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Nature Watch: It's Spring

Gregory Hutzell

This is a glorious time of year.

Spring is the season when the door opens and Mother Nature's nursery is on display. If we're patient, and most often lucky, we'll see little ones swimming, scurrying, and bouncing about. Certainly, mallard ducklings are the common little ones we see about our ponds and lakes. To see them line up in single file behind mother mallard, and follow her wake in perfect rhythm, always brings a smile and a gush: "They're so cute." I've seen batches of six, eight, and ten ducklings with their mothers, all within a few meters of each other. Apparently, these little ones aren't allowed to splash about together like kids at the community pool.



We're together © 2016 Gregory Hutzell

On land, while not so organized, are the pheasant chicks, colored like the hen, with browns and buff for camouflage. Interestingly, they were a present to all of North America in 1882, courtesy of Oregon by way of China. Seeing these chicks assures their legacy lives on, and we'll one day pause in awe when we observe the most extraordinary male of the species, who always comes dressed for the most elegant of balls.

Other little birds are busy as well. The song sparrows, tree swallows, and red-winged blackbirds are introducing their fledglings to the world. How exhausting it appears, those adults busily finding food for so many anxious open beaks.

I've been lucky in nature many times. Last spring, I happened upon an adult great horned owl and her three owlets: she in a pine, and twenty yards away in a leafless oak, her owlets, all with equally penetrating stares.



Who are you? © 2016 Gregory Hutzell

Yet for all their cuteness, the stars of the nursery are the black-tailed deer fawns. Recently a set of twins, each about the size of a large yellow Lab, appeared in a meadow lush with dark green grass, their attentive mother a few feet away. She saw me, though I stood motionless. The watchful doe is ever so cautious. Somehow, perhaps with a low guttural sound, she is quick to communicate when to stop and drop when she senses danger. The fawns then lay motionless, out of my sight.

The spring season is vibrant wherever outside you find yourself. Whether you see a bouquet of pink rhododendrons, red elderberry, black highlighted swallowtail, or the pesky yellow scotch broom—in Mother Nature's nursery it doesn't matter what you fancy, it's all a wonderful show.