

Phenology Calendars for Lake County

Phenology (feh-nahl-oh-jee)

The scientific study of periodic biological phenomena, such as flowering, breeding, and migration, in relation to climatic conditions

Below are natural events that can be observed as you visit the Lake County Forest Preserves throughout the year. These suggestions can be used as a starting place for explorations of your own. Once you start experiencing the world through the eyes of a phenologist, you'll be amazed at the wonders of nature you may have overlooked before.

Phenology Calendar of Lake County, Winter

Natural occurrence	General timetable	Suggested locations	Notes & details
Bagworm	All winter	Independence Grove Lyons Woods	Bagworm moths spend the winter as eggs in cocoon-like sacs that hang by silken threads from evergreen branches.
Cecropia moth	All winter	MacArthur Woods Ryerson Woods Wright Woods	The pod-shaped papery cocoon of a Cecropia moth is attached lengthwise to the underside of twigs on which the larva fed. The large cocoons are actually hard to see because they blend into the branch, but it's a real treat to spot one. <i>Hint: Primarily found on maples.</i>
Dormant plants, winter "weeds"	All winter	Half Day Middlefork Savanna Old School Rollins Savanna Ryerson Woods	Plant materials that dot a winter landscape are remnants of herbaceous plants. The presence of specific winter weeds tells you about the type of habitat in which they grow. Take time to ID a few, and revisit those areas the following summer to test your skills.
Eastern gray squirrel	All winter	Countywide	A squirrel's typical winter home is a dry hollow within a tree hole. Large, loose bundles of leaves high in trees are their summer homes, or dreys. Active all winter, squirrels can be found gathering previously stored, or cached, acorns and nuts.
Galls	All winter	Countywide	Galls are growths on plant tissue that arise when a female insect lays its eggs on or within a plant. Winter is an ideal time to look for galls, which vary in shape from round to tubular. <i>Hint: Bare goldenrod stalks and remaining oak leaves are great places to look.</i>
Grasses	All winter	Half Day Lyons Woods Middlefork Savanna Old School Rollins Savanna	Grasses are interesting in winter. Many seed heads remain as a food source for wildlife. Grass that is weighted down by snow is called "lodged". These grass mounds provide good wildlife habitat and are great places to look for the winding tunnels of small mammals.

Great horned owl	December-February	<i>Woodland preserves:</i> Grant Woods McDonald Woods Old School Ryerson Woods Wright Woods	This species is one of the first birds of Lake County to nest. It lays its eggs as early as late January, even when there is still snow on the ground. Mating occurs in early winter, and it isn't uncommon to see or hear them at dawn or dusk during this time. <i>Hints: These owls reuse large hawk nests from the past season.</i>
Ice formations	All winter	Des Plaines River Trail Fort Sheridan Half Day Wright Woods Van Patten Woods	Some of the most dramatic ice formations are found along the shoreline of Lake Michigan. Wave action & the ravines at Fort Sheridan create stunning scenes. Also, look for "ice rings" circling tree trunks as floodwaters recede along banks of the Des Plaines River.
Long-eared owl, <i>winter visitor</i>	December-March	Lyons Woods	This species has long, feathery "ear tufts" from which it takes its name. It favors roosting spots in dense evergreen trees and camouflages itself by standing flush against the trunk of the tree.
Mink	January-April	Cuba Marsh Des Plaines River Trail Fox River Independence Grove Van Patten Woods Wetlands Research Area	Mating season for minks begins in January, which is typically when their activity & range increases. Look for these long mammals of the weasel family along rivers, creeks, lakes, ponds and marshes. During winter, mink feed through holes in the ice, digging into the mud to retrieve smaller, hibernating animals.
Native winter birds	All winter	Countywide	Some bird species don't migrate. Chickadees, cardinals, goldfinches, woodpeckers and many owl species can be seen all winter.
Nests	All winter	Countywide	Bird, wasp & squirrel nests once hidden in the leaves become easily visible in winter. Look for dark clumps at various levels in trees and shrubs. Winter bird nests are usually vacant, but those covered with leaves may be a temporary shelter for a mouse.
Northern cardinal	All winter	<i>Woodland preserves:</i> Grant Woods Old School Ryerson Woods Wright Woods	Cardinals spend the winter in Lake County. Look for their stunning red color against the snow. Listen for their songs in February when they begin establishing spring breeding territories. <i>Hint: Cardinals are seed eaters. Scout out spots with berry bushes & seeds.</i>
Raccoon	January-March	Countywide	Mating season for raccoons begins in January, which is typically when their activity & range increases. Look for these large mammals and their distinctive tracks in woodland and wetland habitats, especially along wooded stream corridors where they search for food.
Red fox	Late January-early March	Countywide	Adult foxes are solitary until mating season, which occurs late-January through early-March. A male fox uses barks and howl-like cries to attract females and warn other males not to intrude on its territory. Search in December for active females in brushy areas.

Return of Orion	Late December-early March	Countywide	Watch the night sky for the return of Orion. Among the most easily recognized stellar constellations of the northern hemisphere, the “great hunter” is visible in the winter sky. Cold, crisp evenings are great for stargazing. Try using binoculars to enhance your view.
Saw-whet owl, <i>winter visitor</i>	December-March	<i>Woodland preserves:</i> Grant Woods Old School Ryerson Woods Wright Woods	This species is the smallest of the migrant owls. These “earless” birds are quite docile. Its defense when discovered is to stay still & remain perched, leading people to perceive them as “tame.” <i>Be sure to keep a distance if seen to avoid undue stress upon the bird.</i>
Short-eared owl, <i>winter visitor</i>	December-March	<i>Open preserve areas:</i> Cuba Marsh Middlefork Savanna Rollins Savanna Waukegan Savanna	This species is most commonly seen during migration during the spring and fall but can be seen in winter months. It has short “ear” tufts from which it takes its name. These owls are often seen flying low over fields, hunting any time during the day for diurnal mammals.
Snowy owl, <i>winter visitor</i>	December-March	Fort Sheridan	Most often seen along the shores of Lake Michigan, a few snowy owls visit Lake County each year. Camouflaged against the snow, this species is hard to spot. <i>Hint: It is usually found silently perched on prominent lookouts, such as pier posts, searching for prey.</i>
Springtails	February	Countywide	During the warming days of February, the snow around tree trunks seems to come alive. This is surface activity of springtails, often called snow fleas. These insects move up from the soil in huge numbers, where they look like pepper grains dancing on the snow.
Stoneflies	January-April	Grassy Lake Lake Carina	While most insects are inactive during January, winter stoneflies are in their glory. Take walks on sunny afternoons near small, swift streams. The best viewing occurs when stream banks are covered with snow and stonefly larvae climb from the chilly waters to emerge as adults. Stonefly emergence from a stream is a sign of a healthy environment.
Striped skunk	February-April	<i>Woodland preserves:</i> Grant Woods Half Day Old School Raven Glen Wright Woods	Skunks don’t hibernate, though they are less active during early to mid-winter and are temporarily dormant during extreme cold. Mating occurs February through April, during which time they become active again. <i>Hint: Look for tracks and diggings on days following warmer nights that cause early thaws.</i>
Sumacs: <i>Smooth, staghorn & winged</i>	All winter	Countywide Independence Grove	Sumac is a widespread shrub in Lake County. Its deep red clusters of berries remain throughout winter and are a valuable food source for many bird species. The twigs nourish deer and rabbits and provide cover.

Tent caterpillar	All winter	<i>Woodland preserves:</i> Grant Woods McDonald Woods Old School Ryerson Woods Wright Woods	Keep track of the trees that host cottony masses of these larvae each spring. In the winter hard, shiny egg capsules can be found bundled around twigs of those same trees. Begin your search for eggs once the leaves fall. <i>Hints: Wild cherry is a favorite host tree. Look for its dark, flaky bark in woodlands. The egg masses resemble globs of varnish.</i>
Trees & twigs	All winter	Countywide	Examination of winter twigs reveals identifying characteristics about each species. At the tip of twig should be a bud. Buds are next spring's leaves and flowers that formed the previous summer. They are protected by scales. Scale, bark and branching patterns are all clues to winter tree identification.
Wildlife tracks & signs	December-March	Countywide	Many animals are hard to see during the winter due to lower activity levels and protective coloration. However, it is easy and exciting to trace their activity when snow covers the ground. Search for footprints, scat (droppings) and chewed branches. <i>Hint: Staying low and quiet for extended periods can sometimes lead to an exciting encounter.</i>
Woolly bear caterpillars	All winter	Countywide	Look for the black and brown banded woolly bear caterpillar during the winter. It takes shelter under leaves and grasses during the cold months. In spring, it will create a cocoon and later emerges as the Isabella moth.

Winter colors—Below is a list of winter color sources that can add interest to winter photos.

Color	Plant, animal or landscape	Suggested locations
Blue	Blue jays	Countywide
Blue	Eastern red cedar berries	Brushy areas countywide
Blue	Crisp, clear sky on very cold days	Countywide
Blue-gray	White-breasted nuthatch	Woodland preserves
Bright red	Dogwood berries	Woodland preserves
Bright red & orange	Northern cardinal, male	Countywide
Coral-orange	Bittersweet berries	Fence rows countywide
Deep red	Sumac berries	Independence Grove
Green	Evergreen trees	Lyons Woods
Mother-of-pearl	Milkweed pods	Old School, Middlefork Savanna
Pink-red	Eastern wahoo (burning bush) fruits	Woodland preserves
Purple	Raspberry vines	Brushy areas & woodland edges
Rust	Remaining oak leaves	Savannas & woodlands countywide
Silver	Thistle & goldenrod seeds	Open areas countywide
Tan	White-tailed deer	Countywide
Tan & orange	Northern cardinal, female	Countywide
Yellow	Lichen	Grows on trees countywide
Yellow to pink	Winter sunsets	Countywide, Rollins & Middlefork Savanna

Mammals in winter—Below is a summary of mammals in winter that may help you on your search.

Species	Winter habit	Winter habitat	Winter food sources
American beaver	Active	Pond, lodge door, below ice	Bark, twigs
Cottontail rabbit	Active	Areas with heavy brush	Bark, stems, twigs, sedges
Coyote	Active	Open areas, woodlands	Mice, voles, small birds, carrion
Deer mouse	Active	Woodlands, field edges, under snow	Seeds, nuts, insects, bark, fungi
Eastern chipmunk	Dormant	Burrow below frost line	Cached seeds and nuts
Eastern gray squirrel	Active	Woodlands	Acorns, nuts, seeds
Eastern mole	Semi-active	Tunnels below frost line	Insects, spiders, slugs, seeds
Flying squirrel	Active	Hollow trees	Nuts, seeds, bulbs
Least weasel	Active (white coat)	Open areas, woodlands	Small animals, insects, amphibians
Little brown bat	Hibernates	Caverns, holes, roofs	n/a
Meadow vole	Active	Fields in tunnels under snow	Seeds, roots, stems
Mink	Active	Near water	Muskrats, small animals
Muskrat	Active	Cattail lodge in marshes & ponds	Roots, stems, clams, snails, fish
Raccoon	Dormant	Hollow trees, under rocks	<i>Omnivore</i> : fish, clams, fruit, crustaceans, seeds, nuts, insects
Red fox	Active	Brushy areas, open areas	<i>Omnivore</i> : mice, voles, rabbits, fruit, nuts, carrion
River otter	Active	Near water	Fish, amphibians, crustaceans
Short-tailed shrew	Active	Under leaves & grasses	Insects, small animals, fruit, nuts
Striped skunk	Dormant	Open areas, woodlands	<i>Omnivore</i> : eggs, insects, roots, fruit, small animals, bulbs
White-footed mouse	Active	Woodlands, field edges, under snow	Seeds, nuts, insects, bark, fungi
White-tailed deer	Active	Brushy areas, sheltered woodlands	Twigs, evergreens, buds, fruits
Woodchuck	Hibernates	Deep burrow below frost line	n/a

Hibernates—prolonged deep sleep throughout cold months

Dormant—Wakes and moves about occasionally

Bibliography

Following are reference books consulted in the preparation of the *Phenology Calendar of Lake County, Winter*. They are great resources for material and activities not covered by the suggestions above.

Halfpenny, James C. and Ozanne, Roy Douglas. *Winter: An Ecological Handbook*. Johnson Publishing Company, 1989.

Lingelbach, Jennifer (editor). *Hands-On Nature: Information and Activities for Exploring the Environment with Children*. Vermont Institute of Natural Science, 1986.

Lawlor, Elizabeth P. *Discover Nature in Winter: Things to Know and Things to Do*. Stackpole Books, 1988.

Stokes, Donald. *Stokes Guide to Nature in Winter*. Little, Brown and Company, 1976.

Phenology calendar of Lake County, *spring*

Natural occurrence	General timetable	Suggested locations	Notes & details
American coot	March-May	Almond Marsh Cuba Marsh Independence Grove Rollins Savanna Van Patten Woods	Coots are one of the first bird species to arrive each spring. They are a good species to learn if you're just getting started as a birdwatcher, because they're easy to identify. Look on lakes for small, black diving birds with white bills. They're often seen in groups.
American woodcock	Mid-March-April	Cuba Marsh Des Plaines River Trail Grant Woods Half Day Middlefork Savanna Rollins Savanna Ryerson Woods Stevenson Historic Home Wright Woods	Woodcocks have one of the most spectacular breeding displays in Lake County. Males can be heard "peenting" in open areas at dawn and dusk. Listen for a series of "peents" followed by a metallic twitter made by the wings as the woodcock heads skyward and flies in a wide circle above its breeding territory. He lands in nearly the same spot from which he took flight. So, it's fairly easy (and incredibly exciting) to sneak closer for a great view of this amazing bird.
Butterflies	All spring	Countywide	You can watch butterflies throughout the warm months. Learn to identify a few with certainty, and add them to your phenology notes. The first butterflies start arriving in March, beginning with the mourning cloaks.
Canada goose, goslings	May	Countywide	Watch for the goslings of Canada geese near lakes and marshes throughout Lake County.
Cecropia moth	May	Greenbelt Lyons Woods Middlefork Savanna Old School Ryerson Woods Wright Woods	After spending winter in a pod-shaped papery cocoon, adult Cecropia moths emerge in May. The moth is very large and attractive, though they are often overlooked because they are nocturnal. Watch streetlights and woodland skies on warm spring nights. <i>Hint: Typically overwinter on maple and black cherry trees.</i>
Chorus frogs	March-May	Des Plaines River Trail Greenbelt Lyons Woods Old School Ryerson Woods Wright Woods	At the beginning of its mating season, the chorus frog is very vocal in Lake County. Listen near vernal ponds and roadside ditches for their call, which sounds like a finger running down the small teeth of a comb. Wet weather that drives humans indoors is welcomed by frogs. Grab a rain jacket and rubber boots to thoroughly enjoy the chorus.
Controlled burns	March-April	Countywide	Early spring is controlled burn season in Lake County. As soon as the snow melts and the grasses dry out enough to burn, trained staff can be seen conducting burns. Conditions, such as temperature and wind direction, have to be just right. If you're lucky, you may catch the burn team at work. To learn more about this process, visit www.LCFPD.org/burninfo .

Coyotes	March-May	Countywide	Coyotes can often be heard howling at night during the peak of their mating season In January through early March. In early spring the pups are born helpless and depend on the parents to feed them. By the time pups are eight to nine weeks old, they have been weaned and the den is abandoned.
Ferns, “fiddleheads”	April-May	Des Plaines River Trail Fort Sheridan Ryerson Woods Wright Woods	Ferns emerge relatively early in the spring. Often called “fiddleheads”, ferns unfurl their fronds from a beautiful coiled structure. Pay close attention to the leaf litter for these fuzzy spirals. They'll look very different once they open completely.
Garlic mustard, <i>non-native invasive</i>	All spring	Countywide	Watch for garlic mustard emerging in early spring. This species is one of the most aggressive invasive plants in Lake County. The speed with which it grows in the spring is worth observing—it's one of the reasons this species is so successful in out-competing native plants. Learn this plant and help save the wildflowers by removing it <i>root and all!</i>
Great blue herons	Early March-May	Almond Marsh Des Plaines River Trail Fox River Marina	Great blue herons return in early spring to set up their territories. The pair works together to build a nest. Then they feed and protect the babies as a team. Nest building begins in March, eggs are laid in April, and babies hatch as early as May. These herons nest in large groups called a “rookery” in trees near water.
Hawks	Mid-March-May	Countywide	From large groups flying together during migration to aerial breeding displays, this group of birds is very active in spring. Find an active nesting territory one year, and you can often watch the same pair year after year.
Jack-in-the-pulpit	Mid-April	Greenbelt Lyons Woods Old School Ryerson Woods Wright Woods	One of the more unusual of Lake County's spring wildflowers is the jack-in-the-pulpit. This species looks like no other wildflower. Look for a green and purple hood-shaped plant in woodlands. Gently lift the “hood” and peek into the “cup” of this unique flower.
Leopard frogs	April-May	Countywide	This frog species is locally abundant. Look along edges of vernal ponds and small lakes. Listen for their call, which sounds like a wet finger running down the side of a balloon.
Mallard, ducklings	May	Countywide	Mallard ducks are so common that many people take them for granted. Watch for ducklings when they hatch in late spring. Their interaction with the adults can be highly entertaining. Their widespread distribution offers many opportunities for photographs.

Mourning cloak butterfly	March-May	Countywide	One of the first butterflies seen each spring, adult mourning cloaks emerge in March after spending the winter under loose tree bark.
Painted turtles	April-May	Almond Marsh Cuba Marsh Des Plaines River Trail Heron Creek	Watch trails and wetlands in April and you can see painted turtles sunning themselves on logs. This species is one of the first reptiles to emerge in Lake County. Be careful on trails and roadways, especially as summer nears.
Red-winged blackbirds, female	Late March- Early April	Countywide	Female red-winged blackbirds return to Lake County about a month after the males. Females hop around reeds and grasses collecting food and nesting material. Nests are built among cattail stems in late spring.
Red-winged blackbirds, male	March	Countywide	One of the earliest spring events for bird watching is the return of male red-winged blackbirds. The males begin dramatic displays from tree branches and cattails to mark their territories. <i>Hint: Listen for their "conk-la-ree" song near wetlands.</i>
Sandhill cranes	March-May	Cuba Marsh Lakewood Middlefork Savanna Rollins Savanna	Sandhill cranes are among the most spectacular birds that visit Lake County. They usually arrive in March. Listen to the skies for the return of their beautiful, warbling bugle. They nest in Lake County and the young hatch in May. Keep an eye out for the adults and young, called "colts", as they forage near marshes. Do not disturb nests or birds.
Skunk cabbage	Mid-March	Des Plaines River Trail Lyons Woods Ryerson Woods Van Patten Woods Wright Woods	To find the first flowering spring plant in our region, you have to get out and explore before it feels much like spring at all. Walk along a meandering stream or a wooded wetland and look for its striking shape. A pointed dark-red hood, or spathe, emerges from the frosty muck. A narrow opening encloses the flower, which attracts pollinating insects with its carrion-like appearance and namesake unpleasant odor. This attraction is enhanced by the higher temperature within.
Spring peepers	Late March-April	Des Plaines River Trail Half Day Ryerson Woods Wright Woods	Once very common, this species is now extremely rare in Lake County. Listen for their high-pitched "peep-peeper" call, which sounds like sleigh bells when many peepers chorus at once. <i>Hint: Look for vernal ponds in southern woodlands & listen on rainy nights.</i>
Striped skunk	February-April	Woodland preserves: Grant Woods Half Day Old School Raven Glen Wright Woods	Skunks don't hibernate, though they are less active during early to mid-winter and are temporarily dormant during extreme cold. Mating occurs February through April, during which time they become active again. <i>Hint: Look for tracks and diggings on days following warmer nights that cause early thaws.</i>

Trees & twigs	All spring	Countywide	Examination of spring twigs reveals identifying characteristics about each species. At the tip of twig should be a bud. Buds are this spring's leaves and flowers that formed the previous summer. Many trees, such as maples, cherries, hickories and redbuds, have beautiful flower displays throughout spring.
Vernal ponds	March-May	Countywide	Named from <i>vernal</i> , the Latin word for spring, vernal ponds are created by snowmelts, rain and rising water tables. These shallow depressions are critical to species of wildlife that rely on them to live or breed. As soggy spring gives way to arid summer, these temporary reservoirs dry up, along with any amphibians that haven't yet phased into ground-crawling adults.
Warblers	Mid-April-May	Fort Sheridan Greenbelt Half Day Lyons Woods Middlefork Savanna Rollins Savanna Ryerson Woods Wright Woods	Spring warblers are notoriously difficult to identify, but their stop in Lake County during migration is a big event for bird watchers. They are a reminder of how important "green corridors" are for neo-tropical species. If you can't identify birds by sight, the unique song of each species will help you identify these harbingers of spring. Yellow-rumped warblers are among the first to arrive.
Wildflowers	All spring	Greenbelt Lyons Woods Old School Ryerson Woods Wright Woods	Beginning in early March with skunk cabbage, wildflowers can be enjoyed throughout Lake County all spring. Different species bloom at different times, so be sure to re-visit areas and try new spots. From bloodroot to trillium, these beauties make spring worth exploring!
Wildlife tracks & signs	All spring	Countywide	Many animals are hard to see due to nocturnal habits and protective coloration. However, it is easy and exciting to trace their activity when the ground is muddy. Search for footprints, scat (droppings) and other signs. <i>Hint: Staying low and quiet for extended periods can lead to exciting encounters.</i>
Wood frogs	Early March	n/a; extirpated	<i>This species was extirpated from Lake County in the 1980-1990s. The LCFPD began a reintroduction program in 2008 and a small population now exists at one preserve. This is the first year there could be individuals old enough to breed, so we will soon find out if the program has been successful.</i>

Phenology calendar of Lake County, *summer*

Natural occurrence	General timetable	Suggested locations	Notes & details
Annual cicadas	July-August	Countywide	From late afternoon to dark, male cicadas call from trees to attract a mate. The chorus of these insects is an unmistakable sign of the season. Follow calls to low branches for a glimpse of these 2-inch critters. It's fun to try and find the nymphs emerging from the base of trees, where they have spent 2-5 years underground sucking sap from the roots.
Berries	July-August	Countywide	Watch for berries along woodland edges in late summer. <i>Don't eat them!</i> Many are poisonous, and improper identification can be harmful. Plus, it's best to leave for them for the animals.
Butterflies	All summer	Countywide	You can watch butterflies throughout the warm months. Learn to identify a few with certainty, and add them to your phenology notes. Each species has specific plant hosts for food and laying eggs. Search for those plants for desired caterpillars and adults.
Cattails	August	Preserves with water features	A sure sign that summer is coming to an end is when cattails seedheads burst and send their winged seeds sailing across wetlands.
Coyotes	June-July	Countywide	By early June, coyote pups usually venture out of the den that has sheltered them since birth. In early spring, the pups are born helpless and depend on the parents to feed them. By the time pups are 8-9 weeks old, they have been weaned and the den is abandoned. The pups are then taught to hunt by following the parents while hunting.
Dragonflies & damselflies	All summer	Preserves with water: Cuba Marsh Grant Woods Middlefork Savanna Rollins Savanna Wetlands Demonstration Wright Woods	Generally speaking, dragonflies have stout bodies and hold their four wings flat over their backs when perched. Damselflies have slender bodies, and most hold their wings together above their back while resting. Viewing these <i>odonates</i> can be done with the naked eye, but a pair of binoculars makes the job easier. Look for perched <i>odonates</i> near water. Emerging nymphs are found here, too.
Early migrants	August	Countywide	Early migrants begin to group together in late summer, fueling up for the long journey south. Their restlessness at this time of year is referred to as "zugunruhe," which means travel urge.
Fireflies	June-August	Countywide	Standing in a field or forest clearing on a warm summer night, it's obvious how fireflies got their name. Using a special organ in their abdomen, males and females use light to find each other. Each species has a different number, length and pattern of light flashes.

Frog <i>Green frog</i>	June-July	Preserves with water: Des Plaines River Trail Half Day McDonald Woods Wright Woods	Listen at night near ponds and rivers for the sound of a loose banjo string plucked once or twice.
Frog <i>Bullfrog</i>	June-August	Preserves with water features	Some use the mnemonic “jug-o-rum” for this common species, but we prefer to imagine Star Wars’ light sabers in action
Frog <i>Gray treefrog</i>	June	Van Patten Woods, west of the Des Plaines River	Birds singing at night? Probably the bird-like musical trill of this frog calling from the trees. You have to look closely for this species, as they are mottled gray for camouflage against tree bark and lichen. If you see one jump, look for the yellow “flash color” on the rear legs. It’s used as a defense against predators.
Frogs & toads	June-August	Preserves with ponds: Cuba Marsh Des Plaines River Trail Grant Woods Old School Van Patten Woods Wright Woods	Few sounds evoke summer in Lake County like the song of frogs and toads. Listen for late season breeders at a preserve near you. Many of these species will call during early morning hours, as well as evening. Use these times to slowly creep up for a great view. <i>Frogs are highlighted above. Toads have a very long trill.</i>
Great blue herons	All summer	Preserves with water: Almond Marsh Fox River Marina Grant Woods Nippersink Prairie Wolf Slough	Great blue herons nest in large groups called a “rookery” in trees near water. By June many young are ready to venture out of the nest. Adults and juveniles can be seen hunting for frogs, fish and crustaceans along shores of marshes, ponds and streams.
Hawks	All summer	Countywide	Watch for hawks hovering over open areas. You’ll soon realize that they’re busy hunting. Watch long enough, and you may be lucky enough to see them swoop down for a kill. Return to common sighting locations and you may even find an opportunity to watch them teach their young to fly and hunt.
Insects	All summer	Countywide	From bees and moths to leafhoppers and katydids, this group of animals can be found in great diversity no matter where you explore. Look closely on stems, flowers, under logs, and even under rocks in water. There are some amazing species out there, many of which you may never have encountered while relaxing in your backyard.
Mammals	All summer	Countywide	Young mammals are being raised and taught to fend for themselves. Summer is a great time to see family groups traveling together. For example, white-tailed deer are feeding heavily in brushy openings in preparation for the autumn breeding season, called the rut.

"Mobbing" behavior	All summer	Countywide	Hawks are agile predators, and smaller birds typically won't take one on by themselves. But smaller birds find strength in numbers by joining together to attack a hawk that has entered their territory. Watch for the drama of this "mobbing" behavior during the summer months. You can usually hear it first.
Monarch butterfly	June	Countywide	The annual migration of North America's monarch butterfly is a unique and amazing phenomenon. These amazing insects migrate thousands of miles each year, so their arrival in Lake County represents the end of one of nature's more astonishing journeys.
Muskrat	All summer	Preserves with water features	Watch closely near ponds and rivers for muskrats. If you don't see a muskrat along a shore, watch for a mysterious "V" moving across the water. Then watch for a head to appear above the water at the "V" point.
Prairie flowers	June-August	Des Plaines River Trail Fort Sheridan Independence Grove Lyons Woods Middlefork Savanna Rollins Savanna Wadsworth Prairie Waukegan Savanna	Prairie flowers are among the largest and most colorful of any bloom you can find during the summer months. Look for preserves with large expanses of open areas, chances are you'll find a diversity of prairie flowers. Check back each month to enjoy a variety of different species in bloom.
Raccoon families	June-July	Woodland preserves: Des Plaines River Trail Half Day Lyons Woods MacArthur Woods Ryerson Woods Wright Woods	Raccoon young, called kits, are raised by their mother until dispersion in late fall. During this rearing period, groups of 2 to 8 kits can be seen following an adult female everywhere she goes. For a picture-perfect scene, stay low and quiet near big old trees at dusk in early summer. Cavities in dead trees are often used as nests while the kits are still young. Emerging near dusk, a female can be seen on branches followed by a single-file line of kits.
Salamanders	All summer	Half Day Lyons Woods MacArthur Woods Ryerson Woods Wright Woods	Salamanders are amphibians characterized by slender bodies, short noses and long tails. Their sensitive skin must stay moist during the dry months. To keep from drying out many salamanders seek shelter where it's damp under fallen logs. Carefully lift a log to search for them—you will find other creatures, too. <i>Remember to replace the log slowly right where you found it.</i>
Sandhill crane	All summer	Almond Marsh Lakewood Middlefork Savanna Rollins Savanna	One of the most glorious sights is seeing a sandhill crane in flight during the summer months. Listen for their calls, a warbling bugle. Keep an eye out for the adults and young, called "colts", as they forage near marshes. Do not disturb nests or birds.

Spiders & webs	All summer	Countywide	You are never far from a spider, no matter where you stand. Summer brings wonderful opportunities to explore this animal group. Hike in early morning when dew still covers every surface. This is a great time to see every detail of a web—those amazing structures spiders create using only their bodies. Look for spiny-backed orbweavers between branches and peer closely at flowers where crab spiders wait in camouflage.
Turtles	All summer	Preserves with water: Almond Marsh Cuba Marsh Des Plaines River Trail Half Day Nippersink Van Patten Woods	Watch trails and wetlands in summer and you can see numerous species of turtles sunning themselves on logs, from painted turtles to softshell turtles. Be careful on trails and roadways in early summer. Females are crossing trails often in search of nesting locations. Later they dig nests for eggs along the shoulder where there is loose gravel.
Warblers	All summer	Fort Sheridan Half Day Lyons Woods Middlefork Savanna Rollins Savanna Ryerson Woods Wright Woods	Summer warblers are easier to identify than spring warblers. During this season only those species that nest in Lake County remain. This helps you narrow down the options. Warblers are a reminder of how important “green corridors” are for neo-tropical species. If you can't identify birds by sight, the unique song of each species will help you identify this amazingly diverse group of birds.
Wildlife tracks & signs	All summer	Countywide	Many animals are hard to see due to nocturnal habits and protective coloration. However, it is easy and exciting to trace their activity when the ground is muddy. Search for footprints, scat (droppings) and other signs. <i>Hint: Staying low and quiet for extended periods can lead to exciting encounters.</i>

Phenology calendar of Lake County, *autumn*

Natural occurrence	General timetable	Suggested locations	Notes & details
Berries	September- November	Countywide	Watch for berries along woodland and field edges in fall. <i>Don't eat them!</i> Many are poisonous, and improper identification can be harmful. Plus, it's best to leave for them for the animals as a food source.
Cattails	All season	Preserves with water features	A sure sign that summer has come to an end is when cattails seedheads burst and send their winged seeds sailing across wetlands.
Fall colors	All season	Fort Sheridan Half Day/Wright Woods Independence Grove Old School Van Patten Woods	Few things are more beautiful in autumn than the changing colors of the trees. You can find peak autumn color displays in mid to late October at these preserves. Explore a variety of landscapes (e.g. water features, maple stands, winding trails, colorful vistas, etc...)
Hawks	September- October	Fort Sheridan Spring Bluff	Hawks migrate in groups beginning in early fall. Stand along the Lake Michigan shore on a windy day to witness migrating raptors.
Frost	Late October- November	Countywide	When the night temperatures fall below freezing, morning frost creates a sparkling wonderland. Look for flowers, landscapes and spider webs glistening in the morning sun.
Migrants	September- October	Countywide	Watch for the "V's" of migrating birds high in the sky as a sign that winter is on its way. Large groups of sandhill cranes heads south—you can tell they're cranes by the way their legs drag out behind them as they fly.
Monarch butterfly	September	Countywide	The annual migration of North America's monarch butterfly is a unique and amazing phenomenon. These insects migrate thousands of miles each year. Their departure in Lake County represents the beginning of one of nature's more astonishing journeys.
Mushrooms	September- November	Countywide	Watch for mushrooms appearing in massive blooms in early fall. They often grow at the base of trees and appear in the same locations year after year. Inky caps are two great examples scarlet waxy caps.
Prairie flowers & grasses	September-early October	Fort Sheridan Independence Grove Lyons Woods Old School Middlefork Savanna Rollins Savanna Wadsworth Savanna	Prairie flowers are among the largest and most colorful of any bloom you can find during the fall months. Look for preserves with large expanses of open areas, chances are you'll find a diversity of prairie flowers. Check back each month to enjoy a variety of different species in bloom.
Puff balls	All season	Woodland preserves: Ethel's Woods McDonald Woods	Watch for the unusual fungi called puff balls. Wind and rain drops can create unusual sights, landing on the puff ball and releasing small puffs of spores that look like smoke.

Sandhill crane	All season	Lakewood Middlefork Savanna Rollins Savanna	As these cranes prepare for their journey south, they're often seen in large groups. Listen for their calls, a warbling bugle. Keep an eye out at dusk as they forage in fields.
Squirrels & chipmunks	All season	Countywide	This group of animals is very active during autumn, collecting food to tide them over all winter. If you look closely, you may see places, called caches. This is where the squirrels are storing their meals as they work to bulk up for the cold months ahead, when food will be much scarcer.
Sumac	September	Greenbelt Independence Grove	Among the most vivid fall colors each year are the brilliant reds of the sumacs. Arriving earlier than most other species, sumacs are among the first signs you'll see each year that summer is waning and fall is near.
Warblers	September-October	Fort Sheridan Half Day Lyons Woods Middlefork Savanna Rollins Savanna Ryerson Woods Wright Woods	Fall warblers are much harder to identify than summer warblers. During this season you can find species that nest in Lake County, as well as those passing through on their journeys south. Non-breeding plumage and juveniles make identification a tricky but exciting task. If you can't identify birds by sight, the unique song of each species will help you identify this amazingly diverse group of birds.
White-tailed deer, rut	November	Countywide	Autumn is mating season for deer. Males (bucks) "rut" to attract females (does). Look closely for rubs and scrapes bucks leave on trees and the soil. You'll also notice physical changes and more aggressive behavior between males. All social groups split up as males chase females to mate. You'll likely see more deer activity when out in the preserves. Be careful while driving, as this is the time of year with the most deer-vehicle collisions.
Wildlife tracks & signs	All season	Countywide	Many animals are hard to see due to nocturnal habits and protective coloration. However, it is easy and exciting to trace their activity when the ground is muddy. Search for footprints, scat (droppings) and other signs. <i>Hint: Staying low and quiet for extended periods can lead to exciting encounters.</i>
Woolly bear caterpillars	September-October	Countywide	There's an old belief that the width of the brown stripe in the middle of a woolly bear caterpillar predicts the severity of the winter. There's no scientific basis for this belief, but the appearance of this caterpillar is certainly a harbinger of the fall.