

The Ovenbird and the Wisdom of Wild Space

By Karen Kopacz

As tree buds began to burgeon in the spring at Eloise Butler Wildflower Garden, did you notice a spirited, slightly-larger-than-average warbler called the ovenbird (*Seiurus aurocapilla*)?

Since they are typically heard before they are seen, they are commonly identified by a volume-building “teacher-teacher-TEACHER-TEACHER-tea” call. Over the last 100 years, they have occasionally been observed at the Garden during early and mid-May after migrating from Mexico, Central America, Florida, and the Caribbean.

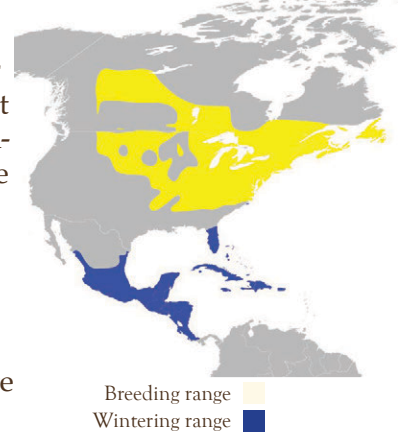
The ovenbird is olive-brown with a white-breast that is streaked with dark “brush marks.” Their crowns are tinted orange and decorated with two dark stripes that extend from the nostril area of the beak and make an arc above each eye. Those who are able to observe an ovenbird in close proximity may also notice two distinctive dark stripes mirrored below the eyes down either side of the throat.

They have an odd walk for a songbird, similar to the strut of a chicken—and for this quality they are sometimes called the walking warbler. Although their color allows them to blend into their woody habitat, I have seen ovenbirds demonstrate this walk while foraging for nest materials in woodlands dense with pine, maple, and birch, with very little regard for me if I am sitting quietly.

Areas of mature, closed-canopy maple-basswood or dry deciduous-coniferous forest mix are essential habitat for their breeding and nesting. They favor nesting sites where the forest floor is covered with fallen leaves and ground

vegetation like asters, ferns, and clubmoss. Weaving together leaves, twigs, grass, plant stems, or bark, the female builds a domed ground nest that resembles a clay oven. The nest may be lined with animal hair or fine roots, then covered with a layer of leaves and twigs.

Robert Frost captured the Ovenbirds’ predilection for uninterrupted forest habitat in his 1916 poem *The Ovenbird* with the turn of phrase “a mid-summer and a mid-wood bird.” Because ovenbirds are sensitive to forest fragmentation from agriculture and urban development, their presence in the Wildflower Garden may be attributed to its proximity within the greater woodland area of Theodore Wirth Park. This natural corridor is very slight in range due to its urban setting, but apparently provides enough closed-canopy for the ovenbird, either as a nesting site or as suitable passage for migration.



During migration, the ovenbird avoids human-made reforestation that it is not dense enough to provide cover from predators. Regenerating forest is also important habitat for these wood warblers, presumably because sapling thickets provide fledglings with protection from their raptorial adversaries.

The ovenbird is listed as a species of least concern, but loss of forest habitat is cited as one of the contributing factors to its decline over decades. Research associated with this

bird underlines the importance of biological corridors, biodiversity, and preserving or rewilding large expanses of natural forestland. Symbolically, perhaps the Ovenbird carries in its song what it is really trying to teach us...the wisdom of wild spaces. ❖



Karen Kopacz is an artist, designer, who recently completed the Big Woods, Big Rivers Master Naturalist program.

Ovenbird photo - Jordan Ryskamp
Map - Birds of North America Online by Cephas

President's Greeting

By Jennifer Olson

Dear Friends:
The spring ephemerals have disappeared and only the yellow, the last of the trillium is blooming. With the warm days the Golden Alexanders and the False Blue Indigo are blossoming in the Upland Meadow.

This year, the Yellow Lady Slipper bloomed five moccasins, when last year only one and I thought it would be the last. The leaves of the Showy Lady's Slippers are visible. Each visit to the Garden has different bird songs and blossoms, always a surprise.

We now have volunteers at the Front Gate Kiosk and in the Shelter. I enjoy greeting the variety of visitors at the Kiosk. One visitor has come weekly for 30 years and for others it's their first time. Some are alone and many are families, sometimes three generations. It's fun to engage the children with the touch and see objects and to challenge them to find the flower that looks like pants or a slipper or a shooting star.

The National Wildlife Foundation (NWF) notes that the average American child spends as few as 30 minutes in unstructured outdoor play each day and more than seven hours each day in front of an electronic screen. The NWF report identifies the benefits of getting kids in nature: outdoor play increases fitness, time outside raises Vitamin D levels, exposure to natural settings may be effective in reducing ADHD symptoms (attention deficit hyperactivity disorder) and children's stress levels fall within minutes of being in green spaces.

Although, the Garden is a bit structured, as one needs to stay on the paths. It's a great time for observation, looking for different patterns of opposite or alternating leaves, round or lobed leaves, and various shapes, sizes, and color of flowers. The Mustard family flowers have four petals and six stamens (four tall and two short) while the Rose family has five petals and numerous stamens, often with oval, serrated leaves. The Aster family has composite flowerheads. One is made up of tiny flowers in a center disc surrounded by big petals, each a flower called ray flowers. Shanley's Quest, A Botany Adventure for Kids Ages 9-99 by Thomas J. Elpel can help with identifying the 8 major flower families.

The American Academy of Pediatrics states getting outdoors provides more than fun for children and teenagers; it is also good for their physical and mental health and development. Research shows that children who spend time in natural settings have less anger and aggression. Stress and depression are lower, and children can show increased focus. Getting outside, being in nature and moving is good for everyone!

Not all children have access to visit the Eloise Butler Wildflower Garden. Since the inception of Student Bus Transportation Grant Program in 2009 5,446 students have been able to tour the Garden with class transportation subsidized. The Friends have provided over \$19,500 in funding for this program. Finally in 2023, the pandemic has fizzled and the school field trips to the Garden are in demand. However, with bus driver shortages and higher gas prices, bus transportation costs have risen. We have a campaign to Bring Kids to the Garden. Please consider a donation to this worthy cause by using the QR code.

Thank you. Enjoy your summer and Bring Kids to the Garden,
Jennifer ❖

Student Transportation Grants



Schools send kids



+Friends fund bus



+Garden has program
=
Learning opportunities



Garden Curator's Update

by Susan Wilkins

It's been a busy and gorgeous season at the Wildflower Garden so far. Staff are working hard to care for the Garden's plant collection of over 600 native plant species and to provide high quality programming for thousands of people at the Garden in addition to supporting tens of thousands of visitors in the Visitor Shelter and on the trails!

We have a fabulous group of bright, hard working and engaging staff this season. The Garden would not be such a wonderful place to visit without them. Thanks to the 2023 staff! And it takes a village here at the Garden to keep everything we have set in motion going and to cultivate a space where visitors feel welcome and eager to learn more about the plants and animals of the Garden. I want to thank the many volunteers involved with greeting visitors at the Welcome Kiosk and in the Visitor Shelter. You add so much in terms of visitor engagement to the visitor experience here, thank you! Additionally, thank you to those who are working to remove introduced plants as Legacy Volunteers and FIPAG volunteers in the Eloise Butler Wildflower Garden Volunteer Stewardship Area and one family in the Fern Glen. The areas you care for look amazing and are such a joy to be in and experience for so many.

A special thank you to Friends of the Wildflower Garden volunteer program coordinators, who are volunteers themselves, Melissa Hansen, Jim Proctor and Kari Christianson. Melissa has given a tremendous amount of time and energy while sharing her intellect and very big heart to support the two docent volunteer programs at the Garden- the Shelter Volunteer program and the new Kiosk Volunteer program- this season. It's been a big effort this year with the Shelter Volunteer program returning after a pandemic pause along with the addition of more shifts

at the Kiosk, due the Kiosk's success last year with both visitors and volunteers. I can't thank you enough, Melissa. This program would not be possible without your efforts over many, many years and you make it so fun for everyone involved!

Jim Proctor and Kari Christianson co-lead the Friends Invasive Plant Action Group work in the VSA and put in a tremendous amount of thoughtfulness and care into planning and implementing the work of tending this area with dozens of volunteers each



Canada lily, *Lilium canadense*



Biennial beeblossom - *Gaura biennis*

season. Kari and Jim provide opportunities for volunteers to learn about introduced plants like garlic mustard and buckthorn while assisting with the removal of these introduced plants. This year they've also added in planting events/care to the routine. Your passion inspires so many and the hard work to turn a vision into reality is genuinely appreciated by so many as well. Thanks to you both for all that you do.

There are many interesting projects in the works and I will share more about a few select project in the autumn edition of *The Fringed Gentian™*. For now, I'm off to plan and prepare for more programs and plantings with staff during this busy summer season.



Bee on pointed-leaf tick trefoil
Desmodium glutinosum

We look forward to seeing you on the trails in the coming weeks and months at the Wildflower Garden. ❖

Photos courtesy Minneapolis Park & Recreation Board (MPRB). Susan Wilkins is Curator of the Eloise Butler Wildflower Garden and a MPRB employee.

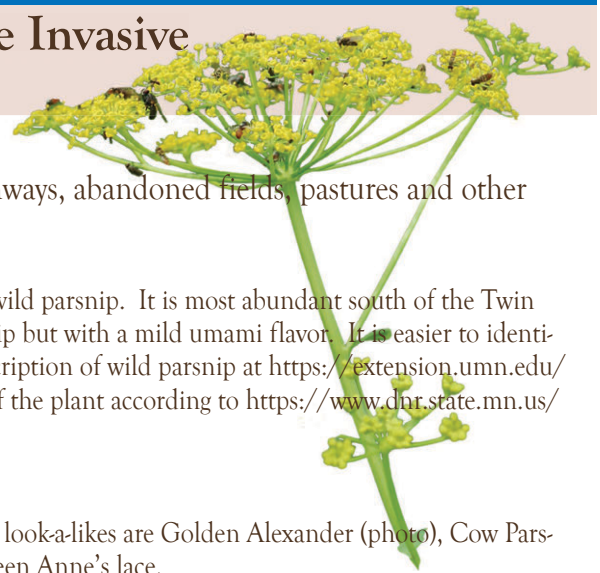
Wild Parsnip: An Edible Invasive

by Cheryl Batson

Wild Parsnip was likely brought over from Europe by settlers in the 1850s as a food crop. It escaped into our ditches along highways, abandoned fields, pastures and other disturbed open areas in sunny locations.

It was first noticed in Minnesota in the 1990s. Store bought parsnip is a descendant of wild parsnip. It is most abundant south of the Twin Cities and in the southern Twin Cities area. Wild parsnip tastes like store bought parsnip but with a mild umami flavor. It is easier to identify in the flower stage in the summer. The University of Minnesota has an excellent description of wild parsnip at <https://extension.umn.edu/identify-invasive-species/wild-parsnip>. Be sure to properly dispose of the unused parts of the plant according to <https://www.dnr.state.mn.us/invasives/terrestrialplants/index.html>.

The only similar looking plant in the basal rosette harvesting stage is burnet-saxifrage.



Wild Parsnip basal rosette stage
Rectangular leaves that tend to curve inward (1)



Burnet-Saxifrage basal rosette stage
Square, flat leaves (2)

At maturity, look-a-likes are Golden Alexander (photo), Cow Parsnip and Queen Anne's lace.

Wild parsnip harvesting season is best done for safety reasons in the spring at the 6 inch or smaller basal rosette stage. This means that you are not harvesting a plant with a flower stalk, flowers or seed head, unless harvesting the



Golden Alexanders, more compact flower heads, stem not grooved (3)

seeds. It tastes woody if you do so. It is possible to harvest basal rosettes in the fall once the mature flowers have stopped blooming and the seeds are set though this increases the chance of causing skin burns from the furanocoumarin in the parsnip when the skin is exposed to sunlight.



Wild Parsnip, compound leaves with 5-15 oblong-elliptic coarsely toothed leaflets (4)

Furanocoumarins exist in the green parts of the plant. Though some say you can safely eat the leaves, not the stems, I would be afraid that someone with more sensitivity to the chemical could react to it. It is safe to eat the root and the seeds. Because of the risk of painful blisters if exposed to the sap of the plant, it is recommended that you wear gloves, long sleeves and long pants.

You can use a regular curved shovel to dig up the root or use a special shovel called a parsnip predator which helps focus the area specifically around the root. Digging after a rain also makes the harvesting easier. It is best to cut the greens from the parsnip shortly after harvest to prevent inadvertent skin contact blisters.

Prepare and eat wild parsnip as you would garden parsnip. You will have a variation of root sizes. Clean the roots of dirt, cut the greens from the root, and peel them as you would a carrot or scrape the outer skin with the back of a table knife. You may want to cut the core out of the parsnip but typically

this would only be in the older parsnip. According to The Forager Chef, the seeds taste like gol-par which is a seed spice used in Persian dishes. You can use the seed in those Persian recipes or experiment in soups with more winter crops such as turnip, parsnip beef stew. ❖

Cheryl Batson is a Minnesota Master naturalist, writer and previous member of an invasive species Rapid Response Team.

Photo Credits: (1) Ohio State Weed Lab Archive, Ohio State University (2) Jeffrey Flory, Bugwood.org. (3) G D Bebeau (4) Shogkatten at English Wikipedia. (Pan) Cheryl Batson. (Root) Cheryl Batson.



Garlic Butter Roasted Parsnips

Ingredients

2 ½ pounds of fresh, small parsnips
5 tablespoons of butter
2 cloves of pressed garlic
Minced fresh rosemary
Salt and pepper to taste
Parsley for garnish

Directions

1) Preheat oven to 450°F. Spread out the parsnips on a rimmed baking sheet. Set aside. Make the Garlic Butter. Melt the butter in a skillet set over medium heat. Stir in the garlic and cook for 20

seconds, or until fragrant. Remove from the heat and stir in the rosemary.

2) Pour the garlic butter over the parsnips. Season with salt and pepper. Toss to coat. Spread parsnips out in a single layer.

3) Roast the parsnips in the preheated oven for 10 minutes. Then, give the parsnips a stir, and continue to roast for 8 to 10 more minutes, or until tender. Remove from the oven. Taste for salt and pepper, and adjust accordingly.

From: <https://diethood.com/garlic-butter-roasted-parsnips/>



Can there be good attributes among the bad ones? Can anything desirable be said about plants on the Minnesota invasive non-native terrestrial plant list?⁽¹⁾ Aldo Leopold and Eloise Butler gave us some advice which I refer to in the conclusion but first a case study will illustrate the dilemma.

Our case specimen is leafy spurge (*Euphorbia virgata*) for which most people would advise eradication. Why? In one word, invasive, it is very invasive! It entered the Wildflower Garden after 1951 and every Gardener and Curator has battled to keep it under control. In Minnesota it is present in 60% of our counties but the real infestations are in the rangeland of the west; to the extent of over 800,000 hectares in Montana, the Dakotas and Wyoming.

As with most invasives, it can be controlled by chemicals, biological agents and even by grazing. Domestic sheep will help to control the plant if the sheep have access to it early in the plant's life cycle, similarly to how we can control buckthorn with goats.⁽²⁾

Biological control methods involve using the flea beetle and the leafy spurge stem-boring beetle. The University of North Dakota reported success with the flea beetle, which they first released in the early 1990s. Treated areas have seen a 50% reduction in plants. The adult beetles feed on leaves, but most help comes from the larvae which feed on roots.⁽³⁾

What good can be said for this pest? How about this: It supports a large number of insects! Lots of them, over 100 species in recent Montana field work by Shane Sater, particularly wasps, beetles and flies, certain of which prey on grasshoppers, other flies and wolf spiders. When an infestation is adjacent to other natives a tantalizing conclusion reached by Sater is that the plant may actually be increasing the local insect population.⁽⁴⁾

What about some other pest specimens? Yellow sweet clover is widely found in our area and infests part of the west, but it supports bees, butterflies, skippers, beetles and is the preferred nectar for honey bees. Caterpillars of various blue and sulfur butterflies eat on the foliage.

Bird's-foot trefoil supports long-tongued bees, the caterpillars of the orange sulfur butterfly feed on foliage. Even one of Eloise Butler's favorite plants, butter and eggs, supports bees as does ground ivy. Eloise Butler advised us to remember that all plants have value. One must determine their proper place.

So, before total eradication of weedy species takes place, perhaps each situation requires us to recall Aldo Leopold's philosophy that was expressed in *A Biotic View of Land* in 1939: "No species can be "rated" without the tongue in the cheek; the old categories of "useful" and "harmful" have validity only as conditioned by time, place and circumstance." His conclusive comment came in *Round River*: "To keep every cog and wheel is the first precaution of intelligent tinkering."

(1) Minnesota invasive non-native terrestrial plant list is a booklet published by the MN Dept. of Natural Resources. <https://www.dnr.state.mn.us/invasives/terrestrialplants/index.html>

(2) A study by Eva Masin, University of Montana, determined that grazing sheep preferred non-native forbs such as leafy spurge when they were in abundance compared to native forbs. In her study area, sheep grazed 89% of the non-native forbs vs 28% of the native forbs. This of course, may be due to the higher non-native population to begin with, but it does show that infestations on rangeland can be mitigated by grazing. Info from *Kelsey*, Fall 2014, Montana Native Plant Society

(3) *North Dakota Agriculture*, 2017-18 edition, North Dakota Dept. of Agriculture.

(4) From field work by Shane Sater, writer and field naturalist in Montana, wildwithnature.com.

Gary Bebeau is a Friends director. The views expressed in this article are those of the persons cited and are a reminder of the intricate web of the natural world and do not necessarily reflect the views of The Friends of the Wild Flower Garden or any other organization.



The inflorescence of leafy spurge. Photo - G. Bebeau



The unique open flower structure of the Euphorbias, called a cyathium, locates the nectar glands at the base of the stamens, easily accessible to insects.

Revisiting the Wild Bee Survey

by Colin Bartol



Declining wild bee numbers has been a concern for scientists for a few decades. Although scientists have good information about commercial bee hives, they do not have very good data for wild bee populations.

Susan Wilkins and MaryLynn Pulscher from the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board (MPRB) identified an opportunity to study wild bee populations at the Garden over time to aid in understanding the diversity of wild bee species in the Garden and to evaluate changes to wild bee diversity over time in the Garden. They contacted University of Minnesota Entomologist Dr. Elaine Evans to create the framework for a bee census that could take place every ten years. The MPRB asked the Friends of the Wildflower Garden if they would like to help fund the original 2013-2014 census work by contributing half of the cost for the project. The Friends were excited about the opportunity to assist with this and are equally excited to fund 50% of the 2023-2024 bee census work now underway by Dr. Elaine Evans and her team. By comparing the baseline numbers from a decade ago with the new data collected, Elaine Evans will be

able to compare the two sets of data. It is a good time to review what we learned last time as we prepare for another census.

When entomologist Elaine Evans was hired by the MPRB to perform the wild bee census, she suspected that there would be over 50 species of wild bees that would be found in the Garden. To the surprise of all, the survey found 104 wild

bee species. It must be noted that some species were only represented by one individual, but it speaks to the diversity of the bee population at the Garden. Although the bee diversity at the Garden was encouraging, the bumblebee population diversity in the Garden was less than other gardens surveyed at the same time, such as Peace Garden near Lake Harriet.

The top plants for bee abundance were *Filipendula ulmaria* (meadowsweet), *Cirsium* spp. (thistle), *Helianthus* spp. (sunflower), *Amorpha canescens* (leadplant), and *Solidago* spp. (goldenrod). The most diversity was found on the goldenrods and second on *Cornus racemosa* (gray dogwood). Another interesting result was despite the majority



Bee visiting *Veronicastrum virginicum*. Photo G D Bebeau

of bees being generalists, several specialists were only found on leadplant or on *Helianthus* species.

We will be sure to keep our readers aware of the results as they come in from the new census. Thank you to all Friends donors for supporting this work through donations to the Friends and thank you to MPRB staff for identifying the need for this project and working with the U of MN to make the census a reality, now for the second time!❖

Colin Bartol is a Friends director and editor of *The Fringed Gentian*™

Photo top corner - Rusty Patched Bumblebee by Trisha Leaf under license CC-BY-SA 4.0



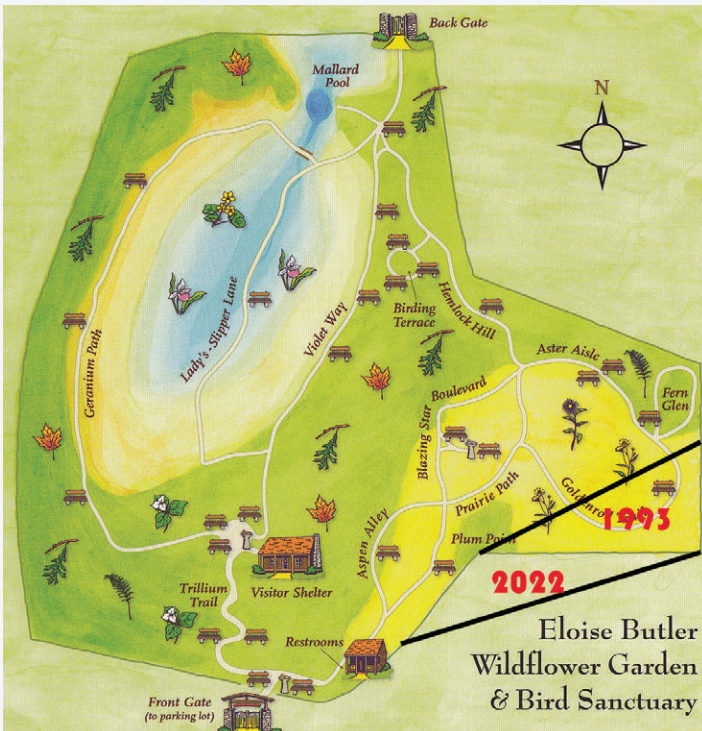
Bee visiting *Filipendula ulmaria*. Photo G D Bebeau



Bee visiting *Solidago rigida*. Photo G D Bebeau

Notes for Our Supporters

Garden and Friends Activities



Garden History Repeats

Thirty years ago Friends Board Member Elaine Christenson and Gardener Cary George worked together to secure approval from the MPRB to expand the upland garden by one acre. That addition is marked "1993" on the Garden map. Now 30 years later the MPRB added a new fence that removes the angle created in 1993 and adds a similar amount of space, marked "2022," to the Garden. Both map lines are approximate. This area was cleared of dense stands of buckthorn and garlic mustard by the Friends Invasive Plant Action Group (FIPAG).



Above: A section of the new eight foot high east fence of the upland garden is shown in the photo above. This was installed by the Minneapolis Park & Recreation Board (MPRB) during the past winter with funds from the MPRB. In front of the fence are the new shrub cages installed this season by the FIPAG volunteers. Twenty shrubs were purchased by the Friends and 20 more were provided by MPRB.

Support form

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Friends of the Wild Flower Garden, P O Box 3793, Mpls MN 55403

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FIPAG held 5 work sessions this spring in the volunteer stewardship area around the Garden and planted shrubs in the area of the maple bowl and the new fence. Both areas are now largely free of buckthorn and garlic mustard. To keep the shrubs healthy, the new shrubs were surrounded by metal cages to help prevent deer and rabbit damage. The Friends purchased three backpack watering apparatus for volunteers to use.





The Fringed Gentian™

71 years - Dedicated to Protecting,
Preserving and Promoting
The interests of The Eloise Butler
Wildflower Garden and Bird
Sanctuary

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Illustration

Interested in writing for us?

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www.friendsofeloisebutler.org



Daisy Fleabane at Eloise Butler. Photo Bob Ambler

Twigs & Branches

Our monthly bulletin links you to short articles
about plants, the Wildflower Garden, and the
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The Eloise Butler Wildflower Garden and Bird Sanctuary comprises cultivated but naturalistic woodland, wetland and prairie environments. It is owned and operated by the Minneapolis Park & Recreation Board, located within the city of Minneapolis in Theodore Wirth Park on traditional Dakota homelands and, established in 1907, is the oldest public wildflower garden in the United States.

The Garden is open April 15 to October 15, weekends only Oct. 15 - 31. Closed Mondays.
Hours: Tuesday - Sunday 7:30 AM to 6 PM;
Thursdays - 7:30 AM to 8 PM.