

Minnesota Now (MPR) | Minnesota Now - John Latimer 01G9FXFF91FM72CVBZR7M66YSW

KATHY WURZER: It's a jungle out there. Literally in some places. Blooming plants are living it up. Animal parents across the region teaching their young how to do what they do. Here they'll look at what's happening in nature across Minnesota, as John Latimer up in Grand Rapids. John is a phenologist, a person who observes the changes in nature through the seasons. Always a pleasure, my friend. Welcome back, John.

JOHN LATIMER: Hey Kathy. Good to hear from you. Yeah, and you're right, it is a jungle out there.

[LAUGHS]

I just came in from a hike with some folks, and yeah, it's-- boy, every available space has got a plant growing in it.

KATHY This is why we love Minnesota in the summer though, you know.

WURZER:

JOHN LATIMER: Yeah.

KATHY I have to say, driving along various roadways and back roads, yellow seems to be the color of the day. A lot of

WURZER: yellow out there. A lot of, I don't know if it's tansy I'm seeing or other plants.

JOHN LATIMER: Yeah. You probably are seeing tansy. It's plentiful. Dark green foliage and those clusters of sort of, I think of them, because I guess I'm an oldster, but they're like about the size of an aspirin tablet, only they're bright yellow. And the individual flowers, there might be throw of them in a clump at the top. And so yeah, that is tansy. And kind of an invasive. If I get a chance, I try to at least make its life difficult in my yard. [LAUGHS] But it's a losing battle with tansy. It's a pretty successful plant.

KATHY I'm always pulling it when I met my mom's house in Knife River. Always.

WURZER:

JOHN LATIMER: [LAUGHS] Yeah. And you will always be pulling it.

KATHY Oh, great. John. thanks. What other kinds of flowers are you seeing right now?

WURZER:

JOHN LATIMER: Well, you're speaking about the yellows, and, of course, the Black-eyed Susans which are pretty easy. Got that dark center and the big yellow orange rays. Then there's a really tall one which most people just need to know that it's a sunflower. And woodland sunflower seems to be the operating number, but technically, it is, at least the ones that I see up here in Grand Rapids, are sawtooth sunflower.

Just another variety of the many sunflowers that grow out there. That one is really tall and kind of dominating. And goldenrod are beginning to bloom, especially the taller ones. We've had all three weeks of the early goldenrod, which is the-- it's probably about two to three feet tall and grows in big packs. Big groups. But easily recognized as goldenrod.

Now, the Canada goldenrod has begun to bloom. And that's a much taller plant. That can be four or five feet tall. Sometimes I'm looking eye to eye with the Canada goldenrod when it's in bloom. It's got a big plummy head which is like early goldenrod kind of identifiable in the goldenrod group.

It's a kind of a one sided sort of a sticking out clump of flowers. And they go in all directions, but they sort of, I don't know, they're sort of like a, think of a splash of paint maybe. The paintbrush. Starts off thick and trails off toward the end. Canada goldenrod. And another more easily-- Canada goldenrod is-- it has a lot of competitors that look a lot like it. Splendid goldenrod and several others that can be easily mistaken for it. But Canada goldenrod is probably the most prevalent.

And then there's a little one called gray goldenrod, which is one of the easy ones to learn because the flower heads are tight. Think of a big finger, like five or six or seven inches long and maybe an inch and a half thick. And sort of slightly bent. And that's the flower structure on the gray goldenrod. And it's at the top of the plant, you'll see many of these sort of slightly bent thick fingers of yellow flowers. And that one is blooming right now too.

KATHY Great.

WURZER:

JOHN LATIMER: And this is certainly the season, as you mentioned, for yellow. And for the goldenrods, this is kind of their time. They're going to be blooming now until probably into October. So we'll be looking at those.

KATHY Say, what about animal babies? Noticed a lot of fawns obviously, but also some turkey poults running around?

WURZER:

JOHN LATIMER: Yep. Lots of poults. At my bird feeder, I've got quite a group of rose breasted gross beaks, males and females. Now young coming to the feeder. Looking a little sleeker than their mom and dad and kind of the same color as the mom, sort of brown. That brown eyeliner and whatnot. But the males will rapidly begin to develop the black and white and red breast of the rose breasted gross beak. But they're going to be moving out soon.

And the other one that's really noticeable, for the last three weeks or so, the hummingbird feeders have seen a little activity in the morning and a little activity in the evening. And during the day not much, because mom was out busy gathering worms-- well, ants and spiders and other forms of protein to feed to her babies. Now the babies are fledged and they're coming to the feeders, and I'm having to fill my feeders

KATHY Yes.

WURZER:

JOHN LATIMER: Every day.

KATHY I've heard that.

WURZER:

[INTERPOSING VOICES]

I've heard that from other people. Say before you go, I know you're working with teachers and young folks in classrooms and camps around Minnesota. We have a phenology report I really want to get it in from some day campers at the Outdoor Adventures Camp at Long Lake Conservation Center.

ADELINE: Hi. I'm Adeline.

FINN: I'm Finn.

CHLOE: I'm Chloe.

CLAIRE: And I'm Claire.

SAM: And I'm Sam. During our weekend Outdoor Explorers Camp at Long Lake Conservation Center, we experience the peak of summer with life bursting everywhere. We even hand fed deer flies to the dragonflies.

SPEAKER 1: The loon chick is alive and growing. It's nearly double its size. We nearly had a loon fight. What we suspected was a young male landed on a lake causing a huge ruckus with the mom and dad. It looked like an invader male was going to challenge the resident male for its territory. They both puffed up their chest and did a lot of loud calling. The invader thought better of it and flew away.

SPEAKER 2: The otters were out about it and playing. Good news, Long Lake now has three otters. Congratulations mama and papa otter.

SPEAKER 3: All of us ate honey straight out of the hive. Very sweet. Speaking of eating, we found a feast of plenty of wild berries and raspberries on the way to the bog.

SPEAKER 4: It's a great time to explore the world, and we want to remind everyone to unplug, to get outside, and to--

ALL: --live connected.

KATHY I love the loon fight by the way. That's a good one, John.

WURZER:

JOHN LATIMER: Oh, that was. Those kids are so sharp. They had so many good notes in that little report. Just really covered the details, which was very nice to hear.

KATHY Now, of course--

WURZER:

JOHN LATIMER: I have--

KATHY Go ahead.

WURZER:

JOHN LATIMER: A couple of things really quickly, if I may. One, if you are thinking about gathering hazelnuts, you better get after them. Because I noticed yesterday that the squirrels had begun to eat the hazelnuts in my yard and the black bears are eating the hazelnuts that my friend Dallas Hudson's over in Akeley. And boy, once the hazelnuts reach a certain stage of ripeness, they disappear in a week. And I would say if you're thinking of gathering hazelnuts, by this weekend it'll be too late.

KATHY All right. Got to run, John. Thank you so much. Have a great rest of the day.

WURZER:

JOHN LATIMER: You too, Kathy. Thanks for the time. Bye bye.

KATHY See you later. John Latimer is a retired postal worker, a full time phenologist. He's got a regular show in KAXE,

WURZER: Grand Rapids Community Radio. You can catch that on air or online at kaxe.org.