

## Savor the Joys of July



It's midsummer, a perfect time to step outside and glory in the lush beauty of your summer garden in its heyday. July's hot and humid weather is telling us to slow down and take it easier.

In April and May we worked tirelessly to buy and plant native species for our garden beds, hoping the native pollinators and wildlife would visit us and stay awhile. It's time now to admire the fruits of our labor.

Clumsy bumble bees hover over white and purple clover blossoms. Purple coneflowers offer a splash of color where leafcutter bees, monarch butterflies, and even hummingbird moths often stop by. Hummingbirds, seemingly suspended in space, hover briefly at the tall scarlet beebalm, sipping life-giving nectar from deep inside

those spiky-petaled blooms. A garden toad has taken up residence near the rock pile and we can imagine him burrowing under the damp leaves of the compost pile as he searches for his juicy worm dinner. All this while a fat caterpillar on an oak leaf makes a tasty meal for an appreciative chickadee.

July is all about nature's abundance and the ripening of fruit into seeds. It's about milkweed coming into bloom with both the butterfly and common variety offering fragrant flowers to entice pollinators. Bright orange butterfly milkweed thrives in the garden while plenty of fat pink flowers dangle from tall native milkweed grow wild at the garden edges and in the meadow. Step close to a patch and listen to the happy drone of bumble bees working over the blossoms, while a fritillary butterfly joins the party and visits each flower in turn. Next up is a giant swallowtail that swoops down and chases everyone else away.

Early arriving monarch butterflies make their annual northward migration in successive generations, stopping by for a quick nectar recharge. We hope to see many of these iconic butterflies before they leave Newtown in mid-to-late September.

Although most of our familiar garden birds have quieted down by mid-July, you can count on the cardinal to keep on singing his merry tune and the perky house wren to burble loudly while hiding deep within the green canopy of the oak where his nest box hangs. He's almost impossible to spot behind all that foliage but we're cheered by his lively presence knowing he'll polish off hundreds of flies and mosquitoes while feeding himself, his mate, and his youngsters. There's no ignoring the insect horde in July because they are everywhere and they like nothing better than a hot day to go about the business of survival. Crickets chirp incessantly from nearby secret hideouts and dragonflies soar as they clatter noisily winging on their zigzagging path while pursuing tiny insect dinners.

In July the living is easy and time seems to stand still. Nevertheless, do take time to enjoy all this richness of species in your own yard, as Nature is on the move and autumn is waiting in the wings.

*In celebration of July, when most blooms and pollinators are at their peak, we would like to invite our readers to participate in a pollinator photo contest. Three age categories: 5-12; 13-18 and 19 and older. Entries should be a clear photo of a pollinator in its natural habitat. File format should be JPG, minimum of 1,000 pixels (150 DPI). Limit two entries per individual to be sent to [propollinators@gmail.org](mailto:propollinators@gmail.org) no later than Monday August 5<sup>th</sup>. Entries will be judged by a panel from Protect Our Pollinators and the winning photos will be published in The Bee. Additionally, the winning photographers will be eligible for a free native plant during our native plant sale at the C.H. Booth library September 7<sup>th</sup>.*