

# 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

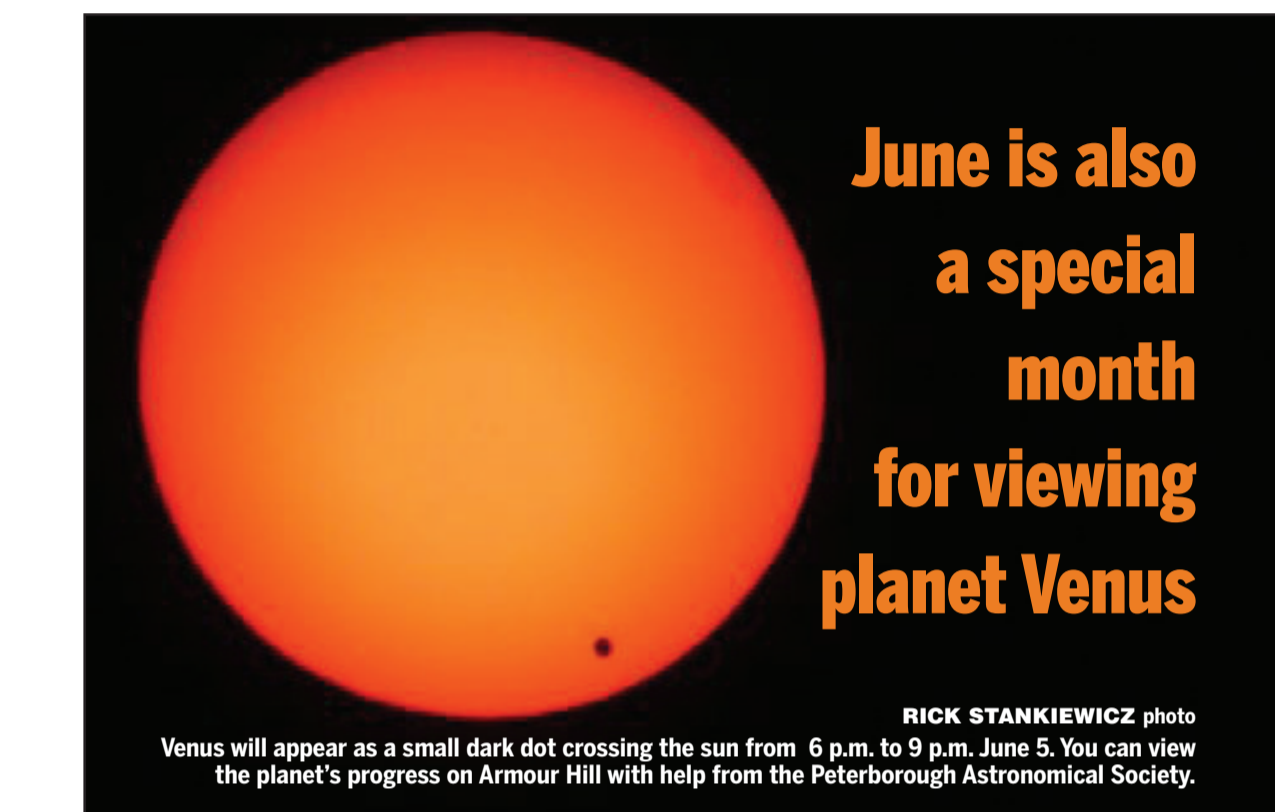
•1 - The yellow dust that has been descending from the sky and covering everything from cars and decks to puddles and shorelines is pollen. In late May and June, most of the pollen is coming from the male flowers (pollen cones) of spruce and pine trees.

•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](http://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

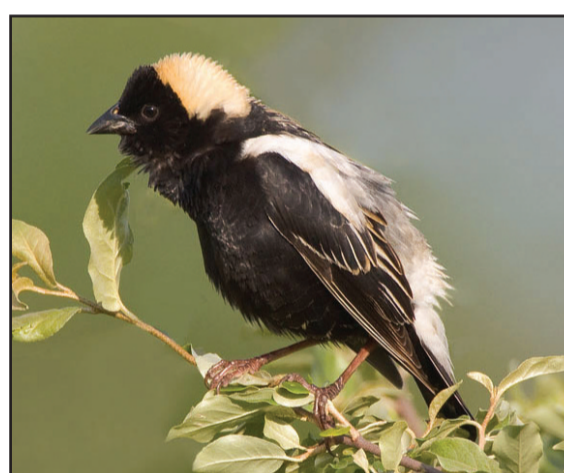
RICK STANKIEWICZ photo

Venus will appear as a small dark dot crossing the sun from 6 p.m. to 9 p.m. June 5. You can view the planet's progress on Armour Hill with help from the Peterborough Astronomical Society.



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 EGRESSY photo

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

cross the face of the sun between approximately 6:04 p.m. and 8:55 p.m. in what is called a "transit." The planet's silhouette will appear like a black dot on the upper part of the sun's surface. Because it is extremely dangerous to look at the sun without proper eye protection, the best way to see the transit is to come out to a free Peterborough Astronomical Association (PAA) event on Armour Hill. A number of safe, solar-filtered telescopes will be set up and members of the PAA will be there to demonstrate and answer questions. After the transit, members of the PAA will remain on the hill until midnight with their telescopes set up to potentially view Mars, Saturn and many other wonders of our night sky. This event is, of course, weather dependent. Check the PAA website at <http://www.peterboroughastronomy.com/>

### BUTTERCUPS POP UP

•6 - The annual roadside flower parade has begun. Plants blooming right now include buttercups, ox-eye daisies, dame's-rocket, goat's-beard, yellow hawkweed, and bladder campion.

•7 - Watch for turtles laying their eggs in the sandy margins of roadsides and rail-trails. Remember to slow down when driving through turtle-crossing zones and, if safe, help the reptile across the road. If you have turtles nesting on your property, consider protecting their eggs from predators by putting a screen

guard over the nest. A flat piece of chicken wire, at least two feet by two feet and attached to the ground with tent stakes or rebar stakes can provide at least temporary protection. It is also possible to relocate nests if necessary. For details on how to build a proper turtle nest cage, go to [bit.ly/Kv1UQT](http://bit.ly/Kv1UQT)

### BIG BUTTERFLY

•8 - The big, mostly yellow butterfly you're seeing is the tiger swallowtail. This species resembles a tiger in its yellow and black colouration and a barn swallow's tail in the shape of the wing extensions.

•9 - Osprey eggs usually hatch during the first half of June. The eggs do not hatch all at once but, instead, the first chick hatches out up to five days before the last one. The older chick dominates its younger siblings, and often eats the lion's share of the food, virtually all of which is provided by the hard-working male. Younger siblings may die if food is scarce.

•10 - Drooping clusters of aromatic, white blossoms hang from nearly every twig of black locust trees for a week or so this month. The blossoms attract bees by the thousands.

•11 - Serviceberries, also known as Juneberries, are the first shrubs to boast ripe fruit. The berries are a great favourite of birds such as robins.

•12 - When the weather is dry enough, the first cut of hay will take place. Unfortunately, this often results

in the deaths of baby birds such as northern harriers and bobolinks that nest in hay fields. The bobolink is now listed as a threatened species in Ontario. Its population has declined 88% since the 1960s. According to Bird Studies Canada, bobolinks nesting in hay fields would see their nesting success increase from near zero% to 80% or more if farmers delayed cutting their hay until the end of the first week of July

•13 - The spectacular white and pink showy lady's slipper orchid should be blooming.

### SWIFTS PUT ON A SHOW

•14 - In the downtown core of Peterborough, chimney swifts are putting on quite a show this month. Pairs can be seen and heard in courtship flight as they raise their wings and glide in a V position. I often see and hear them over the terrace at the Silver Bean Café. To see swifts in flight, go to: [bit.ly/JvaeLL](http://bit.ly/JvaeLL)

•15 - The bullfrog's call is a signature sound of May. Their deep, garrumphing "jug-o-rum" calls are produced by males as they defend a small territory. The males will sometimes physically fight each other to defend their piece of real estate - or take someone else's!

•16 - Common elderberries, along with cattails, bloom along wetland edges.

•17 - That frothy spit you see on the stems of grasses and flowers in June fields is produced by the nymph (immature form) of a small insect living on the stem - the spittlebug or froghopper.

•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](http://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.

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•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.

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