



Featured Sighting

Monday 2/20/2017, 4:45 PM- I was checking the beaver dam area when I saw a large bird sitting in the tree. Upon closer inspection, I realized it was a great horned owl. I raced back to the field station, grabbed a camera, and raced back, and to my amazement it was still there. I took plenty of photos of the fearless owl, before it eventually dropped a pellet and flew off to hunt as the sun started to set. - Stephen Kovari

Great horned owls are usually nocturnal but can sometimes be seen out during the daytime. They are territorial and will even prey on other owl species if given the chance.



Want to submit to VC Nature?

Email vcnature@vassar.edu with your observation, the date, and any relevant photos or descriptions!

Submissions:

2/14/2017- Black-capped chickadee - Maya Enriquez



2/15/2017- 11:58 PM- I saw a skunk on the road near the bridge just past Kenyon. It quickly ran off into the bushes when a person

walking a dog came by. -Stephen Kovari



The striped skunk is the only species of skunk found in Poughkeepsie. They are quite common on Vassar's campus. Interestingly enough, the great horned owl, featured above, is one of the striped skunk's only predators. This is because great horned owls have very poor senses of smell!

2/21/2017 at 4:20 PM- I saw one of the young beavers at the ecological preserve swimming around past the lodge. As soon as it saw me, it slapped its tail in the water and dove under -Stephen Kovari

At the Vassar Farm and Ecological Preserve, as many as three beaver have been observed at once. Typical beaver family groups will be composed of 3 generations- the breeding adults, yearlings, and kits.

2/21/2017- The pussy willow in Edith Robert's Ecological Laboratory is in flower on 2/21. A sure sign of spring. -Keri VanCamp



2/22/2017- 4:45 PM- I just spotted a bald eagle on Vassar Lake! - David Jemiolo

2/22/2017- Red maple # 3 on our phenology trail is just beginning to flower. This photo shows a female flower cluster before stalk development. Red maples are polygamodioecious. The trees can bear only male flowers, only female flowers, or some trees produce perfect flowers. The sex ratio of red maples is skewed. Over 70% of trees are male. The most interesting part is that sometimes male trees can change their sex and begin producing only female flowers. This is the earliest we have ever observed this red maple flower. -Keri VanCamp

Phenology is the study of timing in nature. We have a phenology trail at the Vassar Farm and Ecological Preserve, and students and community members are vital in helping us collect data. If you are interested in helping, contact ecologicalpreserve@vassar.edu



2/23/2017- Saw a bat over the rugby field on the Vassar Farm and Ecological Preserve -Stephen Kovari

Little brown bats and big brown bats are both common in NY, but typically hibernate over the winter months. To see one active in February is highly unusual, and makes a strong statement. As much as we enjoyed the warm snap of weather, it is not normal and probably not good for Vassar's ecological community.

2/24/2017- The skunk cabbage in the Edith Robert's Ecological Laboratory is flowering. Eastern skunk cabbage is known for its ability to generate heat using cellular respiration and melt its way through the snow and ice. This capability makes it one of the first flowers to appear in the spring. -Keri VanCamp



2/24/2017- 12:30 PM - My phone is telling me it's 69 degrees in Poughkeepsie. Took a detour as I walked back from campus to walk over the berm that crosses College Lake. I counted at least 9 turtles basking in the warmth on the various dead logs breaking the surface of the water. - Jen Rubbo



2/27/2017 - Put up a new bird feeder and within 20 minutes of the first brave chickadee checking it out we had 9 more species of birds at the feeder (goldfinches, cardinals, white-breasted nuthatches, purple finches, juncoes, downy woodpecker, mourning doves, tufted titmouse, and a red-bellied woodpecker). Then that afternoon, the deer found it! We raised the feeder so they can't reach anymore. This morning, the squirrels found it. - Lois Horst



2/27/2017 - 7:45 PM- I spotted a lone coyote in the field closest to the beaver dam at the Vassar Farm. Upon realizing it had been discovered, it took off before I could take a photo. Later that night, I saw a bobcat, briefly before it too took off into the bushes. Disappointing night for photography, but I got such great looks at these animals. -Stephen Kovari

Please Note: The Vassar Farm and Ecological Preserve is closed at dusk. Guided walks are available on occasion after dark.

3/1/2017- Monday morning at 8:50am I heard a woodpecker pecking in the pine trees between Baldwin and Blodgett. -Alistair Hall

3/1/2017- The spring peepers were calling near the Collin's Field Station today. -Keri VanCamp

Select Wildlife Photos From Around Campus and the Community

Double-crested cormorant at Sunset Lake. Photo by Marianne Begemann



White-tailed deer. Photo by Dave Jemiolo



Ten white-tailed deer. Photo by David Jemiolo



Common merganser. Photo by Marianne Begemann



Bobcat at the Vassar Farm and Ecological Preserve. Photo by Stephen Kovari



Help Protect Our Wildlife:

Wild animals living in urban regions face many threats, including poaching, habitat degradation, litter and pollution. If you notice anything that may be harmful to wildlife, do not hesitate to contact Vassar Security or the Vassar Farm and Ecological Preserve.



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