

Annals of the Wild Life Reserve

The Writings of Eloise Butler



Animal, Bird, and Insect Life in the Wild Garden, 1914

A Large number of birds nest in the garden, and during the season most of the migrants reported from the state have been noted in the Garden. The tangled vine coverts, abundance of food and water, and protection from sportsmen have made the place a favorite of the birds. Song, vesper and swamp sparrows, catbird, bluebird, rose-breasted grosbeak, Baltimore oriole, brown thrasher, bobolink, marsh wren, scarlet tanager, indigo bunting hold matins and vespers in the leafy aisles along the brook, while those of brilliant plumage, together with goldfinch, Maryland yellow-throated hummingbird gleam like jewels in the foliage or as they dart through the air.



Female Rose-breasted Grosbeak.



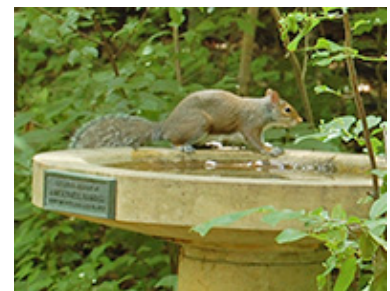
Woodchuck in the Garden

I have stroked baby crows too young to be timid, followed the whip-poor-will in his short flights through the swamp, seen bluebirds chase out the long-eared owl, the great bittern stiffen like a stick when he heard my footstep, and a pair of the rare crested wood ducks swimming in my little pond.

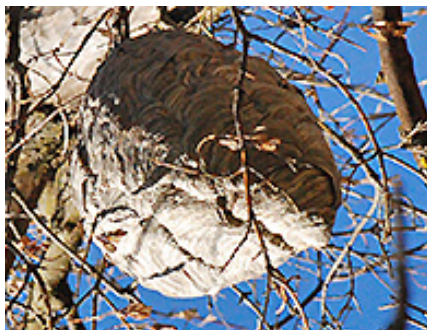
The red-shouldered hawks have nested and reared their young in the garden, and just the other day a covey of nine bobwhites were found in their retreat in the meadow.

All sorts of sappers and miners have homes in the garden. On the sides of the brook, round holes bordered with a ring of mud show where the Cray-fishes abide.

Many heaps of pulverized earth, sometimes, alas, in the midst of a plantation of choice flowers, are the roofs of gophers' dwellings. Big tunnels, probably enlarged by dogs in chase, mark the refuge of woodchucks. Squirrels find winter quarters in basements of decayed tree trunks, their roomy summer residences of interlaced twigs being high in the branches above. Immense mounds, which must have been built up from time immemorial, testify [to] the industry of the ant.



One of the Garden Squirrels on the Odell Birdbath.



Paper nest of the White Hornet

Trees and shrubs are hung with wasps' nests of various sizes. One season I counted fifteen of them and hardly a day passed when I was not warned by a painful prod that I was intruding on their premises. One kind of wasp has made a labyrinth in the ground, with the grass cut from the tunneled entrance as if by a scythe. Another wasp built on the ground a flat paper nest as large as a diner plate. There are various despoilers of the garden. Last winter, mice - on account of some unusual condition, I suppose, as it never happened before - girdled, a foot or more up from the base, all the many young red maples in my swamp. (I applied melted paraffin, but its

efficacy remains to be proved.)

A red aphid is a persistent pest on the wild golden glow, and sometimes it attacks goldenrod. Another species of aphid, noted too late for routing, curled up nearly every leaf on one of my beloved hawthorns.

The eggs of a vile smooth caterpillar are laid in the leaf buds of the common sumach. They hatch and eat the branches bare. Our two heavy frosts, which mowed down my ferns for the first time in the history of the garden, served one good turn by killing the sumach buds and with them the caterpillars. The second crop of leaves are free from the "varmints."

Another flying insect selects the buds of the sunflowers for an egg depository. Scarcely a bud escapes this infliction and my hillslopes are covered with thousands of sunflowers of several species. At this time, pulling apart the leaves of the buds discloses little wrigglers. These develop into slimy, slug like creatures with prodigious appetites. My remedy is to "scrunch 'em"- an endless and unpleasing task.

Among the doings of the animal folk in the garden, I was interested in noting the habit of the striped ground squirrel or gopher, *Citellus tridecemlineatus*. This pretty creature, with stripes mottled like a toad, although said to be the most carnivorous of squirrels, I saw eagerly eating panic grass, and again, the ripe heads of white clover.

June 1914

The text of this article is one of a number of short essays that Eloise Butler wrote while curator of the Garden that after her death were collected in a series titled *Annals of the Wild Life Reserve*, but were not published. The Wild Botanic Garden in Wirth Park, became the "Native Plant Reserve" and was then renamed the Eloise Butler Wild Flower Garden in 1929.

The text "*Our two heavy frosts, which mowed down my ferns*" indicates that this was written for the members circular of the Gray Memorial Botanical Chapter of the Agassiz Association.

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Top of stem gall of a goldenrod caused by an aphid.