

# This Week in the Woods June: Week Three

JUNE WEEK THREE



Blue flag iris



Bobolink



Macroductylus beetle (rose chafer)



Savannah sparrow



Amber snail



Wild rose and bee

**This Week in the Woods** we discovered **blue flag irises** blooming by a forested pond, attended by a number of small butterflies. As [Laurie Morrisey notes in this recent \*Outside Story\* essay](#), blue flag is our most common native iris. It may be found growing on the same wetland edge as its good-looking but ne'er-do-well cousin, the invasive yellow flag iris, which crowds out other vegetation. The name iris derives from the Greek name for the goddess of the rainbow.

**Here are some other nature sights this week (clockwise):**

We were excited to see several nesting pairs of **bobolinks** this past weekend in a large upland field. These ultra-long-distance migrators (they fly thousands of miles to wintering grounds in the South American Pampas) have experienced a continued population decline, largely due to loss of habitat. Bobolinks typically nest in large, grassy fields – which unfortunately makes them vulnerable to early summer mowing. As [Li Shen notes in this \*Outside Story\* essay](#) from our archive, landowners who delay mowing until late July can help these and other field nesting birds successfully raise their young. Here's a link to an [innovative conservation effort, The Bobolink Project](#), that connects farmers with donors who provide funds to make mowing delays in bobolink habitat affordable.

For years, we've been blithely assuming that those mustard-colored beetles that show up on peonies and other garden flowers are pollinators. Nope. They're beetles in the *Macrodactylus* genus and are commonly called **rose chafers** for their habit of feeding on petals. Adults lay eggs in July, and the larvae feed on plant roots. We're taking a live-and-let-bite-the-flowers approach, but if you choose to remove the beetles from your prized blooms, don't feed them to chickens. As noted in this [profile from the University of Minnesota](#), rose chafers have toxins in their bodies that can kill birds and small animals.

Virginia rose and Carolina rose, two common look-alike species of **wild rose**, are both blooming now. The plants' big, beautiful flowers are highly attractive to bees, and as noted in this [profile of Virginia rose from the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center](#), wild roses can also provide nesting materials for native bees. Look for them in open, sunny areas, such as meadows and roadsides.

There are many species of **Succinae** or **amber snails** – some native, some not – and it's difficult sorting them out (our best guess is that the one in the photo is a common European amber snail). As a group, they typically live in wetland habitats and have thin, semi-transparent shells. Here's a [description of work at SUNY-ESF](#) to protect an endangered amber snail species, the Chittenango Ovate, through a combination of picky leaf selection and a carefully-monitored Tupperware terrarium.

In the same field where we saw bobolinks – and perched along the same wire – we also found another grassland bird, a **Savannah sparrow**. As noted in this [profile from Cornell](#), and demonstrated in the photo, “The crown feathers often flare up to give the bird's head a small peak.” Even if you've never noticed these members of the “little brown bird” club before, chances are you'll recognize their buzzy call – a classic sound of summer meadows. This is another bird species that benefits from delayed mowing.

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