



What's Growing On? The Fletcher Wildlife Garden Newsletter

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February - March 2014

Spring is just around the corner

Text by Sandra Garland and France Thibodeau
Photos by Christine Hanrahan



Chickadees are one of the rare birds that stay at the FWG year-round

Although winter's grip seems everlasting, there are hints that spring is coming. Some days are warmer than others, the sun seems a little brighter, and the bird songs are a little louder. Algonquin Park reports chipmunk activity, hummingbirds have started their long journey north, and locally people are hearing cardinals calling. In another month or so, we'll start to see the return of old favorites, beginning with Red-winged Blackbirds, the heralds of spring at the FWG.

In this issue, we learn about animal tracks in the snow: which animal they belong to and what we can learn about them through the prints they leave behind. We hear about where Snapping Turtles go, and how the hardy mouse survives the winter in abandoned nest boxes. There's also news on the Ash Woodlot's on-going makeover, the mysteries behind the Evening Primrose in winter, and we learn about the many abundant food sources that the birds

and animals take advantage of at the garden. And, of course, there's news from our ever popular Facebook Group, where all the updates and news about the Fletcher Wildlife Garden can be found.

Insects are still the big newsmakers, though, with bee species still in trouble and the number of monarch butterflies reaching the lowest ever. To bring the bad news down to something we can grasp, right now all of the

monarchs that flew south last fall from all areas east of the Rock Mountains are gathered in Mexico in an area the size of the FWG!! Conservationists are scrambling to "do something" and urging everyone to plant milkweeds anywhere they can.

Here's a list of milkweed seed suppliers - <http://monarchwatch.org/bring-back-the-monarchs/resources/plant-seed-suppliers> (scroll down to Canada, Ontario). We're growing Common and Swamp Milkweeds for the FWG and hope to have enough to share with anyone who is willing to start a Monarch Waystation as well. Over the spring and summer, we'll let you know how our waystation is doing and provide more info about what you can do too.



One of the many Red Squirrels hanging out at the FWG this winter

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Contact Us!**FLETCHER WILDLIFE GARDEN****Box 35069 Westgate PO****Ottawa ON****K1Z 1A2****Tel: (613) 234-6767****Email: fletcher@ofnc.ca****Find us Online!****FLETCHER WILDLIFE GARDEN****Our Website: www.onfc.ca/fletcher****Our Text Blog: fletcherwildlifegarden.wordpress.com****Our Photo Blog: www.pbase.com/fwg/root****On Twitter: twitter.com/FletcherWildG****On Facebook: [www.facebook.com/](http://www.facebook.com/groups/48901132335/)****[groups/48901132335/](https://www.facebook.com/groups/48901132335/)****On Deviantart: the-fwg.deviantart.com****Where Snappers Go In Winter***Text by Sandra Garland, Photo by Barry Cottam*

Snapping turtles were the subject of a short discussion on a local nature listserv recently. It started when one member reported that a friend's son had found a large snapper "on top of the snow, over a quarter of a mile from the lake. It was frozen but not eaten by predators even though there were numerous coyote tracks around it."

They were mystified that the turtle was so far from water and on top of the snow instead of buried under it.

Another listserv member, David L, cited work in Algonquin by Matt Keevil,* who found that some snapping turtles leave large bodies of water and head into the forest to overwinter in "tiny seeps and springs."

As long as water is flowing, he explained, the turtle would not freeze and the water's oxygen content might be higher than non-moving water in a pond or lake. Buried in mud, it would also be more protected from hungry otters or other predators.

How the large snapper ended up on top of the snow is still a mystery, but this explains its distance from the lake. Who knew snappers were such travelers!

*Matt Keevil is a PhD student at Laurentian University. He is studying "Dispersal of snapping and painted turtles."

More info:

Ontario's reptile and amphibian atlas, Snapping Turtle - http://www.ontarionature.org/protect/species/reptiles_and_amphibians/snapping_turtle.php

Frozen for life, by L. Anthony - http://www.canadianwritersgroup.com/wp/wp-content/uploads/2010/10/Frozen_For_Life.pdf

Field stories and thoughts about turtle conservation in Ontario, blog posts by Christina Davy and guests - <http://thinkingturtles.wordpress.com/2013/05/>



Snapping turtle at the FWG.

Wildlife Tracks at the FWG

Text and photos by Christine Hanrahan

When winter comes, it seems the wildlife slips away, save for a few resilient birds and mammals. But look carefully - tracks in the snow will reveal a busy world, with animals both common and less so, clearly going about their business despite the frigid weather. One of the intriguing things tracks can reveal is the presence of animals we rarely see because they are secretive, nocturnal, or both.

Tracks let you know who has been where, doing what; they have a story to tell. You can see where animals have visited dens, slid into a snow tunnel, or had an interaction with another creature. The placement of front and rear feet can tell you whether the animal was hopping, running, loping, walking, bounding, trotting, etc. And that can tell you whether an animal was in a hurry, moving purposefully over the land. Or walking or loping more slowly, in a meandering fashion, searching for food. By learning the tracks of common species in our region, you will discover that the silent world of winter is not really devoid of life after all.



Fox tracks across the pond



Vole tracks and tunnel

Tracks can look quite different in different types of snow. Heavy wet snow is nearly impossible for tracking, but fresh light snow is perfect. Deep snow or wet snow can make tracks appear larger than they really are. Many tracks will be baffling, for similar species make similar tracks, and distinguishing one from the other will be a challenge. However, patterns will soon emerge. You'll quickly be able to determine that a vole or mouse made one set of tracks, that a fox or coyote made another, that a red or a grey squirrel yet another. And soon enough, you will differentiate between fox and coyote, red and grey squirrel, and so on. Tracking is popular, and it helps that there are so many good books to aid us (see below for a few that I have found very useful).

By following tracks you will often come across other signs of an animal's presence in an area. As food is vital for survival of wildlife in winter, signs of feeding will often be found when following tracks. You'll soon familiarize yourself with the various signs. Cottontail rabbits chew branches closer to the ground (and so do snowshoe hares, though we have none of those at the garden), squirrels gnaw small strips of bark off certain species of trees (sumac is a favourite). Voles leave little piles of gnawed stems. Sumac 'cones' and dried fruit stashed in a tree, cones piled against a trunk, maple keys scattered on the ground, twigs and branches covering the snow, all point to signs an animal is or has been, feeding there. In the wider world, the woods, forests and fields beyond the FWG, you will see signs of animals such as moose (long strips of bark peeled from red maples), deer (sumac bark is yummy), porcupines (they really like conifers in winter), and of course, scattered feathers and fur, evidence that to survive, one species will feed on another.

Wildlife Tracks at the FWG continued...

Scat is another indicator of an animal's presence. Fox scat at the FWG is often mistaken for dog scat (and it amuses me when people complain it hasn't been picked up). Rabbit scat is readily identifiable (dry pellets), squirrel scat is mysteriously infrequent (but looks similar to rabbit scat). Raccoons like to deposit their scat on a high place. Shrew scat is next to invisible. Vole scat is mostly seen when the snow melts.

To figure out what you have seen, you will need to take along a ruler or measuring tape (size is important for identification), a notebook to record your observations, and a camera to take

photos not only of the tracks, but of the surrounding area, for habitat is also a very good indicator of what animals to expect and helps narrow down what may have made the puzzling tracks.

Photographing tracks that you have actually seen an animal make, helps greatly for future identification.



Multiple Grey Squirrel tracks in the snow

Common Mammal Tracks at the FWG

Grey Squirrel
Red Squirrel
Meadow Vole
Mouse
Fox
Eastern Cottontail Rabbit

Less Commonly Encountered

Raccoon
Shrew
Weasel

While tracking is a complex art, which takes time and practice to hone, don't let that deter you. At the FWG, you can easily pick up the basics, on which you can then build ever more esoteric tracking skills. Learn the tracks of our common mammals well and take it from there. The box at right indicates the common and less common animals we routinely find at the FWG. Over the years we've also had deer and coyote, and even a mink turned up (though that one was sadly dead, but it does indicate that anything is possible). Keep your eyes open when walking around the garden and who knows what will be revealed in the snow!

Bird tracks offer another opportunity to test your skills. Apart from some very easy tracks, most left by birds are difficult to identify. However, their tracks and wing prints also tell a story and it is worth taking up the challenge.

One note of caution: ensure that the needs of the animals come first. Don't disturb den or nest sites, or chase animals from cover.

Resources

Elbroch, Mark. 2003. Mammals Tracks and Signs. A Guide to North American Species.

Stackpole Books

Rezendes, Paul. 1999. Tracking and the Art of Seeing. How to Read Animal Tracks and Signs. Collins.

Stokes, Donald and Lillian. 1986. Guide to Animal Tracking and Behaviour. Little, Brown and Company

Mice at the FWG

Text and photos by Christine Hanrahan



Mouse peeking out of a nestbox

are not terrific as the mice move faster than I do.

Although I would be loathe to put a species name to the mice I see at the garden, the following information can, in general, apply to either species. The arrival of autumn is a signal for mice to get their winter quarters in shape. Around residential areas, they will enter houses, hoping to spend the frigid months in comfy quarters. At the Fletcher Wildlife Garden, we certainly have found them in the Interpretive Centre, but mostly they lay claim to various of the bird nest boxes scattered around the site. In these they create very warm, snug nests of plant fibres, gathered from vegetation close to the site. As dog-strangling vine (DSV) has increased, the use of this plant in nest making has also increased. A number of mouse nests I've examined over the last 5 or 6 years, have been made almost entirely from the dry DSV plant stems and seed pods, lined with DSV seed fluff. In addition to this, other plant stems, dry leaves, and recently, bits of plastic, are also used, lined with seed fluff from sow-thistle, milkweed, and other plants. Shreds of moss, feathers, and various other items are also used. I've found the occasional mouse nest in tree cavities, and one year, found a mouse nest in a witches broom growth, where I inadvertently disturbed a couple of the inhabitants. Mice will also burrow into rock piles and under logs to nest.

In cleaning out the nest boxes at FWG over the last 13 or 14 years, I've discovered that mice will at times build their nests directly on top of old swallow nests. The birds leave their nests in late June, and the mice move in in late summer or autumn, so there is no conflict between the two. Occasionally, mice will move into a box that red squirrels later decide they want. In 2013, I saw a red squirrel sitting on top of a nest box which mice had occupied, eating a baby mouse. The squirrel then took over the box.

When winter's cold grasp takes hold of the land, many animals very sensibly hibernate. Those who don't are relatively well adapted to withstand the frosty conditions. Red and grey squirrels are the most noticeable animals at the Fletcher Wildlife Garden, but there are others, rarely seen, such as the tiny *Peromyscus* mice. Both deer mice (*Peromyscus maniculatus*) and white-footed mice (*P. leucopus*) are very common in the region, but telling them apart is not easy. As Donna Naughton says in her impeccable guide to Canadian mammals, "distinguishing between them can be a challenge." Although I've seen many mice at the garden, those glimpses have often been fleeting, and where I've managed a photo, the images



Mice at the FWG continued...

One nest box, around which a tree has grown, making it less appealing to swallows, has been used by mice for five years in a row. I've left it there, as we have ample swallow boxes in better locations. Mice have short lives, perhaps, if they are very lucky, up to three years, but usually much less. Thus this nest box has likely seen several generations of mice since it was first co-opted.

Food is cached for the winter, usually in a 'larder' away from their nest sites. One winter, at the garden, I came across a store of seeds in a goldfinch nest, not all that far from a regularly used nest box. These mice are little omnivores eating a wide variety of foods, including insects. In winter, diet is naturally more restricted, and when caches are low, they have to forage for weed seeds, fruit, or whatever else they can find.



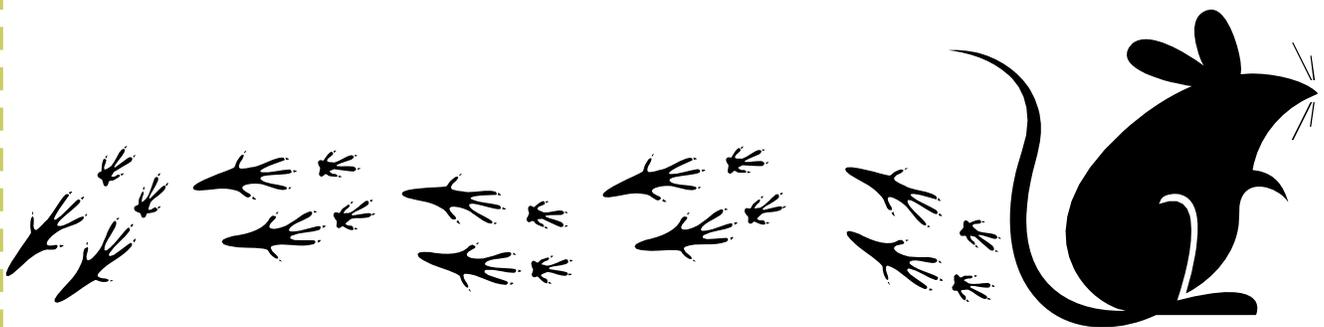
Mice in a cozy nest

Source:

Naughton, Donna. 2012. The Natural History of Canadian Mammals. Canadian Museum of Nature and University of Toronto Press.

Donna Naughton reports that both species will resort to daily periods of torpor when weather is especially cold, to conserve energy. Here, she is explaining the process as pertaining to white-footed mice: "Torpor usually lasts at least three hours, during which the heart rate and body temperature may drop from an average 700 beats per minute and 35degrees C to about 60 beats per minute and 17 degrees Cc."

Because mice are primarily nocturnal, they are rarely seen, but they are there, surviving the winter as best they can, silently going about their lives, revealed only by tracks across the snow.



Why I Like Our Facebook Group

By Sandra Garland



A screenshot of the FWG Facebook group

I'm a keen Facebook user, so it was logical to use this social medium to publicize the Fletcher Wildlife Garden, share gardening tips, and hopefully attract new volunteers. I chose the FB "group" format (rather than an official "page") because I like the camaraderie it creates. People have to ask to join, but can then post information and messages or create an "event."

Most posts are visible to everyone, although that can be changed so that individual messages or events can be seen only by members.

As of 12 January, there were 175 members - 110 women and 65 men. We're quite a diverse bunch: young

people and old, working and retired, young moms and many grandparents, biologists, organic gardeners, communications specialists, birders, writers, artists, civil servants, photographers. They live as far away as South Africa, but most are in the Ottawa region.

Most of the 175 members never post a comment, but many have asked questions. They want to know the name of a plant in their garden or an insect they've found. Or how to attract more birds to their garden. Someone can usually provide the answer. I especially love it when a posting sparks a debate.

Others let us know about events, such as plant exchanges, a lecture, a pertinent TV show. Others simply "like" posts and photos.

So far, though, most posts come from the FWG. We

- publicize events, such as our annual native plant sale and weed bees
- let people know about additions to our photo galleries and blog
- share interesting photos and information about local wildlife and wildlife gardening practices
- repost information about monarch websites, bee hotels, pollination, the North American Native Plant Society, and others

-link to our latest newsletter

-thank people for their help and donations

-describe what wildlife gardeners and conservationists are doing elsewhere



The Facebook group has proved to be an excellent quick way to reach a different audience. Websites are great repositories of information, but tools, such as Facebook and Twitter, are a way to reach an audience of computer/smartphone users who want to know more and want to be engaged with others in learning about things like wildlife gardening.

It's been a pleasure to "meet" group members – mostly in cyberspace, but a few in person as well. We are getting to know each other through photos, questions, advice, shared interests. And it's lovely to log on and talk gardening in the middle of winter.

Friends of the FWG Facebook Chatter

Deluxe bee hotel - <http://www.treehugger.com/sustainable-product-design/atelierd-hotel-for-bees.html>

Tough chickadees - <http://www.insideottawavalley.com/community-story/4288863-chickadee-small-but-one-tough-bird/#.UsL4hvIWk1Q.facebook>

How to tell the difference between ravens and crows (video) - http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=guBwMUAWAJI&feature=em-subsub_digest-vrecs

Stats and info about the status of monarchs, e.g., http://www.nytimes.com/2013/11/24/sunday-review/the-year-the-monarch-didnt-appear.html?src=recg&_r=1&

10-year development of a pond in New England - <http://www.beautifulwildlifegarden.com/10-years-of-a-new-england-farm-pond.html>

Autumn, busy time for beavers - <http://www.insideottawavalley.com/community-story/4197227-autumn-is-a-busy-time-for-beavers-in-the-valley/#.UoEnQX7Ga18.facebook>

Setting a winter table for wildlife - <http://www.nwf.org/News-and-Magazines/National-Wildlife/Gardening/Archives/2012/Winter-Table-for-Wildlife.aspx>

Food and feeder preferences of common feeder birds - <http://feederwatch.org/learn/common-feeder-birds/>

Greening your fall cleanup - <http://www.nwf.org/News-and-Magazines/National-Wildlife/Gardening/Archives/2008/Greening-Your-Fall-Garden-Cleanup.aspx>

4 steps to a beautiful wildlife garden - <http://www.ecosystemgardening.com/4-steps-to-a-beautiful-wildlife-garden.html>

Carleton U butterfly show - <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3PRz9Dq6B3k&feature=youtu>

Make your garden more wildlife friendly - <http://housecraft.ca/2013/10/10/make-your-garden-more-wildlife-friendly/>

Turtle tale - <http://www.insideottawavalley.com/community-story/4150666-a-turtle-tale-of-empty-holes-and-broken-shells-some-alert-predators-have-learned-that-smorgasbords/>



Ash Woodlot Makeover

Text by Sandra Garland, photo by Robert Berry



Pileated Woodpecker “scaling” bark off an ash tree in our woodlot

If you’ve walked through the woods at the FWG recently, you’ll have noticed that the bark seems to be falling off our ash trees. It’s actually being pulled off by Hairy and Pileated woodpeckers who are looking for Emerald Ash Borer (EAB) larvae.

It’s been speculated that these birds could actually control EAB, or that our very cold temperatures this winter might kill the larvae. However, realistically, we are expecting our ash trees to die over the next few years. As about 40 largest trees in the woodlot are green ash, we’re looking at a total “makeover” - and name change - for this habitat.

The game plan: study the site, consult experts, locate resources, buy trees.

As tenants on the Central Experimental Farm, we have access to people, like JP Gratton, who manages the Dominion Arboretum. According to JP, “If ash trees grow there, most other local forest species will do well.”

Clay underlies most of the Ottawa area and it surfaces in many parts of the FWG. Fortunately, the woodlot is on high ground and the soil is much more loamy than anywhere else on the site. Unfortunately, earthworms gobble up organic material as fast as it’s formed, so the woodlot lacks the thick spongy layer you find in most of our natural forests and is, thus, dryer than normal.

Two years ago, Roman Popadiouk, a forester and former member of the FWG management committee, gave us an excellent workshop on woodlot composition and management. The resources he recommended have been invaluable. Among the best are:

Tree Atlas (Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources): here’s the page for the Ottawa area - http://www.mnr.gov.on.ca/en/Business/ClimateChange/2ColumnSubPage/STDPROD_102485.html

Ontario woody species diversity (Forest Gene Conservation Association): here are the pages for Kemptville - <http://www.fgca.net/conservation/native/pdf/6E-12> - and Smith’s Falls - <http://www.fgca.net/conservation/native/pdf/6E-11>

From this list of locally suitable native trees and shrubs, I crossed off species that require full sun and those needing a lot of moisture, leaving a manageable shopping list.

I then asked Roman how to decide on the composition of a forest. What percentage of sugar maples, balsam firs, etc., should I aim for. Shrugging eloquently, he explained that the survival of trees depends on genetics, location, and luck. (You have to love the outlook of foresters; after all, they are dealing with timelines of 100s of years.)

Roman’s advice: get as many trees as you can of the species on our short list, plant them everywhere, and see what happens. Some will die because they are not quite suited for the location; some will die because a mouse will eat the bark or a branch will fall on it. But any that manage to grow to be 6-8 feet tall are there for life.

Ash Woodlot Makeover continued...

What's happening so far?

-Over the last 15 years, I've planted many sugar maples from various sources and a few birch, basswood, striped maples, beech, and pagoda dogwoods as available. Some of these are now a good size.

-Two years ago, I put in a dozen small beaked hazels.

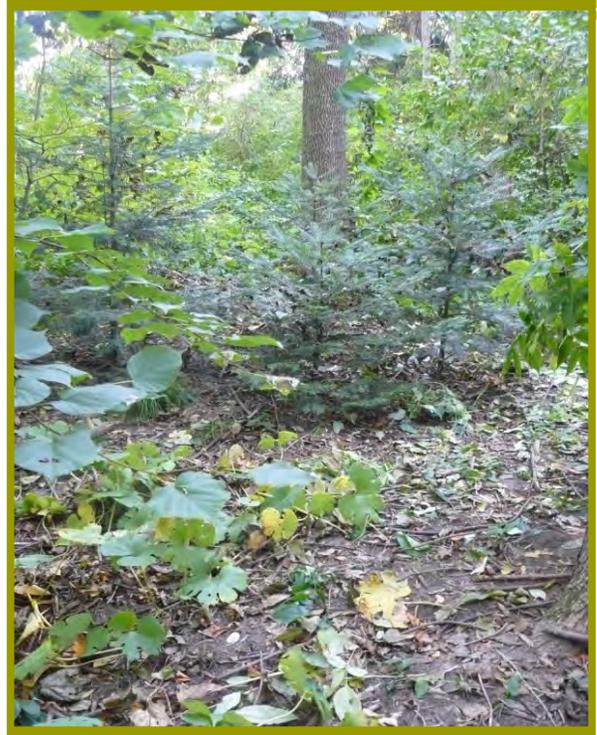
-Last fall, the Arboretum staff gave us 4 good-sized yellow birch saplings that they grew from seed. I planted 3 in the woods in various locations and one in the area just west of the woods.

-Renate donated about a dozen each of balsam firs and red maples. We planted those in groups in 4 locations in the woods.

-I ordered bare root stock from Ferguson Forest Centre for planting in the spring: larger balsam firs, sugar maples, and cedars.

-I've collected seeds of ironwood, mountain maple, maple-leafed viburnum, bittersweet, basswood, beech, and other tree and shrub species, but I have not had much luck germinating these. Lots more to learn.

This is probably enough for this year, but as the season warms up, we'll check other sources for the rest of the species on our list.



Although we've planted many trees, such as these balsam firs and basswood, over the past 20 years, they are nowhere near ready to replace the over 50+ year old ash trees.



At ground level, the invasive dog-strangling vine is slowly being replaced – naturally and with a lot of human assistance - by native wildflowers, like these zig-zag goldenrods, jewelweeds, and ferns.

As always, we welcome advice, feedback, observations, criticism. We'd love to hear from anyone who has grown trees from seed, knows a good supplier of native stock, or has ideas about how to plant and ensure survival. And, of course, if you'd like to help weed garlic mustard and other invasive species, please DO get in touch.

Evening Primrose in Winter

Text by Sandra Garland, photo by Christine Hanrahan

The dried seedpods of evening primrose (*Oenothera biennis*) have an almost sculptural look. As Christine Hanrahan recently wrote in our photo blog, "Inside each pod is a cluster of tiny black seeds, which when spilled on the snow look like someone has sprinkled black pepper. Sparrows, finches and chickadees have all been observed eating these seeds."

This is definitely a species that brings out the differences between gardeners and wildlife gardeners. It's a beautiful native plant, but it tends to spread aggressively as the light seeds are blown around by the wind. As it belongs in the rose family, it's also susceptible to the Japanese beetle that is devouring our roses.

But if you prefer a natural meadow look, it's a lovely addition and easy to grow in difficult dry sites. In summer the spikes of lemony yellow flowers bloom consecutively over many weeks from mid-summer to fall. As the name suggests, the flowers open in the

evening -and on cloudy days. In winter, the strong flower spikes stick up over the snow, and, as Christine mentions, the seeds are eaten by a number of overwintering birds. This species is also the larval host to a beautiful moth.



Dry open seedpods curl whimsically around the tall stems of evening primrose.



Wild food sources for birds and other wildlife at the Fletcher Wildlife Garden

Text and photos by Christine Hanrahan



White-winged crossbill eating alder cones

I thought it might be an interesting exercise to compile a list of all the natural food sources around the Fletcher Wildlife Garden, used by wildlife. I include only those plants on which I have actually seen birds or other wildlife feed. Many are obvious, of course, the crabapples, mountain ash, wild grape, sumac, and cones of various conifers. What I find interesting, and hope you do too, is the number of weedy plants that are used by wildlife, mostly birds, and mostly sparrows, finches and chickadees. Plants such as lamb's quarters, cow vetch, brome grass, and so on, many with tiny seeds. Unfortunately, while I have many photos of birds and squirrels feeding on the big stuff... the cones and tree fruits, for example, it has been difficult to photograph birds on the weedy plants. They fly away the moment I come within photographic distance.

The list given below can surely be added to, and surely I have forgotten some plants too! Please let me know if you have seen wildlife feeding on a species not listed below. By leaving the weedy plants standing over the winter, we are providing a wide and varied food source for our local wildlife.

The asterisk * indicates a non-native species.

- *Amaranthus (*Amaranthus* sp.)
- *Amur corktree (*Phellodendron amurense*)
- *Amur maple (*Acer ginnala*)
- Ash seeds (*Fraxinus* spp.)
- Birch catkins (*Betula*)
- *Brome grass (*Bromus inermis*)
- *Buckthorn, both species
(*Rhamnus cathartica*, *R. frangula*)
- *Bull thistle (*Cirsium vulgare*)
- Canada elderberry (*Sambucus canadensis*)
- Canada goldenrod (*Solidago canadensis*)
- *Canada thistle (*Cirsium arvense*)
- *Chicory (*Cichorium intybus*)
- *Common burdock (*Arctium minus*)
- Common milkweed (*Asclepias syriaca*)
- *Common plantain (*Plantago major*)
- *Cow vetch (*Vicia cracca*)
- *Crabapples (*Malus* spp.)



Bohemian waxwing eating juniper fruit

'Seeds' continued....

The asterisk * indicates a non-native species.

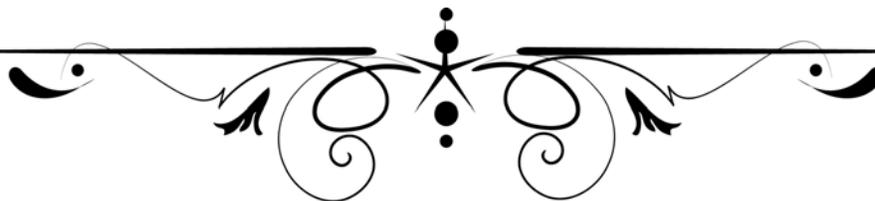
- Cup Plant (*Silphium perforatum*)
- *Curly dock (*Rumex crispus*)
- *Dandelion (*Taraxacum officinale*)
- Eastern white cedar (*Thuja occidentalis*)
- Evening primrose (*Oenothera biennis*)
- Juniper (*Juniperus*)
- *Lamb's quarters (*Chenopodium album*)
- *Mallow (*Malva moschata*)
- *Manitoba maple (*Acer negundo*)
- *Mullein (*Verbascum thapsis*)
- New england aster (*Symphotrichum novae-angliae*)
- *Peppergrass (*Lepidium densiflorum*)
- Ragweed (*Ambrosia artemisiifolia*)
- *Red clover (*Trifolium pretense*)
- Red elderberry (*Sambucus racemosa*)
- Red osier dogwood (*Cornus sericea*)
- *Sow thistle (*Sonchus*)
- Speckled alder (*Alnus incana*)
- *Spotted lady-thumb (*Persicaria maculosa*)
- Spruce spp. (*Picea*)
- Staghorn sumac (*Rhus hirta*)
- Tall goldenrod (*Solidago altissima*)
- *Tartarian honeysuckle (*Lonicera tatarica*)
- *Timothy (*Phleum pratense*)
- Virginia creeper (*Parthenocissus vitacea*)
- *White clover (*Trifolium repens*)
- *White sweet clover (*Melilotus alba*)
- Wild grape (*Vitis riparia*)
- Wild lettuce (both canada and prickly lettuce)
(*Lactuca canadensis*, *L. scariola*)
- Wild raspberry (*Rubus strigosus*)



American goldfinch eating prickly lettuce seeds



Black-capped chickadee eating new england aster seeds



Nature Notes: Plant(s) of the Month



All text by Christine Hanrahan

Two different galls close together, both on goldenrods. The top, shaggy one is called a bunch gall, and is caused by Cecidomyiid midges. The round, ball-shaped one below is made by the goldenrod gall fly, a large attractively patterned fly in the Tephritidae family (the fruit flies). Larvae of the latter provide food for birds and animals through the fall and winter, and you'll often find the galls either chewed in half or with large holes in them.

Nature Notes: Bird of the Month

Several white-throated sparrows have been seen at the FWG this winter, with reports of up to three. These birds typically head south in autumn, passing through our region in large numbers. But, occasionally, some try to overwinter.

Although a plentiful migrant in spring and fall, and a common nesting species in the region, though not at the FWG, this species doesn't typically overwinter. However, a few can be found scattered around the district each winter.



Nature Notes: Animal of the Month



These clever little animals are pretty well adapted to survive the cold and snow and are active on all but the very coldest of days. They create snow tunnels all along their regular routes, into which they can dive at a hint of danger, emerging some distance away, often at the base of a tree.

Red squirrels are always more easily seen and photographed in winter than during the warmer months when they are busy with young. They are entertaining to watch as they go about the business of gathering and eating food.

See more on our PHOTOBLOG: www.pbbase.com/fwg!