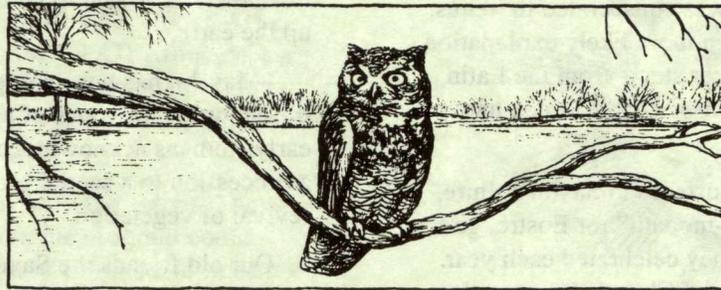


STILLMAN NEWSLETTER



©SPRING 2007

MARCH ROARS AND APRIL SHOWERS

-- Mark Spreyer

*This is the month of winds that whirl,
That stream and twist and turn and curl...
This is the month, the month of wind,
That piles the clouds or drives them thinned
In reluctant herds, some low, some high,
Relentlessly across the sky.*

-- Enola Chamberlain's description of March

Of course, it is during March that the days exceed the nights in length. The Saxons called March "length-moneth" or "lencten-monath." When the Anglo-Saxons accepted Christianity, they held their chief season of fasting or the "fast of lenet monet" at this time. Today, we know this fast as Lent.

Some notable people were born during the "length-moneth," including Albert Einstein, Elizabeth B. Browning, Luther Burbank, and Robert Frost.

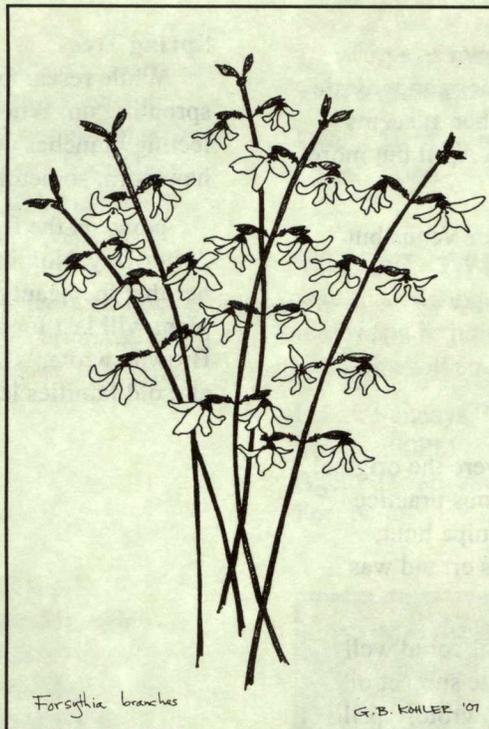
"March comes in like a lion" and "April showers bring May flowers." We hear these old chestnuts every year but how did the spring months get their names? Let's take a look.

March Lengthens

Happy New Year! Too late for that greeting, you say? You're right. I'm about 2,050 years too late. March got its name from the Roman month "Martius," honoring Mars, the god of war. Prior to the adoption of the Julius Ceasar's reformed calendar in 46 BCE, Martius was the first month of the Roman year.

If you stop to think of it from a natural point of view, this makes sense. The snow is giving way, sap is flowing up the maple trees, and the earliest spring flowers begin to appear.

As one author writes, "March is a rude and boisterous month, possessing many of the characteristics of winter, yet awoken sensations perhaps more delicious than the following two spring months; for gives the first announcement and taste of spring"



What better bridge from March to April than this stanza from Frost's *Spring Pools*.

*The trees that have it in their
pent-up buds
To darken nature and be summer
woods--
Let them think twice before they
use their powers
To blot out and drink up and seep
away
These flowery waters and these
watery flowers
From snow that melted only
yesterday.*

April Fools

The origin of April's appellation is, like the ground during this month, a bit muddy. Some claim that it comes from the Latin verb *aperire* meaning "to open," referring to the actions of leaves and flower buds during this season.

While such an explanation appeals to nature lovers, historians raise a critical eyebrow. All the other months

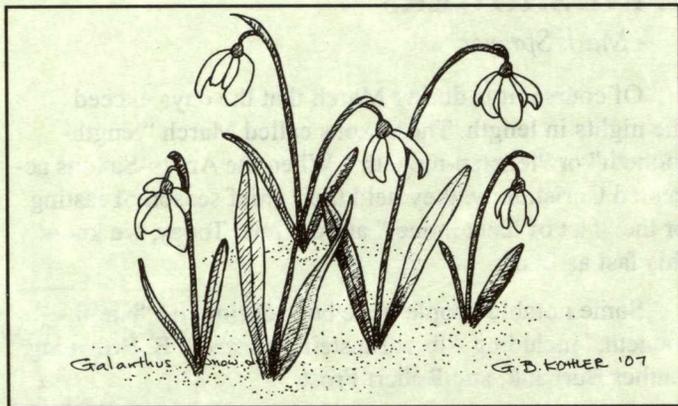
STILLMAN NATURE CENTER

33 WEST PENNY ROAD • BARRINGTON • IL • 60010 • 847-428-OWLS (6957)

honor deities, why should this one be named for natural conditions?

Since the first day of April was consecrated to Venus, the goddess of love and beauty, a more likely explanation is that the fourth month's moniker stems from the Latin term *Aprilis*, corrupted from *Aphrodite*, the Greek name for Venus.

This idea of spring beauty surfaces in Saxon culture. Anglo-Saxons called it "Eostur-monath" for Eostre, goddess of spring, whose festival they celebrated each year. Easter, the Christian celebration of Christ's Resurrection, took its name from the Anglo-Saxon term.



In some ancient depictions, April is shown as a girl, dressed in green, holding garlands of hawthorn and myrtle in one hand with violets and roses in the other. It seems only natural that we celebrate Arbor Day in April but more on that later.

April 1st no longer refers to a festival for Venus but rather, as an early poet put it:

*The first of April some do say
Is set apart for All Fool's day...
But on this day are people sent
On purpose for pure merriment.*

Dispatching folks on foolish errands were the original April Fools' jokes. In Scotland, this humorous practice was called "hunting the gowk [cuckoo]." Snipe hunt, anyone? In France, a fellow sent on a fool's errand was dubbed a *poisson d'Avril* or April fish.

Anyone who spends time outside in April could well fill like a fish as April showers have been the subject of commentary for centuries. As one observer wrote, April is filled with "showers and sunshine rapidly chasing each other."

May Flowers

The merry month of May has long been associated with new growth and colorful flowers. Like April, there is more than one story about the origin of this month's name.

I'm going with those who believe it was named after Maia, the mother of Mercury and the deity of growth and increase. She is said to be the daughter of Atlas, who held up the earth.

May 1st has been a popular day of celebration over the centuries. In hopes of assuring plentiful crops, the early Romans acknowledged May Day by marching in a procession to a sacred grotto where they honored the revival of vegetation.

Our old friends the Saxons, called May "tri-milchi" because the cows could now be milked three times a day. You see, in early May the cows were put out to pasture and, because of the abundance of grass, the cows produced more milk of a higher quality.

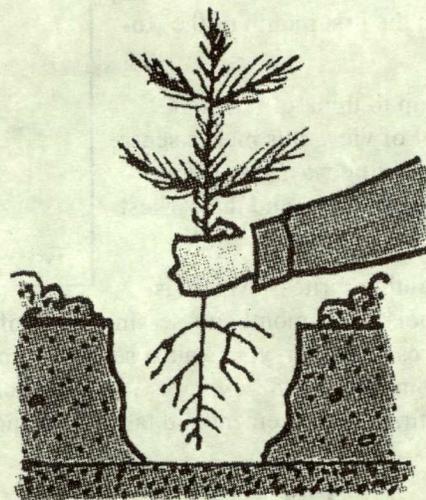
In medieval and Tudor England, May Day was an important public holiday. During this festive day, folks would rise at dawn to collect flowers and branches of trees which they would use to decorate their houses. And what May Day celebration would be complete without dancing around a Maypole?

Such frivolities were an anathema to strict Puritans who managed to have maypoles banned in England for a short time. Isn't it a bit odd that some Puritans came to this country on a ship called the Mayflower?

Spring Trees

While researching our vernal traditions, trees kept sprouting up. Whether it was May Day celebrants collecting branches or the young April holding a handful of hawthorn, something was happening under or near a tree.

Now, on the fourth Friday in April, we plant a tree on Arbor Day. Nothing could be more appropriate. Remember that the beauty to be celebrated in the seedling you plant will last for a multitude of seasons. As Sir Thomas Browne wrote, "Generations pass while some trees stand and old families last not three oaks."



Plant a tree on Arbor Day!

PROGRAMS

Program Basics: PLEASE CALL OR FAX US AT 428-OWLS(6957), OR EMAIL STILLMAN AT: stillnc@flash.net TO MAKE RESERVATIONS for programs. Remember to include your name, phone number, and the number of people that will be attending.

If less than 5 - 10 people (varying with the activity) have called two days prior to a program, the program could well be cancelled. So, don't forget to call the nature center in advance. If you discover that you are unable to attend, please call to cancel your reservations. This courtesy will be greatly appreciated.

WOODCOCK WATCHES

In past years, the woodcocks have put on quite a show. Hopefully, the weather will cooperate and we'll have another good nuptial display this year. Bring you binoculars and come join the fun!

Date: Saturdays, March 24 & 31

Time: 6:30PM

Fee: None

Age: 10 years and up

BIRD BANDING



Watch Mark Spreyer, a licensed bird bander, measure, weigh and record data about our resident and migratory birds. Birds are not caught in a predictable manner, so come prepared to hike the trails. With luck, you'll see a bird in the hand and two in the bush. If it is raining, the banding open house will be cancelled.

Dates: Sundays, April 1 & May 6

Time: 9:00AM to Noon

Fee: None

SUNDAY MORNING BIRD WALKS

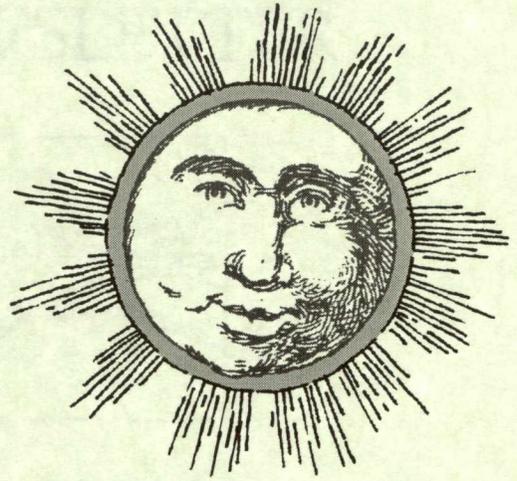
Mark Spreyer will lead a morning bird walk. Migration will be under way and you never know what we might find. Binoculars and field guides are a must. If you don't have any, don't worry, Stillman does. Please call 428-OWLS to make reservations.

Date: Sundays, April 22 & May 13

Time: 8:00AM

Fee: None

Age: 10 years and up



SOLAR OBSERVING ON (what else?) SUNDAY

Join the Northwest Suburban Astronomers and observe our nearest star with special telescopes and filters. See sun spots, filaments, and solar prominences in remarkable detail! this will be a fun and safe activity for the entire family.

After observing the sun, take a hike on your own or join a walk led by Stillman's naturalist and enjoy the life-giving properties of the sun as spring flowers and birds return to our area.

If you like, bring a dish and join us for a potluck picnic. Remember to call Stillman at (847) 428-OWLS and let us know if you're coming. If it rains, the event will be cancelled. If the weather is iffy, call Stillman for an update before making the trip.

Date: Sunday, April 29

Time: Noon - 4:00PM

WILDFLOWER WALKS

Join us as we explore Stillman's woodlands in search of ephemeral beauties such as white trillium, may-apple, Virginia bluebell and jack-in-the-pulpit. Bring your camera!

Dates: Sundays, May 6 & 13

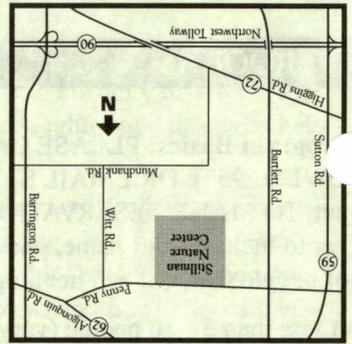
Time: 2:00PM

Age: 10 years and up

Fee: None

SUMMER HOURS BEGIN IN APRIL In March, Stillman will be open to drop-in visitors on Sundays from 11 AM to 4 PM. Starting in April, Stillman will be open Sundays from 9 AM to 4 PM.

Please note that the Stillman Nature Center is available, by reservation, during the week to school classes, Audubon chapters, garden clubs, and other organized groups. For a brochure that describes the programs and fees, just call (847) 428-OWLS or visit our website, stillmanncc.org.



www.stillmann.org

Email: stillnc@flash.net
 (847) 428-OWLS
 South Barrington, IL 60010
 33 West Penny Road

STILLMAN
 NATURE CENTER



STILLMAN NATURE CENTER
 BOARD MEMBERS

Susan Allman, President • Jim Kaltsas, Vice President • Mike Levin, Treasurer
 Rita Mueller, Secretary • Eva Combs, Legal Advisor • Joy Sweet • Bill Mueller
 Karen Lund • Roger Laegeler • Carroll Jackman • George Sawicki • John Albanese

Mark Spreyer, Director & Newsletter Editor
 Jill Kohler, Newsletter Illustrator

If you aren't already a member, please consider joining us.

- Yes, I'd like to become or continue as a member of the Stillman Nature Center.
 I enclose my tax deductible contribution of \$_____.
- I'd like to help as a volunteer with programs or land management at the Stillman Nature Center, please call me.
- Please send a gift membership from _____ to the name and address listed below.

Name _____
 Address _____
 Telephone _____

Student/Senior.....	\$10.00
Member.....	25.00
Supporting Member.....	50.00
Contributing Member.....	100.00
Sustaining Member.....	500.00
Partner.....	1000.00

Please mail with your check to:
 STILLMAN NATURE CENTER, 33 West Penny Road, South Barrington, IL 60010-9578

NONPROFIT ORG
 US POSTAGE
 PAID
 BARRINGTON, IL 60010
 PERMIT 112