



# What's Growing On? The Fletcher Wildlife Garden Newsletter

www.ofnc.ca/fletcher

May - June 2014

## Spring has finally arrived!



*A male Red-bellied Woodpecker photographed by Robert Berry. This is the 153rd species for our FWG bird list!*

For a while, it felt like spring would never arrive. After an unusually stubborn winter, the cool days and colder nights have finally released their grip. Now that the warm sunshine has returned, the trees are sprouting new leaves, the grass is green once again, and spring flowers are in full bloom. Birds and animals alike are taking advantage of the warmer temperatures, filling the garden with life.

We've had an unusual number of warblers migrating through the garden this spring and it's been a great year for orioles so far! We even added a new species to our FWG list last week when our friend Robert Berry photographed a Red-bellied Woodpecker.

In news from elsewhere, the swift stewardship program in Shawville overcame many obstacles to rebuild a capped chimney in time for the return of Chimney Swifts

– and the swifts are now roosting in the new structure.

On a sombre note, members of a new local chapter of FLAP (Fatal Light Awareness Program) are patrolling the streets of Ottawa looking for birds that have flown into large expanses of reflective windows or buildings with light left on overnight. Although they are saving a few slightly stunned birds, they are finding many more that have not survived the collision. If you can help monitor or if you know of a building that is particularly susceptible to bird collisions, please contact [flap@ofnc.ca](mailto:flap@ofnc.ca)

Meanwhile, in this issue of our newsletter, we learn about the habits of Red-tailed Hawks, the fate of our soon-not-to-be-Ash Woodlot, why it's important to stay on the trails, and we get a quick reprise of the "Spring Fling" that took place back in early April. And, as always, we have a nice long list of "Things I learned from our Facebook Group."

*One of the many Tree Swallows that can be seen at the Garden*



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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](http://www.onfc.ca/fletcher)****Our Text Blog: [fletcherwildlifegarden.wordpress.com](http://fletcherwildlifegarden.wordpress.com)****Our Photo Blog: [www.pbase.com/fwg/root](http://www.pbase.com/fwg/root)****On Twitter: [twitter.com/FletcherWildG](https://twitter.com/FletcherWildG)****On Facebook: [www.facebook.com/groups/48901132335/](http://www.facebook.com/groups/48901132335/)****Undoing Trails***by Ted Farnworth*

The trail system at the Fletcher Wildlife Garden serves two main purposes. First, it allows visitors to walk easily and safely through the site and enjoy a variety of vistas in the different habitats that have been created at the garden. Second, and perhaps even more important, the trails are a subtle way to discourage visitors from walking in areas of the garden where so many delicate plants, shrubs, and trees grow; and areas that are the home or resting spots of birds, small animals, and insects.

But it is this second role that presents the most challenges. What do we do if visitors don't want to stay on the trails? How can we stop people from tromping through areas that are sensitive? A walk through the garden reveals several places that have become well used "unauthorized" trails. Along the side of the Ravine, several of these are causing unwanted soil erosion. Others are dangerous and could cause some unwanted slips and falls.

In the past, several attempts have been made to discourage visitors from wandering off the main paths, with varying levels of success. Signs and the trail map are enough of a message for some people. But for others, piles of brush, log barriers, and some selective planting have been tried to no avail. Polite suggestions that visitors stay on designated trails often result in polite indifference — and so the problem persists and may be becoming worse.

But undoing unwanted trails is back on the radar. This summer, a concerted effort will be made to identify and fill in inviting gaps with a combination of signs, barriers, and plantings. If you are interested in helping out, contact Sandy Garland or Ted Farnworth ([fletcher@ofnc.ca](mailto:fletcher@ofnc.ca)).



## DSV Circles at the FWG

**Editor's note:** Over the past couple of years, FWG volunteers have noticed an odd phenomenon: in fields that have been invaded by dog-strangling vine (DSV) there are circles that are completely free of DSV. In 2013, we shared this information with Agriculture and Agri-Foods Canada, whose mycologist, Scott Redhead, paid us a visit to see the circles. He contacted colleagues at Algoma University in Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario and Jackie Ayotte and Laura Sanderson from the university's Invasive Species Research Institute followed up with some tests to try to determine the cause. Here is their report.



*One of the infamous 'DSV Circles'.*

In July 2013, we arrived at the FWG to investigate dying circles of dog-strangling vine (*Vincetoxicum rossicum*), an invasive perennial vine that has taken over much of the garden. There were nine circles in total; one as large as 10 m in diameter and already experiencing some regrowth of DSV, but most no more than 2 m across. They consisted of bare ground with a few other plant species interspersed or completely bare ground (most likely the newest circles).

We selected four of the circles for investigation: the largest (plot 9) and three smaller ones (plots 5, 3, and 2) representing various stages of circle age. Plot 9 was in an open field, plots 3 and 5 were in a mix of open area and tree cover, and plot 2 was in the forest understory. We suspect that plot 9 is the oldest and plot 2 the youngest.

In plot 9, we collected soil 2 m outside the circle, 2 m inside the circle and at the edge of the circle in four places. For the remaining three plots, we collected soil 2 m from the outside of the circle, at the edge, and from the centre of the circle, as their diameters were not large enough to continue the 2-m sampling distance. Soil samples were stored in individual plastic bags for analysis. In addition, we took approximately 10 L of soil from outside the circles and 10 L from inside and placed these in individual tubs for use in a germination and growth experiment.

If present, DSV plants were collected from the outside, inside and edge of the circles. Roots

were placed in 50% ethanol for transport and shoot size was measured as well.

Back at Algoma University, we measured soil pH of all samples and found no significant differences between inside, edge, and outside circles; pH values ranged from 7.7 (plot 2 edge) to 5.5 (plot 9 edge). We also measured nutrients (nitrogen and phosphorus) and found no significant differences in ammonium, nitrate, or phosphate levels between the inside, edge, and the outside of circles. Based on these findings, we concluded that the mystery of the dying DSV was not due to primary nutrient limitations within the circles.



*Plot 5.*

*Continued on page 4*

*DSV Circles continued*

Another potential explanation for the dying DSV was soil biota; perhaps a soil pathogen specializing in DSV was present in the soils within the circles. The circular pattern of plant die-off was consistent with this hypothesis. We conducted a comparative experiment using soils from inside and outside the four circles plus a control soil sample to test the germination and growth of DSV in those soils. Six replicate pots were created from each inside or outside soil (6 pots x 8 soils + 5 controls = 53 DSV pots). Lettuce was planted as a control species (4 pots x 8 soils + 5 controls = 37 lettuce pots).

We seeded each pot with three DSV seeds that had been cold-wet stratified to break dormancy or three 'Black Simpson' lettuce seeds. We monitored germination and thinned each to one seedling. Germination did not occur in several pots, but this was not consistent for site, soil, or species.

We allowed seedlings to grow for 15 weeks post-germination and fertilized them once during that period. We watered the pots three times a week. At the end of the experiment, we harvested all plants by separating the roots and shoots into separate bags for drying. After drying

the plant material for three days at 60°C, we weighed the samples. We found no significant differences in plant weight within species between soils and sites. In addition, we detected no obvious differences in growth or plant health during the course of the experiment. Plants grown in soil taken from inside the circles grew just as well as plants grown in soil from outside the circles.

We concluded that whatever is causing the death of the DSV at the FWG is not a soil biota that travelled with the soil back to Sault Ste. Marie.

The roots collected from the FWG plots still need to be stained and analyzed for root colonizing fungi and lesions. However, at this point, we are quite puzzled by these circles!



*Dying DSV at Plot 2*



## Bumblebee nests in the garden

What should I do? **Do Nothing** Let it be!

**Bumblebees**

- are not aggressive
- do not swarm
- rarely sting

**Bee helpful**

Changes in farming practices and urbanisation have made life hard for bumblebees.

Visit our website for tips to help bees

[www.sussexwildlifetrust.org.uk/bees](http://www.sussexwildlifetrust.org.uk/bees)

**Bumblebee Lifecycle**

**Queen finds new nest and starts laying eggs**  
e.g. compost heap, bird box or even a pile of grass cuttings

**Queen awakes from hibernation**  
Queens are hungry and must find pollen to eat quickly or die

**Nest grows as sterile worker bees produced**  
Queen remains in the nest laying more eggs

**Males and new fertile queens produced and leave nest to mate**  
The nest naturally ends in early autumn and queen, workers and males die. Only new queens overwinter

**TO LET**

Bumblebee nests are temporary, usually empty by September

Sussex Wildlife Trust

bees by Helen Walsh

# Red-Tailed Hawks at the FWG

*Text and photos by Christine Hanrahan*



*Through the branches, I was just able to get a front view photo of this handsome hawk. You can see the dark band across the chest, which is one of the indicative marks of this species.*

For many years, late autumn at the Fletcher Wildlife Garden has signaled the arrival of a Red-tailed Hawk. It was at least 15 years ago that we first noticed one of these imposingly large hawks at the garden. Throughout that autumn and winter it remained, hunting and roosting around both the garden and the farm, but once spring was underway, it vanished. The next autumn, a Red-tailed Hawk appeared again and, without fail, every year since, we've been treated to the arrival of this species once the weather cools. True to form, another, an adult bird, appeared in late autumn 2013. However, later in the winter, a juvenile also appeared and as of this writing, mid-May, is still hanging out at the FWG. The adult was last spotted, as far as I know, in early spring.

Red-tailed Hawks are possibly the most common and most familiar of all the hawks in North America. Their loud "keeeerrr" call is instantly familiar. In fact, that call often emanates from movie and TV screens when a "call of the wild" is required, no matter how inappropriate the location!

People have wondered if the same individual is returning to the FWG each year. Most hawks live for only a few years in

the wild and, although we may see the same individual return for a few years, most of the birds are likely different individuals. Some years we see adults, some years, juveniles (identified most easily by their yellow eyes). The entire Central Experimental Farm provides good wintering habitat and is also relatively free of competition from other hawks — and owls. It isn't surprising that Red-tailed Hawks find their way there each autumn when they begin moving further afield from their summer territory on the hunt for a steady food supply.

Although many Red-tailed Hawks can winter as far south as Central America, not all individuals migrate, which is why you will always find some of these hawks year-round in this region.

The preferred breeding habitat of this species is open country with scattered tall trees or open woodlands where they usually nest along the edges. In many respects, the Arboretum might seem to offer great nesting potential, but it is far too busy and noisy for that. However, for overwintering, it is ideal. Food, in the shape of squirrels and voles, and the occasional rabbit, is plentiful.

At the FWG, Red-tailed Hawks can be found anywhere, although they are most often seen perched in the ash woods, in the new woods, or in some of the taller trees around the old field. On the farm itself, they perch on the roofs of barns and service buildings as well as in trees. In the Arboretum, they seem to like the slope near the hosta garden, but can be found throughout.

*(Right) From the back, the reddish tail feathers are visible. I saw this hawk fly towards the Arboretum from the Fletcher garden. It was later re-located in the Arboretum, looking quite content until crows found it and created a mob scene.*



## Goodbye to our Ash Woodlot

Text by Sandra Garland, photo by Christine Hanrahan



*This photo, taken by Christine Hanrahan in March, clearly shows where woodpeckers have pulled bark off to get at Emerald Ash Borer beetles. Sadly, the seven largest trees in this photo will all be removed this spring.*

**A brief history:** A couple of years ago, we noticed that Emerald Ash Borer had infested the ash trees – around the same time it was reported in the news that EAB had been found on The Farm. We’ve been keeping an eye on the trees, which are now heavily scaled by woodpeckers. Last spring, Christine and Barry walked around the woods with an AAFC person who then marked 6-8 trees for eventual removal as a safety precaution.

**The current situation:** When I ran into JP Gratton at the FWG this spring, we talked about the ash trees and reviewed the plan – to take down the marked trees and leave the trunks and

chipped upper branches on site, but remove medium-sized branches.

JP followed up by visiting the woods along with his director and several colleagues. They were surprised at the number of affected trees and the extent of the scaling, which reflects the extent of infestation by EAB. As a result, they decided that all the ash trees have to come down.

Although this will affect this habitat drastically, I’m trying to look upon it in a positive light. There will be damage to “good” trees, but it will happen this season, rather than over several years if we left the trees to fall naturally. It will also be an opportunity to replant the woods with a good mix of native trees. As you know, from previous newsletters, I have a list of appropriate species, and I just picked up some of those trees from Ferguson Forest.

**Logistics:** AAFC will not be able to leave tree trunks, which would be a hazard to the workers. I’m hoping they will agree to leave the last few trunks, as I would like to use them to protect newly planted trees. Similarly, we cannot keep all the chipped wood, because there will be a mountain of chips. However, I expect the ground will be covered with pieces of broken branches over the next little while and that should increase the organic matter considerably.

We won’t be able to plant any of the new seedlings until most of the work is done. In fact, the whole area will likely be roped off for part of the summer. I am planning to plant some highbush cranberries, nannyberries, and chokecherries along the south side of the woods and in the semi-circle, as these species were intended for those areas, not inside the woods.

**The future:** By fall, we should be able to plant the Sugar Maples, Balsam Firs, and Eastern White Cedars that will remain in pots for now. And start building the perfect wildlife forest around the remaining large oak, spruce, and pine trees as well as the smaller Black Cherry, Red Elderberry, Sugar Maple, Striped Maple, Pagoda Dogwood, Beaked Hazel, Ironwood trees and others that we’ve been planting over the last 20 years.

But we’ll have to find a new name for the Ash Woodlot

# Spring Fling Report

*Text by Barbara Riley, Isabelle Nicol, Diane Lepage and Barry Cottam*

FWG Volunteers held their "Spring Fling" on 6 April to enjoy a potluck lunch, re-connect after the winter break, and talk about plans for the new season. Although the snow – remember that stuff? – was still too deep to do any 'real' work, the group coordinators provided lots for volunteers to think about. Isabelle outlined plans for the Backyard Garden, starting with some serious 'Spring' cleaning. She has quite a list of things to do... New signs have been created for each of the Backyard Garden beds – the Butterfly Bed, Woodland Walk, Woodland Edge, Rockery, Pond, Ontario Meadow and the new Plum Tree Garden. As well, work will be done on signs identifying the individual plants. But the big news is that Jay Ladell, a former BYG manager who did a lot of the design work, is returning this summer. Jay redesigned the patio and put in the stone walls on the north side. He also designed and built – with lots of volunteer help, of course! – the stone paths that start at the back of the Interpretation Centre, wend their way through the Rockery, and around the Woodland Edge. He's coming back to help extend these paths, which will curve around the new Plum Tree Garden on the east end.

Diane discussed the Butterfly Meadow, which continues to expand. There's always a lot to do in the Meadow and the model Monarch Butterfly Waystation – and this year especially, the Monarchs need all the help they can get! The new semi-circular trail on the west side of the Meadow, an ongoing project, and the 'Alcove' near the main path, planted last year after lots of hard work by the Stewardship Rangers, will continue to get attention. As always, Diane has new projects on her list. One for this year is clearing out and replanting the small triangle just south of the bridge, formed by the paths leading east, south and west from the bridge. It has a small black walnut in the middle but other than that it's not the nicest intro to the Meadow, Diane has decided, hence the plan to redevelop it this summer.

Barry noted several changes for his Invasive Species Group, beginning with a shift from Tuesday to Wednesday mornings. The group's activities are changing as well, since we've been given the go-ahead for new approaches to managing DSV. Participants in a special meeting in February of the OFNC Board of Directors, the FWG management committee and interested volunteers voted in favour of using an herbicide in a test area of up to one acre. Agriculture Canada has agreed to do the spraying, but we need to choose one or two spaces and develop a restoration plan before moving ahead on this. As well, it was decided to set out other test areas for comparing mechanical approaches, including scything, pulling by hand, mulching and covering with tarps. It will take at least two years before we see the results of these tests, at which time the effectiveness of the different approaches can be assessed. In the meantime, the group will be carrying on with its usual activities, focussing on the areas immediately around the Butterfly Meadow, especially the Birch Grove, which we've been working on now for a couple of years.

We also discussed several potential entomology projects. Scientists at the AAFC and CFIA would like to study the insect population at the FWG and need help from us for their projects. The management committee will be discussing these, so stay tuned!

**Plant Sale:** All volunteers were alerted to be on deck for our annual native plant sale on 7 June. The word is really getting out this year, so we're expecting some pretty big crowds. Tony is already concerned about space for parking!



Jardin écologique  
**Fletcher**  
Wildlife Garden



# Annual Native Plant Sale

**Saturday, June 7, 2014**

**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](mailto:fletcher@ofnc.ca)



[www.ofnc.ca/fletcher](http://www.ofnc.ca/fletcher)

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



# The Backyard Garden

*Text by Isabelle Nicol, photo by Christine Hanrahan*

Work in the Backyard Garden will start on May 2 this year. One of the first jobs is to cut back all the dead stems of the plants, but not until they begin to develop new growth, so we can keep track of what's growing. The dead stems don't compost well, so we use them to create brushpiles.

Later, we will be doing the usual gardening work - weeding, placing ripened compost out on the beds, replacing any missing plants, renewing planted areas as needed, and mulching (last fall we received a nice load of leaves to help out with this).

Also last fall, we had signs created for identifying each of the beds that compose the Backyard Garden — the Butterfly Bed, Woodland Walk, Woodland Edge, Rockery, Plum Tree Garden, Ontario Meadow, etc. We'll install those this spring. And we will continue to work on the issue of getting all our plants identified for the benefit of visitors to the garden.

Jay Ladell has agreed to help us create a stone pathway through the Plum Tree Garden this summer. When Jay was coordinator of the Backyard Garden, he did a tremendous amount of work, changing its structure and making it the showplace it is today. He redesigned the patio, put in the stone walls, as well as the stone path that starts at the back of the Centre, wends its way through the Rockery, the Woodland Edge, and now will continue on into the Plum Tree Garden.

We're looking forward to the many visitors who come out each year to view the garden! Last year the blooms were spectacular, and the berry bushes, fruit and nut trees were loaded with a wildlife bonanza much to the pleasure of all the wild creatures that form the livelier part of the garden. We're hoping this year will also be both beautifully spectacular and productive.

Volunteers are always welcome. We work on Friday mornings from 9 a.m. to noon. Bring gardening gloves if you have them; we'll supply everything else, including coffee and cookies at 10:30. Just come along and introduce yourself to Isabelle, Gretchen, or Marilyn. The work is hard, but working conditions are magnificent, and you're sure to learn a lot about local wildlife.



*(left) The Rockery that Jay created is one of the highlights of the garden. He laid large flat rocks in layers, making sure they sloped inward to channel all rainwater toward the plants. Other horizontal rocks catch rain in little puddles for wildlife, and they hold moisture in the soil below. Toads and chipmunks find shelter in crevices. Open sandy areas between the rocks are used by birds that collect grit and by insects that tunnel into the ground to lay eggs.*



## Things I learned on our Facebook Group

By Sandra Garland

Great photos of spring unfolding at the FWG by Robert Berry. This one shows the intricate Red Maple flowers that appear early in spring before the leaves. (See right)



Video of toads created last spring by Facebook group members John Davidson - <http://perfectdayfactory.com/trill-of-a-lifetime/>

Also from John Davidson, "An afternoon at Fletcher Wildlife Garden" - <http://perfectdayfactory.com/an-afternoon-at-fletcher-wildlife-garden/>

Worth checking out: Alex MacDonald's Tweet of the Week on CBC radio In April, the Osprey - <http://www.cbc.ca/intownandout/bird-tweets/>

Also, check out photos from the Laurie Consaul OspreyCam here - <https://www.icloud.com/photostream/#A2GI9HKKGHqyce>

And for more information about the webcam, which is a joint project of the OFNC, the Innis Point Bird Observatory, and Nature Canada, see the OFNC blog post - <http://ofnc.wordpress.com/2014/04/29/an-eye-on-ospreys/>

### Fighting for territory



Both Christine Hanrahan and Robert Berry witnessed fierce battles between Red-winged Blackbirds at our Amphibian Pond in early May. (See left)

Read more here - <http://www.pbase.com/fwg/image/155532640>

Cuckoo bees (*Nomada* sp.) visit bloodroot flowers. This may sound like a bit of trivia, but when you're planting a wildlife garden it's important to know which species are actually used by what wildlife and how. We try to collect this information and keep it all in a database for reference. Photographic evidence is best.

### Canadian Wildlife Federation webinars

Wednesdays, 1-1:30 p.m. - <http://cwf-fcf.org/en/discover-wildlife/resources/webinars/cwf-wild-about-gardening-public-webinars.html>

The four Snowy Owls still at the Central Experimental Farm at the end of April are probably the most photographed birds in the world.

### How to keep a sparrow from flying into a window:

It's probably trying to chase away its own reflection as it establishes its territory. Hang something in front of the window or attach a number of things to the window to break up the large reflective surface. A few weeks later, these things can be removed.

Xerces beefs up pollinator protection. Nice story about the importance of bees to black raspberry production: <http://portlandtribune.com/sl/217821-73811-xerces-beefs-up-pollinator-protection>

*Continued on page 11*

Facebook Group continued

Winter firefly (*Ellychnia corrusca*) found at the FWG - The earliest of our fireflies to be seen, it can sometimes be found on warm winter days, but generally I've seen it in very early spring rather than in mid-winter. I've been looking for them for several weeks, at different locations, and the first I've found this season, was at the FWG, on an ash tree. - <http://www.pbase.com/fwg/image/155284048>

How much milkweed does it take to feed a monarch from egg to chrysalis? "They eat very small amounts as early instars, but the fifth instar can eat up to about 4 fairly good-sized leaves during that stage," says Dr. Karen Oberhauser. <http://www.learner.org/jnorth/monarch/spring2014/update050114.html>

Series of photos showing simultaneous growth of milkweed plants and monarch caterpillars - <http://www.learner.org/jnorth/tm/monarch/sl/36/1.html>

After a long absence, a pair of American Kestrels returned to the FWG last year. On 17 April 2014, they showed up again, right on schedule. Thanks to Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada staff for kindly cleaning and repairing their nest box. <http://www.pbase.com/fwg/image/155284025>

This is a busy - and stressful - time of year for birds and other wildlife. Please don't add to the stress. Take a few minutes to read the OFNC's Code of Conduct - <http://www.ofnc.ca/birding/Code-of-Conduct.pdf> - and "Always respect wildlife, the environment, and other people."

Thanks Brenda and Barbara for staffing our FWG/OFNC display at City Hall during the second in a series of wildlife talks - <http://ofnc.wordpress.com/2014/04/18/showing-up-at-city-hall/>

How to build a robin's nest - <http://www.learner.org/jnorth/tm/robin/BuildNest.html>

The second edition of Rick Cavasin's excellent "Pocket Guide to Butterflies of Southern & Eastern Ontario" pocket guide is now available. For more information, check his website - <http://www.ontariobutterflies.ca/pocket-guides/southern-eastern-ontario>. Don't forget to explore this site's many other features!

## Don't Pull That Dandelion!

It's one of the first spring foods for our precious bees.



Let's not kill off anything that helps the bees.



[www.gmofreeusa.org](http://www.gmofreeusa.org)  
[www.facebook.com/gmofreeusa](http://www.facebook.com/gmofreeusa)  
[www.facebook.com/gmofreecanadagroup](http://www.facebook.com/gmofreecanadagroup)

# FWG winners of OFNC awards

*compiled by Sandra Garland*

## **Member of the Year**

- 2011 Barry Cottam for his dedicated work at the Fletcher Wildlife Garden to control dog-strangling vine
- 2008 Diane Lepage for her dedicated work as a volunteer at the Fletcher Wildlife Garden.
- 2007 Carla Hilado for her work with the Fletcher Wildlife Garden, in particular with the Backyard Garden, but also for work on the Butterfly Meadow, and for initiating several important projects such as organization of the FWG brochures.
- 2006 Annie Bélair for her dedicated, creative and innovative involvement with the Macoun Club, as well as her work as a volunteer at the Fletcher Wildlife Garden
- 2004 Marilyn Ward for dedicated contributions to the Excursions and Lectures Committee, the Fletcher Wildlife Garden, and for being the contact person for the OFNC
- 1999 Claudia Burns for work at the Fletcher Wildlife Garden and in particular coordinating and planning work on the Backyard Garden
- 1998 Robina Bennett for performing a multiplicity of tasks within the OFNC including the FWG, various committees, leading walks

## **George McGee Service Award**

- 2012 Connie Clark for over 10 years of active service with the Fletcher Wildlife Garden, leading walks for the Club, committee work and writing Trail & Landscape articles
- 2009 Gretchen and Tony Denton for their work at the Fletcher Wildlife Garden and dedication to the project for over 12 years
- 2005 Christine Hanrahan for exceptional service to the OFNC as regional coordinator of the Ontario Breeding Bird Atlas, extensive contributions to the Fletcher Wildlife Garden, representing the OFNC on the Wildlife Festival Committee, service on the Conservation Committee, and work toward the conservation of Petrie Island and Larose Forest
- 2002 David Hobden for his participation in the Conservation Committee and his enthusiastic, productive work on the Fletcher Wildlife Garden Committee over several years
- 1999 Betty Campbell for many years of active OFNC work in numerous roles including photo librarian, Chair of Education and Publicity Committee, team player at FWG
- 1993 Bill Holland awarded posthumously in recognition of long years of work for the club

## **Conservation Award — Member**

- 1996 Christine Hanrahan and Sandra Garland for work on the Fletcher Wildlife Garden
- 1995 Jeff Harrison for work on the Fletcher Wildlife Garden

## **President's Prize**

- 2013 Al and Erma Beaulieu for years quietly helping in many ways at the Fletcher Wildlife Garden and maintaining two east-end OFNC feeders
- 1990 Peter Hall for establishing the Fletcher Wildlife Garden

## **Honorary Members**

- 2012 Peter W. Hall for his work on butterflies among other species, the Fletcher Wildlife Garden, biodiversity conservation and over 30 years of service to the Club
- 2008 Christine Hanrahan in recognition of the astonishing depth of her love and caring for everything natural and the efforts she has undertaken to make people "see the beauty and the wonder of even the tiniest creature or plant."

## Fans of Fletcher Wildlife Garden

Every now and again, a fan of the FWG graces us with an email of appreciation. We love to get these emails, and are always looking forward to more. If you want to send us something, feel free to send an email to [fletcher@ofnc.ca](mailto:fletcher@ofnc.ca).

Betty sent the FWG a lovely email:

*I was out to the Fletcher garden this morning , Monday May 19, and it was magical.*

*The garden looked lovely, and I couldn't help thinking that those of us who worked on the early days of planting and planning couldn't have wished for a better outcome that all of the many volunteers have achieved in bringing it to its present state. It was obvious that work is still in progress but the overall effect is one of a mature garden there to be appreciated.*

*Several people were slowly walking through or sitting and watching the animals and birds. There must have been a dozen chipmunks, squirrels running around, and the birds were coming to the feeder ...downies, goldfinch, white crowned sparrows, chickadees ..... and peace reigned.*

*Congratulations and pass on the complements to all concerned.*

Thank you for your lovely letter, Betty! We're honoured that you enjoy the garden!



*White-crowned sparrow*

## OFNC City Hall Meeting



*Brenda McCrea and Barbara Riley at the expo*

Backyard Biodiversity was the theme last Friday night (April 11) at City Hall. As part of the City of Ottawa Wildlife Speaker Series, the evening featured talks by two guest speakers. Sarah Kirkpatrick-Wahl from Nature Canada spoke about features that make a garden attractive to wildlife. Bill Dowd, CEO of Skedaddle Humane Wildlife Control, demonstrated how numerous mammals gain entry to our homes and how they can be persuaded to take their babies outside, and stay outside.

Over 100 people attended the evening. In addition to the presentations, 21 organizations brought displays, among them, the Canadian Wildlife Federation, the Nature Conservancy of Canada, Ottawa Master Gardeners, Ottawa Bird Count, Let's Talk Science, Rideau Valley Wildlife Sanctuary, and the OFNC.

Three volunteers from the Fletcher Wildlife Garden gave out OFNC bookmarks, fliers for the Native Plant Sale on June 7 and trail maps. We encouraged people to visit the FWG and volunteer. We also met people from the other environmental organizations. It was an evening of enthusiasm and camaraderie.

The next lecture will be August 18 at City Hall (7-9 pm). The topic will be white-tailed deer.

## Nature Notes: Insect of the Month

*Text and photo by Barry Cottam*



Our Insect of the Month was spotted early afternoon of April 14, in a small, young grove of alders with 'socks' knitted over the winter by hungry mice and voles. The socks were the main attraction and until I noticed the butterfly. Well, a guy can have only so much interest in socks! The butterfly flitted about very cooperatively on a rare warm and lovely day, basking in the photo op. If you look closely, you'll see a small spider just below its right rear wing.

To identify it, I turned to OFNC member Rick Cavasin's excellent "Pocket Guide to Butterflies of Southern & Eastern Ontario," which quickly narrowed the possibilities to either an Eastern Comma or a Question Mark. How to choose? I put the question to Rick himself, and he provided the fine details needed to distinguish the two species and identify it as a "pale form Eastern Comma, the one that overwinters as an adult." Besides being a lesson for this very amateur entomologist in observational skills, it was absolutely amazing to me that such a delicate creature could survive the brutal winter we've just had. The next day turned very cold again, but hopefully it survived. (Christine's article in the November-December 2013 newsletter explains how they handle the cold.)

## Nature Notes: Plant of the Month

Bloodroot. This woodland species is one of the first native wildflowers to bloom in spring, and emerges not long after the snow has vanished. The crisp white flowers and large leaves are distinctive. There is nothing else like it and hence it is very easy to identify. It is a great addition to a woodland garden, giving a good, if very fleeting display in early spring. But while they last, the display is striking. The flowers vanish within days, while the leaves linger for some time, but eventually they too disappear and one must wait for spring again to enjoy this beautiful spring ephemeral.

Those insects out early enough in the season, will seek out this plant as it provides pollen when not much else is around. Because the early blooming bloodroot cannot depend on insects for pollination, it self-pollinates. Ants help to spread this plant around as they carry away and bury the seeds.

Bloodroot has been known by many names, including redroot, red-puccoon, and snake-bite. It also has quite a history attached to it, having been used for medicinal and other purposes by native peoples. The red juice of the stem and roots was said to have been used as a dye for clothing. It seems to have been considered a virtual panacea for everything from headaches to cancer. However, it is also considered toxic in large quantities, according to a compendium of its uses found in the book "Medicinal and other uses of North American plants" by Charlotte Erichsen-Brown (1979). We strongly discourage picking any plants for any purpose, and suggest that one simply enjoy their beauty.



*Text and photo by Christine Hanrahan*

## Nature Notes: Bird of the Month



The eastern phoebe is one of the earliest flycatchers to arrive back in our area, often found in early April, sometimes late March. It's distinctive rather harsh-sounding "fee-be" is a sure sign of spring to winter-weary ears. Returning to this cold land too early, however, can mean difficulty in finding enough insects to sustain these insectivorous birds, although they'll eat seeds when nothing else is available.

Once back on territory, phoebes waste no time getting started nest building, and before long the first brood is underway. Once the young have fledged, the adults quickly start on a second nesting, typically reusing the same nest.

I'm not aware that phoebes nested at the FWG prior to 2013, when a pair built a nest on top of a security light on the side of the Interpretation Centre. Having successfully fledged one brood, they then started on a second one, which, as far as we know, was also successful. I saw a couple of phoebes this year but no sign that they are nesting at the garden.

If you look at a phoebe nest you'll see it is composed largely of mud and plant material, with a lining of grass and some feathers. Some nests also contain moss. Phoebes are not shy about nesting around humans, as the FWG pair demonstrated last year. They are often found nesting on sheds, under eaves, by doors, under bridges, anywhere there is a ledge to hold their nest. Prior to human structures, they probably nested on cliffs.

*Text and photo by Christine Hanrahan*

**See more on our PHOTOBLOG: [www.pbase.com/fwg!](http://www.pbase.com/fwg!)**