VOLUME 37 NUMBER 4 PAGES 145-192 OCTOBER-DECEMBER 2003

TRAIL & LANDSCAPE

A Publication Concerned With Natural History and Conservation

The Ottawa Field-Naturalists' Club

TRAIL & LANDSCAPE

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Publications Mail Registration # 09798
We acknowledge the financial support of the Government of Canada through the Publication Assistance Program (PAP), toward our mailing costs.

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Postage for U.S. and other foreign countries please add $5
Single copies of recent issues: $6 each postpaid
Index to Vols. 1 - 20: $10 postpaid; to Vols. 21-25 $5 postpaid.

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Published by
The Ottawa Field-Naturalist' Club
Box 35069, Westgate P.O., Ottawa, Ontario, K1Z 1A2

Volume 37 Number 4
October - December 2003

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Important Ecological Sites in Aylmer

Ian Huggett

The following articles constitute a reconnaissance level ecological inventory profiling five natural areas within the Aylmer Sector of the City of Gatineau. These natural area profiles were prepared to complement an ecological inventory for the City of Gatineau in 2003-2004. The present study lists only the most abundant and common species of each study area.

The lack of any systematic compilation of life science data for the former Municipality of Aylmer within the past half century has precipitated the loss of several exceptional woodlands to residential and industrial development. This report was intended to assist municipal authorities in identifying natural areas worthy of special recognition.

It is hoped that additional studies will follow by competent professionals in the natural sciences and appropriate development constraints be applied. The current work is an exercise in progress and hopefully more site evaluations will be undertaken this summer.

FRASER ROAD EAST

This site is south of Lucerne Blvd., east of Fraser Road, and west of the future autoroute Deschênes right-of -way. Its present zoning is residential and contains a riparian park.

Community Types

There are two ecotypes found at this site, an upland forest and a Silver Maple swamp. The northern section containing the upland forest is predominately comprised of mature even-aged Red Oak *(Quercus rubra)* but also has White Ash (*Fraxinus americana*) and Sugar Maple (*Acer saccharum*) as co-dominants. The site is well-drained with a complete absence of soil or organic material on shale bedrock. Other canopy species include: American Elm (*Ulmus americana*), Bur Oak (*Quercus macrocarpa*), Ironwood (*Ostrya virginiana*), Basswood (*Tilia americana*), and Poplar (*Populus* spp). The understory includes hawthorn (*Crataegus* spp.), buckthorn (*Rhamnus* spp.), dogwood (*Cornus* spp.), Staghorn Sumac (*Rhus typhina*) and cherry (*Prunus* spp.). Large-leaved Aster (*Aster macrophyllus*), Barren

Strawberry (*Waldsteinia fragaroides*), Wild Strawberry (*Fragaria virginiana*), Canada/fly Honey-suckle (*Lonicera canadensis*), and blueberry (*Vaccinium* spp.) are the main ground covers. Three uncommon to rare tree species encountered were several semi-mature Blue Beech (*Carpinus caroliniana*), a single young Striped Maple (*Acer pensylvanicum*) and a scattering of White Oak (*Quercus alba*) which included an exceptionally large specimen with a trunk circumference of 61 cm dbh (diameter breast height).

The Upland forest drops abruptly southward to mature Silver Maple (*Acer saccharinun*) swamp that is partially bisected by a regional storm sewer before reaching the shoreline of Lac Deschênes. Other canopy species include Black Ash (*Fraxinus nigra*), Manitoba Maple (*Acer negundo*), Cottonwood (*Populus deltoides*) and willow (*Salix* spp.). Sand deposits in the flood zone and accumulated leaf litter provide a limited substrate for Sensitive Fern (*Onoclea sensibilis*), Poison Ivy (*Rhus radicans*) and various sedges (*Carex* spp.).

A 1-2 hectare active beaver pond is situated to the east and is bordered by the municipal cycle path. Northern Orioles, warblers, Red-winged Blackbirds, and waterfowl can also be found in this pond.

Ecological Processes and Habitat Functions
The Upland forest is one of the last original oak forests bordering Lac Deschênes and has a few uncommon deciduous species (White Oak, Blue Beech and Striped Maple) for the Outaouais. The lowland Silver Maple swamp is an increasingly rare habitat type due to intense waterfront development along the Ottawa River. It is an important site for song birds such as Tanagers, Orioles, Grosbeaks, Leconte's Sparrows and waterfowl.

The Silver Maple swamp north of the storm sewer is an important habitat for nesting birds like Blue-gray Gnatcatchers, and acts as a catchment basin filtering out sediments from the storm water before it enters Lac Dechênes.

Patterns of Disturbance
In the late 1970s the storm sewer was installed and some backfilling occurred along the western border of the swamp and a collector sewer was installed through the southern section of the Silver Maple swamp. In the 1990s a temporary road was built immediately west of the beaver pond for surplus backfill or snow disposal, but it has now become a dump site for household appliances.

Threats
Although a 30 m wide shoreline south of the collector sewer is zoned parkland, the remaining land, including the swamp, is zoned for residential development. The

beaver pond shows signs of eutrophication (nutrient enrichment) probably from an increase in sedimentation from residential construction immediately north of Lucerne Blvd.

BOUCHER FOREST EAST

Boucher Forest East is south of Boucher Road, east of Klock Road, west of Vanier Road and north of the McConnell-Laramee Highway. It is currently zoned industrial, commercial and residential.

This two square kilometre natural area known as the "Boucher Forest" probably represents the most important undisturbed forested landscape in the urban Outaouais outside Gatineau Park. It is a diverse landscape and can be described as having a high floristic diversity and stable predator/prey populations. The area is buffered to the north by another piece of undeveloped land which, although of lesser ecological quality, remains unfragmented by roads.

Community Types

The study area harbours a mosaic of mature forest communities and wetland complexes. Upland forest communities are dominated by Sugar Maple, American Beech *(Fagus grandifolia)*, Butternut (*Juglans cinerea*) (including a possible Outaouais record of 81 cm dbh), Bitternut Hickory (*Carya cordiformis*) (one measuring 64 cm dbh), Ironwood (*Ostrya virginiana*) (the largest recorded specimen for Québec), Slippery Elm (*Ulmus rubra*) and Wild Plum (*Prunus americana*). Lowland coniferous forests are characterized by White Pine (*Pinus strobus*) (largest recorded specimen for Aylmer), White Spruce (*Picea glauca*), Eastern White Cedar (*Thuja occidentalis*) and *Abies balsamea* (Balsam Fir).

Ground vegetation includes the uncommon and threatened species Horse Gentian (*Triosteum aurantiacum*), Wild Leek (*Allium tricoccum*), and Painted Trillium (*Trillium undulatum*). Other floristic species include Blood Root (*Sanguinaria canadensis*), Blue Cohosh (*Caulophyllum thalictroides*), Large-leaved Bellwort (*Uvularia grandiflora*), Maiden's Hair Fern (*Adiantum pedatum*), Wild Ginger (*Asarum canadense*), Leatherwood (*Dirca palustris*), Common Speedwell (*Veronica officinalis*), White Baneberry (*Actaea pachypoda*), Prickly Gooseberry (*Ribes cynosbati*), Ground Cedar (*Lycopodium* spp.). Soil depths and types are variable. The upland sites have a shallow layer of soil over limestone while the lowland sites are mainly rich organic muck and peat.

Ecological Processes and Habitat Functions

The Boucher Forest was discovered by naturalists in the 1960s and has been recognized as an important habitat for Pileated, Northern three-toed and Black-

backed Woodpeckers, Crossbills, Winter Wrens, Wood Thrushes, Oven-birds, Red-shouldered Hawks and Barred Owls. The largest wetland in the Aylmer Sector is found here. The retention, and filtering capacity of the cattail (*Typha latifolia*) marsh and woodland, combined with other forests to the west, probably function as an important surface/groundwater recharge/discharge area.

The study area is representative of the region's original ecosystem. The area provides critical habitat for rare, provincially uncommon and threatened species of plants and animals. The cedar and pine stands are used by deer in winter and Black Bears are frequent visitors that hibernate in the forest's cedar and spruce stands. A stable population of American Fishers, Porcupines, Flying Squirrels, Coyotes, Red Foxes, Raccoons and Snowshoe Hare exist in the area. In the 1960s a Lynx was also recorded as being present. The marshy areas harbor healthy amphibian populations, the most common being Gray Treefrogs, Wood Frogs, Spring Peepers and possibly Western Chorus Frogs. American Beech and Sugar Maple snags with their multiple excavation holes and enlarged rot cavities provide many nesting sites for local wildlife. Although logged 30 years ago, the northern part still provides a core natural area and is an important corridor to Gatineau Park 3 km north.

Patterns of Disturbance

Much of the study area has remained undisturbed for the past century. The woodland south of Boucher Road has escaped commercial logging. Although a local logger and cattle rancher removed most of the forest north of the study area between Pink and Boucher Roads in the 1970s, the study area south of Boucher Road was left uncut. Up until the 1960s gravel extraction took place in a few hectares south of Boucher Road. The clearing was later used as a firing range by local gun owners and by the Aylmer Police. The Canadian Armed Forces used the wooded areas for field orienteering exercises until the mid-1980s. Cedar stands west of the snowmobile trail continue to be a popular "bush party" site. However, the study area east of the snowmobile trail and west of Vanier Road remains free of recent human disturbances.

Threats

The property's current industrial and commercial zoning offers little protection for this exceptional natural landscape. Municipal facilities (sewer and water) have been recently installed and a public school is currently under construction on the east side of Vanier Road. The threat of urban encroachment or logging continue to exist.

The presence of all-terrain vehicles (ATVs) remains a constant menace. The opening of a nearby ATV outlet coupled with inadequate law enforcement has helped to increase vehicle use in the area and the probability of further ecological damage.

Since the 1980s Aylmer's youth have targeted this forested area, but fortunately damage has been localized primarily around the abandoned gravel pit at the end of Boucher Road and along the existing snowmobile trail. Core areas were made inaccessible by ice storm damage and have escaped most human disturbance.

FRASER'S FIELD

This habitat is bordered by Lucerne Blvd. to the south, Fraser's Beach Road to the north and by Hemlock Street and Fraser Road to the east and west respectively. Its current classification is residential and commercial.

Community Types

Several different habitats occur in this area. There is an abandoned field, a four hectare Silver Maple-Black Ash swamp, a seasonal cattail wetland and a hardwood stand.

The field with its scattering of young to middle-aged Bur Oaks and White Pines would be considered a "late successional" area. Young American Elm, Red Oak, Juniper (*Juniperus communis)*, and White Oak (*Quercus alba*) can be found in the open sites. Soils here are thin or absent on top of unbroken shale bedrock. Situated in the southwest is an undisturbed portion that contains a very old (80-140 years) Silver Maple (*Acer saccharinun*) and Black Ash (*Fraxinus nigra*) swamp.

The hardwood swamp in the flood zone has Silver Maple, Black Ash and American Elm as the dominant canopy species. The drier sites contain stands of White Ash, Red Maple, Bur Oak, and Basswood. The small seasonal cattail wetland found immediately west of Fraser Road is surrounded by honeysuckle (*Lonicera*) and buckthorn and drains under Fraser Beach Road into Lac Deschênes.

Common herbaceous shrubs and vascular plants include:

American Basswood
Eastern Red Cedar
Red Maple
Common Juniper
Pin Cherry
Maple-leaved Viburnum
Downy Arrow-wood
Round-leaved Dogwood
Red osier Dogwood
buckthorn
Tartarian Honeysuckle
Bush Honeysuckle
Staghorn Sumac
serviceberry
Pink Lady's Slipper
Queen Anne's Lace
Canada Mayflower
Spreading Dogbane
Barren Strawberry
Large-leaved Aster
Pearly Everlasting
blueberry
Bracken Fern
Poison Ivy
vetch
Wild Raspberry

Common Ragweed

Swamp section herbaceous shrubs and vascular plants are:

Jewelweed
gooseberry
Purple-leaved Willow Herb
Wild Raspberry
Round-leaved Dogwood
Red osier Dogwood
Poison Ivy

Ecological Processes and Habitat Functions
The proximity of this 40 hectare scrub to Lac Deschênes makes it an important area for migrating birds and is an important nesting site for Common Snipes, Goldfinch, Catbirds, Brown Thrashers, Red-eyed Vireos, Cardinals, Chestnut-sided Warblers, Ruffed Grouse, Savanna Sparrows, and White-throated Sparrows. The small seasonal cattail marsh in the east acts as a retention basin that accumulates and filters surface runoff from Lucerne Blvd. that drains west of Fraser Road. Blue-spotted Salamanders (*Ambystoma maculatum*) have been found in previous years in early spring where the creek drains into the marsh. Successful White Pine regeneration (some 35-50 years old) is evident in the area's southern section which, if left undisturbed, will eventually return to the White Pine landscape that once dominated Wychwood and Blueberry Point. The provincially rare White Oak is scattered throughout the property and a single rare Eastern Red Cedar is located adjacent to an excavated clearing. The rare Ram's-head Lady's Slipper (*Cypripedium arietinum*) was reported in the area in the 1980s but has not been found since. Finally, the southwest portion's mature Silver Maple flood plain swamp is exceptional. It retains the surface runoff from the north and accumulates the sub-surface seepage from Lac Deschênes during high flood periods.

Patterns of Disturbance
The area was cleared in the late 1800s for a railway yard and was subjected to frequent fires until the 1920s and has been subjected to several episodes of human disturbance since its use as railway yard. A portion of the property adjacent to Hemlock Street was cleared in 1973 when sewer and water facilities were installed for residential housing. The subdivision was never developed. The property is heavily used by pedestrians, cyclists and skiers. "Bush parties" have occurred there since the 1970s. Some portions of this site have become dump sites for household appliances, construction waste (asphalt shingles) and fill from ditch excavation.

Threats
In March 2003 the Gatineau City Council approved the building of 600 housing units on at least 70% of the site. Although the legality of the project has been

challenged by citizen groups, the developer has, nevertheless, surveyed and bulldozed roads on this site in anticipation of final approval.

QUEEN'S PARK

Found south of former CP railway line, north of Queen's Park Road, east of Boulder's Rd. west of Lattion Road, this region is slotted for residential use.

Community Types

The northwestern quadrant of the study area is characterized by Eastern White Cedar and mature Eastern Hemlock (some attaining sizes of 60 cm dbh) with a remnant understory of Balsam Fir. However, the dominant canopy species of the extremely rich lowland forest consists of uneven-aged Sugar Maple, Black Ash and Butternut (52 cm dbh). Pure stands of Black Ash are located directly along the former rail bed and behind Queen's Park Road where drainage is impeded and where surface run-off from an abrupt rise accumulates. Other canopy species include Red Oak (66 cm dbh), American Basswood (74 cm dbh) and Ironwood. The eastern portion of the study area consists primarily of White Pine (61 cm dbh), Sugar Maple, Red Oak (73 cm dbh), American Elm, White Birch (*Betula papyrifera*) and White Spruce. A couple of young Blue Beech (*Carpinus caroliniana*) and Striped Maple were discovered growing along the main trail that dissects the property. The deep rich organic soils have produced a wide variety of uncommon herbacious flora species. Some of the more abundant include:

American Basswood (seedlings)
Red Maple (seedlings)
Pin Cherry
Cultivated Apple
Common Juniper
Round-leaved Dogwood
hawthorn
Staghorn Sumac
Red osier Dogwood
Round-leaved Dogwood
American Fly Honeysuckle
Tartarian Honeysuckle
Spreading Dogbane
Bush Honeysuckle
Red Baneberry
Buckthorn
blueberry
gooseberry
Large-leaved Aster
Maple-leaved Vibernum
Bracken Fern
ferns (several species)
Canada Mayflower
Blue Cohosh
Queen Anne's Lace
Barren Strawberry
Jewelweed
Sarsaparilla
Vetch
Poison Ivy
wild mustard
False Solomon's Seal
Meadow Rue
Wild Raspberry
Trout Lily
Painted Trillium

Three-leaved Solomon's Seal	Bloodroot
hawkweed	Sharp-lobed Hepatica

Ecological Processes and Habitat Functions
This piece of land acts as a catchment basin for nitrate rich agricultural effluent draining from a commercial cattle operation to the north. The western section has an exceptionally large Butternut which functions as a migratory stop and nesting site. Birds seen here include Pine Warblers, Indigo Buntings, Rose-breasted Grosbeaks, Winter Wrens, Red-eyed Vireos and Northern Water-thrushes and Great Horned Owls. The area is also perfect habitat for the threatened Western Chorus Frog. The shoreline of this section of Lac Deschênes has received official designation as a migratory waterfowl refuge by Québec's Fauna et Parc.

Patterns of Disturbance
The forest has been left undisturbed since the 1920s. And the western section probably hasn't been disturbed for over a century. There is no evidence of previous logging on this site. For decades local residents have been conscientious at protecting the area's natural attributes.

Over the past two years 1-2 acre housing lots bordering Queen's Park Road have been sold. In May 2003 a residential street was cut into the eastern section of the forest thus removing mature Sugar Maple, Red Oak, and White Pine trees. The majority of the trees cut were 100 years old.

Threats
The major threat is commercial and residential development. Further development of this area would fragment the migratory and nesting song bird habitat and would drain the Western Chorus frog breeding habitat. The Outaouais would loser this rare old forest type.

Although the filtering capacity of the woods north of Queen's Park Road is unknown, there is a greater risk of ground water contamination to existing and future wells from the nearby cattle operation and from the former rail site. Ground water aquifers and surface water could both be affected from nearby effluent if development is to continue.

NCC VANIER EAST

Located north of Lucerne Blvd., east of Vanier Road, and south of Crescent Drive, the zoning is NCC "parkland, " but some sections may be rezoned as institutional.

Community Type
NCC Vanier East is a late successional apple orchard with middle-aged regeneration of American Elm, Black Ash and Manitoba Maple (*Acer negundo*). Other canopy species include Bur Oak, poplar, willow (*Salix* spp.), and Basswood. The majority of this property, especially in the west, has been heavily invaded by the alien species buckthorn. The abandoned pasture's shrub layer also includes an abundance of hawthorn (*Crataegus*), Staghorn Sumac, honeysuckle and dogwood.

Two or more small seasonal cattail marshes are fed by creeks draining under and alongside two schools to the north on Vanier Road. The wetlands are surrounded by middle-aged Black Ash. The ground flora is characterized by Horsetail (*Equisetum* spp.), Curly Dock (*Rumex crispus*), grasses, Large-leaved Aster, Yarrow (*Achillea millefolium*), honeysuckle, Poison Ivy, Virginia Creeper (*Parthenocissus quinquefolia*), Wild Raspberry, Maple-leaved Viburnum, Cow Vetch (*Vicia cracca*) and Queen-Anne's Lace. Shallow soil over broken shale are found in the west but there are heavier soil deposits located in the east towards Stewart Road. Cultivated plant varieties have escaped from nearby homes and have spread into the surrounding field

Ecological Processes and Habitat Functions
The area provides summer nesting habitat for a large number of song birds such as Red-winged Blackbirds, Catbirds, Goldfinches, Cardinals and Northern Orioles. The seasonal wetlands also attract large numbers of birds. Residents along Crescent Drive have set up winter feeders, erected nest boxes and maintained walking trails throughout the property. The location of this area makes it a wildlife corridor to Lac Deschênes.

Patterns of Disturbance
The major problem of the property are the thickets of invasive and non-native species. The most abundant being buckthorn, Manitoba Maple and Purple Loosestrife (*Lythrum salicaria*).

Threats
The property is currently owned by the National Capital Commission (NCC). The zoning has recently been modified to accommodate institutional development. A subdivision is under construction on the west side of Vanier Road which could alter drainage on the property.

Acknowledgements
I would like to thank the following people for their valuable observations and input towards these land assessments. Thanks goes to J. Dubois, M. Fournier, F. Goudreault, B. Beaudoin, J. Cayouette, D. Brunton, D. Gagnon D. St-Hilaire, and E. Stephens.

Photographers and Artists. . . The Soirée is coming!

Phil Jeffreys

Please keep those cameras and brushes working and keep next year's Soirée in mind to display some of your nature inspired projects covering Summer, Fall, Winter and Spring.

The 2004 Soirée will be held on Saturday 24th April 2004 at Saint Basil's Church, Maitland Avenue, at 7:30 p.m. The church is 0.5 km south of Carling Ave. (about a seven minute walk).

Thanks to a few, but very active participants we had some beautiful pictures last time and I am sure it will be the same next year. Some form of mounting or simple "Walmart-style" framing is preferable, as this best protects the pictures. Un-mounted pictures (4" x 6" minimum) are also acceptable providing we can mount these temporarily onto Bristol board.

If you have any questions, please phone me at 721-0139.

Members' Bulletin Board

Dave Smythe

A new feature has been added to our website for the benefit of members. The Bulletin Board on the opening page now includes a "Members' Bulletin Board" where members can
- advertise a personal item for sale that is related to Club activities such as optical equipment or reference books.
- request or offer personal items related to Club activities.
- post a notice related to Club activities, such as looking for volunteers, looking for a ride to a field trip or a roommate on a long distance field trip.

Instructions for use and conditions for posting are given on the web page. Remember this is for member use only and not for commercial enterprises. If you want to use this new feature but don't have a computer, ask someone with a computer to help post the notice. You can always include your telephone number in the notice for a response.

Which one is it? Dog-strangling vine or swallow-wort, *Cynanchum* or *Vincetoxicum*, this species or that?

Stephen Darbyshire

Anyone who has visited the Fletcher Wildlife Garden in mid-summer will have noticed the extensive populations of a vine with small purplish or maroon flowers, which smothers other vegetation in the fields and ravine and infests hedges, shrub thickets and woodlots. In late summer and fall it produces masses of pods containing plumed seeds strikingly similar to the common milkweed. The characteristic flower, fruit and seed structures indicate that this plant belongs to the milkweed family, Asclepiadaceae.

Identification of this plant and the names under which it has gone have been a source of great confusion. This is due to various problems including misidentification and taxonomic disagreement which have lasted for more than a century. The story of the plant's names is not an easy one to explain or follow. While the name and relationships of the plant may be in heated dispute, there is no doubt that this plant came to North America from Europe in the late 19th century. It was probably introduced to the Ottawa area early in the 20th century as a garden plant. Readily escaping from cultivation, it has spread to many areas in eastern North America and is now causing severe disruption and ecological degradation in various habitat types.

Two generic names have been applied to the plant, *Cynanchum* and *Vincetoxicum*. This is a reflection of the controversy associated with taxonomy and classification in the milkweed family. The name *Cynanchum* is from the Greek roots for "dog" and "strangle," where the term "strangle" is used in a classical sense to mean "poison." This name alludes to the ancient belief that it was a useful poison "for dogs and other vermin." The name *Vincetoxicum* comes from the Latin roots for "conquer" and "poison," after the mediaeval belief that it was an antidote for most poisons. Placing these plants in *Cynanchum* is considered a conservative approach (lumping) where the genus includes many hundreds of species from Europe, Asia, Africa and Australia. The name *Vincetoxicum* is sometimes adopted to differentiate a small

group of Eurasian temperate species from the larger and more tropical group of *Cynanchum* species. Both generic names are used for our plant by different authors. Both names are "correct," depending on how one has defined the genus.

The species name has also gone through some changes over the years. Originally thought to be a species from southern Europe, the name used in early publications was *Cynanchum nigrum*. In the mid 20th century it was shown that the Ottawa plants were really another species altogether. The name *Cynanchum medium* was taken up to distinguish this quite different, although superficially similar, species (e.g., Gillett and White 1978). Later it was determined that *Cynanchum medium* was an inappropriate name and the name *Cynanchum rossicum* became widely adopted. If one opts to use the narrower genus concept of *Vincetoxicum* the name would be *Vincetoxicum rossicum*. This plant originated from southern Georgia and the Caucasus, but is part of a large species complex which ranges across Europe and into western Asia. The common form in western and northern Europe has very pale creamy or yellowy flowers and is known (in various languages and forms) under the name "swallow-wort." Its scientific name, *Vincetoxicum hirundinaria*, alludes to this old vernacular name. While the common names "swallow-wort" or "pale swallow-wort" are often used to refer to our plant (*V. rossicum*), this name is not used for that species in Eurasia and the flowers, while paler than those of *Vincetoxicum nigrum*, are certainly a lot darker than the 'true' swallow-wort. Since it was first reported in Canada under the genus name *Cynanchum* (Moore 1959), the common name "dog-strangling vine" has often been used for *V. rossicum* (e.g., Alex et al. 1980).

To complicate matters the previously mentioned *Vincetoxicum nigrum* has also been introduced to various places in North America including Canada. Common names used for this species include "black dog-strangling vine" or "black swallow-wort." The scientific name takes a strange turn as the rules of botanical nomenclature require that, as a member of the genus *Cynanchum*, the name *Cynanchum louiseae* must be used for this species. Although *V. nigrum* has been known from various places in Canada (e.g., Montreal, Hamilton, Kingston, etc.) for a long time, *V. rossicum* was the only species found in the Ottawa District. In 1977, however, David White found a population of *V. nigrum* on the grounds of the Unitarian Church on Cleary Ave. It has spread at this site into nearby commercial lots and to the National Capital Commission lands along the Western Parkway and Ottawa River shore.

Not only is there some ambiguity over what names to call these plants, but there is also a problem of distinguishing the two species. The two are quite similar and are distinguished with certainty only by their flowers which are borne in small stalked clusters in the leaf axes. Fortunately flowering is extended over much of the season,

from early June (or even late May) and continuing throughout the summer. The deltoid petals of *V. nigrum* are dark purple to almost black (Figure A), while the elongate strap-like petals of *V. rossicum* are pink, red-brown or maroon (Figure B). The upper surface of the petals are covered with short white hairs in the former, but are smooth and hairless in the latter. Table 1 below compares these and other characteristics which will assist in distinguishing the two species. The picture also illustrates most of these differences. Other differences exist but are less reliable, including the shape of the flower stalks (peduncles), pods and seeds (longer, narrower and smaller in *V. rossicum*, respectively).

By far the most common and widespread of these two species in the Ottawa area is *V. rossicum*. It is known from many sites across the urban core and western Greenbelt in roadsides, fields, thickets and fencerows, with the most extensive populations in the Carleton University and Experimental Farm area. The population of *V. nigrum* near Woodroffe and the Western Parkway (which may not be the only one) is expanding, however, and this species is to be expected in other places in the Ottawa District. Have a close look at the flowers next time you see some plants. The two species are easily distinguished, even if the names you hang on them are equivocal and subject to personal preference.

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Gillett, J. M. and D. J. White, 1978. Checklist of vascular plants of the Ottawa-Hull region, Canada. National Museum of Natural Sciences, Ottawa. 155 pp.

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Table 1. Comparison of the names and floral characters of *Vincetoxicum rossicum* and *Vincetoxicum nigrum*.

Character	*Vincetoxicum nigrum* (L.) Moench	*Vincetoxicum rossicum* (Kleopow) Barbar.
scientific names (asterisk indicates an inappropriate name previously used)	*Cynanchum nigrum* (L.) Pers.* *Cynanchum louiseae* Kartesz & Gandhi	*Cynanchum medium* R. Br.* *Cynanchum rossicum* (Kleopow) Borhidi
common names	black dog-strangling vine dog-strangling vine black swallow-wort black swallowwort Louise's swallowwort	dog-strangling vine swallow-wort pale swallow-wort swallowwort
petal colour	dark purple to almost black	pale pink, red-brown or maroon
petal shape	deltoid, about as long as wide	strap-like, distinctly longer than wide
petal texture	thick, somewhat fleshy and hairy	thin and smooth
corona (cup-shaped structure between the petals and stigma)	dark purple	yellow to orange
flower buds	spherical (rounded apex)	conic (pointed apex)

Figure 1. Flowers and flower buds of *Vincetoxicum nigrum* (A), and *Vincetoxicum rossicum* (B).

Our Waters. . .What is a healthy aquatic ecosystem?

Paul Hamilton and Roger McNeely

Rideau River on the west side of Long Island, Manotick

The underwater world is one of intrigue and misunderstanding. From aquatic mammals, and fish to microorganisms and bacteria, we can imagine how life must be. But do we really know? Limnologists studying aquatic systems cannot always agree on the importance of acid rain, nutrients, organic carbon, man-made contaminants and single stress events (e.g. major flooding). How then can public users be expected to evaluate water quality and understand some of the reasons for basic water conservation? Although the chemical dynamics of aquatic systems is complex, we can generally evaluate water quality with the understanding of basic water chemistry (Hutchinson 1957, Wetzel 1983, CCREM 1987).

The most common question asked.... is our water polluted? Even in the voice you can tell that most individuals don't exactly know what they are asking. Are they asking about heavy-metals, pesticides, fertilizers, pH, oxygen levels and/or dangerous microbes in the water? The word pollution is arguably one of the most misunderstood, indeed misused words when referring to aquatic ecosystems. The word pollution has its roots in latin *polluto*, meaning to make unhealthy or impure. A rather vague term because who decides what is impure or healthy. We have water quality guidelines, which are generally accepted water quality conditions, but these do not always indicate unhealthy waters. Ultimately it is most important to identify a specific problem.

Pure water (H_2O) is not found in nature and only available as distilled or purified water. In large quantities, distilled water is potentially unhealthy to humans because it can remove minerals and nutrients from our bodies. So what is healthy water? Water in its natural state is composed of H_2O molecules along with many other components. The natural impurities, in order of abundance are ions (e.g. dissolved salts), dissolved oxygen (DO), nutrients (e.g. nitrogen, phosphorus, carbon), and metals (even including heavy metals). When humans introduce chemicals they can be organic contaminants such as pesticides.

Ions (Dissolved Salts)

The most common chemical impurities are ions (dissolved salts). The eight most common ions are calcium, sodium, magnesium, potassium (cations = positively charged) and bicarbonate, sulfate, chloride, and carbonate (anions = negatively charged). Calcium and sodium are the most abundant. In saline waters sodium chloride (NaCl) dominates, whereas in almost all North American freshwaters calcium carbonate ($CaCO_3$) is the most prominent salt (ion-combination). If either of these combinations is high, the ions will precipitation out as a white film along the shoreline, as sodium chloride (salt) in saline lakes or as calcium carbonate (marl) in freshwater lakes and streams. Other less common ion impurities, in general order of abundance include magnesium (Mg), sulfate (SO_4), potassium (K) and bicarbonate (HCO_3). Waters in the Ottawa region are dominated by calcium bicarbonate, a small unnamed lake near the village of Leland (44° 27' N; 76° 26' W) is a good example of a calcium-rich lake, which has a marl skirt around the upper ledge of the lake. A similar phenomenon occurs in Lamb's Pond northwest of Brockville (44°39'20"N; 75°48'20"W) where marl actively precipitates during the summer season.

In natural waters, ion concentrations determine pH, conductance and alkalinity. Pure (distilled) water has a neutral pH of about 7 with very low conductance (the ability to conduct a current when a voltage is applied between two electrodes) and low buffering ability (alkalinity). Life cannot exist in distilled water because essential salts and nutrients are missing. Further distilled waters are quite unstable because

they cannot control or buffer any changes from exposure to air, soil or even bedrock. This means healthy freshwaters are relatively rich in ions creating pH levels generally between 6 to 8, conductance levels between 100-2000 micro-siemens and have good buffering ability (reasonable alkalinity). Acid lakes have a lower pH (typically 4-6), but it is the poor buffering ability (low alkalinity) in some of these lakes, which makes them even more susceptible to increases in acidity after rain storms. Therefore low pH and poorly buffered lakes (acid lakes) exhibit variable water quality conditions that affect aquatic life.

Oxygen

Without oxygen, only bacteria would live in aquatic ecosystems. Canadian water quality guidelines suggest that 5.5 to 9.5 milligrams/litre or parts per million of oxygen in the water creates good living conditions for aquatic life. Rapids, waterfall, wave action, and photosynthesis aerate the water, while respiration (including animal, bacterial and plant respiration) removes free oxygen. Also the solubility of oxygen decreases when temperatures increase. Therefore during the peak period of summer, it is not uncommon to have an oxygen deficit in the waters at the bottom of lakes and deep rivers. In the Rideau River for example, selected areas in Mooney's Bay and below Kars can have bottom waters with oxygen levels below the guidelines. These are small areas at the bottom of the river that do not impact on surface water quality.

Nutrients

Nitrogen, phosphorus and carbon are the major nutrients required for plant growth. Three nutrients in commercial fertilizers are listed as N:P:K (Nitrogen: Phosphorus: Potassium). Potassium can be a limiting nutrient in terrestrial systems; however, in aquatic environments potassium is an ion (salt) that is readily available and generally not a limiting nutrient for biological growth. Of the major three, it is phosphorus and nitrogen that limit aquatic plant growth.

When evaluating the nutrient levels (fertilization) of our lakes and rivers, two things must be considered, the amount (concentration) and the relative ratio. Nitrogen and phosphorus concentrations are measured in micrograms/litre (µg/L), which is equivalent to parts per billion (ppb). Concentrations of total nitrogen are not specified, while phosphorus levels between 5 and 30 ppb are commonly observed. When the concentrations of nitrogen and phosphorus are excessive (termed eutrophication), we have well fertilized lakes and rivers resulting in heavy plant and microorganism growth. With lower than normal nutrient levels, biological growth is reduced and the waters are relatively clear (oligotrophic). The front cover of the July-September issue of "*T&L*" depicts a small river with average nutrient levels and good (not excessive) plant growth. The Ottawa River has nutrient levels on the lower side of average, while the Rideau River and its tributaries have nutrient levels

on the higher side of average (Figure 1). At certain places and times along the Rideau River phosphorus levels exceed 30 and excessive fertilization (eutrophication) is easily observed (Hamilton and Poulin 2000). It is worth noting than phosphorus levels in the Rideau have decreased over the last 30 years, but are still considered high.

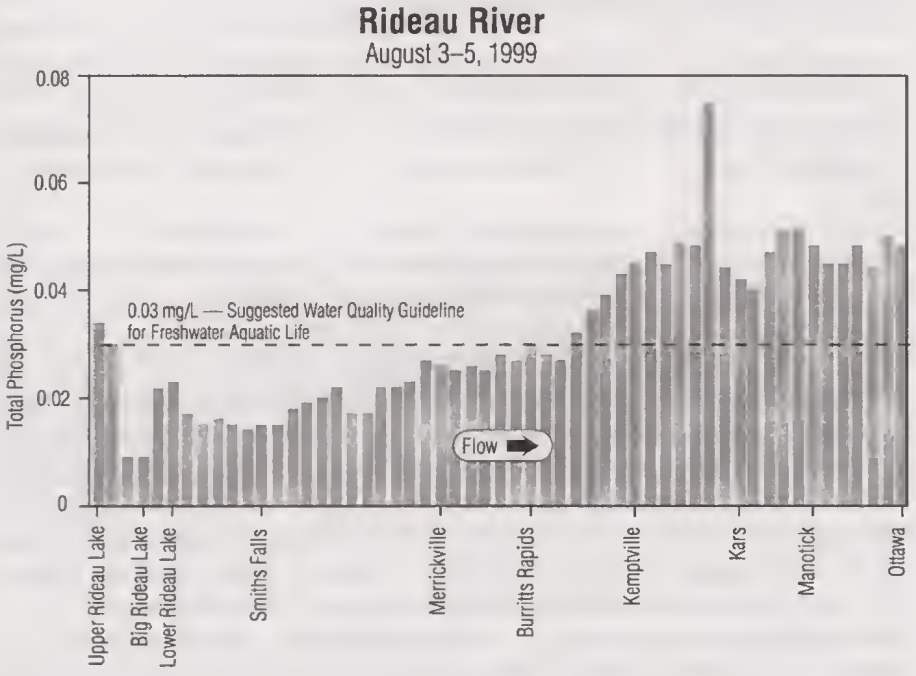

Figure 1. Phosphorus levels in the Rideau River from the headwater lakes to Ottawa. In the late summer phosphorus levels from below Burritts Rapids to Ottawa can be above the suggested water quality guidelines for aquatic life.

The second component for consideration is the ratio of nitrogen to phosphorus. In other words, if one of these nutrients is more prevalent/abundant than the other what kind of growth or problem can we expect to see (Table 1). Nitrogen is more abundant than phosphorus and a ratio between 10:1 and 20:1 is indicative of balanced nutrient levels for biological growth. When nitrogen concentrations are low (ratio less than 10:1), nitrogen is effectively limiting growth and organisms that actively collect (fix) nitrogen or those that do not need as much nitrogen to survive will prevail. In this case nitrogen collecting aquatic plants (legumes) and many

cyanobacteria (blue-green algae) are commonly observed. In fact, cyanobacteria typically dominate waters limited by nitrogen. When phosphorus levels are low (ratio greater than 20:1), plant and microorganisms better adapted to low phosphorus and high nitrogen will grow. Under this condition, phosphorus is limiting growth, creating less biological diverse, monoculture-like conditions typically dominated by green algae, or cyanobacteria, or rooted aquatic plants that can get nutrients from the sediment at the bottom of the lake and river (Proulx et al. 1996).

Table 1. Total nitrogen to total phosphorus ratios.

Less than 10:1	10:1 to 20:1	>20:1
Nitrogen more limited	Normal ratio	Phosphorus more limited
Biologically less diverse	Biologically diverse	Biologically less diverse
More cyanobacteria growth	Aquatic plants, green & golden brown algae, cyanobacteria	Green algae, cyanobacteria, aquatic plants

Fertilization is the dominant problem in the aquatic ecology of Canadian waters. Nitrogen and phosphorus are natural components of aquatic environments, but we enhance the natural levels. Once in the water, nitrogen and phosphorus are difficult to remove. The natural removal of these chemicals is by gravity usually in the form of dead aquatic organisms settling to the bottom of a lake or river. Over their growth period, aquatic organisms trap significant quantities of these nutrients and when they die the nutrients remain sealed in their bodies. If physical forces disturb the bottom, these nutrients can be redistributed back into the water. If the sediments at the bottom of the lake and river are undisturbed, then over time the nutrients remain trapped (sealed) from returning to the water. There are other removal processes at work, like downstream flow in a river but settling is most important natural removal process. Since life in aquatic systems is highly variable from season to season and from year to year, it very difficult to predict and control these nutrient concentrations.

Where do the nutrients come from? Disturbed shoreline, lawn fertilization, poorly operating septic systems and even direct livestock access to local waters contribute to fertilization. But, people don't fertilize local waters? This is a common mistake because passive fertilization (indirect addition of nutrients by storm sewers and waterfront owners) is the most common way aquatic systems are fertilized. For example, did you know that phosphorus is not a common nutrient and must be

actively mined from bedrock. The addition of phosphorus through the fertilization of your lawn is effectively offsetting the natural balance of phosphorus in soils and it should be no surprise that natural water drainage (runoff) will carry the excess into local water bodies. What is a solution? Reduce phosphorus application for cosmetic purposes, slow the flow of surface water into aquatic systems (holding ponds), and develop riparian zones (stable vegetation zones along the shoreline).

Carbon is the most common nutrient, but is not well understood in water quality dynamics. Dissolved organic carbon (DOC) created by living and dying life forms is also in the water. This organic matter has significant implications in bacterial activity and UV light penetration into our lakes and rivers. Much research effort remains to be done in understanding the significance of changing carbon forms and levels.

Metals

A common vision of "pollution" is aquatic systems loaded with heavy-metals. Like ions and nutrients, trace metals occur naturally in aquatic systems. Indeed, some metals are important micronutrients for biological life (e.g. iron, manganese). Two classes of metals can easily be identified, those that are biologically influenced and those that aren't. Under natural conditions, all metal concentrations in water are determined by local bedrock and soils. The interaction between metals and the resulting compounds are chemically determined based on availability and reactivity. For example, pyrite (iron + 2 sulphur, FeS_2) in contact with water can be bacteriologically converted to iron hydroxide ($Fe(OH)_3$) and sulfate (SO_4) thus creating acid (mine) water. Metal concentrations, arranged by abundance in local waters, are iron, aluminum, manganese, copper, lead, zinc, nickel, vanadium, molybdenum, cobalt and cadmium (Hamilton and Poulin 2000). Consistently, these occur in concentrations below water quality guidelines, with only aluminum, on rare occasions, exceeding suggested water quality guidelines. Any enhancement of these metals is typically a local problem related to industrial or commercial activities close to aquatic systems.

Mercury is not soluble in water but can occur in the sediments at the bottom of lakes and rivers as biologically available methylmercury. Where does the mercury come from? Mercury occurs naturally but in the past was widely used in industrial application. With the reduction of mercury in industrial activities, new mercury inputs have been dramatically reduced. However, since some forms of mercury can become volatile, it is still transported long distances through the atmosphere.

Further, once in aquatic sediments, bioavailable mercury can concentrate in the surface sediments at the bottom of lakes and rivers. As a result of long-term exposure and consumption, fish and other aquatic organisms can accumulate mercury and care should be taken when consuming large quantities of fish from such a region. Mercury is responsible for the majority of fish consumption restrictions in Ontario waters (Guide to Eating Ontario Sport Fish 1999-2000). Refer to provincial or state guidelines on fish consumption. Both the Ottawa and Rideau Rivers have average fish consumption requirements, with the Ottawa slightly more restrictive.

Organic Contaminants

Human produced contaminants are the biggest unknown, the least reported and are rare to absent in most aquatic environments. The commonly reported contaminants include pesticides (like DDT or Mirex), polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs), chlorinated carbon compounds (dioxins) and polynuclear aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs). Like mercury, these contaminants are more likely to be found in the sediment and animals which bioaccumulate contaminants. Our studies in the Rideau River consistently show minimal to no presence of these contaminants, except where very localized sources may be present, like the Ottawa and Smiths Falls sections (Hamilton and Poulin 2000).

The chemical interactions, especially in aquatic ecosystems is complex and often unexpected. Further, water quality is related to both human health (water with an acceptable level of impurities) and aquatic life (waters with a diverse spectrum of impurities). The suggested Canadian water quality guidelines for drinking water and aquatic life are similar in that moderate levels of impurities that create stable waters for a biological diverse ecosystem are what we classify as clean healthy waters. Water quality guidelines can be found at *http://www.ec.gc.ca/CEQG-RCQE/English/Ceqg/Water/default.cfm*.

References

CCREM (Canadian Council of Resource and Environment Ministers). 1987. Canadian water quality guidelines. Prepared by the Task Force on Water Quality Guidelines. Environment Canada.

Hamilton, P.B. and Poulin, M. 2000. Water chemistry. In A Multidisciplinary community based study of the environmental health of the Rideau River (ed. M. Poulin). Canadian Museum of Nature publication Ottawa 33pp. (Also see web site below).

Call for Nominations for OFNC Awards

The Awards Committee

It is time to think back and consider those OFNC members (and, in one case, even non-members) who, by virtue of their special efforts and talents, are deserving of special recognition. The Club has six awards: Honorary Membership, Member of the Year Award, George McGee Service Award, Conservation Award for OFNC Members, Conservation Award for Non-members, and the Anne Hanes Natural History Award. An elaboration of each of these categories is presented in this centre-fold, together with space to put the nominee's name and accomplishments. (Additional sheets can be used if needed.) If necessary, the Awards Committee will seek out more information on individuals nominated, but of course, the more information you provide, the easier it is for the committee to make a decision. An informative article on the background of these awards, and a list of recent recipients, was published in Volume 33, Number 4, of *Trail & Landscape*. Last year's awardees were highlighted in the previous issue of *T&L* (vol. 36, number 3). The deadline for the submission of nominations is December 15th, 2003. Nominate as many individuals as you like, but be sure to give your reasons. Return the nomination form to:

OFNC Awards Committee
P.O. Box 35069
Westgate P.O.
Ottawa, ON K1Z 1A2

If you have any questions regarding the nominations, feel free to contact Irwin Brodo, Chair of the Awards Committee, at 723-2054,or at *ibrodo@cyberus.ca*.

NOMINATION FORM FOR AWARDS

The Ottawa Field-Naturalists' Club

In the appropriate spaces please submit the names of those you wish to nominate for OFNC awards and your reasons for each nomination. The more information you provide, the more effective will be the assessment of nominees. Attach additional information if the space is inadequate. Nominations may be made for more than one person. The Awards Committee may contact you for further information regarding any of your nominations.

Name of Nominator:_____

Address:_____

_____

Telephone_____

HONORARY MEMBER: This award is presented in recognition of outstanding contributions by a member, or non-member, to Canadian natural history or to the successful operation of the Club. [Usually people awarded an honorary membership have made extensive contributions over many years. At present honorary membership is limited to 25 people.]

Nominee_____

Reasons for the nomination_____

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MEMBER OF THE YEAR: In recognition of the member judged to have contributed the most to the Club in the previous year. [Members of the Executive are excluded from consideration.]

Nominee_____

Reasons for the nomination_____

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GEORGE MCGEE SERVICE AWARD: In recognition of a member or members who has (have) contributed significantly to the smooth running of the Club over several years. [Members of the Executive are excluded from consideration.]

Nominee_____

Reasons for the nomination_____

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ANNE HANES NATURAL HISTORY AWARD: In recognition of a member who, through independent study or investigation, has made a worthwhile contribution to our knowledge, understanding and appreciation of the natural history of the Ottawa Valley. [The award is designed to recognize work that is done by amateur naturalists.]

Nominee_____

Reasons for the nomination_____

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CONSERVATION AWARD - MEMBER: In recognition of an outstanding contribution by a member (or group of members) in the cause of natural history conservation in the Ottawa Valley, with particular emphasis on activities within the Ottawa District. [The Ottawa District is the area within 50 km of the Peace Tower in Ottawa.]

Nominee_____

Reasons for the nomination_____

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CONSERVATION AWARD - NON - MEMBER: In recognition of an outstanding contribution by a non-member (or group of non-members) in the cause of natural history conservation in the Ottawa Valley, with particular emphasis on activities within the Ottawa District. [The Ottawa District is the area within 50 km of the Peace Tower in Ottawa.]

Nominee_____

Reasons for the nomination_____

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Hutchinson, G.E. 1957. A treatise on limnology. Volume 1, geography, physics and chemistry. John Wiley and Sons, London, 1015 pp.

Ontario Provincial Government (1999-20000). Guide to Eating Ontario Sport Fish. 197 pp.

Proulx, M., Pick, F.R., Mazumder, A., Hamilton, P.B. & Lean, D.R.S. 1996. Effects of nutrients and planktivorous fish on phytoplankton community structure in shallow versus deep (stratified) aquatic systems. *Ecology* 77:146-162.

Wetzel, R.G. 1983. Limnology. W.B. Saunders Company, Toronto 743pp.

Suggested Web sites:

http://www.ec.gc.ca/CEQG-RCQE/English/Ceqg/Water/default.cfm (Canadian water quality guidelines).

http://www.epa.gov/waterscience/criteria/aqlife.html (US EPA water quality criteria).

http://waterdata.usgs.gov/nwis/qw (USGS water quality data for the nation).

http://www.nature.ca/rideau/c/c1-e.html (Rideau River Biodiversity Study).

http://whatis.techtarget.com/definition/0,,sid9_gci551931,00.html (Standard units of measure).

The 2003 Fall Bird Count

Chris Lewis

The OFNC's 9th annual Fall Bird Count will take place from 3:00 p.m. Saturday, October 18 to 3:00 p.m. Sunday, October 19. This count once again covers the entire 50 km radius so both Ontario and Québec participants are required. The "prime directive" is to have fun so it is not necessary to go birding for the entire 24 hour period. All that is needed is some familiarity with identifying the common bird species as well as an effort to count and take notes. Each sector has a leader who will give direction concerning areas to be covered and collect species totals and numbers of each species counted.

After the field work is completed, participants are invited to enjoy warm food and drinks (at no cost) during the post count compilation. The post count will be at the Fletcher Wildlife Garden and will begin at 4:00 p.m. on Sunday October 19.

Anyone interested in counting birds should contact Daniel St-Hilaire at 776-0860 (for Québec) or Eve Ticknor at 737-7551 or at *sandbird@magma.ca* (for Ontario).

News from the Fletcher Wildlife Garden: Spring and Summer 2003

Christine Hanrahan

Introduction
Welcome to a new series on the Fletcher Wildlife Garden (FWG) in which we'll share with you a season-by-season look at this urban oasis. We'll bring you news of the people, events, projects, plans, and of course, the wildlife, the animals and plants that give life to the garden..

Volunteers
Without our volunteers, the garden couldn't exist. These wonderful people are the backbone of the FWG assisting in so many ways according to their interests and their capabilities.

Backyard Garden Crew (aka The Friday Morning Gang)
Our biggest group is the long-standing Friday morning crew of Backyard Garden (BYG)

Jay Ladell

Jay, our new BYG Manager, notes that he became interested in native plants "*after picking-up a guide on wildflowers only to discover that many of our roadside flowers were actually foreign invaders.*" He credits Lorraine Johnson's books for "*really generating my appreciation of native plants.*"

Jay has been gardening for about seven years, spending countless hours working the soil, reading widely about gardening, and developing a thorough knowledge of the topic. Several years ago he translated his passion for gardening into a career in landscaping. For the design aspect of gardens he relies on his training in photography (Sheridan College 1989) and visual art.

What does Jay envisage for the BYG? "*My vision is of a place of education as well as beauty. I want visitors to discover that the backyard can be a place where nature and people share space - including birds, insects and animals - even in the city!*" He also sees the garden "*as a centre where local gardeners can come to learn how wonderful our native flora really is.*"

volunteers, some of whom have been with the project almost from day one. Essential to the smooth running of the BYG is a coordinator for the work, a BYG Manager. We have had some great people involved, but until recently had been without a manager for a year until Jay Ladell offered to assume this role. He has already developed some really exciting and innovative plans for the garden (*read more about Jay in the sidebar*). Visitors over the next while will notice a completely revamped rock garden and a gradual move to all native plants. In the past, because native plants have been so difficult to acquire, we have filled the gaps with non-native plants attractive to wildlife.

Sunday Work Group

A Sunday morning work group was established two years ago to accommodate volunteers unable to come on Friday morning. One of their main tasks is weeding invasive plants such as the garlic mustard in the Ash Woods. Although it is only the second year of removing this plant, Sandy Garland notes "*we are making inroads with the garlic mustard. The plan is to keep it from blooming so no more seeds are produced. I am noticing far fewer first year plants this summer.*" The group has also planted a variety of shrubs, trees and wildflowers including about a dozen hackberry trees across from the Butterfly Meadow. A lot of work in 2003 has taken place around the Interpretive Centre where the nursery bed has been enlarged, burdock has been cut back, and all the trees and shrubs in front of the centre have been mulched.

Interested volunteers can contact Sandy at *sgarland@rogers.com* or phone the FWG at 234-6767 and leave a message. With enough people, the Sunday volunteers might even continue through the winter with indoor projects such as reorganizing the library, or taking care of seedlings for the 2004 plant sale.

Staffing the Centre on Sunday Afternoon

During the summer we rely on volunteers to staff the centre on Sunday afternoons from noon to 4:00 p.m. If you enjoy chatting with people, especially if you enjoy chatting with them about gardens and wildlife, you might consider joining the roster of volunteers (call 234-6767 and leave a message). Tasks are simple: keep the centre open. Information about the FWG and about different aspects of gardening for wildlife can be found in our many brochures, information sheets and our quarterly newsletter, "What's Up at the FWG."

Other Volunteer Work

Regular visitors to the garden will have noticed how well-maintained the Bill Holland Trail is these last few years. The man with the mower is Charlie Clifford. Every week or two he is out there making sure the trail is easy to walk (he also installed the directional posts with the blue arrows pointing out the route). More

recently, Tony Denton and Rod Craig have been filling in temporarily for Charlie. Thanks, guys, for making the trail such a pleasure to walk.

Charlie also rejuvenated our big directional sign near the parking lot after minor vandalism and a decade of winter weather rendered it pretty shabby looking.

Dale Crook has been mapping the location of every walnut and butternut tree in the garden, and recently began tagging them with yellow numbered tags (Crook 2003).

Events - Spring and Summer 2003

International Migratory Bird Day. On May 10th we held an open house with displays and guided birding tours. Approximately 50 people took advantage of the glorious weather and the expertise of Celia Bodnar and Dave Moore to find over 30 species of birds, including many migratory songbirds.

Taverner Cup. May 24th. The garden was once again the location for the compilation of results for the annual Taverner Cup, organized by Jeff Harrison. The centre was open from 9:00 p.m. to midnight as weary birders filed in with their tallies after a day of relentless rain and cold. Some of the money raised from the Taverner Cup helps support FWG endeavours.

Plant Sale. June 7th. Our annual plant sale is becoming a 'must-attend' event, eagerly awaited by scores of local gardeners. New and very well received this year were the scores of native plants

Jay Ladell at the 2003 FWG Plant Sale. Photo by Christine Hanrahan.

propagated from seed by several volunteers and the Horticulture Department of Algonquin College. . . Les Camm made and donated some excellent bird boxes suitable for tree swallows and chickadees, which sold for a very reasonable $12.00. Daphne Griffith, a local artist and garden volunteer, gave us a lovely découpage mini-armoire for our raffle. Betty Campbell, Elizabeth Gammell and Renate Sander-Regier manned an information table which was non-stop busy, and Philip Fry once again brought his expertise along with a unique variety of native plants from his Old Field Garden. Crowds began arriving long before the 10:00 a.m. opening and kept us busy until noon. It was a great day with perfect weather, satisfied customers and at the end, a pile of money, enough to hire a summer employee (*see more about this below*). Keep your antennae tuned for details of next year's plant sale. I predict it will be another winner! Kudos to Sandy Garland and Jay Ladell for their hard work organizing and many thanks to all the volunteers who helped make this event such a success

Use of the FWG by Other Groups

The centre is used by several OFNC committees for regular monthly meetings, as well as by groups such as the Ottawa Stewardship Council, and for ad hoc meetings by the Ottawa Wildlife Festival (of which, FWG/OFNC is a member) and the Ontario Breeding Bird Atlas. The garden, meanwhile, is often used by local artists who sometimes gather in small groups to paint,, and for walks such as the OFNC Wednesday evening outings in May.

Staffing the Centre

For the last few years we have been able to hire a summer student, thanks to the HRDC summer student employment

Annie Bélair

Our friendly, hard-working summer employee in 2003, Annie B., came to us with an interesting background covering both the Arts and Sciences. She has a degree in French Literature, a Fish and Wildlife Technician Diploma and is now working on her Forestry Technician Diploma from La Cite Collégiale. Annie said she'd like to focus her work on surveys and monitoring projects, particularly involving waterfowl, an interest she developed while working on her diploma. Combining various passions she also wants to pursue writing articles on natural history, possibly in both official languages. Working at the FWG has provided a tremendous learning experience with lots of hands-on work that fits right in with her studies.

Annie's tasks at FWG ranged from tackling invasive plants, translating most of our brochures and information sheets into French (she is fluently bilingual), answering questions from visitors, researching online information, and a variety of other jobs, all of which she carried out with intelligence and care.

grants. This year, HRDC was inundated with requests and we were not among those awarded a grant. However, the plant sale generated sufficient funds for us to hire a student. Annie Bélair, or Annie B. as she is known, had been volunteering with the Friday Morning Gang while looking for a summer job. She was a perfect candidate for the FWG position and it was our good fortune that she was still available in mid-June when we realized we had enough money to hire her! The Centre was open Monday through Thursday from mid-June until the end of August.

Plants and Animals

Birds

Previous articles have discussed the rewards of birding at the FWG (Hanrahan 1997; 1999; 2003). The spring of 2003, however, was outstanding. It all began, appropriately enough on International Migratory Bird Day, May 10th when a lingering cold spell followed by a warm front overnight pushed waves of migrants into our area. The next day more birds flooded the area and in an hour I'd had over 30 species including Palm Warblers, Magnolia Warblers, Black-throated Blue Warblers, Chestnut-sided Warblers, a gorgeous male Northern Parula Warbler, Least Flycatcher, and a host of others. I kept thinking it was like Point Pelee in miniature. And all this in the midst of the city!

Once the migration was over, breeding season got underway with a vengeance. Most of the usual species nested once again (Hanrahan 2003), including Kestrels who successfully fledged at least two young in their nest box high up on the red barn. Our Tree Swallow population continues to grow and this spring Dale Crook and I added seven new nest boxes, six in the Old Field and one by the Interpretation Centre (IC). Five of these were used by swallows and two were seriously checked out by chickadees but rejected, at least this time around.

Bird Houses for Sale!
We still have some of Les Camm's lovely, very well-constructed bird houses available for $12. All profits go to the FWG. Phone 234-6767 if you are interested

After concluding that the Green Herons were not nesting in the garden, I was happily surprised to find a nest with two young in a crabapple close to last year's nest site. For whatever reason, these little herons have become a real star attraction here. One day in late spring while walking the Bill Holland Trail, I came across a father-daughter birding team. After chatting for a few minutes the little girl asked if the Green Herons were back. I told her I had seen my first one of the year the day before. She was ecstatic! Her father said that they had been birding regularly at the FWG for a couple of years and this was the species that most enchanted them. They knew the best spot to find the bird (west side of the pond) and I left them patiently

standing there, happy in the knowledge the herons had again returned. Over the summer I've been stopped a number of times with questions about the Green Herons. Once I was able to point out a pair standing on top of a tree to a family who had been asking about them. They took turns looking through my binoculars, marvelling at this "miniature" heron with the bright yellow legs!

An overwintering Great Horned Owl was last seen in early May. Its favourite roost site was a spruce tree north of the Ash Woods under which a substantial pile of large pellets formed. Chris Traynor reported finding several very small pellets near the woodlot and suspected Eastern Screech Owl. We may try erecting a few Screech Owl nest boxes in and near the woods and see what happens. It would be pretty exciting to attract one or two of these amazing little owls.

From mid-July onwards, the pond became a nightly gathering spot for well over 200 Red-winged Blackbirds. Starting about an hour before nightfall, they began accumulating in the trees around the pond calling and singing loudly. Eventually they began making their way into the cattails until by the time darkness fell most of them were ensconced deep down in the vegetation, only the odd call, rustling of leaves, and occasional movement from one end to the other, betrayed their presence. One evening I counted 220 but they were only the ones I could see - I knew from various movements that there were many more hidden in the cattails.

Thanks to Susan Goods, we added our 120th species to the FWG Bird Checklist, a Winter Wren found near the Butterfly Meadow on April 25th.

Butterflies

Butterflies were present in good numbers this year, the season beginning on April 30th with an American Lady and a Mourning Cloak soaking up some spring sunshine. It continued through spring and summer with sightings of (in season) Spring Azure, Silvery Blue, Common Ringlet, Cabbage White, European Skipper, White Admiral, Red Admiral, Black Swallowtail, Hobomok Skipper, Little Wood Satyr, Clouded Sulphur, Peck's Skipper, Monarch, Milbert's Tortoiseshell, Atlantis Fritillary, Great Spangled Fritillary and, new for the FWG Butterfly list, a Banded Hairstreak on July 18th. One of the best places to see butterflies is the Old Field habitat.

David Hobden rescued six Black Swallowtail caterpillars and brought them into the centre where they underwent extraordinary metamorphosis from caterpillar to pupa to adult butterfly. Most of the caterpillars crawled out of the aquarium where they had been feeding on their food plants and attached themselves to various places including table legs and walls. There they sat for the several weeks it takes to complete the transformation. One by one they emerged, several days apart, the last one on July 26th.

Old Field, July 2003. Photo by Christine Hanrahan.

Mammals

The number of Chipmunks in the garden seems to be at its highest since we began keeping notes on wildlife. However, now that the Least Weasel has appeared again Chipmunk numbers may drop. This feisty little creature has been seen several times this summer. David Hobden recalls that in mid-June, he and Annie B. heard quite a commotion by the front door of the IC and when they investigated saw the "*Least Weasel family (at least four individuals) heading into the door post. One little fellow(?) missed his way and headed into the IC. We were able to turn him round and after some trouble steered him into a cardboard box and placed him near the door post and away he went. Annie, wearing a leather work glove, actually touched him briefly. There was no response, he just froze.*" On August 3, David said he was talking to a visitor when one of the weasels arrived: "*It went into the door post then turned around and looked out at us before disappearing inside. The visitor's response: "that's the first time I've seen one of those.*" We think it is quite an honour to have these little creatures take up residence in the centre!

Groundhogs continue to be scarce to absent in the garden, though present on the farm. Red Squirrels, however, like Chipmunks, are quite common. One of the nest boxes in the Old Field contained a female with four young which were transferred after some weeks to an adjacent nest box where they remained until old enough to fend for themselves. I watched one of these feisty animals climb a Manitoba Maple

towards a Goldfinch nest, ignoring both me on the ground and the very agitated female Goldfinch above. Of course, Red Squirrels have a taste for eggs and fledglings, amongst other delicacies.

Reptiles and Amphibians

Our ponds and garden are home to a good number of Green Frogs, Wood Frogs and American Toads. The turtles that used to inhabit the pond seem to have wandered off and we haven't seen a Painted Turtle, or any other species, for several years. However, American Toads are thriving (and no doubt providing food for the Green Heron family). On May 10th the toads celebrated the advent of warmer spring weather with a great flurry of mating. The water was so churned up by their frantic activity that it was difficult to assess numbers, but Dave Moore said he counted 50 before giving up!

Invasive Plants

Dog-strangling Vine (Swallow-wort), *Cynanchum (Vincetoxicum) rossicum,* continues to be our number one challenge. For several years, Naomi Cappuccino from Carleton University and a couple of her students studied various control methods for this species at FWG but no solutions have emerged. Naomi has now finished working at FWG and is turning her attention to potential bio-control agents. Meanwhile, we are mowing the open areas in an effort to at least control the formation of seed heads and subsequent seed dispersal. In less accessible areas volunteers are continuing to hand weed. Some of the literature suggests that hand pulling can control light infestations but the entire root system must be pulled out since it can regenerate from pieces of the root crown. Mowing is generally considered ineffective by many biologists studying the species, but since nothing is known for sure about the efficacy of any of the control methods, repeated mowing over several years might help decrease the population in a particular spot, and at the very least, it will cut down on the number of seed pods.

Buckthorn *Alnus frangula (Rhamnus frangula)* and *Rhamnus cathartica*. Both species occur in the garden. Work began on removal in 2001 and has continued since. Initially headed up by Dale Crook with Malcolm Leith and Tony Denton, the project is now Tony's and he is doing an excellent job of gradually taking out all the mature buckthorn shrubs. Some trees have been ringed, allowing them to remain as perches and cover for birds for a little longer before they are cut down. Planting with native shrub species around the Old Field where buckthorn removal has created the largest gaps in the thickets continues. The biggest challenge is controlling the seedlings which seem to spring up by the hundreds from one year to the next. By all accounts it will take some years before these efforts result in a buckthorn-free site.

Garlic Mustard *Alliaria officinalis*, grows primarily in the Ash Woods. Consistent work by volunteers has had an effect on this invasive weed, as noted above.

Flowering Rush *Butomus umbellatus*, is an invasive wetland plant which grows in shallow water, often along shorelines. Because our pond at FWG is not very deep, this plant has been able to spread towards the middle, leaving only small areas of open water. Pulling it out by the root seems to be the only control method that we can use at the moment (apart from chemical control which we don't want to use) . Sandy Garland has done most of the work using the FWG's small inflatable dinghy to reach the plants.

FWG Details

The FWG is located off Prince of Wales Drive on the Central Experimental Farm (Map 1). For more information about the FWG please visit the website at: *http://www.achilles.net/ofnc/fletcher.php*.

There you can sign up for our free quarterly newsletter *What's Up at the Fletcher Wildlife Garden*, available electronically. Brochures about the garden can be picked up from the kiosk in front of the centre or from inside on Friday mornings from spring through fall, Sunday afternoons in the summer, or during the week June through August when we have a summer employee.

Acknowledgements:

As mentioned above, our volunteers make the FWG happen! A fact noted by this heartfelt appreciation from our 2003 Visitor's Book:

"*An honour to be the first to compliment all the volunteers who maintain this oasis of colour and creation! One of our favourite cycling destinations in Ottawa. Thank you*"

Great work everyone

References

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Book Review: Bugs of Ontario

Karen McLachlan Hamilton

Lone Pine Publishing has added another book to its series. The latest, entitled "Bugs of Ontario," is written by John Acorn with illustrations by Ian Sheldon. When Lone Pine approached *T&L* about reviewing the book, I was delighted. I now have another excuse to seek out some of my favourite animals.

"Bugs of Ontario" is 160 pages long and describes 113 insects, nine spiders, and three miscellaneous invertebrates. It includes some of the more common, easily recognised invertebrates as well as some of the more obscure. This book begins with a colour coded key dividing the book loosely into the insect orders (i.e. butterflies, damselflies/dragonflies, wasps, flies etc.), but it also has a section on aquatic insects and one on non-insects. This colour coding is carried throughout the book and serves as a quick tab index. There is one species per page which includes an illustration, an information box containing size and habitat preferences, and a discussion about that particular insect. The cost is $14.95.

I decided to test this book three different ways. I gave the book to some of my non-insect friends to find out how user friendly it was. I had several professional entomologists quickly peruse the book a give me their impressions on content, and I had fun myself keeping a running total of what species from the book I had found this summer. The comments I received are as follows.

People liked the explanation of the author's philosophy on entomology, why he used the term "bug" for all insects and his reasons for including the insects he did in the introduction. He also did an excellent job describing basic insect morphology, insect development, ecology, and systematics (the naming of organisms). I also liked the way he explained why spiders and other invertebrates are not insects.

The text was well written and the author's enthusiasm shines in each of the species descriptions. The one page per insect where the text and the illustration are together was unanimously congratulated. The arrangement of the pages such that two similar insects appear face-to-face was also appreciated. The milkweed bug facing the boxelder bug and the water boatman with the backswimmer are good examples of this arrangement.

Most people liked the illustrations and thought the average person could readily identify many of the insects using the pictures. However, I had one professional entomologist suggest that some of the insects may have been too pale and questioned the use of illustrations over photographs. Another commented on the size of some of the insects with respect to others. The example given is the size of the illustrated carpenter compared with the pavement ant. Although the sizes of the ants are clearly stated, the much larger carpenter ant (10-15 mm) is shown as approximately two thirds the size of the much smaller pavement ant (3-4 mm). One of my non insect friends identified the carpenter ants around my house as pavement ants because she focussed on the illustrations and did not notice the written measurements in the information box.

It was noted that some groups were over represented, while others were under represented. It was pointed out that 30 butterflies and moths were featured but this order is relatively small containing only 75 families and 11 000 species in North America (Borror, De Long and Triplehorn 1981). Conversely flies which have 108 families and 18 200 described species in North America are represented by only seven species.

I object to some of the common names used. In my entomological experience I have never heard of the eastern pond kayak skater, but the term water strider is commonly used among my insect friends, in my text books (Borror, De Long and Triplehorn 1981, Remoser 1973) and field guide (Borror and White 1970). Also, the mantis fly does not appear in my books, however mantidfly does. I am not sure why the author gave the beetle, *Lucanus capreolus*, the common name pinching beetle rather than stag beetle. Although admittedly this creature is not as spectacular as its tropical relatives, I believe the younger insect enthusiasts know what a stag beetle is and I think it is rather "cool" to have stag beetles living in Ottawa.

As a minor note on insect names: it is my understanding that only insects in the order Diptera (two-winged flies in this book) are considered true flies. This means that they have special status when it comes to common names. All true flies are referred to as a "something fly" —two separate words (i.e. horse fly). Insects not belonging to the order Diptera should be referred to as a "somethingfly" — one word. So dragonflies, damselflies and mayflies are correct, but the dobson fly (in the main text only) and mantis fly (mantidfly) both in the main text and in the key are incorrect. This may appear trivial, but I would be remiss if I did not address this issue.

Insects I would have included are honey bees, an adult caddisfly and a house centipede primarily because I am asked about them several times a season. I may have excluded the mole cricket and the termite. They certainly fit into the author's "extremely weird" category but they are less common and would not be as easily

found as other insects. Unfortunately we all have our favourites and considering space may have been limited, the author could never please everyone.

After everyone had a good look, the general consensus is "Bugs of Ontario" is a good reference book for the budding entomologist or for the backyard enthusiast. Apart from some of the common names and different spellings, it is a well written, well illustrated book that exudes enthusiasm for insects and invertebrates alike. For anyone who is interested in insects and does not know where to start, this book would be a good beginning. Anyone wishing to check this book out for themselves, can find it at the Fletcher Wildlife Garden.

References

Borror, D. J., D. M. De Long, and C. A. Triplehorn. 1981. An Introduction to the Study of Insects (fifth edition). CBS College Printing. New York. 827pp.

Borror, D. J. and R. E. White. 1970. A Field Guide to the Insects of America North of Mexico. Houghton Mifflin Company. Boston. 404pp.

Rosmoser, W. S. 1973. Survey of Class Insecta *In* The Science of Entomology. Macmillan Publishing Co. Inc. New York. pp. 313-372.

Butterfly in the Park

November 3rd

Linda Jeays

Close now... subtle death
rides on winter's eager winds
sulphur wings shiver.

Spring Bird Sightings March - June 2003

Chris Lewis

After being teased by mild temperatures in the latter part of February, birds and birders alike were shocked when March came in like a lion. . .on the "Siberian Express!" On 2 March, northwest winds up to 50 kph caused a rapid drop in temperatures to below -42 °C. Radical fluctuations in the weather continued for most of the spring, including further dumps of snow after the winter white stuff had almost completely melted. Finally, things seemed to normalize by the end of May and the birds caught up to their migration schedule. . .proving once again that despite our human perceptions, nature always works things out.

RARITIES

In spite of the slow start to the season, a surprisingly good number and variety of rare birds appeared in the 50 km radius. April was an excellent month for unusual waterfowl. Two adult **ROSS'S GEESE** were among a flock of approximately 3000 Snow Geese on 12 April at Johnston Rd. near Bourget. A **BARNACLE GOOSE** (of unknown origin) appeared at Cedarview Rd. opposite the Log Farm on 20 April; the same day, a **GREATER WHITE-FRONTED GOOSE** was in the same location. A very accommodating 1st-spring **TRUMPETER SWAN** (also of unknown origin) was feeding in a flooded field along Frontier Rd. south of Carlsbad Springs from 23 - 27 April, and an adult **TUNDRA SWAN** frequented the Embrun sewage lagoons from 26 April until at least 7 May. A beautiful male **EURASIAN WIGEON** was discovered on the Québec side of the Ottawa River in the Masson-Thurso marshes on 30 April and was last reported on 5 May. The **1st RECORD of TUFTED DUCK for the 50 km** was discovered on 30 April at Shirleys Bay - many birders were able to enjoy this duck until at least 7 May.

Other rarities included a **GREAT EGRET** at Ottawa Beach (the east end of Andrew Haydon Park) on 10 May; a **SNOWY EGRET** flying over the town of Carp on 3 May; an adult **MISSISSIPPI KITE (another 1st RECORD for OTTAWA** as well as **EASTERN ONTARIO)** flying north over the O-Train station at Walkley Rd. on 1 May; a male orange-plumaged **RUFF** at the Embrun sewage lagoons from 10 - 13 May; a **GLOSSY IBIS** in a wetland at Moodie Drive and Corkstown Rd. north of the Nepean Equestrian Park on 17 May; and an amazing yet disappointingly brief

visit by a male **PAINTED BUNTING (also a 1st RECORD for EASTERN ONTARIO)** near Ashton on 12 and 13 May. The property owners took wonderful videotapes of this spectacular southern vagrant at their feeder, but the tapes were all that other birders got to see.

Apart from the rare birds, the following sightings were of interest during the spring of 2003:

LOONS, GREBES, HERONS & BITTERNS

Small numbers of **Common Loons** and **Horned Grebes** were reported from the Ottawa River. A very early Horned Grebe was found in a flooded field along Milton Rd. east of Carlsbad Springs on 29 March. Two **Least Bitterns** were heard on 17 and 25 May in the Nepean Equestrian Park wetland. An early **Green Heron** was seen in the Britannia Conservation Area on 3 May, and an adult **Black-crowned Night-Heron** was seen repeatedly at the east end of Mud Lake in Britannia from late April until early June.

WATERFOWL

Some of the best birds of the season were waterfowl (see "RARITIES" above). The first **Ruddy Duck** of the year was reported from Shirleys Bay on 10 May. Following the trend of recent years, this species was found in large numbers later in the season in the eastern sewage lagoons. Pairs of **Redheads** were seen as early as 30 April in the Masson-Thurso marshes, and other pairs were seen later at Shirleys Bay and Moodie Drive south of the Trail Rd. Landfill. After the Rideau River froze in early March, Ottawa's faithful wintering female **Harlequin Duck** moved from her favoured location on the Rideau between Strathcona Park and the Rideau Tennis Club, to Remic Rapids on the Ottawa River where she lingered until at least 21 April. A male **Barrow's Goldeneye** was performing a courtship display at Remic Rapids on 15 March. A female Barrow's was still present at Remic Rapids on 15 April, and a male **Red-breasted Merganser** was seen in the Moodie Drive Pond on the 25th. Later in the spring on 31 May, a group of 11 male **White-winged Scoters** touched down on Lac Deschênes and a flock of 120 **Brant** were seen in the same location, flying west up the river.

RAPTORS

Bald Eagles were frequently seen flying over the Gatineau Hills in early spring, though not in large numbers, and an adult **Golden Eagle** was reported from the Luskville area on 13 April. **Ospreys** were commonly seen near any large body of

water throughout the spring, and several nested locally. A pair of **Cooper's Hawks** was very vocal and agitated in the Britannia woods on 15 March, but no nesting activity was subsequently reported. **Red-shouldered** and **Broad-winged Hawks** were vociferous at Pink Lake in Gatineau Park in mid-June. **Merlins** exhibited courtship displays near locations where they nested in past years (e.g. the Central Experimental Farm, Britannia and Carlingwood) but their nests were again typically difficult to locate. Unlike Merlins, the **Peregrine Falcons** on the Crowne Plaza Hotel remained faithful to this site again in 2003 and managed to successfully fledge one youngster, a female named "Solitaire," without incident or accident.

GALLINACEOUS BIRDS & RAILS

Gray Partridge flocks began dispersing in early April, and **Virginia** and **Sora Rails** began showing up on schedule in early May. A **Yellow Rail** was heard from the railroad tracks in the Richmond Fen on the evening of 14 June (always good to know that this species is still breeding in Ottawa). **Common Moorhens** were evidently scarce in the region, only one report came from the Plaisance marshes in Québec, and very few **American Coots** were reported. Up to six **Sandhill Cranes** were seen regularly in the Carlsbad Springs area from 27 March until mid-April, returning to their breeding grounds in the Mer Bleue bog.

SHOREBIRDS

As usual, **Killdeers** were the first arrivals in late March, followed by small numbers of transitory migrants (**Greater** and **Lesser Yellowlegs, Least, Semipalmated** and **White-rumped Sandpipers** and **Dunlins**), as well as local breeders such as **Solitary** and **Spotted Sandpipers, Wilson's Snipes** and **American Woodcocks**). **Upland Sandpipers** were found along William Campbell Rd. off Montague Boundary Rd. as well as at Bleeks and Conley Rds. near Munster Hamlet from late May through late June. **Wilson's Phalaropes** were again plentiful at the Embrun sewage lagoons, one of their traditional breeding sites.

GULLS & TERNS

The earliest spring record of **Bonaparte's Gulls** for the 50 km radius was of 14 adults on 29 March in the flooded fields near Carlsbad Springs and Bourget east of Ottawa. The Deschênes Rapids on the Ottawa River provided good larid-watching opportunities in late May-early June, especially during a mass emergence of *Ephemeroptera* (a.k.a. Mayflies). On 1 and 2 June, up to 24 Bonaparte's Gulls, mostly adults, were taking advantage of this fresh crop of insects. An adult **Lesser Black-backed Gull**, a rare sight in spring, was seen loafing at Deschênes Rapids on

23 March. On 1 June and again the following day, three adult summer **Arctic Terns** flew west up these rapids—an almost annual occurrence in Ottawa during dynamic weather conditions at this time of year. **Black Terns** appeared in small numbers in a variety of locations such as the Masson-Thurso marshes, the Embrun sewage lagoons and the Ottawa River at Britannia.

OWLS

A pair of **Eastern Screech Owls** nested again for the second year in the Britannia woods. A pair of **Great Horned Owls** was also seen in the Britannia woods almost daily from late winter until well into May, often sitting side-by-side in the White Pine stand at the southwest corner of Mud Lake, but no breeding evidence was ever reported for this pair (perhaps they attempted to nest and failed, or were they just a couple of youngsters keeping company?) A single **Long-eared Owl** was found in the Clyde Ave. woods on 11 April.

CUCKOOS , GOATSUCKERS & WOODPECKERS

Black-billed Cuckoos were typically unpredictable, but were found in their expected habitats. A **Yellow-billed Cuckoo** (very uncommon in the Ottawa area) was reported along Hwy 7 near Carleton Place on 16 June. Locally breeding goatsuckers have declined, particularly **Common Nighthawks** which used to nest commonly in urban areas; however, at least two nighthawks were heard downtown on the evening of 17 June. The most consistent location for **Whip-poor-wills** was along Mountain Rd. in Québec. The most notable report in the woodpecker department was of a pair of **Red-headed Woodpeckers** in Constance Bay, seen here from 3 June onward, in the same area where they nested last year in an old burnt wood-lot off Whistler Rd.

PASSERINES

Aside from the unexpected (the PAINTED BUNTING—see "RARITIES"), there were no exciting songbird events. . .at least nothing to write home about. Reports of **Carolina Wrens** have been increasing over the past two years - males over-wintered in Orleans, Gloucester and Rockcliffe At least one of these east-enders was heard singing in early spring, and a west-ender was singing on 26 March near Andrew Haydon Park. Twenty-one species of **warblers** (the expected migrants and local breeders) were found in mid-May to early June. Nine species of **sparrows** could be easily found during the breeding season. The continuing absence of **finches** other than **Purple, House** and **American Goldfinches** remained an unsolved mystery.

EVENTS

The 7th annual Taverner Cup Birding Competition was held on 24 May. An unprecedented low total of 209 species was recorded, no doubt due to the cool temperatures and heavy rain that dominated the weather for most of eastern Ontario that day. Congratulations to the 52 participants in the 14 teams that toughed it out.

The Ontario Breeding Bird Atlas launched its 3rd year with good coverage of most of the squares in our region (Region 24). Any new volunteers interested in participating in this important, exciting, and fun project should contact the regional coordinator Christine Hanrahan at (613) 798-1620 or e-mail *vanessa@magma.ca.*

The bird reports mentioned in this article were derived mainly from reports to the OFNC Bird Status Line. Many thanks to all who shared their observations.

To report bird sightings as well as hear updates for the Ottawa area, call (613) 860-9000. An excellent directory to good birding locations, as well as links to more birding information can be found on the OFNC web site at *http://www.achilles.net.ofnc/.*

Christmas Bird Counts

Chris Lewis

The Ottawa - Gatineau and the Dunrobin - Breckenridge Christmas Bird Counts will be on again this year. People who are interested in participating in these events should contact the following people.

Ottawa - Gatineau's Christmas Bird Count will be held on Sunday, December 14. Contact Daniel St-Hilaire (776-0860) if you wish to bird on the Québec side and Eve Ticknor (737-7551 or *sandbird@magma.ca*) for Ontario.

The Dunrobin - Breckenridge Christmas Bird Count is scheduled for Saturday January 3, 2004. Please register with Bruce Di Labio at 839-4395 or at *bruce.dilabio@sympatico.ca.*

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Subject

Authors

Coming Events

arranged by the Excursions & Lectures Committee.
For further information,
call the Club number (722-3050).

Times stated for excursions are departure times. Please arrive earlier; leaders start promptly. If you need a ride, don't hesitate to ask the leader. Restricted trips will be open to non-members only after the indicated deadlines.

ALL OUTINGS: *Please bring a lunch on full-day trips and dress according to the weather forecast and activity. Binoculars and/or spotting scopes are essential on all birding trips. Unless otherwise stated, transportation will be by car pool.*

REGISTERED BUS TRIPS: *Make your reservation for Club bus excursions by sending a cheque or money order (Payable to The Ottawa Field-Naturalists' Club) to Box 35069, Westgate P.O., Ottawa, Ontario, K1Z 1A2, at least ten days in advance. Include your name, address, telephone number and the name of the outing. Your cooperation is appreciated by the Committee so that we do not have to wait to the last moment to decide whether a trip should be cancelled due to low registration. In order for the Club to offer a bus trip, we need just over 33 people to register. If fewer than 30 register, we have the option of cancelling the trip or increasing the cost. Such decisions must be done a week in advance so we encourage anyone who is interested in any bus trip to register as early as possible. We also wish to discourage postponing the actual payment of bus fees until the day of the event.*

EVENTS AT THE CANADIAN MUSEUM OF NATURE: *The Club is grateful to the Museum for their cooperation, and thanks the Museum for the use of these excellent facilities. Club members must be prepared to show their membership cards to gain access for Club functions after regular museum hours.*

BIRD STATUS LINE: *Phone 860-9000 to learn of recent sightings or birding potential in the Ottawa area. To report recent sightings use the 860-9000 number and stay on the line. This service is run on behalf of the Birds Committee and is available to members and non-members.*

Tuesday **14 October** **7:00 p.m.** **Social and Club Business** **7:30 p.m.** **Formal Program**	**OFNC MONTHLY MEETING** **THE RIVERKEEPER PROJECT II** **Speaker:** Lara van Loon **Meet:** Auditorium, Canadian Museum of Nature, Metcalfe and McLeod Streets. Lara will give us an update on the Riverkeeper Project, tell us what has been accomplished particularly concerning controlling pollution and enhancing ecological protection of the Ottawa River.
Saturday **18 October** **3:00 p.m.** **to** **Sunday** **19 October** **3:00 p.m.**	**THE 2003 OTTAWA - HULL FALL BIRD COUNT** This annual one day event is fun for both professional and amateur birders. Participants do not need to attend for the entire 24 hour period. The day will end with a warm meal and drinks. Further information can be found on page 169 of this issue.
Saturday **18 October** **8:30 a.m.**	**FALL BIRDS** **Leader:** Ken Allison **Meet:** Lincoln Fields Shopping Centre, northeast corner of the parking lot, junction of Richmond Road at Assaly Road. The main focus will be waterfowl and other migrating species along the Ottawa river. Dress warmly.
Wednesday **22 October** **7:00 a.m.**	**LATE MIGRANTS AND SHOREBIRDS** **Leader:** Bruce Di Labio **Meet:** Tim Horton's at the west end of Carling Avenue near The Coliseum (formally the Britannia movie theaters). Bruce will likely visit Lake Duchênes and part of the western section of the Ottawa River on this half day outing. Bring appropriate clothing, a snack and a drink.
Saturday **25 October** **10:00 a.m.**	**PHOTOGRAPHING NATURE WITH A DIGITAL CAMERA** **Leader:** Bev Wigney **Meet:** Fletcher Wildlife Garden If you have been considering buying a digital camera or if you have one and want to learn more about how to make best use of your camera, then this is for you. Bev has captured many lovely nature photographs and posted them on the web. Some of these will be exhibited at the EOBM (see Dec. 7th below). Bev will show us how she approaches photography, what she looks for, and how she makes use of the particular capabilities of her camera.

Saturday **8 November** **9:00 a.m.**	**LATE FALL RAMBLE IN GATINEAU PARK** **Leader:** Philip Martin **Meet:** Supreme Court Building at the front entrance, Wellington at Kent Street. Come and explore one of the most interesting areas in the National Capital area. Even in November there will be a surprising numbers of plants and animals to see. Bring a lunch and dress warmly for this half-day outing.
Tuesday **11 November** **7:00 p.m.** **Social and Club Business** **7:30 p.m.** **Formal Program**	**TRAVELS IN CHINA** **Speaker:** Dan Strickland **Meet:** Auditorium, Canadian Museum of Nature, Metcalfe and McLeod Streets. Come and learn from Dan about his thirty years of studying the Grey Jay in Ontario and Québec, and how global climate change has impacted these birds and their Old World counterparts in Sweden and China.
Friday **28 November** **7:00 p.m.**	**GEOLOGY WORKSHOP** **Leader:** Geoff Burbidge **Meet:** Fletcher Wildlife Garden Did you pick up that unusual rock this year but do not know what it is? Well bring in your favourite specimens and Geoff will try and identify them. This workshop is for general rock enthusiasts as well as the serious rock hounds. A limit of 5 rocks per person is requested, but the rocks may come from anywhere in the world. Please REGISTER AT THE CLUB NUMBER as soon as you can as there is a limit of 25 people.
Sunday **7 December** **1:00 p.m.** **to about** **5:30 p.m.**	**BEHIND THE SCENES MUSEUM VISIT TO THE EOBM** **Leader:** Fenja Brodo **Meet:** Lincoln Fields Shopping Centre, northeast corner of the mall parking lot, junction of Richmond and Assaly Road. The Eastern Ontario Biodiversity Museum (EOBM) in Kemptville invites you "backstage" to explore the rich collections of birds, mammals, invertebrates and plants housed in this unique museum. The Limerick Forest diorama and other permanent exhibits will be on display as well as a new exhibit of nature photography featuring Dragonflies by local artist Bev Wigney.

Tuesday	**OFNC MONTHLY MEETING**
9 December	**CAPTURING NATURAL SOUNDS OF ONTARIO**
7:00 p.m.	**Speaker:** Monty Brigham
Social and Club Business	**Meet:** Auditorium, Canadian Museum of Nature, Metcalfe and Mcleod Streets.
7:30 p.m. Formal Program	Monty Brigham has spent more than 40 years looking and listening for birds. He wondered about the function of the various songs he was hearing and so has spent much time recording and studying these songs. He will talk about what he has learned through his many years of listening and recording. Copies of his CD "Natural sounds of Ontario" will be available.

Sunday	**OTTAWA - HULL CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT**
14 December	Join the 2003 Ottawa - Gatineau Christmas Bird Count. For more information see page 186 of this issue of *T&L*.
Saturday	**DUNROBIN - BRECKENRIDGE CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT**
3 January	People of all skill levels are welcome. Further details and contact numbers are outlined on page 186 of this issue.

Tuesday	**OFNC 125th ANNUAL BUSINESS MEETING**
13 January	**Meet:** Auditorium, Canadian Museum of Nature, Metcalfe
7:00 p.m.	and Mcleod Streets.
Review of Minutes	At this meeting the Council for 2004 will be elected and a brief review of the 2003 activities and a statement of the Club's finances will be given. Following the formal
7:30 p.m.	portion, David Hobden, Chair of the Fletcher Wildlife
Meeting	Garden will give an inspiring talk on "FWG and its Rise to Fame." Everyone is welcome to attend.

DEADLINE: *Material intended for the January - March issue must be in the editor's hands by November 1, 2003. Mail your manuscripts to:*

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ISSN 0041-0748

TRAIL & LANDSCAPE

Published by

THE OTTAWA FIELD-NATURALISTS' CLUB

Postage paid in cash at Ottawa

Change of Address Notices and Undeliverable Copies:
Box 35069, Westgate P.O.
Ottawa, K1Z 1A2

Return postage guaranteed

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