

Thelma Beaubien – Planting a Wildflower Garden for Photography

Thelma Beaubien, an accomplished nature photographer and long-time KWFN member, presented her latest photographic jewels in a stunning presentation. The showcased photographs were both arrestingly beautiful in their composition as well as meticulously perfect in their technique. She also discussed how she converted her standard-issue suburban lawn into highly photogenic wildflower garden.

Thelma's photographic involvements go back many years. She began with film and slides, and her presentations from this era remain classics in their own right. In those days, she made many presentations of her photos set to thoughtfully selected tape-recorded instrumental music, with synchronized mechanical slide projectors equipped to smoothly transition with automatic dissolving.

As high-quality digital technology became available, Thelma immediately recognized the expanded opportunities for her creative urges, and she seized upon the possibilities that high-resolution all-digital photography and cutting-edge professional multimedia software innovations promised. Over the years, she has continually honed her techniques, all the while adding to her impressive portfolio while simultaneously helping to train the next generation of nature photographers.

Thelma's travels have taken her far afield, both to take pictures and to training sessions. The long travels have brought her many unique photo opportunities, and have enabled extensive cross-pollination of many creative talents. In addition to imparting her skills to others, she has taken courses herself in many areas, including not only professional photographic techniques but also computer software applications and advanced horticulture.

Thelma has documented, under her *Journey of Inspiration* audio-visual series, her latest photographic initiative: a nature garden arranged for maximum attractiveness to birds and insects, and for optimized photographic opportunities as well. Thelma resides in a suburban setting on the gently rolling Waterloo Moraine. Her property has good soil, good lighting and good drainage. Her exciting garden adventure was inspired by a presentation by master gardener Anne Morgan.

Thelma began her garden project two years ago, in April 2008. With help from her husband and others, a long-disused basketball net was removed, and the original landscaping of alien plants was removed. Compost mulch was brought in to enrich the soil and tilled in. With the soil preparations complete, planting could begin.

In May 2008, Thelma planted a delightful variety of wildflowers: Pale Purple and Green-headed Coneflower, Northstar Red Canna, Blanket Flower, Cup Plant, Coreopsis, Caradonna Salvia, False Sunflower, Butterfly Weed, Meadow Blazing Star, Red Milkweed, Butterfly Milkweed, and others. She notes that a recent addition, the annual

Verbena Bonariensis, has been the most popular for attracting butterflies. Thelma graciously distributes seeds from her wildflowers.

To date, Thelma has observed 18 species of butterflies and moths in her garden. These include the American Lady, Great Spangled Fritillary, Monarch, Painted Lady, Milbert's Tortoiseshell, Viceroy, Banded Hairstreak, Mourning Cloak, Question Mark, Red Admiral, Tiger Moth, Virginia Ctenucha, Eastern Tiger Swallowtail, Cabbage White Butterfly, and the Hummingbird Clearwing Moth. Thelma has successfully captured photos and videos of these, plus many other winged friends. She shares photos via her website (thelmabeaubien.ca) and videos through YouTube (as [kwegardengirl](#)).

Thelma's audio-visual presentations have been recognized by other photographers through acceptance into the renowned Latow Audio Visual Festival in Burlington. Yet in order to allow more time for other interests, she has chosen to retire from presenting her audiovisual masterpieces. She notes that the experience in giving presentations and meeting people has helped her to become more comfortable speaking in public, and she notes that she has met tremendous numbers of people who share her interests in gardening, conservation, entomology, and ornithology.

Thelma concluded the evening with an especially moving presentation for fellow KWFN members entitled "Grand Passions", a collection of her photos set to music. These wonderful photos she took at a wide variety of unique locations: the Cambridge-based *rare* (Cruickston Park) reserve, the Cheltenham Badlands (Credit Valley), Algonquin Provincial Park, Niagara Falls, Nahanni National Park (Northwest Territories), New Brunswick, and the Florida coastline. Each image married technical brilliance with exquisite artistic merit. The combination of landscape scenery and close-ups of flowers and birds was especially breathtaking.

Heartfelt thanks to Thelma for, once again, treating us to nature photography at its finest.