

PUBLICATION OF  
FRIENDS OF THE  
WILD FLOWER GARDEN, INC.

# THE FRINGED GENTIAN™

WINTER 2005

Volume 53, Number 1



## *President's Report –*

### THE GREAT GREY OWL

Have you been fortunate to catch a glimpse of this northern visitor? This past winter, northern owls, especially the Great Grey Owl, have been recorded moving south from Canada into Minnesota in unprecedented numbers. This beautiful, mysterious-looking bird generally lives, breeds and even winters north of Minnesota. It is common for a small number of Great Grey Owls to be seen in northwestern Minnesota during the winter, when shortage of food supply causes them to range farther south. In past years, there might have been 35-50 Great Grey Owls seen in northwestern Minnesota, and rarely any at all seen south of there. Prior to this winter, the largest number of Great Grey Owls was seen in the winter of 1991-1992 when about 200 were reported seen in northern Minnesota.

In this past winter, a record number of Great Grey Owls have been seen throughout Minnesota, as far south as the metropolitan area. By mid-January 2005, more than 1,700 Great Greys had been reported seen throughout Minnesota, according to the Minnesota Ornithologists Union (MOU).

We had a good look at a Great Grey Owl on Saturday, February 12th as my wife, Sally, and I drove slowly through a back road in the Pillager State Forest (northwest of Brainerd). We had driven into the area intending to look for owls. We weren't dressed to get too far off the road, so we didn't really expect to see any. Suddenly, a Great Grey flew directly in front of the car and then alighted on a branch a short distance ahead of us. He stopped and looked right at us so we could study him. It was most definitely the Great Grey Owl, with the distinctive large wingspan (4-5 feet) and rings of feathers forming large ovals around its deep-set, yellow eyes. What a sight! We emailed the MOU website with the details of our sighting to add to their database.

### BUFFER ZONE AROUND THE GARDEN

The Friends Board is advocating that the Park Board establish a natural space around the Garden to make it clear that the area of Wirth Park around the Garden should be used for quiet, contemplative enjoyment and study of nature like walking, bird watching and plant identification. Protecting this fragile environment for birds and animals is important, and other parts of Wirth Park are more suitable for sports like ski racing and mountain biking.

We have come across some historical references to the idea of a natural buffer zone around the Garden. For example, an article in *The Fringed Gentian* from October 1964 announced that the Park Board had granted an enlargement to the Garden. The added territory consisted of high land and marshy land, extending to the picnic grounds, then along Glenwood Avenue. The article stated, "The area is to be left in its natural state. It harbors many moisture-loving plants and is ideal for bird watchers... The deep seclusion of this area is ideal for bird nesting and bird study."

An article in a newsletter for Minneapolis City Employees, appearing in June 1971, described the Garden as consisting of "a total area of 40 acres... including a good buffer area surrounding the actual Garden."

*continued*

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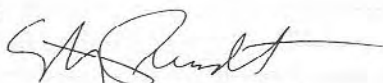
Susan Wilkins, *Gardener/  
Curator (Ex-officio)*

**President's Message** *continued*

In another article appearing in *The Fringed Gentian* in fall 1980, the Friends printed a statement of proposals for maintaining and protecting the Garden. One of the specific proposals was that "the unmanaged areas surrounding the present Garden be preserved as an unfenced, semi-wild buffer zone."

We are doing additional research to look for further historical references to the buffer-zone concept. Our historian, Constance Pepin, is reviewing the records at the Minnesota Historical Society. We would appreciate hearing from any Friends member with information about this.

For the Friends,



Steve Pundt

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**It's No April Fool**

Assuming there's not a late-spring snow storm, the Garden will officially open on April first of 2005! The Martha Crone Shelter will be open Monday through Saturday from 10 AM to an hour before dusk, and on Sundays from noon to an hour before dusk. After April first, you can call the Shelter at (612) 370-4903.

**Annual Meeting is Scheduled**

The Annual Meeting of the Friends will be held on Saturday, May 21, 2005, at 10:00 AM, and will be followed by a meeting of the Board of Directors. If any members are interested in serving on the Board, they are encouraged to contact any officer (see list on page 1).

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*The Eloise Butler Wildflower Garden & Bird Sanctuary is an untamed garden and sanctuary for wild native flora and fauna. It is officially open from April 1 to October 15, barring heavy spring snows. The Garden entrance is located just off Theodore Wirth Parkway close to the intersection of the Parkway and Glenwood Avenue.*

*Friends of the Wild Flower Garden, Inc., is a nonprofit organization of private citizens whose purpose is to educate by enhancing visitors' appreciation and understanding of Minnesota's native plants and their natural environments. It aims to enhance and safeguard the interests of the Garden.*

*The Fringed Gentian is published on a quarterly basis for members and supporters of Friends of the Wild Flower Garden. Editor is Lisa Locken, 1227 Edlin Place, Minneapolis, MN 55416. Your comments and suggestions are welcome. E-mail: ldlocken@goldengate.net*

**Notes from the Gardener/Curator --**

**The Restoration of Hepatica Hill**

*by Susan Wilkins*

Spring in the Wildflower Garden is always enchanting. Trilliums and trout lilies are two of the troubadours of the season. Anemones, toothworts, hepaticas and so many others find themselves in the spotlight as well. This is the season for subtle and spontaneous beauty in the woodlands of the Garden.

One of the most wonderful things about our spring ephemeral collection at the Wildflower Garden is the history contained within. Many of the groupings still found here today are remnants of what Eloise Butler planted in the early 1900s. To visit a patch of purple trillium and know that the original plants were carefully harvested for and relocated at the Garden by Eloise Butler makes the sight all that much more extraordinary. Other plant groupings found growing today in the Garden are vestiges of what was here before Eloise began her work at what was then Glenwood Park. These historical collections, some planted and some natural, are part of what makes the Garden so special still today.

Unfortunately, many of the historical spring ephemeral groupings died out during a few different periods of drought and disease in the Garden's past. Most recently, a significant portion of the spring ephemeral collection at the Wildflower Garden was lost when over 165



*Susan Wilkins stands at the foot of Hepatica Hill as it looked in mid-February, 2005, before restoration.*



*In this 1959 photo a carpet of hepaticas covered a huge section of the most western hill at the Garden.*

diseased American elm trees were removed in the late 1970s. Shade from the canopy-forming elms provided refuge from the intense summer sun for the woodland wildflowers. Once the canopy was gone, the spring ephemeral species quickly perished.

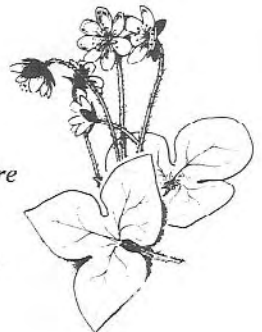
One such collection that vanished was a quilt-like grouping of hepatica plants known as Hepatica Hill. It was made up of hundreds of sharp-lobed Hepatica (*Hepatica acutiloba*) and round-lobed Hepatica (*Hepatica americana*) -- the two hepatica species native to Minnesota. Hepatica Hill was a Garden treasure. The annual burst of lavender, light pink, and white from the tightly woven blanket of flowers delighted and inspired visitors as they toured the Garden.

Although the complete history of Hepatica Hill has not yet been uncovered, it is clear from Eloise Butler's Garden logs that she nurtured a hepatica plantation in the northwest corner of the Garden for many years. The specimens transplanted to this plantation came from many different locations throughout the Upper Midwest region. The gorgeous grouping that resulted may have been intended to serve as a holding bed, but instead turned into a living jewel of texture, form and color.

We will continue to research the history of this particular planting and delve into the history of other unique plantings once found in the Wildflower Garden. We will also begin bringing these plantings back to life so that the rich history of the Garden can be appreciated in the 21st century. To this end, the restoration of Hepatica Hill will begin this spring. The initial planting of 600 *Hepatica acutiloba* specimens is scheduled to occur in early-mid May.

For more information about the planting and history, visit the Martha Crone Shelter where we will have information posted about the Hepatica Hill restoration.

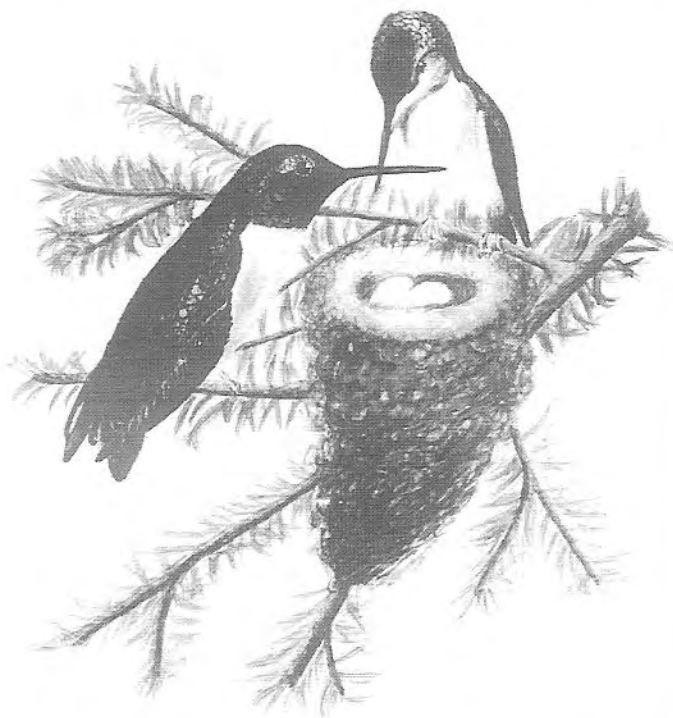
*About the earliest blooming flowers in woodland gardens, the hepatica (both round-lobed and sharp-lobed) have slender, hairy stems. Under 10" tall, both varieties have petals that are actually sepals. For the home garden, hepaticas should be planted in light shade where the soil remains moist but not wet.*



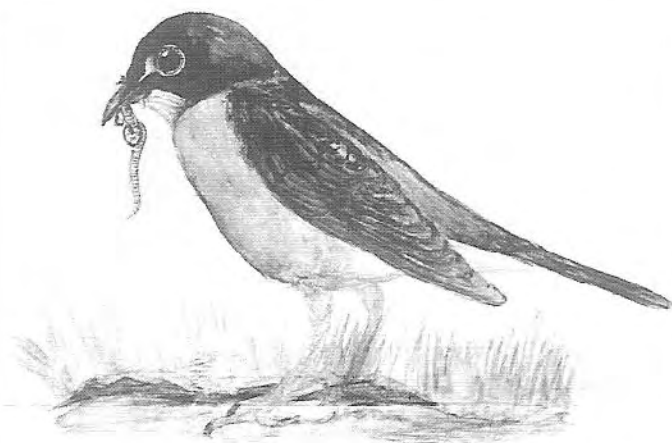
# Birds of the Region

Artwork by Harriet Betzold

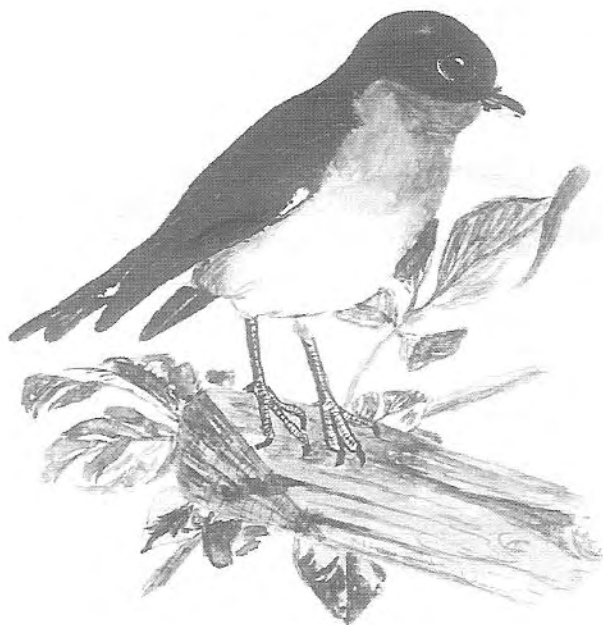
*A lifelong lover of nature, Harriet Betzold shares these renditions of birds which she executed several years ago. A past-president of Friends of the Wild Flower Garden and currently a member of the Board, Harriet continues to do artwork and take art classes through the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute at the U of M.*



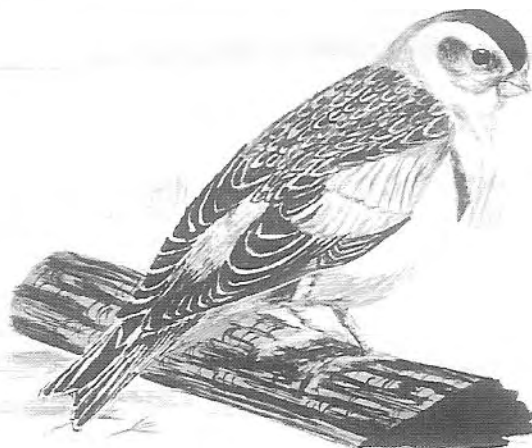
Ruby-throated Hummingbird  
*Trochilus colubris*



American Robin  
*Merula migratoria*



Blue bird  
*Siala sialis*



American Goldfinch  
*Spinus tristis*

## Remembering a Special Man

by Constance Pepin,  
Historian, Friends of the Wild Flower Garden

As we approach the centennial year of the Eloise Butler Wildflower Garden and Bird Sanctuary, the Friends celebrate the gifts of the few individuals who have served as the curators of the Garden since its founding in 1907. The first curator was Eloise Butler herself, who served from 1911 until her death in April 1933. Succeeding her was Martha Crone, who had been Eloise's assistant and then served as curator until her retirement in 1959. That year, a young man of 33 named Kenneth E. Avery began what would be the longest tenure as curator of the Garden. Five years earlier (in 1954), Ken had joined the Minneapolis Park Board staff as an assistant to Martha Crone.



Ken Avery

In the spring of 1959, he became curator, a position he would hold until his retirement 28 years later.

Ken Avery had a deep reverence for nature and considered working in the Garden a "very humbling experience." He considered the Garden a real sanctuary for nature, where "a dead tree is as important to the ecological nature of the

area as a live one." As he worked to preserve the ecology of the Garden, he tried to interfere with nature as little as possible. "Wild plants have an integrity that we must respect," he said. Long before the current interest in native plants, Ken emphasized the preservation and protection of native plants. "If you find something common to Minnesota growing wild, then I say leave it there. Make that area a preserve."

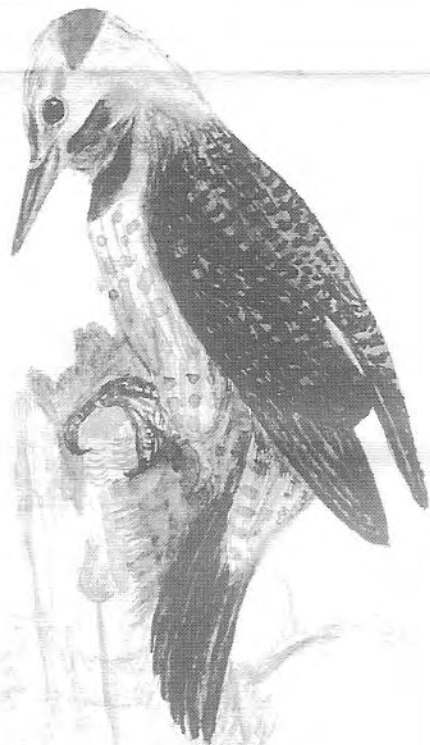
By his own description, Ken was a "back-woods farmer" who did everything in the Garden from guiding tours to transplanting wildflowers to mending bridges and fences to answering the telephone in the Martha Crone Shelter. He meticulously documented the blooming times of plants and flowers. His records indicate that in 1977, for the first time in his (then) 23 years at the Garden, the Showy Lady's-slipper opened in May!

A lifelong student of nature, Ken wore a small magnifying glass on a leather strap around his neck "for close inspection in case I see something I don't

*continued*



Belted Kingfisher  
*Ceryle alcyon*



Flicker  
*Colaptes auratus*

## Remembering a Special Man *continued*

recognize and want to examine it closely." Ken also carried binoculars so he could observe birds. "Because they're here," he said, "I may hear a song and stop what I'm doing and try to identify the bird."

### THE KEN AVERY BIRDING TERRACE

This year, the Friends of the Wild Flower Garden will honor Ken Avery and his dedication and contribution to the Garden by creating a special place for bird watching. Several wooden benches and a natural stone, carved bird bath with memorial plaque will be installed in a small

flat area overlooking the bog and Hemlock grove. Native bushes and flowers will be planted in his memory. In keeping with Ken's philosophy that Nature knows best, installation will involve no alteration of the landscape and minimal (only temporary) disruption to the plants and birds that Ken so valued and respected. A dedication ceremony is planned for Father's Day, June 19, 2005, one day before Ken's birthday.

**MARK YOUR CALENDAR!** *You're invited to the dedication ceremony of the Ken Avery Birding Terrace to be held at 2:00 PM on Sunday, June 19, 2005 at Eloise Butler Wildflower Garden and Bird Sanctuary.*

## *A Lifetime Full of Good Memories at the Garden and in Wirth Park*

*by William W. Toivonen*

Eloise Butler Wildflower Garden and Bird Sanctuary has been in walking distance for most of my life. I attended Bryn Mawr School through the 8th grade. The park has had so much to enjoy, as it has today.

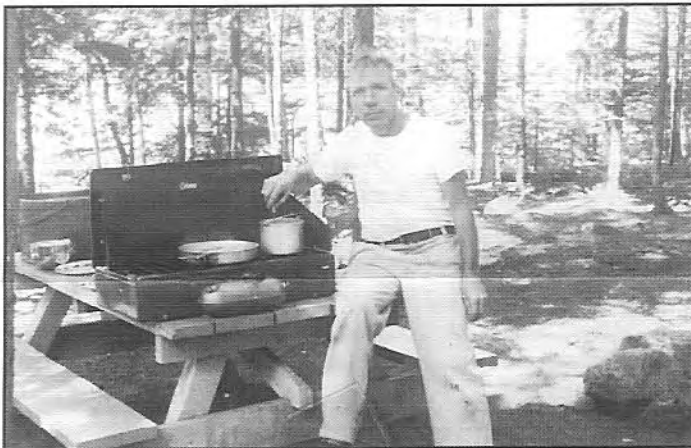
I could ski right from my home to this winter wonderland. Before fences, we could pick out the terrain that suited us, cross country or ski jumping. We would make log jumps on the steep hills. We even had our own names for different hills – Breakers Point, Happy-Go-Lucky or Death Valley. In the summer we had so much area to explore.

Now I wait until April first to see the early bloomers and to watch the succession of plants and flowers to take their turn to show their finery. In my senior years (93) I have gotten to know most of the benches and their vantage points. It's fun to see the steady stream of visitors of all ages. Children are always leading the way to be the first to discover something new.

From the sea of golden blossoms to the upland area there is so much to enjoy.

We are so grateful for the far-sighted people who set apart areas for our parks and for the people who now nurture them.

*Next October, Bill Toivonen will reach the age of 94, but he doesn't expect that to stop him from hiking the trails of Eloise Butler Wildflower Garden. Due to arthritis, Bill finds it useful to use trekking poles that aid him in as he courses the hills and valleys of the Garden. Among his interests is watching birds. "I have taken ornithology classes at the 'U' and the Garden was a must for our field trips," he said.*



*Perched beside a cookstove on a picnic table in Wirth Park near the Eloise Butler Wildflower Garden, Bill Toivonen (in this undated photo taken many years ago) readies for one of countless family picnics. "In fact," he said, "in the middle of one winter we set up a card table and four chairs and had a full meal in Eloise Butler Wildflower Garden."*



*A long-time resident of Bryn Mawr, Bill Toivonen stands beside his car in "downtown" Bryn Mawr in 2005.*

## Memberships

by Joy Davis, Membership Chair

Welcome, new members:

The Armstrongs, Grafton, North Dakota  
Mr. And Mrs. Walt Hanson, Minnetonka, Minnesota  
Nate Lee, Minneapolis  
Dan Miller, Portland, Oregon  
Temenos Garden Services, LLC -- Judy Remington, Minneapolis  
Gerry and Bonnie Wilkins, Roseville, Minnesota

The Friends have a new Life Member, Hubert Nelson. Thank you, Hub, for your generosity.

## Memorials

by Marguerite Harbison,  
Memorial Chair

Thank you for all of the caring and sharing:

Memorial to honor James H. Dean from Pam Weiner and Deb Boehm ✓

Memorial gift for Bruce Lloyd from Joan and John Haldeman ✓

Gift in memory of Lon Miller from Cary George ✓

Gift in memory of Lon Miller from Ed and Harriet Betzold ✓

Memorial gift for Anne A. Mortenson from Joan and John Haldeman ✓

In memory of Joseph Steen, lover of the great outdoors, from Gary Bebeau ✓

Funds for a Garden bench were received from Peter Furman in memory of his pets, Lucy and Ernie. ✓

Your memorials and other gifts to the Friends are much appreciated. Donations constitute a very important part of keeping the Garden

a special place for generations of people to enjoy the beauty of native plants.

*Please note: When sending a memorial, would you please include the name and address of the family of the deceased so that we can acknowledge that a memorial has been received. Memorials may be sent to Friends of the Wild Flower Garden, Inc., c/o Marguerite Harbison, 6038 Golden Valley Road, Golden Valley, MN 55422*

## ALERT: Garden Volunteers!

by Shirley Schultz & Harriet Betzold

Spring can't be far away and so it is time to again start planning the Volunteer Program in the Garden. Previous volunteers will be contacted in the middle of March for the April Garden opening.

Scheduling will be similar to the plan we have used the past two seasons. Have your calendars ready for that call. The volunteer hours are 10:00 AM to 12:30 PM and 12:30 PM to 3:30 during the week. On weekends and holidays the hours are 12:30 PM to 3:30

### NEW COORDINATOR

The Volunteer Committee has added a new coordinator, Mary Jo Schifsky. She will help with scheduling volunteers for the Shelter during the 2005 season. Mary Jo lives near the Garden and was a volunteer last season. The committee is as follows: Harriet Betzold, (763) 588-4374; Mary Jo Schifsky, (763) 377-9095, and Shirley Schultz.

### WANT TO BE A VOLUNTEER?

We welcome new volunteers. If you or anyone you know would like to join us, please give us a call. Thank you.

## Comments and a Photo from Friends Members



"Woolly Bear" caterpillar of a moth

The above photo was sent to us by Vi and Dan LaBelle, longtime members of the Friends and frequent visitors to the Garden. The photo was enclosed with this message:

"There he was – just hanging there – his eyes mirrored the sun as he looked at us while clutching the stem of the tall Goldenrod within the upland Prairie area of the Garden that hot, summer-like day in early October! We peered back at this Banded Woolly Bear through the camera lens so others could glimpse another unexpected surprise found when visiting this enchanted world of teeming activity in preparation for the Winter Season!

"We feel honored to have the opportunity to share in the support of the Eloise Butler Wildflower Garden, both with a donation and bringing the beauty of the Garden through pictures to many others who are unable to visit in person."

-- Dan and Vi LaBelle