

This Week in the Woods October: Week One

OCTOBER WEEK ONE



Wood ducks



Sharp-scaly pholiota



Selfheal



Wine cap



Wild cucumber



Yellow-rumped warbler
(juvenile female)

This Week in the Woods, we found approximately 50 **wood ducks** perched together in trees along a river. In the Northeast, migration occurs from September to November. Although some wood ducks will migrate as far as Mexico and Cuba, others travel shorter distances, with some spending the winter in southern New England. Thanks to Tig Tillinghast for the image.

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

We found several young clusters of **sharp-scaly pholiota** growing out of the trunks of hardwood trees. Although the caps will brown and flatten out as the mushrooms age, at this stage they seem to glow, and the bumpy scales on both their caps and stems give them a festive appearance. As noted in Lawrence Millman's *Fascinating Fungi of New England*, one difference between this and a similar species, scaly pholiota, is that sharp-scaly has a slimier cap.

Other than hardy goldenrods and other asters, most wildflowers have gone by. An exception is *selfheal*, which continues to bloom at field edges and along forest trails. Here's a [profile from The Native Plant Trust](#), which notes that this herb has traditionally been used as a fever reducer.

We spotted this young female **yellow-rumped warbler** in an apple orchard. Flocks of these common warblers are passing through, and given the variation in their plumage depending on age and gender, they're easy to confuse for other species. Here's an [article by Bryan Pfeiffer](#) from our archive, in which he explains that this "winter warbler" may remain in parts of the Northeast year round.

That bizarre spiky fruit dangling on a vine is a **wild cucumber**. This a plant we most often see growing up trees in floodplains, but as noted in this [profile from The Native Plant Trust](#), it shows up in other habitats as well. The fruit, which isn't palatable to humans, will dry out and burst open, using hydrostatic pressure to eject dark seeds.

Finally, keep an eye out for **wine cap stropharia** mushrooms, which have a mycorrhizal association with conifers. We've found a number of them this week, and they're exceptionally beautiful; as young mushrooms, they have chalk white stems and dark, red wine-colored caps. Timothy Baroni, in *Mushrooms of the Northeastern United States and Canada*, notes that you may also find this species growing out of wood chips and garden mulch.

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