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LIVING

A month to be savoured

After the hectic days of May, June ushers in a time of relative calm for those who enjoy observing the natural world. There is still much to be seen, but the pace of change has slowed. It's a little easier now to keep up with all that is



OUR CHANGING SEASONS

Drew Monkman

new. The frenzy of spring bird migration has finally ended and most of our trees have already flowered and come into full leaf. We can now turn our attention to gentler pursuits such as dazzling moths and butterflies and breathtaking orchids

The June sun arcs higher overhead than at any other time of year, giving more than 15 hours of daylight and conveying a sense of unending time.

Hal Borland, the former New York Times nature columnist, spoke of the month as "long, sweet days we bought and paid for with long, cold nights and short, bitter days at the dark turn of the year in December." This is a month to be savoured.

I have tried to provide a list of events that can be observed in your own backyard or neighbourhood. A few may require a short drive or some special searching. The box in front of each date can be used to check off the events that you witness. As for every month of the year, the date is only an approximation, and often dependent on the vagaries of the weather.

□ 1 The annual roadside flower parade begins, with mustards and buttercups blooming first.

□ 2 In downtown Peterborough and Lakefield, chimney swifts are putting on quite a show. Pairs can be seen in courtship flight as they raise their wings and glide in a V position. Swifts nest in colonies inside the walls of old chimneys. Like their swallow cousins, they are in serious decline.

□ 3 Common carp are spawning. They can be seen thrashing at the surface of shallow rivers, bays and backwaters. The fish sometimes jump right out of the water.

□ 4 Dragonflies become quite common. Sometimes, thousands of individuals of the same species will emerge on the same day and fill the air around cottages and along country roads.

□ 5 Mother chipmunks force their young to leave the den and to find their own territories. This dispersal is accompanied by a constant barrage of "chuck-chuck" sounds.

□ 6 Birdsong is at its most diverse. Make a point of getting up and listening to the "dawn chorus," the fervent birdsong that takes place each morning before the sun comes up. Robins usually lead off the show - at least in the city - but a myriad of other species soon joins in.

□ 7 At just about any time this month, adult mayflies emerge from lakes and streams and form large mating swarms. They are most often seen in the evening or early morning.

□ 8 Smallmouth, largemouth and rock bass, along with pumpkinseeds and bluegills, are spawning and can be seen guarding their shallow-water nests.

□ 9 Painted turtles and snapping turtles are often seen along roadsides and other sandy locations laying their eggs. Please slow down in turtle-crossing zones and, if safe, help the reptile across the road.

□ 10 On warm, still nights, giant silk moths are sometimes attracted to white lights. They may be seen flying around the light or sitting on the pole or ground. Watch especially for the cecropia.

□ 11 Serviceberries, also known as Juneberries, are the first shrubs to boast

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Terry Carpenter, special to The Examiner

Baby loons usually hatch in the last week of June. Painted turtles and snapping turtles (below) are often seen along roadsides and other sandy locations laying their eggs.

ripe fruit. Silver maple keys ripen about now, too, and fall to the ground in huge quantities.

□ 12 The gray treefrog chorus of melodious, two-second bursts of bird-like trills reaches its peak.

□ 13 Ox-eye daisies and dames'rocket bloom in fields and along roadsides.

□ 14 Male hummingbirds can be seen doing their pendulum courtship flight, almost as if suspended from a string. They fly in wide arcs above and to both sides of the female.

□ 15 Black cherries and black locusts come into flower. Locust flowers are very aromatic.

□ 16 The green frog's banjo-like "poink" is a widespread sound in wetlands both day and night.

□ 17 The male cones of white and red pines release their pollen. Decks, picnic tables and shorelines look like they've been powdered with a yellow dust.

□ 18 The first monarch butterflies of the new year are usually seen sometime during the first half of June. These are believed to be the "grandchildren" of the monarchs that flew to Mexico last fall.

□ 19 June, through early July, is a critical time for loons. The birds are very vulnerable to disturbance by humans as they attempt to nest and care for their chicks.

□ 20 When the weather is dry enough, usually thanks to drying north winds, the first cut of hay takes place. Unfortunately, this often kills the babies of field-nesting birds such as bobolinks.

□ 21 The summer solstice occurs today at 8:26 a.m. The sun will rise and set farther north than on any other day of the year. At about 1 p.m., it is at its highest point in the sky of the entire year and casts shorter shadows than at any other



time.

□ 22 More than 20 species of orchids bloom this month. Among them is the spectacular showy lady's slipper.

□ 23 The summer stars have arrived. The three stars of the Summer Triangle, Vega, Deneb and Altair, can be seen low in the eastern sky soon after dark.

□ 24 Black bears can sometimes be found in hay fields, grazing on clover and alfalfa.

□ 25 Warm, late June nights are wonderful for firefly watching. The magical flashes of light from the male serve to attract a female. She will respond with

her own luminous signal.

□ 26 Crows and red-winged blackbirds have now finished nesting and reform flocks.

□ 27 Butterfly-watching is usually at its most productive in early summer, since the greatest number of species is aflight at this time. Tiger swallowtails, white admirals and European skippers are particularly noticeable.

□ 28 Baby loons usually hatch in the last week of June or the first week of July.

□ 29 Look high overhead for Arcturus, the star that heralded the arrival of