



# The Ferrum Nature Society Bulletin

*Dedicated to the appreciation and conservation of our natural world*

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## Nature's Events:

**Fireflies** - The summer "lightning bugs" have been active since late May. There are several species flashing in our area with more enthusiasm this month.

**Before it rains** - Listen for the voices of the gray tree frog and the yellow-billed cuckoo (the "rain crow") that may announce an increase in humidity that precedes summer thunderstorms.

**Summer wildflower favorites** - butterflyweed and queen anne's lace begin to bloom this month among a myriad of other species that are much appreciated by butterflies and other nectar seekers.

## Sky calendar:

**Full moon** - June 11th—Known as the Hay Moon.

**Planets** - Look for Saturn and Mars low in the West this month. Jupiter is high in the sky and close to the moon. Venus is a morning star at this time and is brightest towards the end of the month.

**Summer Solstice** - The beginning of summer starts at 8:26 AM on June 21.

**Constellations**—The summer triangle begins to take an overhead position.

## Franklin County Bird Count Results – April 23, 2006

**1445 birds, 96 species**

Double-crested cormorant	5
Great Blue Heron	2
Green heron	1
Black Vulture	10
Turkey Vulture	48
Canada Goose	15
Wood Duck	2
Mallard	11
Osprey	18
American Kestrel	1
Northern Harrier	1
Cooper's Hawk	2
Sharp-shinned Hawk	3
Broad-winged Hawk	10
Red-tailed Hawk	6
Wild Turkey	4
Killdeer	2
Solitary Sandpiper	1
Spotted Sandpiper	2
American Woodcock	1
Rock Pigeon	11
Barred Owl	1
Mourning Dove	30
Whippoorwill	3
Chimney Swift	13
Ruby-throated Hummingbird	3
Belted Kingfisher	5
Red-bellied Woodpecker	15
Downy Woodpecker	16
Hairy Woodpecker	4
Pileated Woodpecker	11
Eastern Phoebe	23
Acadian Flycatcher	4
Great Crested Flycatcher	1
Eastern Kingbird	3
Yellow-throated Vireo	10
Blue-headed Vireo	11
Red-eyed Vireo	69
Blue Jay	77
American Crow	64
Northern Cardinal	69
Indigo Bunting	9
Blue Grosbeak	2
Purple Finch	1
American Goldfinch	135
Pine Siskin	1
House Sparrow	3
Common Raven	3
Tree Swallow	7
Northern Rough-winged Swallow	6
Barn Swallow	9

Indigo bunting caught during misting on Franklin County Bird Day



Carolina Chickadee	28
Tufted Titmouse	35
White-breasted Nuthatch	10
Carolina Wren	38
House Wren	1
Ruby-crowned Kinglet	3
Blue-gray Gnatcatcher	23
Eastern Bluebird	39
Wood Thrush	22
American Robin	19
Gray Catbird	1
Northern Mockingbird	4
Brown Thrasher	10
Starling	18
Cedar Waxwing	7
Northern Parula	1
Yellow Warbler	1
Black-throated Green	1
Yellow-rumped Warbler	31
Pine Warbler	11
Palm Warbler	1
Prairie Warbler	2
Black-and-White Warbler	7
Cerulean Warbler	10
American Redstart	11
Worm-eating Warbler	1
Ovenbird	31
Louisiana Waterthrush	9
Kentucky Warbler	3
Hooded Warbler	29
Yellow-breasted Chat	1
Scarlet Tanager	8
Rufous-sided Towhee	38
Chipping Sparrow	45
Field Sparrow	8
Song Sparrow	26
Grasshopper Sparrow	4
White-throated Sparrow	50
Red-winged Blackbird	24
Eastern Meadowlark	14
Common Grackle	20
Brown-headed Cowbird	15
Orchard Oriole	2
Baltimore Oriole	2
House Finch	13

## Copperhead summer

Carlton Hughes

The Northern Copperhead snake is a venomous snake, but is not highly dangerous to people. This surprisingly common snake has a very stocky build and it is named for its coppery red and brown color. The body is marked with about 15 to 19 mahogany lateral bands with darker edges that are wide on the sides and narrow on the back. Young copperheads can be identified easily because they are lighter in color and they have a yellow-tipped tail. The adult body length for a Northern Copperhead ranges from 24-36 inches. Their body length at birth ranges from 8 to 10 inches. There are two breeding seasons for this species. One breeding period is from August to October and the second is from February to April. Copperheads usually have 3 to 10 live young per year. Males will mate with more than one female, but females will mate only once every other year. Northern Copperheads have a large appetite and eat a variety of different foods including small rodents, small birds, insects, lizards, and frogs.



The overall range for the Northern Copperhead covers the eastern United States from southern New England westward through Ohio and Indiana and South to the Gulf Coast. The Northern Copperhead snake is closely related to the Eastern Cottonmouth snake which is also venomous, but has a more restricted range in the wetlands of the Atlantic and Gulf Coastal plains.

In our area, the Northern Copperhead is found primarily in rocky, dry, and well-forested areas dominated by oaks and hickories. This snake is most active at night when it is very warm and moist. The best place to find copperheads is under logs, in cracks of foundations, and under rocks. Northern Copperheads are very secretive and are more likely to defend themselves at night. Watch you step!

**The Ferrum Nature Trail was recently designated an official birding and wildlife trail by the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries.**



## A trailing, climbing vine to avoid

Nancy Overton

Poison ivy is a highly variable perennial woody vine or shrub that is native to North America and Asia and is a member of the Cashew or Sumac family. The stems are woody, brown and smooth although the older stems of climbing plants develop a very hairy appearance. The root is reddish and branching. The leaves are rather large and are three-parted. They may grow upright in a shrub form, which can reach 7 feet in height, or they may grow as a vine, up to 5 inches, climbing trees and fences. The three leaflets, around 2" to 4" in length, may be shiny or not, are generally wavy edged. In late spring to early summer, the flowers appear in loose clusters from the leaf axils. The flowers have five petals, are about 1/8" diameter, and are off-white with a yellowish tinge. The leaves fall once temperatures drop below freezing, while the fruits remain on the plants through the winter.

Poison ivy prefers rich soil with good drainage and plenty of water. It is particularly common around lakes, swamps and rivers. It will grow perfectly well, however, in a wide variety of habitats. It is common along roadsides and trains, in thickets, in open woods and in old fields. New poison ivy shoots from existing roots, from rhizomes (underground stems), from climbing vines and from seed.

The thing that makes poison ivy so famous is the presence of a pale yellow oil called urushiol. This oil is present within all parts of the plant, but is not found on the surface unless the plant is damaged or bruised. Urushiol can take many years to break down and is present in dead plants. It is sticky and easily transferred to anything that touches it. It is a stable compound, so once it is on something like your clothes, tools or pets, at least some of it will stay there for quite a while until it is washed off. When poison ivy is burned, the urushiol is carried on particles of soot and dust in the smoke.

The average person does not have a reaction the first time they are exposed and, if they do, it usually is delayed by seven to ten days. It takes some time for your body to produce the appropriate T-cells. Sensitivity varies among individuals and usually decreases with age.

The best way to avoid getting poison ivy is to not get urushiol on you skin. Know what the plant looks like and avoid it. If you cannot avoid it,



Poison Ivy—Ferrum Nature Trail

wear protective clothing. Never burn poison ivy because you can make contact with urushiol through the smoke.

Poison ivy fruits are an important food source for a variety of birds (who also spread the seeds) and also for other wildlife including deer. Goats quite like poison ivy and is an effective means of controlling it.

The nonselective herbicide glyphosate can be used to control/kill poison ivy. It is a systemic herbicide; therefore, use it with caution, as it will kill everything it contacts. Treatments should be made in late summer or early fall, when the plant is storing carbohydrates in the root systems.