

September

Nature Through the Seasons

By: Dan Bertsch, Chief Naturalist

One of the many things that fascinates me about nature is the predictability of seasonally-occurring natural events like bird migration, flowering, and the calling of frogs. Nature Through the Seasons is based on observations recorded over the past nine years in Medina County.

First Week

Birds

Fall migration is evident with flocks of robins from Canada moving through our area. Chimney swifts can be seen hawking insects over our lakes and wetlands. Most male hummingbirds have left for Central America. Last females leave about a week later.

Exposed mudflats at Buckeye Woods wetlands host killdeers and many species of sandpipers including greater and lesser yellowlegs, least sandpipers, and semipalmated sandpipers. It is entertaining to watch them probe the mud searching for invertebrates.

Wildflowers

September is the golden month with fields bright yellow with goldenrod. Interspersed with the goldenrod are the intense purple flowers of New England aster and the numerous small white flowers of the heath aster.

Shrubs

The berries of several shrubs including many dogwoods, northern arrow-wood, and chokeberry become ripe. Robins and other migrating birds fuel up on this bounty for their trip south.



Lesser yellowleg sandpiper

Second Week

Birds

Migrating warblers pass through our woodlands this month in their confusing fall colors. Having lost their breeding plumage together with not singing during fall migration presents a challenge for identification.

Amphibians

Listen for the spring peepers vocalizing on warm days through November. Since they are not calling to attract a mate, some biologists believe they are the first year males practicing their skills for the following spring.

Insects

The greatest concentration of monarch butterflies migrate south for Mexico during this week. The park district annually hosts Monarch Madness on the second Saturday of the month.



Monarch butterfly

Third Week

Birds

Large flocks of grackles can be intimidating as they may gather in flocks numbering in the thousands preparing for migration.

Wildflowers

This is the time to enjoy the last wildflower display of the season as the golden yellow tickseed sunflowers join the goldenrods and purple, blue, and white asters. The best area for viewing is Wolf Creek and Buckeye Woods wetland trail.

Trees, Shrubs and Vines

The cranberry and burgundy color of poison ivy and Virginia creeper vines stands out against the backdrop of green. A few trees and shrubs are also beginning to add color to the landscape including red maple, white ash and sumac.

As wild grapes are ripening, they are consumed by several bird and mammal species.

Squirrels are consuming hickory nuts and black walnuts as they fall along forest trails.

Fourth Week

Birds

Hermit thrushes and Swainson's thrushes migrate through our woodlands during this time. Also, look for flocks of red-breasted nuthatches in pine woodlands.

Insects - Female praying mantis will be forming their egg cases on stems of weeds or shrubs.



Praying mantis