



Woodland Gardens at Birdsacre evolved as a project with the University of Maine Cooperative Extension

Master Gardener Volunteer (MGV) program. The program provides 40 hours of free horticultural education, in return for 40 hours of volunteer work on community gardening projects.

Master Gardener Volunteers from the Ellsworth Hancock County Extension Office met with Stan Richmond, President of Birdsacre Inc. in January 1997 to formulate plans for an accessible boardwalk through the diverse habitat which the garden encompasses.

The ice storm of 1998, which left much devastation in the glade and throughout Birdsacre, created an additional hurdle in developing the garden. After clearing away much of the damage the boardwalk was completed and now the MGV's concentrate on plantings, and grooming, and programming.

The goal is to create a woodland garden which is accessible, educational, and enjoyable for all members of the community. Photos of plants found along the boardwalk are available for viewing inside the nature center. Center hours vary.



-Spotted Jewelweed, *Impatiens capensis*

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Donations to support programming, planting, and maintenance of the garden are welcomed.

Mail to:
Hancock Cooperative Extension Office
Master Gardener Volunteers Program
63 Boggy Brook Road
Ellsworth, ME 04605

Thank you for your generous support!

Birdsacre Funds for the Future

Yes!!! I would like to donate much needed funds to the Woodland Gardens at Birdsacre!

Enclosed is my tax-deductible contribution of \$ _____

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THE WOODLAND GARDENS AT BIRDSACRE

A woodland garden under development by Master Gardener Volunteers within the Birdsacre Wildlife Sanctuary



The area we know as Birdsacre today was the home of Cordelia Stanwood from 1865 to 1879. Much of her youth and early adult years were spent out of state receiving an education and teaching. In 1904, at the age of

thirty-nine, illness forced her to abandon teaching and return home to recuperate. She found comfort and joy in immersing herself in the surrounding fields and woods. Her daily explorations eventually became her most important life's work.

For the next 48 years she devoted her life to studying and photographing birds on her family homestead. Her detailed studies of nests and the nesting life of birds would provide a rich legacy of scientific information for novice bird enthusiasts as well as prominent ornithologists.

The boardwalk is a microcosm of the many habitats that comprise Birdsacre sanctuary. Here plants and animals play out their lives on the edge of a bustling community. On your walk, your footsteps might be a mirror image of the footsteps taken by Cordelia on her daily foray into the woods. Like her, may you discover the wonders of the birds and plants that inhabit this special place.

If I had not watched for the buds of the arbutus to unfold when a child, if I had not gathered it as a woman, if I had never seen the linnea carpeting the ground, trailing over the rocks, making a flower garden of each old log, and filling the vast woodlands with haunting sweetness, I should care for flowers less. It is because my mind is stored with groves, fields, swales, hills, and mountains where ferns, flowers, and trees grow in unusual beauty in natural surroundings, it is because each bird voice means so much to me and suggests such varied experiences, that I love nature so much.

-Cordelia Stanwood



Cow Vetch, *Vicia cracca*

Glade

To your right and left are remnants of the open meadow environment known to Cordelia when she began her bird studies. Native plant species like New England aster, goldenrod, rudebeckia and blackberry are common in this habitat. Are there other meadow plants you can identify?

Exotic (non-native) plants such as the Autumn Olive shrub on the right side of the boardwalk pose a particular problem to native plant species. Known for its beautiful blooms and sweet fragrance it attracts birds that in turn spread seeds to other locations. When the Autumn Olive was planted here, the ecological effect of planting non-native species wasn't known. Once established, these plants out-compete native plants and eventually replace them. Notice the native Crabapple now thriving to the right of the boardwalk now that an Olive has been removed. The loss of native plants can negatively impact native birds and insects as well.

Listen for birds common to the meadow: song sparrows and the common yellowthroat (*witchety, witchety*). A black-throated green warbler (*zee-zee-zee-zoo-zee*) or red-eyed vireo (*here I am, where are you?*) may be singing from the tree canopies on the edge of the meadow.

Along the edge of the woods, look for shrubs such as viburnum, dogwood and rhodora. The viburnum's purple berries add highlights to winter's monochromatic color scheme.

As you continue along the boardwalk, on your right you may notice a stand of lady slipper blossoms in spring. Watch for late blossoms or developing fruit of pyrola, a 3-4" perennial widely scattered in the garden.

Ledge

Many young firs have been removed from the glade and ledge areas. What other types of trees can be found in this evergreen habitat? How many deciduous shrubs can you find? Witherod? Shad? The dead and decaying trees you see are being recycled by fungus, lichens, mosses, and insects to make new soil and in the process provide food for chickadees, nuthatches, creepers, woodpeckers and other birds.

How many native woodland ground covers can you identify in this habitat? Native blueberries, bunchberries, bracken fern and wild sarsaparilla are common here. A variety of lichens and mosses also carpet the ground.

Spruce-Pine Forest

Spruce and pine are the predominant trees along this section. The natural succession of the forest is for conifers to replace the shorter lived, shade intolerant hardwood species like aspen and birch. Look for nest cavities in the trees created by downy, hairy or pileated woodpeckers. Black-capped chickadees often inhabit abandoned woodpecker holes in birch trees. Can you tell if a nest cavity is new or old? No bird captured Cordelia's heart more than the acrobatic, energetic chickadee. Accessible to us in all manner of weather, it richly deserves the distinction of being Maine's state bird. Listen for its call: *Chickadeedeedee*.

Notice the wonderful native carpets of partridgeberry, goldthread, checkerberry, star flower, clintonia and Canada mayflower. How many varieties of moss and ferns can you spot from this vantage point? Notice too, the large leaves of the Striped Maple, or Moosewood, making it's home here among the evergreens.

Sphagnum Bog

In the muffled solitude of a sphagnum bog a startled squirrel may scold you for trespassing or a hermit thrush may softly be calling *e-olay*. See if you can identify the various plants that like to get their feet wet in the bog. Notice how the cycle of death, decay and rebirth allows nature to constantly alter and adapt this garden. Here and throughout the bog area you will find stands of jack-in-the-pulpit, violets and buttercups. Listen and look around and imagine how this habitat changes with the seasons. Although the brook may be dry in late summer, in spring and fall it supports plants which thrive on moisture and low light. In winter its icy exterior provides a drinking spot for birds and other wildlife. In the summer you might hear the ovenbird calling (*teacher, teacher*) in the forest beyond the boardwalk.

Beyond the Boardwalk... Cordelia's observations took her to every corner of Birdsacre's original 40 acres. Today the sanctuary encompasses 200 acres of woodlands, forest, and meadows. Follow the color-coded map to walk various trails. A site map is available in the small building in the parking lot. Observe birds in the rehabilitation enclosures located in the sanctuary.



- Interrupted Fern, *Osmunda claytoniana*



Pink Lady Slipper, *Cypripedium acaule*