



## ELOISE BUTLER WILDFLOWER GARDEN AND BIRD SANCTUARY WEEKLY GARDEN HIGHLIGHTS

Phenology\* notes for the week of June 27<sup>th</sup> to July 6<sup>th</sup>, 2018

June ended humid and hot, including one 95 degree day, but the first week of July brought rain and cooler breezes. Mosquito activity almost seems like part of the weather now, with the woods partly cloudy with wings. Naturalists watched a painted turtle lay its eggs in the upland meadow, in the same location as last year, but its nest was promptly raided the next morning, probably by a fox.

The upland meadow continues to burst into bloom. New pink and purple flowers include purple coneflower or Echinacea, famous for its antiviral properties, bee balm and purple bergamot, whose leaves smell like oregano, common milkweed hosting monarch caterpillars, heal-all, showy and pointed-leaved ticktrefoil, figwort, tall American bellflower, and creeping bellflower, a European arrival that spreads aggressively through yards and alleys. Orange flowers include butterfly milkweed, wood lily, Canada lily, and the tall, graceful Michigan and turk's cap lilies. The season of yellow composites is beginning, adding stiff coreopsis and Jerusalem artichoke this week. To tell the latter from other sunflowers, try smelling the center: it smells distinctly like Hershey's chocolate. Whites include wild quinine, glade mallow, Canada milk vetch, soapwort, white vervain, white prairie clover, and Culver's root, waving like fairy wands throughout the meadow. In the woodland, motherwort is blooming, and the white pom poms of the buttonbush have appeared in the wetland.

Many birds are fledging their nests around the Garden. Naturalist Tammy Mercer writes: "Listen for frantic begging sounds and look for young birds still learning to use their wings to fly and feet to perch. As their flying improves, they chase their parents around making lots of racket." Black-capped chickadee and great-crested flycatcher fledglings have been seen testing their wings this week. A family of wood ducks was spotted in the ponds north of the Garden. Birds seen and heard in the woodland this week include the scarlet tanager, red-eyed vireo, catbird, blue jay, cardinal, and downy, hairy, and red-bellied woodpeckers. The indigo bunting sings daily in the upland meadow. Near Great Medicine Spring, Saturday birders noted Northern flicker, cedar waxwing, Eastern wood pewee, mourning dove, swamp sparrow, and ruby-throated hummingbird. At Wirth Lake, they heard the Orchard oriole, Baltimore oriole, and warbling vireo. A great blue heron flew overhead.

The well at Great Medicine Spring was capped this week, 18 years after the Friends of the Wildflower Garden attempted to restore a flow of water at this historic site. Although this particular spring was documented as a place where Dakota leader Mahpiya Wicasta (Cloud Man) and others would travel from miles away, archaeologists Eva and Michelle Terrell note that all springs are considered sacred to the Dakota people: "Springs are held by Dakota people to have significance beyond being a place where water can be found. ... Because spring water renews itself, it is considered to have the ability to renew the user and hence it has healing properties. For this reason, and its purity, springs are the traditional source of water for medicine and ceremonies." Spring water in this area contains calcium and magnesium from the limestone bedrock, and settlers of Minneapolis also came to gather water for a hundred years. The flow gradually decreased and finally stopped in 1989 during the construction of I-394. In order to keep the highway corridor dry, a process called "permanent dewatering" removes 2.5 million gallons of water per day into the Mississippi river. Seeking to restore the spring, the Friends funded a well at the site, but the flow and water quality never recovered. Capping the well will prevent pollutants from entering the groundwater, but the event marks the inability of our efforts to correct human impacts on a place important to so many communities. As naturalist Wes Nugteren writes about Great Medicine, "the scars wrought by nature will heal, but sometimes the misdeeds of humans last forever." May we stand up to protect the future of our land and water as we remember Great Medicine Spring.

*\*Phenology: The study of periodic biological phenomena such as flowering, breeding and migration especially as related to climate.*

Prepared by Naturalist Kyla, with birding notes by Phoebe

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