



A baby snapping turtle.

Photo: Larry Chase

Andover Naturally

Spring Becomes Summer

By Lee Carvalho
Beacon volunteer

Remember all the chirping, croaking, warbling, trilling, and general carrying-on that characterized May and June? That noisy attention-getting behavior has had its consequences, which we see as egg masses in water and egg-filled nests in trees, boxes, and under the eaves. Bird parents are now too busy either incubating eggs or foraging for food to have time for flirtatious songs.

While the woods and fields are quieter now, there's still much to see and hear outside in July. Listen for the red-eyed vireo's almost constant "Here I am... where are you?" song with alternately rising and falling scales and the ovenbird's surprisingly loud "teacher, teacher, teacher" as you walk through or near the woods.

Plants, too, are changing due to fertilization, as a glance at your backyard apple tree will confirm. Two plants that are common along trails in the woods are Clintonia and bunchberry. When fertilized, the delicate yellow lily-like blooms of Clintonia transform into round blue fruits; because of these prominent fruits, Clintonia is sometimes called blue bead lily. (The plant is not named for former president Bill Clinton, but for DeWitt Clinton, botanist and former governor of New York.)

Also, the beautiful four-petaled white bunchberry flowers will soon develop into bright red berries, an important food for birds and edible (but flavorless) for humans. If you wander off the trails, keep an eye out for the orange, funnel-shaped chantarelle mushroom, a delicacy that peaks in July.

In July, milkweed comes into bloom, providing a lovely fragrance along with a source of nectar for butterflies, bees, moths, and wasps. From your car you can spot the cornflower blue of chicory flowers which often grow along roads because of their ability to tolerate poor soil. It's the taproot of this plant that is

ground and used as an additive or substitute for coffee.

If you're driving or walking on a dirt road, you may notice some Eastern tiger swallowtail butterflies 'puddling,' a term for their behavior when they gather on wet soil or dirt roads to take in salt ions. You can recognize these yellow and black butterflies by the four distinctive black stripes on the leading edge of both wings. Another July 'puddler' is the white admiral, black with a white band across both wings.

Fireflies

The birds may have settled into domestic chores, but for fireflies the courting season is now. Few sights are as miraculous as their blinking signals that move over fields as dusk turns into night.

While females rest on grasses and reeds, males fly above them, sending their semaphore in a pattern that is unique for each species. When a female sees a pattern she recognizes, if she's in the mood, she will flash back the same signal... then it's a date! Fireflies, or lightning bugs, are neither flies nor bugs; they are beetles, and, of the over 20 species in New England, most are bioluminescent.

A perfect place for an outdoor adventure in July is Knights Hill Park on County Road in New London. You do not need to be a member to visit, nor is there a fee. The park has a diverse mix of habitats including woods, a pond, and meadows, plus trail maps and signs to help you identify what you see. It's open daily from 10 AM to 5 PM. For directions and a schedule of activities, visit TheOutingClub.net/pages/knightshill.html.

Of course there's plenty to see closer to home. Joanna Sumner counted over 100 lady slippers in bloom along the Rail Trail between Bridge Street and Potter Place. Larry Chase spied a jack-in-the-pulpit by the Rail Trail near Valley Road and observed a young snapping

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Lady's slippers bloom in profusion beside the Rail Trail.

Photo: Larry Chase



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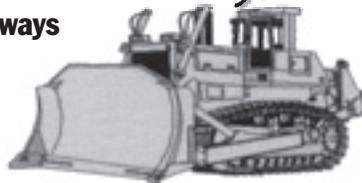
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Wood holds a Masters Degree in Nursing from the University of New Hampshire and a Bachelor's Degree in Nursing from Georgetown University in Washington, DC.

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