



The Ferrum Nature Society Bulletin

Dedicated to the appreciation and conservation of our natural world

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Nature's Events:

Scatterhoarding — small mammals, such as the eastern gray squirrel, southern flying squirrel, and the eastern chipmunk, will be busy caching acorns and hickory nuts for the winter

Autumn leaf color — normally hits its peak in the middle of this month.



First frost—normally occurs on October 5 in our area

Sky calendar:

Full moon - October 6 - called the "harvest moon" - the full moon closest to the Autumn equinox

Saturn - occurs near the moon around dawn

Orionid meteor shower - October 20-21. Expect a meteor every few minutes.

Invasion of the Eurasian Collared Dove—Todd Fredericksen



While chatting in the parking lot of the Burnt Chimney Elementary School, Clyde Kessler points to some power lines across the road and identifies the first two records or the Eurasian Collared-Dove (*Streptopelia decaocto*). Clyde had seen numerous birds in the New River Valley last year. Since its establishment in Florida from the Bahamas in the late 1970s, the species has quickly spread throughout the southeastern U.S. It also has colonized California, Illinois, the British Isles, and parts of Scandinavia.

The Eurasian collared-dove is native to India and looks similar to the ringed turtle-dove (*Streptopelia risoria*). It is a grayish bird with a cinnamon hue along its back and a characteristic dark collar on the back of its neck that does not extend forward to the throat. The species is mostly a seed-eater and forages mostly on the ground, but it will also feed occasionally on fruit or green vegetation. Its song is a "koo-koo-kuk", but also has a harsh "kreeeuw" flight sound.

While found in urban areas, the Eurasian collared-dove has also become established in parks and rural areas. The potential effect of the spread of this species on our native mourning dove (*Zenaidura macroura*) or the ubiquitous naturalized rock dove (pigeon) (*Columba livia*) has yet to be determined. It may become an agricultural pest.

Birds not our only migrants -

Nell Fredericksen



Most of us are aware that birds fly south for the winter, but there is another spectacular winged migration reaching its peak this month—that of the monarch butterfly (*Danaus plexippus*)

Every fall, by instinct alone, monarchs make their way from North America to Mexico, moving to their warmer wintering grounds before temperatures drop below 55F (the temperature at which they are no longer able to fly). The peak of migration through our area this year is estimated to be around October 6th.

The group Monarch Watch has been tagging and monitoring monarch migration since 1994 and through the help of many volunteers, thousands of butterflies are tagged each year. This data has allowed the identification of major migration routes, distances traveled (up to 3000 miles in some cases) and wintering grounds. Monarchs west of the Rockies congregate in Southern California and roost in Eucalyptus trees.

Those to the east of the Rockies travel south and west over Texas and down into Mexico where they roost in mountainous oyamel fir forests at an altitude of over 3000 feet above sea level. Monarchs do not feed while wintering so they select cool climates, but not freezing, which slows their metabolism and conserves fat reserves needed for the long journey back to summer homes in the spring.

Once reaching their summer homes monarchs breed, lay eggs and die. The future fall migrations will be done by the next generations.

The Red Fox (*Vulpes vulpes*)

- Corey Basham



The Red Fox (*Vulpes vulpes*) is a member of the canine family. With the largest distribution of any terrestrial carnivore, it can be found just about everywhere in the world including the outback of Australia, the mountains of Japan and of course, the United States. Originally a European species, the Red Fox was distributed throughout the world during the 1700s due to their value as a game species. These animals can exist in environments as harsh and unforgiving as a desert or even urban areas. The Red Fox is the most popular of the foxes due to their aesthetically pleasing characteristics, such as flashy colors and proportional morphology, and cunning behavior due to highly developed hearing and eye sight. "Sly as a Fox" and "foxy" are two phrases in common usage representing these traits.

Red Foxes are typically a "rusty," red color but yellowish and even silver phases are common in different parts of the world. A population of silver fox was domesticated to the point of human companionship in Siberia through an experiment to determine domestication in wild animals. Foxes of this species usually reach an adult size of approximately 6-15 pounds. An adult fox is capable of speeds of

up to 45 miles per hour.

Just about anything smaller than and including an adult rabbit is on the fox's menu including rats, mice, small birds, and even small reptiles. Foxes will forage on grasses, berries, and other soft mass and herbage. Hunting and other activities occur during the day or night, depending on the circumstances. If a fox finds too much competition and disturbance from humans during the day they will emerge during the evening and night time.

Red Foxes breed during the early months of the year after a fall and winter of being solitary and fending for themselves. Typically a female fox will find a burrow abandoned by another species of animal and claim as their own. A new burrow can be dug; when this occurs, a sandy/loose soil is chosen on a southern facing slope. These new burrows are dug to a depth of approximately 4 feet. They are considered monogamous, though they have been observed practicing polygamy in some populations. It is not determined whether males and females reproduce together in subsequent years. Kits, as the young foxes are called, are born after 2 months of gestation and typically weigh around on third of a pound. A litter of kits usually consists of 5-6 individuals, but can be as high as 13. The kits will disperse during the fall of their first year to claim their own territories.

Interesting sightings around Ferrum

Eastern Narrow-mouthed Toad
Gastrophryne carolinensis



This Eastern Narrow-mouthed Toad is the first recorded capture of this species in Franklin County. It was captured in pitfall traps near Chapman Pond on September 13. Normally, this wartless toad species is restricted to the Coastal Plain and lower Piedmont..

Photo by Nell Fredericksen.

Melanistic Fox Squirrel
Sciurus niger



Normally, fox squirrels are brownish-orange in color. Occasionally, however, black-colored (melanistic) forms occur in our area. The squirrel in the photo above was observed in late September in the white pines near the commuter parking lot.. Photo by Katherine Anderson.