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# News from the FWG: 2012

*Christine Hanrahan*

At the wildlife garden, changes and challenges are a given. We could never anticipate the events that unfold as the year progresses, both good and bad. The good includes the great number of outside volunteers who in 2012, arrived for a morning, a few hours, a few weeks, alone, or part of a group, all willing and eager to help with our multitudinous tasks. The not so good would include the fierce heat that arrived early (did we even have a real winter) and, with lack of rain in the heart of summer, created very tough conditions for plants and animals alike. There is always far more news to report on, than there is space, therefore this update contains only a fraction of FWG news from 2012.



*Chipping Sparrow at the birdbath in the BYG.*

## **Backyard Garden News**

Last year's update noted we had removed the old garden shed and were awaiting the new one. The new shed, now installed, is large, spacious, made of wood, and a great improvement, plus it looks good! A donation in memory of Juliet Hutchings,

provided for a nice new bench at the end of the Backyard Garden (BYG). The same great team who made the previous one, located near the building, Tony, Al and Malcolm, also made the new one, to the same attractive and comfortable design. Many thanks, guys! And speaking of seating . . . a new picnic table was purchased to replace the old one, and has been well used by visitors, who often come to eat lunch there, or have a rest after walking in the garden.

Isabelle has been overseeing the myriad of details that go into keeping the BYG looking healthy and beautiful. The individual beds can look slightly (sometimes very) different from year to year, particularly as we consider new and various plants that attract birds, butterflies and other pollinating insects. Sometimes an existing plant, which we think is perhaps not very useful for wildlife, surprises us with just how many species of wildlife it really attracts. For example, the Garden Phlox near the picnic table was a magnet for both hummingbirds and hummingbird moths, as well as bees and other insects.

Anyone visiting the BYG will understand how much we rely on volunteers for maintaining the site. We are always on the lookout for more bodies! If you like gardening, nature, or enjoy working with congenial companions, and have Friday mornings free, we'd like to hear from you! Volunteers meet from spring through fall. Contact the FWG at either 613-234-6767 or [fletcher@ofnc.ca](mailto:fletcher@ofnc.ca).

### **Events**

***Native Plant Sale.*** As always, the sale was held on the first Saturday in June. Despite rainy weather (some of the last rain we saw for a prolonged period) we raised a very tidy sum of money. Thanks to the wonderful volunteers who grow hundreds upon hundreds of plants from seed for the sale, we had a truly astonishing variety of plants to sell. Because of the new nursery, we were able to carry over plants from last year and thus sell larger ones, which many buyers prefer. The plant sale volunteers spring into action long before the actual sale day. There are not only the plants to be grown and tended, but publicity to arrange, and a veritable army of volunteers to coordinate for the day of the sale. All the paraphernalia needed for the event has to be checked and repairs, if any, made. A ton of work! Kudos and thanks to all.

***Corporate and Other Volunteers.*** We had a terrific number of volunteers in 2012, which enabled us to do many things that might not otherwise have got done so speedily. In late May, a group of Microsoft employees, organized by the Evergreen Foundation, worked on planting trees in the ravine. They also gave a substantial donation which helped with the purchase of good-sized trees. In early June, Price Waterhouse Cooper volunteers spent the day helping Diane in the Butterfly Meadow. In mid-September, a group of 45 Killam Fulbright scholars spent a rainy

day working with Barry and others on a myriad of tasks. Renate was very busy introducing her respective classes to the FWG, including giving them the opportunity to volunteer at assorted tasks. One group came in early May, while a different group of students spent time working on invasive species in the Birch Grove in late September, and again in early October. Several students volunteered their time at the FWG, helping Diane and Barry. In addition to the groups, there were the individuals who came out to participate in the various work bees, either working in the Butterfly Meadow, or helping remove Dog-strangling Vine (DSV). We joined Volunteer Ottawa, and that has also provided us with new volunteers. More volunteer activity can be found under the Butterfly Meadow report below.

## **Habitats**

### ***Butterfly Meadow***

The Butterfly Meadow, under the leadership of Diane Lepage, continued its expansion in 2012, including enhanced work on the Model Monarch Waystation which is integrated within the Butterfly Meadow. Money from the Monarch



*Black Swallowtail caterpillar (note early instar of the same species behind).*

Waystation fund allowed us to pay Budd Nurseries to grow 3,000 plants, something we could not otherwise have done. Once spring came, the plants were delivered and fortunately, volunteers were ready and available for planting. Diane reports that on 1 June, a group of eight very hard-working volunteers from Price Waterhouse Cooper

(PWC) helped to plant hundreds of flowers. A little bit later, on 16 June, 20 folk came out for a work bee, not only helping to prepare the previously rototilled areas, but also doing a lot of the planting. Another contingent of volunteers arrived on 15 July, as part of a second work bee, to continue the work of removing the invasive DSV from the Butterfly Meadow.

Future plans include the installation of a kiosk at the Butterfly Meadow, to provide information about monarch butterflies, monarch waystations, and creating gardens for butterflies and other beneficial insects. Diane will also be working on a few more small paths around and between the planted areas in the meadow, and continuing to work on the wet area developed in 2012.

Despite the intense heat of summer, 2012, Diane's regular volunteers turned up to work on Wednesday evening. As Diane says, it is thanks to them that the meadow looks so beautiful. If you would like to take part in this very rewarding activity, the group meets Wednesday evenings at 6:00 p.m. from late spring to early fall. Check the FWG website ([www.ofnc.ca/fletcher.php](http://www.ofnc.ca/fletcher.php)) in spring for details about the 2013 work season.

### ***Monarch Butterfly Waystation Project***

As reported in the last update (Hanrahan, 2012), the FWG was the fortunate recipient in 2011, of a grant from the Fido/Evergreen group, after coming second in a "Share Your Care" contest. A portion of that money was spent on the propagation of 3,000 flowering plants, all known for attracting monarchs and other butterflies, including of course, milkweeds, both common and swamp. Many of those plants went into what we call the Model Monarch Waystation within the Butterfly Meadow. Others were planted in sites away from the meadow, in accordance with our plan to make the entire FWG a Monarch Waystation.

Part of the mandate we developed for the project included providing education and outreach about monarch butterflies, as well as plugging into the greater network of monarch butterfly experts and enthusiasts around Ontario and further afield. Therefore, in May 2012, we held a workshop for people with a demonstrated interest in, and experience with, monarch butterflies and monarch waystations, who could help us develop a workable plan for promoting monarchs and their conservation. Many of the invited attendees are part of the Monarch Teachers Network. We also brought to Ottawa, one of the leaders in monarch butterfly conservation, Don Davis, from Toronto. He not only attended the workshop, but gave a lecture at the Canadian Museum of Nature as part of the OFNC's monthly programs.

We also received our official Monarch Waystation certificate, so we're legal and registered! Displayed in the Interpretive Centre at the FWG are several posters

showing the monarch butterfly life cycle and migratory route.

We have many plans for 2013, so stay tuned to our Monarch Waystation Project pages here: [www.ofnc.ca/fletcher/projects/MonarchWaystation/index.php](http://www.ofnc.ca/fletcher/projects/MonarchWaystation/index.php).

Our Pbase photo galleries dedicated to monarchs and milkweeds can be found at: [www.pbase.com/fwg/monarch\\_waystation](http://www.pbase.com/fwg/monarch_waystation).

### **Invasive Species**

The Tuesday Invasive Species Group (TISG), had a second full year in 2012.

Several new volunteers were added to the existing group, and some serious work was undertaken with regard to removing DSV. However, despite scything, pulling and cutting, it was difficult to keep up with the rampant growth. At one point, Barry enlisted the aid of AAFC (Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada) to mow a section of the New Woods north of the Amphibian Pond. This occurred in mid-July, and while the DSV naturally grew back, so did the grass which, at least for the rest of the summer, held its own with the DSV. We know better than to think that one mowing will control the DSV. If only it was so! However, it has allowed us to consider the use of mowing for certain areas at certain times. One of the problems with full-scale mowing is that other beneficial plants attractive to wildlife, will be cut too. We definitely don't want to revert to the mowed look that was the norm when we first assumed management of the site, 22 years ago. As always, when dealing with invasive species control, there is no one easy answer, and more often than not, different species, and different sites, require different methods of control.

One interesting development was the extensive growth of the non-native White Sweet-clover on the eastern edge of the Old Field, in an area where DSV removal has occurred over some years. From no clover, to a dense stand of it in 2012, was a surprise. At first it appeared that the clover was keeping the DSV at bay, but by mid-summer, the DSV was growing up and amongst the clover. Unfortunately, a large stand of the native flowering raspberry on the southeast side of the Old Field area, which had spread extensively over the last 12 years, and appeared to be almost free of DSV for all that time, was completely taken over by the invasive vine in 2012.

Garlic Mustard is another invasive that grew abundantly in 2012. At one time we thought we'd removed all Garlic Mustard from the garden. Sadly, it was just resting, waiting to spring forth again. And so it did. In 2011, there was quite a growth of it under a thicket of trees on the edge of the Old Field. That was all removed, but in 2012 it was back with a vengeance. The Old Field was mowed in October 2011, and in spring 2012, the Garlic Mustard was flourishing along the service road, near the Butterfly Meadow. Bags of the plant were removed, yet a little later, thousands of tiny Garlic Mustard seedlings were found growing up far from the original site.

Raspberry plants soon grew and shaded the mustard, but we can only imagine what we'll find in 2013!

Under Barry's leadership in 2013, we'll continue working away on the two worst invasives, DSV and Garlic Mustard, while Tony and his helpers will continue with buckthorn removal. Other species vie for our attention, but none are as serious a threat as the three just mentioned. If you have a hankering to help with this important work, please check the FWG website for the start dates of the Tuesday Morning Invasive Species group, or come out on Friday mornings and help Tony, beginning in spring. In the meantime, you can check out the TISG blog at: [tisgatfwg.blogspot.com](http://tisgatfwg.blogspot.com).

## **Plants and Animals**

### ***Birds***

It has been a long time since we've seen Evening Grosbeaks in the city, and I've never seen them at the FWG, although Bill Holland recorded them there 20 years ago. Thus, on 31 October I was thrilled to see a small flock of 10 grosbeaks feeding on ash and sumac seeds at the garden. Larose Forest is usually the one sure spot to see this species in the area, but autumn of 2012 saw Evening Grosbeaks reported from many locations around Ontario.

Eastern Kingbirds bred in the garden, as did House Wrens and Common Yellowthroats, species which don't regularly nest in the garden. Green Herons were very much in evidence during the summer, and also in summer, an American Bittern was flushed and flew into the field of buckwheat adjacent to the garden. All our other regular nesting species were present in much the same numbers as in the last few years. House Sparrows continue to be noticeable by their absence.

### ***Insects***

Butterflies were *the* insects of note in 2012, beginning with an unprecedented northward migration of Red Admirals and American Ladies in early spring, and continuing through the summer with multiple sightings of Giant Swallowtails in the region, including one at the FWG (thanks, Barry!). Both Red Admirals and American Ladies laid eggs at the garden on, respectively, Stinging Nettle and Pearly Everlasting. Overwintering Mourning Cloaks and Eastern Commas were both seen in mid-March, after a period of unprecedented hot weather at that time (+30°C).

At least eight Fiery Skippers were found across the road at the Ornamental Gardens in August, only the second record for this species in Ottawa. While looking for the Fiery Skippers, one butterfly watcher found a Wild Indigo Duskywing, another first for the region. Naturally, we searched the FWG for these two species but with no luck. With all the nectar available at the Ornamental Gardens, they had no reason to

cross the road!

However, at the FWG, an American Snout was found again, fourth year for this regional rarity. In late summer, Painted Lady butterflies were being seen in great numbers. And then there were the monarch butterflies, which arrived in our area in far better numbers than we've seen for several years. We found a number of caterpillars at the garden, and we enrolled ourselves in the *Monarch Larval Monitoring Program*, run by the University of Minnesota, so that we could record the ones we found.



*Praying Mantis, found frequently in 2012.*

A couple of new odonates were added to the insect list, a Stream Cruiser and a Spotted Spreadwing. Common Green Darners, often the first dragonfly we see at the garden, were found very early in 2012. Because this species is regularly observed at FWG, we enrolled in the *Dragonfly Watch Program*, which gathers information on arrival and departure dates of Common Green Darners.

Turning to other insects, once again we added a good number of new species, including bugs, beetles, flies, and moths, to our insect inventory. Naturally,

we have recorded only a fraction of what is really there. Dr. Sophie Cardinal and several of her students, conducted a survey of bees in the region, including at the FWG and by so doing, added four more bee species to our list. Photos of many of the species found at the garden in 2012 are on our Pbase photo galleries ([www.pbase.com/fwg](http://www.pbase.com/fwg)).

### ***Mammals***

For the first time in many years no muskrats were seen in the pond, and the growth of cattails and Flowering-rush was unimpeded by their voracious appetite. In years

past, they have been found collecting quantities of both species, and in some significant way (at least in our pond) helped to control the growth of the invasive Flowering-rush. It was sad to see the pond devoid of these little mammals. Nor did we see any beaver in the pond, which in this case was good, as the habitat is too poor from a beaver's point of view, and can't support them.

### ***Reptiles and Amphibians***

Wood Frogs continue to be virtually absent from the pond. In 2011 they were heard, briefly, on only a couple of occasions. This year I didn't hear them at all, although perhaps someone did. American Toads were also less vocal, although definitely present, and the same holds true for the Grey Treefrogs.

From the banner year when our pond supported a couple of Snapping Turtles, a Blanding's Turtle, two or three painted turtles, and even a Red-eared Slider (non-native), to 2012 when turtles were rarely seen. I saw a Snapping Turtle floating in the pond one day in spring, and on a few occasions a small painted turtle, and that was it.

If you are interested in complete lists of what we see, please check out inventories of birds, insects, mammals, reptiles and amphibians, and wildflowers on our website: [www.ofnc.ca/fletcher/alphabet.php](http://www.ofnc.ca/fletcher/alphabet.php), and scroll down the list of wildlife-related subjects to find these lists, and much more.

### **Other**

#### **Photo Galleries**

We've had our Pbase photo galleries for over 4 ½ years. Visitors to the site come from around the globe, and as of this writing have attracted over 845,560 visitors. There are currently 158 galleries, with over 4,000 images. Galleries cover insects, mammals, birds, wildflowers, a history of the FWG, and many other topics. Most popular are our monthly photo blogs, with contributions from many people, showing the garden and its wildlife through the eyes of visitors from near and far. Please take the time to browse our galleries at: [www.pbase.com/fwg](http://www.pbase.com/fwg) and let us know what you think!

#### **New FWG Blog**

We have another way of communicating with our friends and fans! Tremayne has started a new text blog for us, where a wide variety of information is posted, from notices to articles. Check it out at: [www.fletcherwildlifegarden.wordpress.com](http://www.fletcherwildlifegarden.wordpress.com).

#### **FWG Newsletter**

Our newsletter is now being edited and produced by Tremayne, in full colour. It is distributed electronically every two months. Tremayne has done an amazing job re-



designing the newsletter, adding colourful graphics and illustrations, and perhaps most importantly of all, coming up with terrific ideas for each issue. The last one of 2012 was dedicated to the Monarch Butterfly and received a lot of rave reviews. You can find all the past newsletters at [www.ofnc.ca/fletcher/newsletter/index.php](http://www.ofnc.ca/fletcher/newsletter/index.php). To be added to the mailing list, simply send an email to [fletcher@ofnc.ca](mailto:fletcher@ofnc.ca), with this request in the subject line: I would like to receive the FWG newsletter.

### **FWG T-shirts**

If you happen to see someone sporting a bright green t-shirt, with the FWG logo on the front, then you've come across a volunteer!

### **Volunteer Opportunities**

If you would like to volunteer at the FWG, there are many ways in which you can do so. There is invasive species control, tree planting, or any number of other activities. Regular volunteer groups meet on Friday morning (BYG), Tuesday morning (Invasive Species), and Wednesday evening (Butterfly Meadow), spring through fall. The FWG is run by a Management Committee and they'd be very happy to see new members. You are welcome to drop by one of the regular meetings (always the 4<sup>th</sup> Wednesday of each month, at 7:30 p.m. (7:00 p.m. in the winter), at FWG and see what the committee does.

### **Acknowledgments:**

As always, thanks to all the volunteers who make FWG happen!

**Photos:** Christine Hanrahan, except where noted.

### **References:**

Hanrahan, Christine. 2012. News from the FWG: 2011. *T&L* 46(1):9-17.  
Lepage, Diane. 2012. Butterfly meadow report. Unpublished.

### **FWG Details and Contact Information**

The FWG is located off Prince of Wales Drive on the Central Experimental Farm. For more information please visit the website at: [www.ofnc.ca/fletcher.php](http://www.ofnc.ca/fletcher.php). Brochures about the garden are available from the kiosks by the parking lot and in front of the Interpretive Centre.

- FWG phone number: 613-234-6767.
- Website, information about the FWG, Sandra Garland: [fletcher@ofnc.ca](mailto:fletcher@ofnc.ca).
- Newsletter: Tremayne Stanton-Kennedy: [fletcher@ofnc.ca](mailto:fletcher@ofnc.ca).
- Bird and wildlife observations, Christine Hanrahan: [vanessa@magma.ca](mailto:vanessa@magma.ca).
- AAFC Security: 613-759-1985.