

May 9, 2018

Spring is every naturalist's favourite time – a season of promise as flowers come into bloom, birds who have spent the winter in warmer climes return and of course many creatures start the business of trying to find a mate.

Despite the somewhat rocky start to spring this year, a walk or paddle around Rainbow and Little Silver Lakes yields new things to observe daily. Spring Beauties and Hepaticas have been blooming for at least a week, the White Trilliums are in bud, Trout Lilies and Nodding Bellwort are pushing their leaves up through the leaf litter. The woodlands have that subtle pale green glow that indicates that leaf-up will not be too long.

On the bird front the American Woodcock have been displaying on territory since mid-April, as have Eastern Phoebes. Listen for their emphatic “ phee-be” call, especially around buildings. Pine warblers are trilling their ethereal songs high up in the many pines present along Rainbow Lane and Yellow-rumped Warblers have been back for about a week. Barred Owls are hooting vociferously, even in the daytime, while the eponymous and repetitive call of the Whip-Poor-Will has been heard at dusk for the past week or so.

A paddle down Rainbow Lake on Sunday produced the first Spotted Sandpiper and a brightly-coloured Yellow Warbler, while several Painted Turtles were busy sunning themselves on available logs. The buzzy call of a Yellow-throated Vireo heard around the cottage on Monday was a welcome return bird and on Tuesday we spotted the first Ruby-throated Hummingbird of the season at the feeder.

In the last four weeks over 50 species of birds have been seen in the general neighbourhood of the two lakes with new arrivals being added daily. For instance, a quick stop today along Rainbow Lane yielded the first Gray Catbird, Veery, Chestnut-sided Warbler, Black-and-White Warbler, Common Yellowthroat, Scarlet Tanager and White-crowned Sparrow for the year.

Happy nature walking!