



Featured Sighting

Thursday 3/30/2017, 4:15 PM- We have a red fox family on campus. The 8 kits and parents have been frequently seen near their den site. The little kits love play fighting with each other, and have been seen wrestling and pouncing on one another. The mother comes by to discipline the ones that stray too far, and to feed them. If you do stumble across fox kits, please keep your distance. It's tough enough to be a vulnerable baby fox. - Stephen Kovari



Featured Sighting

4/21/2017 A male eastern box turtle rests on the forest floor. Box turtles are some of the most opportunistic feeders on the Vassar Farm and Ecological Preserve and will eat anything from worms, slugs, and insects to berries, mushrooms, and flowers. -Dylan Finley



Want to submit to VC Nature?

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

Submissions:

3/27/2017- Around noon I spotted a river otter swimming just downstream of the beaver dam at the Vassar Farm. He poked his head out of the water, stared at me, and then quickly dove back under. The occurrence of an otter and a beaver in the same pond is not uncommon- in fact there have been reports of otters and beavers cohabiting peacefully in the same lodge. - Dylan Finley

3/28/2017- Skunk cabbage, blooming toward Sunset Lake. - Jen Rubbo



On 3/28/17, I saw woodpecker blanding on this ash tree near the beaver pond on the Ecological Preserve. Woodpecker blanding occurs when woodpeckers chip away the outer bark of the tree and expose the lighter colored inner bark when in search of larvae and pupae. The presence of woodpecker blanding on the preserve is a indicator that the emerald ash borer (EAB) has established itself on the preserve. EAB is an invasive insect that causes mortality in all native ash trees. 12% of the trees in the Preserve's forest are ash. The loss of these trees will create gaps and a major shift in our forest composition and structure. - Keri VanCamp



3/30/2017 - Found several bunches of snowdrops blooming behind the Environmental Cooperative barn today. - Jen Rubbo



3/30/2017- Fox kit nursing near Walker. The foxes have since relocated, so are probably under stress from their popularity with people. Please keep your distance if you see any foxes on campus. Photo by Billy Ackert.



4/3/2017 Red-tailed hawk's nest on campus. The nest is almost as big as some student dorm rooms! -Dave Jemiolo.



4/3/2017- Crocuses blooming by the TA Staircase. - Alistair Hall



4/5/2017 At 5pm I observed a muskrat swimming across Sunset Lake. I briefly thought he was a beaver, but upon seeing his long, slender, rat-resembling tail, I realized his true identity. He swam on the surface across the width of the lake and I waited for him on the shore, but he retreated underwater to access the entrance to his den. -Dylan Finley

4/7/2017 I observed a pair of american kestrels on the Vassar Farm. They usually show up around this time of year and move on shortly after. Let's hope they stay this time. -Stephen Kovari

American kestrels are small falcons, denizens of grassland habitat. Their populations have been in decline recently, potentially due to a reduction in grassland habitat.



4/8/2017- A bobcat stares into one of our trail cameras at the southern portion of the Vassar Farm and Ecological Preserve.



4/9/2017- As I was walking up to Cushing by the TA riverbed I saw a beaver. When I tried to take a photo of the beaver I lost sight of it but to the right I saw a bird thing. -Jose Rojas

The "bird thing" is actually a great blue heron



4/10/2017- Womp Womp (groundhog) By Ian Snyder



4/10/2017 Violets in the woods near Shakespeare Garden by Keri VanCamp



4/11/2017- **Sand bees**, in the *Colletes* genus, are solitary nesters, though they will build nests in aggregates of hundreds of nests. The females dig the holes in sandy areas and deposit a mass of pollen inside for their larvae to feed upon. They are not aggressive bees,

and right now the males are busy chasing after females in order to mate. These nests are in between the patio stones in a backyard off of College Ave, and there are dozens of them. Bees are important pollinators and should not be bothered while they live out their interesting life cycles. - Lois Horst



4/11/17 1:30pm: I saw two muskrats in Sunset lake this afternoon. One was swimming across the lake to the other side and the other was up on the bank munching on something. It saw me and then jumped in the water and disappeared. - Jenni Kennell

4/12/2107 I observed bloodroot flowering in a research plot in the woods near the Collin's Field Station on April 12th. Bloodroot is a spring ephemeral. Spring ephemerals take advantage of the period of high light availability on the forest floor before trees leaf out in early spring. Bloodroot's seeds are ant dispersed and a patch of blood root can be indicative of the work of a single ant colony. -Keri VanCamp



4/13/17, I observed spring beauty and trout lily blooming in the Casperkill floodplain on the Preserve. Both plants are spring ephemerals and only are visible for a brief period in the spring- Keri VanCamp



4/16/2017- A few year ago I noticed this plant with a pretty yellow flower growing in my front yard at 75 Raymond. The next year it multiplied and when I tried to dig it out I discovered it had tubers making it difficult to remove. I finally realized that the source of the plant was the wetland between Raymond Avenue and the Town Houses. The plant, *Ficaria verna*, is an invasive species that flowers very early in the spring and spreads rapidly. The picture below is a section of the wetlands literally covered with the plant. - Dave Jemiolo

Ficaria verna
(Fig Buttercup,
Figroot, Pileroot)



4/17/2017- I observed Dutchman's breeches in bloom in the Edith Robert's area. Keri VanCamp



4/19/2017- Millipede!! - By Laura Vidano



4/22/2017- Gold Finch at the bird feeder - By Dave Jemiolo



Relevant Events at Vassar:

All events meet at the newly renovated barn, across from the Poughkeepsie Farm Project

4/28/2017- Sights of Spring Tour of the Vassar Farm at 2 pm

Step into spring with a beautiful walk on the [Vassar Farm and Ecological Preserve](#). Learn about threats to native flora, how to identify spring ephemeral plants, and local phenology. This is a great opportunity to come explore the Preserve and observe all the emergent sights of spring!

5/2/2017- Beaver/Wildlife Walk at the Vassar Farm at 6:30 pm

Join us on a late afternoon walk to the beaver dam in an attempt to search for wildlife, including beaver. We will discuss the natural history of the american beaver and look at the landscape they have created.

5/5/2017- Informational Walk of the Vassar Farm at 3:30 pm

Join us for a walk on the Vassar Farm and Ecological Preserve. Get a guided tour of the preserve and learn about some of the work going on out there, and potentially ways in which you can get involved.

Snacks and refreshments will be served.

Email vcnature@vassar.edu if you have any questions! Hope to see you at the preserve!

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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Our mailing address is:

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Email questions, comments, and submissions.