

# This Week in the Woods May: Week Two

MAY: WEEK TWO



Black-and-white warbler



Brain fungus (false morel) - toxic



Spring Peeper



Caddisfly larva



Ostrich fern fiddleheads



Serviceberry (shadbush)

**This Week in the Woods** more warblers are returning, including this **black-and-white warbler**, which obligingly posed for a photo behind the Northern Woodlands office. Black-and-white warblers are mavericks – they have their own genus and (unlike most warblers) often stick their beaks under bark to glean invertebrate prey. Like so many of our summer birds, they depend on winter habitat in Central and South America. Here’s a [map from the Winter 2019 issue](#) of *Northern Woodlands* magazine, showing where some of our summer birds go in the winter and sharing links to the [“Woods, Wildlife, and Warblers” program](#) as well as a [video that we produced](#) with filmmaker Ben Silberfarb, focused on a long-term migratory bird study at Hubbard Brook Experimental Forest. And here’s [an interview and photo series](#) from photographer, bird

conservation volunteer, and commercial fisherman Geoff Dennis, who has documented several migratory fallouts of mixed warbler flocks on Monhegan Island in Maine.

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

Do you see brains growing out of the forest floor? Either you're stuck in a bad science fiction movie, or you've discovered **brain fungi**, also called **false morels**. The specimens we've found this week look much more like brains than real morels – but their appearance varies, and foragers take note: false morels are toxic, and if consumed can result in severe-to-fatal illness. Here's a [profile of \*Gyromitra esculenta\*](#), a common spring species, from Tom Volk's mushroom blog, published by the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse. And here's a [helpful fact sheet from the State of Michigan](#), on ways to distinguish true morels from imposters.

Although it may be hard to tell in the photo, this little frog has an X on its back, and a dark bar running from its nose to behind its tympanum (ear area). That, and its tiny size, confirm it's a **spring peeper**. Peepers started singing last month and are making a racket in the wetlands right now. Here's a [profile from the Vermont Reptile & Amphibian Atlas](#). And here's an [Outside Story article about the frogs](#) by Kent McFarland, who notes, "Each male peeper can pump out from 3,000 to 4,000 peeps an hour for several hours each night."

**Serviceberry** (also called shadbush or shadblow) is in full bloom now. As noted in this [article from the UNH Extension](#), it gets these names from its association with the spring thaw (and therefore, the digging of graves) and the spring shad run up rivers. A member of the rose family, it's a boon to pollinators and other wildlife.

**Ostrich fern fiddleheads** are emerging from the ground – some are already leggy, and well on their way to unfurling – and we've enjoyed eating them this week, steamed with a little butter. Not all fern fiddleheads are edible, so again, 100% Identification is key. We look for a combination of traits including a "U-shaped" crevice running up the stems, and the papery brown casings that cover young fronds. Here's an [article about sustainable fiddlehead harvesting](#) from Todd McLeish's Discoveries column in the Spring 2021 issue of *Northern Woodlands*.

Finally, while you're peeping for peepers at the pond or vernal pool, keep an eye out for tiny bundles of sticks creeping across submerged leaves. These are case-building **caddisfly larvae**, which disguise themselves with materials from their aquatic habitat. There are many species, and likewise many different building techniques. As [Declan McCabe notes in this Outside Story essay](#), "These [case-building] species may have been the inspiration for the 'caddisfly' name. In Elizabethan England, traveling salesmen – 'cadice men' – attached their wares to their clothing."

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