guided tours, and comments from Fenja Brodo, our Ottawa Field Naturalists' Club President, got everyone caught up and ready to tackle the new season.



FWG Job Openings

Our 2015 outdoor season is about to start. On top of our usual things to do, there are several jobs that we need help with that are a bit different. If you have any experience in these areas and want to help, that is great. If you are willing to try, enthusiasm and willingness to learn is all you need.

A. Librarian

In our resource centre we have a collection of books, pamphlets and documents. We have a partial inventory of our holdings, but need someone to do a thorough sorting and recording of what we have. In the end, we would like to put this information into a database so that volunteers and visitors to the FWG can make better use of the library. This can be done at your convenience. Contact : Sandy Garland (sgarland@teksavvy.com); Diane Lepage (dlepagehibou@sympatico.ca)

B. Quartermaster ? Quartermistress? Quarterperson?

At the FWG we have an impressive amount of equipment. The storage shed is full of all sorts of garden tools. Last year, we started a tool inventory. We need one or two people to organize the tool shed, put FWG labels on tools, and complete the inventory. Other FWG volunteers can help you with this. Contact : Ted Farnworth (tedfarnworth@yahoo.com)

C. Volunteer co-ordinator

We are an organization of volunteers. But we don't have one person who has the job of recruiting, screening, providing orientation and support to our volunteers. We need someone who enjoys working with people, is able to describe and explain what volunteering at the FWG is all about and can help new volunteers settle in. Contact: Barbara Reiley (bariley@sympatico.ca); Ted Farnworth (tedfarnworth@yahoo.com)

If you are interested in any of these important jobs, or you know of someone, even someone who is not currently an FWG volunteer who could help us, please contact or talk to one of the FWG people listed above.



Redesigned Brochures

Text by Barbara Riley



We are pleased to report that our newly-designed, bilingual brochures are now available and decorating bulletin board boxes throughout Fletcher Wildlife Garden. The new format, with a new FWG logo, will be used for all future FWG publications.

These free brochures include the Garden's Trail Map, three Invasive Species Fact Sheets (garlic mustard, burdock, do-strangling vine), and five "How To's": Creating Gardens for Birds, All About Feeding Birds, Backyard Composting, Gardening for Butterflies, and Create a Backyard Pond. They will soon be posted to the FWG website and we encourage readers to copy them with credit to Fletcher Wildlife Garden.

Thanks goes to Tremayne Stanton-Kennedy, Michèle Wilson, Sandy Garland, Christine Hanrahan, Diane Lepage, Jeewa Mendis, Gillian Boyd, and Dierdre Furlong for design, content, translation, and photography. Fletcher Wildlife Garden

acknowledges the support of the TD Friends of the Environment Foundation in the redesign of the brochures.

Springtime In The Backyard Garden

Text by Isabelle Nicol

A rather cool spring this year, but one day was hot enough for one of our red squirrels to press its warm belly against a cool rock in the shade. However, suddenly with warmer weather, spring seems to be busting out all over. Now many of our springtime birds have returned, and the "en masse" arrivals were heralded earlier with Red-winged Blackbirds and Cedar Waxwings. These were soon followed by Baltimore Orioles, Great Crested Flycatchers, Yellow Warblers, Redstarts, Warbling Vireos, House Wrens, and Catbirds mewling at each other in the undergrowth. White-crowned Sparrows were also seen about the garden in greater numbers. Many of these birds are setting up their territories for the new nesting season and add a great sense of pleasure as we work, the males' songs a warning to each other to stay out of their particular territories.

Yesterday, while working in the garden, I was told by one of our well-known birders in the area that a Sharp-shinned Hawk had just buzzed the feeder where a Northern Cardinal had just landed. The cardinal made good its escape.

There were a fair number of Mourning Cloak butterflies about earlier as they awakened from their winter sleep and flitted about the garden and also in the near-by ravine. They have been joined by Spring Azures, Cabbage Whites, Red Admirals, and an American Painted Lady, which flitted about in the Pearly Everlasting, laying her eggs here and there. One even deigned to visit the nursery and appeared to lay a few of her eggs on the potted Pearly Everlasting, an interesting surprise for some unsuspecting customer.



Our "blue-headed" Green Frog has appeared again in the pond. She sits in pretty much the same territory she claimed last year, and many photographers look for her in that particular spot.

(left) An Eastern Comma Butterfly, photographed by Christine Hanrahan



The Trillium, Ontario's provincial flower. Photographed by Christine Hanrahan

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Her turquoise tones can be quite brilliant at times depending on the time of day and lighting. She tries to stay well hidden most of the time, as though somehow aware that her comely colours cause her to stand out more than her greener comrades. She also appears to be a tranquil sort, as she allows photographers to get fairly close to her, perhaps believing she is well hidden. One young toad sat on a nearby rock “singing” last week, but it has now disappeared. Our small pond appears to be home to mainly Green Frogs. However Gray Treefrogs are also in abundance, croaking from the leafy foliage of trees and bushes surrounding the garden.

An Eastern Gartersnake was seen in the compost pile yesterday, apparently a young one. A couple of photographers hung around hoping it would make another appearance after having been disturbed. The voles and mice, who like to roam about and nest in the compost pile, would more likely not be so pleased, having a snake make an appearance right in their own backyard.

Bumblebees and ground-nesting bees are in abundance. And dragonflies are showing up along with water striders, which skim across our upper pond, and were joined by one whirligig beetle this past week.

The garden was a sea of gold just last week with Daffodils, Marsh Marigolds, and Barren Strawberries in bloom, closely followed by Wood Poppies. Now, a week later, the garden is

awash in blue with many Forget-Me-Nots blooming in different places. So very many other flowers have also started to come into bloom, or are now finished - Trout Lily, Bloodroot, Wild Columbine, Canada and Yellow Violets, Trilliums, and our Yellow Lady’s Slippers now about to burst into bloom. Many of our flowers (ephemerals) bloom so early that if you’re not there at the right time, the season for them passes quickly and they won’t be seen again until next year.

Please do come visit and enjoy our garden, which is considered by many “a hidden gem” in the middle of the city. We very much look forward to seeing you there.



The backyard garden's blue headed frog, photographed by Hans Blokpoel



"Nodes" at the FWG

Text by Ted Farnworth

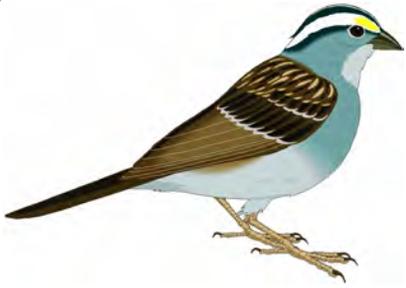
What is a node? In the context of the Fletcher Garden, a node is a place or a feature that FWG volunteers use to create, preserve, or protect native plants, animals, and environments. Nodes can become points of interest on a walk through the garden where visitors can learn more about what we are doing to save and protect this valuable space, and it can show how easy it is to do similar things on their own property. From a management point of view, creating nodes will give volunteers a chance to work on a small area or project that they will be able to maintain.

Three things prompted the idea of creating nodes at the Fletcher Wildlife Garden. First, we have many interesting things to see. However, as people walk through the garden, they often don’t understand or appreciate what they are looking at. Volunteers may know why we pile up branches and stems into “brushpiles” and why we built the amphibian pond, but our visitors often don’t. The Management Committee has talked for some time about how we can make a walk through the garden more educational.

Second, last year the Ottawa Field-Naturalists’ Club changed out mandate to “Demonstrate to residents of the Ottawa area how to create or restore wildlife-friendly habitats and gardens in their neighbourhood, emphasizing the use of plants native to this region.”

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The OFNC sees the garden as a place where people can learn more about nature and where and how the FWG volunteers have created flower beds of native plants, insect hotels, brushpiles, etc., that promote, protect, and encourage local animals, plants, and birds. Over the years we have built the FWG from mowed parkland into a variety of wildlife homes. The things we have done, and learned in the process, need to be shared with people who visit the garden.

Third, the Management Committee has come to realize that managing the existing “habitats” has become difficult. Managing such a large area as the New Woodlot, for example, is a commitment that most volunteers are not willing to take on. By creating nodes that are much smaller and well defined, we are hoping to encourage volunteers to become a “node nanny” – someone who is responsible for the upkeep and maintenance of the node and any associated signage.

Some examples of possible nodes: the DSV crop circles, various brushpiles in the FWG, an insect hotel, bird feeders, the milkweed patch north of the woods.

You will be hearing more about nodes in the near future.

Nature Notes: Nomada Bees

Text & photos by Christine Hanrahan

In early spring one may often see very small wasp-like bees darting around, showing flashes of red. Closer examination reveals a red abdomen with yellow markings. These are Cuckoo Bees, more often called Nomada bees or Nomad bees, in the genus *Nomada*. As to which species we have at the FWG, who knows. It is difficult for any but an expert to ID them to more than genus level, as there are nearly 300 species in North America, and many look similar to each other.

Nomada bees are cleptoparasites, laying their eggs on the pollen masses gathered and stored by other bees such as *Andrena* and *Colletes*. Although Nomada bees are frequently found nectaring on early spring flowers and may be dusted with pollen, they have no means of gathering and carrying it the way many other bees do.

One of the easiest ways to find Nomada bees is to check out the big willow at the Amphibian Pond when it's in flower. There are also several locations at the garden where one can watch the Nomadas patrolling the nest sites of Andrenid bees, flying low and fast just above ground level, occasionally landing and vanishing beneath the leaf litter.



Nomada bee on Forget-me-not



*Nomada bees investigating
Andrenid nest site*



Nomada bee on Willow



Nomada bee on Dandelion

Nature Notes: Gray Treefrog

Text & photos by Christine Hanrahan



A well-camouflaged gray treefrog at FWG



Gray treefrog at FWG



A recently metamorphosed treefrog



Gray treefrog at FWG

The somewhat bird-like trill of the gray treefrog (*Hyla versicolor*) is a familiar one in eastern Ontario, including at the FWG, where many folk, not surprisingly think they are hearing a bird. Trying to track down these little guys is another matter! They are not only exceptionally well camouflaged, but they shut up when you get too close! Occasionally luck wins out and one is found, as happened at the garden a few days ago (15 May) when Malcolm found one near the nursery area.

One of the best times to see these endearing frogs is at night when they hang around lights, waiting for the moths and other insects attracted to the brightness. Otherwise, outside of breeding season, they are mostly found on trees, sometimes quite high up. These tree dwellers clearly prefer wooded areas and such habitat is where they are most likely to be found.

Gray treefrogs are noted for their chameleon-like ability to change colour. They may be either gray or green, usually, but not always, with darker blotches on their body. You should also notice a small whitish square patch under the eyes. Colour change is thought to be temperature dependent. Bob Johnson (1989) suggests that treefrogs on warm days or in bright sun are green, whereas those found on cooler, darker days tend to a grayish colouration. However, colour change also occurs (and can occur within minutes) depending on what or where they are perched. As you can see in David's photo (right), the frog is gray and sitting on a gray branch.

Right about now (third to fourth week in May), they head to the pond, the males calling for a mate. Listening to their wonderful chorus at night is riveting as the sound surges across the garden. Eggs, up to 2000 per female, are laid and attached to submerged plants, but they hatch quickly, usually within seven days.

By August the tadpoles are transforming into tiny brilliantly green froglets. It is not uncommon to find the newly metamorphosed youngsters, some still with remnants of the tadpole tail, around the pond area, clinging to shrubs and weedy vegetation. Meantime, the adults have long since returned to their upland habitats where they can still be heard calling, although not as prolifically.

During winter, these frogs hunker deep down under leaves and have the ability, as many frogs do, to tolerate freezing temperatures.

I have seen many treefrogs over the years, in a variety of situations, and in all colours and sizes, but the thrill of seeing them never dulls. I know I am not alone in thinking this!



Gray frog on DSV leaf



Juvenile gray treefrog