



Spring 2016

By Ann Prince

APRIL

- 2 On beaches look for piping plovers arriving from southern wintering grounds.
- 9 Listen for the high-pitched bell choir of hundreds of spring peepers in freshwater wetlands.
- 17 A native shrub, shadbush, blossoms in April when American shad are swimming upstream to spawn.
- 18 This evening is a good time to see Mercury, which is now at its highest point above the horizon. As the sun sets, the planet is in view low in the darkening sky.



- 22 Full moon. The Shad Moon (Native American).
- 27 Gray catbirds and eastern towhees return. Listen for the filine-like mewing of the catbirds among sprawling vines and thickets and the drink-your-tea call of the towhees in scrubby areas.



- 30 Search in woodlands for early wildflowers, such as trout lily, trillium, lady's slipper, bloodroot, and hepatica.

MAY

- 5 Common blue violets, actually purple in color with heart-shaped leaves, are blooming in woodlands and wet meadows, and are often ubiquitous in neighborhood lawns.
- 6 New moon and height of the Eta Aquarids meteor shower. In the northern hemisphere, roughly 30 shooting stars per hour, most prominent after midnight, grace the dark moonless sky.
- 8 Brilliantly colored scarlet tanagers, Baltimore orioles, and rose-breasted grosbeaks arrive from southerly climes. Look and listen for flashy males high above in spring-green treetops.



MAY (continued)

- 15 Spring anures are abundant now—keep an eye out for the strikingly blue butterflies at woodland edges and in forest clearings.
- 21 Full moon. The Bright Moon (Celtic).
- 22 The red planet Mars is its brightest for this calendar year—fully illuminated by the sun and visible all night long.
- 24 At nightfall watch for flickering fireflies in fields and grassy areas. Each species has its own pattern of flashes.



JUNE

- 3 Newly metamorphosed from tadpoles, multitudes of tiny toadlets may appear in your garden or wooded yard if you live near a small pond or wetland.
- 5 On a midday walk you could happen upon a garter snake—the state reptile of Massachusetts—basking in a sunny forest clearing or grassy meadow.
- 14 Garden butterflies are about. Watch for favorites including swallowtails, painted ladies, fritillaries, and sulphurs.
- 20 Summer solstice, ushered in by the Full Rose Moon (Colonial American). Longest day of the year.
- 26 Field wildflowers such as Joe-Pye weed, Noddy-eyed Susan, and milkweed bloom.
- 28 Tiny gray treefrogs, often heard yet seldom seen, are camouflaged against tree trunks to which they cling with their sticky toe pads as they sound their birdlike trill.



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