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LIVING

Long, sweet days

Growth and procreation dominate nature's June agenda



**OUR
CHANGING
SEASONS**

Drew Monkman

In June the world seems brand new. Never in the year is the foliage fresher, the kaleidoscope of greens more vivid and the smells of the natural world more alluring. Early in the month, the air is rich with the compelling perfume of balsam poplar, lilac, cherry and freshly mown grass. Later, the sweet smell of black locust and catalpa blossoms join the fragrance parade.

Growth and procreation dominate nature's agenda. With migration completed, June is the month of peak nesting activity. The warm nights resound with the chorus of love-crazed treefrogs. By day, turtles lay their eggs in sandy banks and roadsides while bass and sunfish spawn in the shallows.

The insect world, too, explodes wide open this month. Damselflies and dragonflies abound and, by month's end, the year's largest variety of butterflies is on the wing. Giant silk moths and fields of fireflies provide entertainment by night.

The annual roadside flower parade kicks off, too, with mustards, buttercups and daisies leading the way. The white blossoms of hawthorns, dogwoods and viburnums are also a welcome site to winter-dreary eyes. Conifers bloom, as well, their pollen dusting land and water.

With more than 15 hours of sunlight, June days seem never-ending. The sun arches overhead higher than at any other time of year. And, as we celebrate the summer solstice on June 21, the sun rises and sets further north than any other day of the year and thereby signals the imperceptible transition into summer. These long, sweet days are to be savoured.

The events listed below represent a June nature almanac for the Kawarthas. However, many of them occur over the entire month and are not restricted to any particular date. Many depend on the vagaries of the weather, as well. The box in front of each entry may be used to check off those events that you witness yourself.

☐ 1 June is the time of peak nesting activity for many bird species but especially for migrants from the tropics. Most songbirds spend about two weeks incubating the eggs and another two weeks feeding the young before they leave the nest.

☐ 2 This is orchid month. Among the species that bloom early in the month are the yellow and the pink lady's slippers. In another two weeks or so, the spectacular showy lady's slipper will also be in flower.

☐ 3 The last migrants pass through in the first week of June. These often include willow and alder flycatchers, Wilson's warbler as well as shorebirds such as the least and semipalmated sandpipers.

☐ 4 Just as tiny spring peepers are winding their chorus down, mighty bullfrogs herald approaching summer with their deep, garrumphing "jug-o-rum" calls.

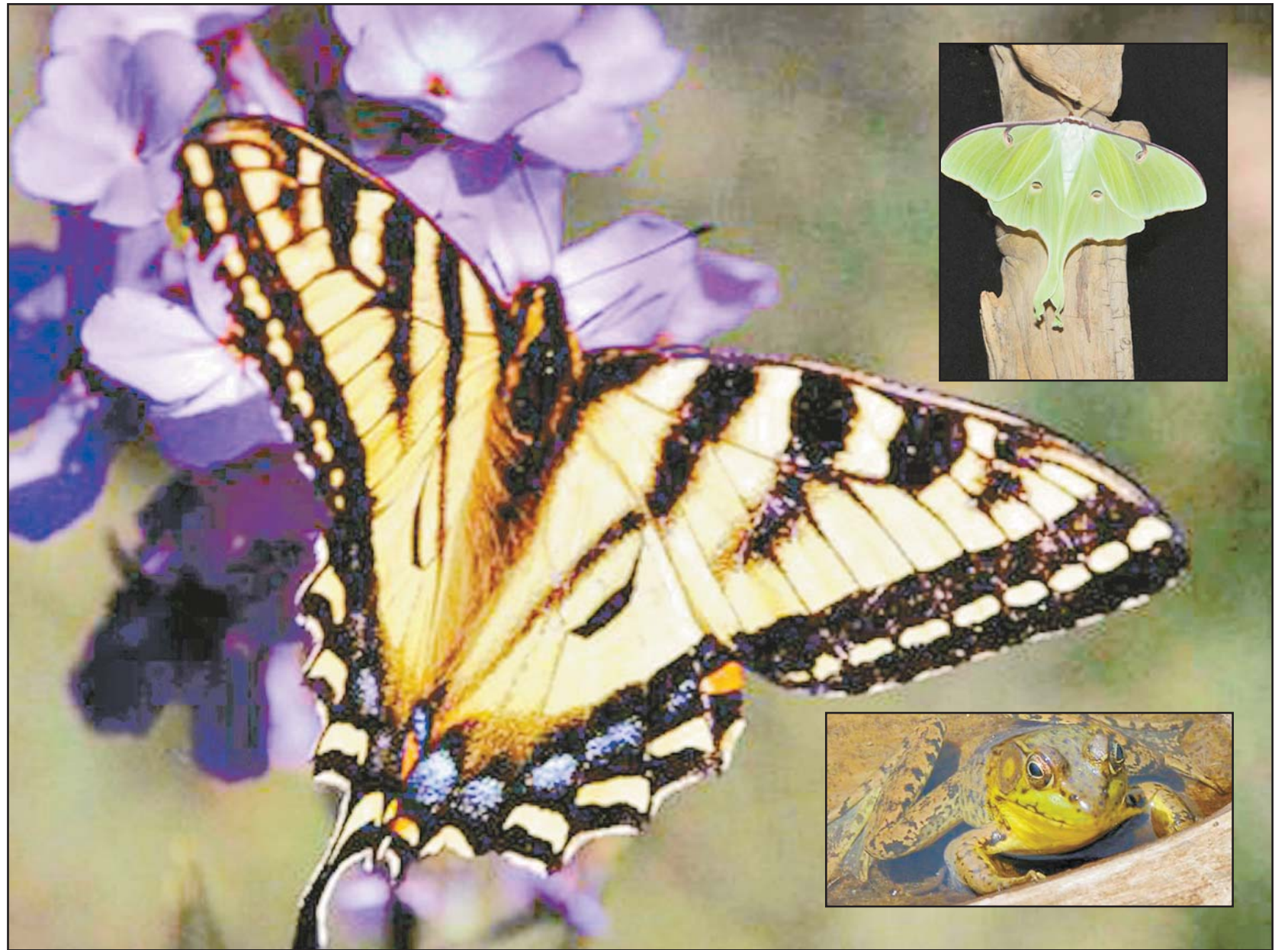
☐ 5 Observing bats can be a fascinating activity on a warm June evening. Let the presence of insects be your guide. Bats forage most heavily starting at dusk and continue for about an hour.

☐ 6 Five-lined skinks, Ontario's only lizard, mate in early June and are therefore more active and visible. Look for them on sunny, bare, bedrock outcroppings with deep cracks such as near the Visitors Centre at Petroglyphs Provincial Park. Skinks are now on the threatened species list.

☐ 7 Osprey eggs usually hatch during the first half of the month. The young are fed constantly by the female with fish supplies provided by the male. The young fledge about 52 days after hatching.

☐ 8 Bass, along with pumpkinseeds and bluegills, are spawning, and the males can be easily seen guarding their shallow-water nests. All of these species provide an excellent opportunity for fish watching.

☐ 9 Watch for turtles laying their eggs in the sandy margins of roadsides and rail-



A Canada tiger swallowtail butterfly (main image) and a green frog (bottom right) photographed by Terry Carpenter. At top right, the luna moth, an increasingly rare silk moth of the Kawarthas, photographed by Tim Dyson.

trails. Remember to slow down when driving through turtle-crossing zones and, if safe, help the reptile across the road. Unfortunately, turtle eggs stand a very poor chance of surviving the 90-day incubation period, since raccoons, skunks or foxes usually devour the eggs within a matter of hours.

☐ 10 A country porch light left on in June may attract a giant silk moth such as the cecropia, polyphemus, promethea, luna, or the small, but spectacular, Io moth. The male silk moths have large, feather-like antennae which are very sensitive to airborne sex attractants called pheromones. This chemical communication system allows a male to find a female at distances of up to several kilometres.

☐ 11 Serviceberries, also known as Juneberries, are the first trees to boast ripe fruit. They therefore attract large numbers of birds like robins and cedar waxwings. Our tree is usually stripped of its berries in a matter of days.

☐ 12 The music of June nights is provided courtesy of the grey treefrog. Listen for its melodious, two-second bursts of bird-like trills. Many cottagers are familiar with treefrogs as the nocturnal visitors that gather around the porch light, their sticky toe-disks allowing them to literally walk up and down walls.

☐ 13 Ox-eye daisy, dame's-rocket, goat's-beard, bladder campion and yellow hawkweed are a few of the many flowers in bloom right now in fields and along roadsides.

☐ 14 Because their fawns are young and vulnerable, female white-tailed deer have a tendency to "rule the woods." The buck's antler growth has now reached the halfway point of development.

☐ 15 Young spring peepers and wood frogs complete the aquatic stage of their development and emerge from ponds. They can often be found in nearby damp, shaded locations

on the forest floor.

☐ 16 Balsam poplars, trembling aspens and various willows release their airborne seeds, which are carried long distances on white, silky hairs. The "fluff" collects on lawns and looks like a mid-June snowstorm has hit.

☐ 17 The male cones of white and red pines release their pollen. Decks, picnic tables and shorelines look as though 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 With more than 15 hours of sunlight, June days seem to never end. The daily mean temperature is almost as warm as in August.

☐ 20 On clear, dark summer nights, the white swath of starlight from the Milky Way is at its most impressive. This is because, in summer, we are facing our galaxy's densely star-studded centre.

☐ 21 The summer solstice occurs today at 2:06 p.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 Common dragonflies of early summer include the green darner, beaverpond basket-tail, dot tailed whiteface, chalk-fronted skimmer and four-spotted skimmer.

☐ 23 Venus outshines all the other stars and planets in the evening sky this month. It is unmistakable, shining like a beacon high in the west. It will soon begin to drop down a little lower each evening, however, before disappearing from view in early August.

☐ 24 Black bears mate from early June to early August, with the peak period between the middle of June and mid-July. In what is

probably a behaviour to show dominance and sexual readiness, bears will bite and claw the bark of trees to a height of almost two metres above the ground. This is the only time of year male and female bears will tolerate each other.

☐ 25 Late June nights are alive with fireflies. Actually a type of beetle, fireflies produce a heatless light in their abdomen by combining a chemical called luciferin with luciferase and oxygen. The male will typically fly low over a meadow and flash his light in a specific pattern, colour and duration. The female then responds with her own luminous signal, usually from the ground, thereby allowing for a nocturnal rendezvous.

☐ 26 Aquatic insects are very active and plentiful, making this a great time of year for pond or creek studies. Lots of interesting critters can be found under the rocks in Jackson Creek.

☐ 27 With bird activity winding down, now is the time to pay more attention to our many species of butterflies. Tiger swallowtails, black swallowtails, white admirals, northern crescents, European skippers and clouded sulphurs are particularly noticeable.

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

☐ 29 The stars of summer have arrived. Vega, Deneb and Altair, which together form the Summer Triangle, can be seen in the eastern sky soon after dark.

☐ 30 The roadside parade of blooming plants now includes common milkweed, viper's-bugloss, white sweet clover, birdsfoot trefoil, chicory and rough cinquefoil.

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