

Review -- First Week of April, 2020

Bloodroot. I saw the first blooms in our woods on April 6. I have not seen them yet down by the Hop River, but soon they will bloom along the walking trail and along some roadsides in town.



Bloodroot (*Sanguinaria canadensis*), April 6, 2020

In my records for Andover, which go back to the spring of 1990, the first bloodroot blooms have appeared as early as April 2 (2010) and as late as April 23 (2011). This year is one of the earliest.

Ramps. These members of the onion family are poking out leaves along wet trails along the Hop River and in my own back yard.



Ramps (*Allium tricoccum*), April 6, 2020

Hazelnut. The male hazelnut catkins are among the earliest catkins to open in the spring. The female flowers open a few days later. Look for a tiny glint of crimson as you walk along trails in Gay City or on Andover roadsides. As Thoreau described them:

March 27, 1853. The hazel is fully out. It is in some respects the most interesting flower yet, though so minute that only an observer of nature, or one who looked for them, would notice it. It is the highest and richest colored yet – ten or a dozen little rays at the end of the buds which are the end and along the sides of the bare stems. The high color of this minute unobserved flower, at this cold leafless and almost flowerless season! It is a beautiful greeting of the spring, when the catkins are scarcely relaxed and there are no signs of life in the bush.



Hazelnut (*Corylus americana*) in Gay City, April 1, 2020



Hazelnut (*Corylus americana*) on Townsend Road, March 13, 2020

Spicebush.

*Nature's first green is gold,
Her hardest hue to hold.
Her early leaf's a flower;
But only so an hour.
Then leaf subsides to leaf.
So Eden sank to grief,
So dawn goes down to day.
Nothing gold can stay.*
■ Robert Frost

The first gold I notice in the Eastern CT spring is the flowering of the *Lindera benzoin* shrub. By mid-April, on a sunny day, the woodland understory is filled with a golden haze due entirely to

the blooming of this shrub. Actually, the strongest color is from the male plants, with their stamens covered with yellow pollen. The female flowers, on separate plants, are a more subdued yellowish-green. I saw the first open male flowers at the back of our property on April 4. The show will go on for several weeks.



Spicebush (*Lindera benzoin*) flowers.

Bluets. In the past, I've seen bluets as early as March 27 (2012) in the Townsend Cemetery. This year, I saw my first on March 22 near the Andover soccer fields. The next day, they were open in Gay City. Truly the earliest in my own records.



Bluets (*Houstonia caerulea*), March 22, 2020, Andover ballfields. In the same spot: My first dandelions of the season.

Mourning Cloak. If you're walking just inside the edge of the woods on a still, sunny early April day, a large butterfly might undulate past you, almost as though a breeze were moving a brown leaf; but this leaf is edged with gold. The Mourning Cloak hibernates through the winter as an adult, and is usually the first butterfly I see in the spring. George saw his first last week; I missed it.



Mourning Cloak (*Nymphalis antiopa*) photo from Wikipedia

Eastern Comma. I was sitting on my porch the other day and saw a tiny orange butterfly motoring maniacally around the front garden bed. It moved so fast, I could not identify it until it rested for a split second on a bloodroot blossom. Aha! The Eastern Comma! Like the Mourning Cloak, it has hibernated through the winter, and is out and about looking for nourishment.



Eastern Comma (*Polygonia comma*) photo from Wikipedia

Creatures I've been hearing:

Peepers and Frogs

Eastern Phoebe

Song Sparrow

White-throated Sparrow

Carolina Wren

House Wren

Cardinal

Chickadees

Titmice

Red-shouldered hawks

The juncos (snowbirds) have left my bird feeders. Their absence is a sure sign of spring!