

localnews

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LIVING

Butterflies and pollen flood in

Because of the unprecedented heat in March this year, many events in nature that are typical of June in the Kawarthas began to occur in mid-to-late May. This has been especially true for the blooming dates of plants, many of which flowered two or three weeks earlier than usual. A much warmer than usual winter in the southern U.S. also contributed to the record-early arrival of migratory butterflies such as the red admiral and questionmark. From mid-April through early May, admirals poured into the province in staggering numbers.



Drew Monkman
OUR
CHANGING
SEASONS

Several people emailed me about the "carnage" they witnessed from so many of the black and orange-red insects being struck by cars as they crossed busy highways on their flight northward. One motorist told me that he actually pulled over onto the shoulder and waited a while because he couldn't stand the number of butterflies he was killing!

Monarchs also benefitted from the warm weather and excellent growing conditions for milkweed along their migratory route. They arrived back in the Kawarthas on about May 12, more than two weeks earlier than usual. I am also seeing larger numbers than usual, especially for this time of the year. According to the Journey North website, the abundance of monarchs has been especially noticeable in Manitoba and Saskatchewan.

The following dates and events in nature are my best guess at what to expect this month. However, you may find that some events listed below will have taken place earlier than the date I've suggested.

YELLOW POLLEN CLOUDS

•1 - The yellow dust that has been descending from the sky and covering everything from cars and decks to puddles and shorelines is pollen. In late May and June, most of the pollen is coming from the male flowers (pollen cones) of spruce and pine trees.

•2 - The Kawartha Turtle Trauma Centre (KTTC) is holding a barbecue fundraiser today from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m., at Pet Supply Warehouse, 621 The Parkway in Peterborough. The KTTC is a non-profit, registered charity that operates a hospital for injured wild turtles. Once healed these turtles are released back into their natural habitat. If you have found an injured turtle, call 705-741-5000 or visit the KTTC website at www.kawarthaturtle.org.

•3 - With monarchs back in the area, make sure you have some milkweed in your garden or growing wild on your property.

•4 - As I outlined in my May 24 column, Parliament is pushing through legislation to weaken many of the country's most important environmental protection measures and research projects and to make it more difficult for Canadians to voice their opposition to development that threatens the environment. Today, Canada's major environmental organizations will darken their websites to Speak Out in defence of nature and democracy. To see what you can do personally, go to <http://blackoutspeakout.ca>

•5 - A unique celestial event takes place today, one that won't occur again for 105 years. The planet Venus will



June is also
a special
month
for viewing
planet Venus

RICK STANKIEWICZ photo



DREW MONKMAN photo

Watch for female turtles laying eggs along roadsides. You could drop a steel grate over a nesting turtle (top) to help protect it from harm.



KARL EGESSY photo

The bobolink, an endangered species, nests in hay fields and its babies are often killed when farmers cut hay in the middle of June.

- 18 - Aquatic invertebrates are very active and plentiful, making this a great time of year for pond studies. Try looking on the underside of rocks in streams or sweep a net through the submerged vegetation of a pond or marsh. Many of the species you will find are in the larval stage of their development. A good online identification guide can be found at: bit.ly/ixTol
- 19 - The green frog's banjo-like "poink" is a widespread sound in wetlands both day and night.
- 20 - Today marks the summer solstice. Today, Peterborough receives an amazing 15 hours and 32 minutes of daylight.
- 21 - 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. Keep your cat indoors.
- 22 - Bats give birth to one or two pups in communal maternity roosts consisting mainly of adult females and their young. Given the precarious state of bat populations in Ontario, every effort should be made not to disturb these colonies.
- 23 - The living lights of fireflies appear in late June. A type of beetle, fireflies produce a heatless light in their abdomen by combining a chemical called luciferin with luciferase (an enzyme) and oxygen. The light brings males and females together.
- 24 - St. John's wort is in bloom. Brought to North America from Europe, it got its name because it flowers in June and was traditionally harvested on St. John's Day, June 24. This, of course, coincides with the summer solstice. St. John's wort was thought to be imbued with the power of the sun.
- 25 - 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.
- 26 - Skunks feed primarily on insects in early summer. The digs they make in lawns are sometimes a source of frustration for homeowners.
- 27 - With nesting duties completed, crows and red-winged blackbirds reform flocks.
- 28 - Butterfly-watching is usually at its most productive in early summer since the greatest number of species is flying at this time. White admirals and European skippers are particularly noticeable.
- 29 - Red-backed salamanders lay their eggs in rotten logs. Unlike most salamanders they are completely terrestrial. The eggs are guarded by the adults throughout the summer. The young actually go through the larval stage in the egg and therefore hatch out as miniature adults.
- 30 - With nesting duties completed, some crows and red-winged blackbirds are already beginning to reform flocks.

Drew Monkman is a retired Peterborough teacher and author of *Nature's Year: Changing Seasons in Central and Eastern Ontario*. He can be reached at dmonkman1@cogeco.ca. Visit his website and see past columns at www.drew-monkman.com

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