

APRIL 1-14, 2019 NATURAL HISTORY NOTES

By Dick Harlow

SPRING EPHEMERALS

What can we expect to see in April?

What do we have to look forward to in April?

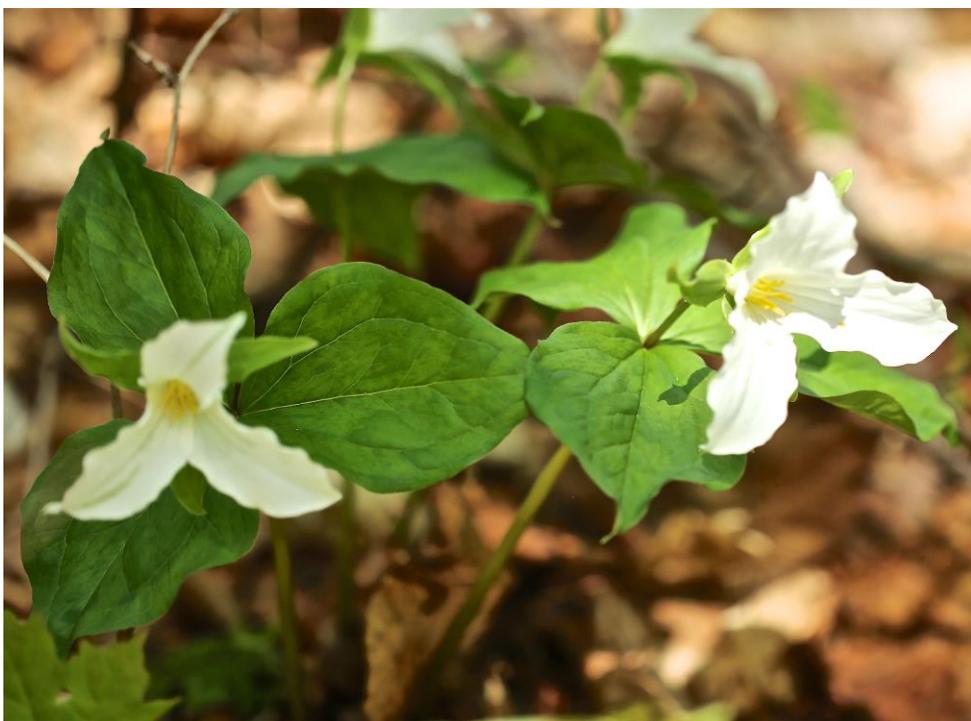
When the trees and shrubs are still in bud and haven't leafed out yet, this allows the understory in deciduous forests to catch sunlight. This sunlight activity allows **spring ephemerals** such as Trilliums, Jack-in-the-Pulpits, Trout Lily, to flower. Other early perennial wildflowers of the forest will also develop producing leaves and flowers.



(1) Red Trillium, *Trillium erectum*, © Dick Harlow

Trilliums belong to the Lily Family of plants and there are 39 trilliums that are native to North America.

The two trilliums that are pictured in (1) and (2) are an example of spring ephemerals. Absolutely beautiful to see flowering before the trees leaf out. According to the Native Plant Herald, trilliums can live up to 25 years; so, they can live in the woods for a long time.



(2) White (large flowered) Trillium, *Trillium grandiflorum*, © Dick Harlow

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(3) **Trout Lily**, *Erythronium americanum*, © Dick Harlow

The **Trout Lily (3)** is a common spring ephemeral wildflower also known as Dogtooth Violet. This other name creates confusion as the flower is not violet, but yellow instead; so Trout Lily makes more sense. To identify this plant, look for the mottled leaves. Unfortunately, there can be colonies of mottled leaves with few to no flowers. **Trout Lily** can be found in the east from Ontario to Georgia and as far west from Minnesota to Oklahoma.

The last example of an interesting ephemeral is Yellow Clintonia, picture (4).



(4) **Yellow Clintonia**, *Clintonia borealis*, © Dick Harlow

Clintonia borealis has several common names dependent on what part of the country it is found. Examples of these names are as follows: **bluebeard lily, clinton's lily, corn lily, cow tongue, yellow beadlily** and **snakeberry** to name a few. This ephemeral is a perennial forest plant found in eastern North America. Interestingly enough, ***Clintonia borealis*** is named in honor of former New York senator and governor, DeWitt Clinton.

From Wikipedia, "DeWitt Clinton (March 2, 1769 - February 11, 1828) was an American politician and naturalist who served as a United States Senator, Mayor of New York City and sixth Governor of New York. In this last capacity he was largely responsible for the construction of the Erie Canal. Clinton was a major candidate for the American presidency in the election of 1812, challenging incumbent James Madison."

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AMERICAN ROBIN



American Robin, *Turdus migratorius*, Male, © Dick Harlow

American Robin, Robin Redbreast, harbinger of spring, worm chaser on the lawn, all terms that bring forth pleasant memories. I can remember as a boy actually being excited about seeing my first spring robin.

Robins are a constant presence on lawns looking for earthworms and soil grubs during nesting. But earthworms are not their only food. They will feed on various insects both the flying kind and ones tied to plants. In the fall and winter, they will be looking for berries, like winterberry or crabapples to help insure their winter survival. Finding food in your berry bush or in your lawn suggests we should be very mindful of what chemicals we put on the lawn and spray on the berries.

One of the first birds to form an open nest in spring, robins always brings joy to my heart when I see my first spring robin staking out its nesting territory. Although robins do have specific territories around their nests and within a short distance from the nest, they will also travel to communal feeding areas.

Of course, there are birds nesting earlier than robins in open stick nests either that they have made or are ones from the past. These tend to be birds of prey such as the Great Horned Owl which begins nesting in February or March. It will take over an abandoned nest. Eagles and hawks also build stick nests and return to these nests year after year.

The cyclicity of birds of prey nesting earlier than other birds is that they take longer to hatch their young. This timing ensures that the adults will have a food supply (i.e. the young of other animals) for their young when they hatch.

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OBSERVATIONS

MAMMALS

Coywolf Family
Red Fox
Striped Skunk
Eastern Cottontail
Gray Squirrel

Weather Tidbits

Month of APRIL 1-14, 2019

[All Measurements taken at solar noon \(1230 EST\).](#)

PRECIPITATION

Total Precipitation: 18.6 mm or 0.73 inches; below normal for the month so far.

Overcast Days: 4