

Natural Resources Stewardship Committee News

Protecting Native Habitats

According to the N.C. Forest Service [Invasive Plants](#) article "Many invasive plants reduce biodiversity by occupying habitat normally utilized by native species. More aggressive invasive species can displace natural vegetation by growing so densely as to prevent reproduction by native species, or by physically overtaking natural vegetation. The long-term effects of invasive plants on biodiversity are just beginning to be understood. Forests are complex systems of interacting organisms; the loss of one plant species can affect many other plants, animals, and microorganisms"



The NCFS list of nonnative invasive plants includes several species that have established clusters on CFPOA and private properties including [Callery/Bradford Pear](#), [Bicolor Lespedeza](#), [Multiflora Rose](#), [Oriental Bittersweet](#) (pictured above), [English Ivy](#), [Japanese Honeysuckle](#), [Chinese/Japanese Wisteria](#), [Japanese Stiltgrass](#), and [Chinese Silvergrass](#).

The NRSC Invasive Plant Subcommittee (IPSC) is making progress. Invasive plants are particularly good at invading disturbed areas along roadways, hiking paths, and other disturbed areas. The IPSC team will continue to monitor CFPOA forest margins, hiking trails, and property lines to identify, document, and mitigate invasive plants. For example, oriental bittersweet vine has spread quickly along the fence behind the Lake Wanteska building and down to the debris area. An IPSC task force will work with the CF maintenance crew to cut each bittersweet stem at the base and dab it with herbicide to kill the root system.

This is what you can do to help. Now is the perfect time to remove non-native invasive plants from your landscape and to develop a plan to replace them this fall with native plants. The [NRSC website](#) has a [Resources](#) page with links to information that will help you to transform your outdoor space into a haven for birds, butterflies, and other beneficial pollinators. To help you get started, the IPSC has created a presorted list from the NCSE Gardener Plant Toolbox titled [NCSE Deer and Fire Resistant Landscapes](#). The list contains 68 varieties of native plants for you to choose from to create a beautiful and resilient natural mountain landscape.



Wildlife Watch From the NRSC

The Little Ladybug

By Judy Merrifield, NRSC Volunteer Writer

Who doesn't love seeing a colorful little "ladybug" in their yard? According to the NC State Extension article "[Lady Beetles](#)", there are more than 400 different species of lady beetles (family *Coccinellidae*) in North America, and many of them serve as predators of aphids, lepidopteran eggs, and other soft-bodied insects in gardens and orchards. Regardless of the species, most adults are brightly colored (orange or red), exhibit a variety of spot patterns (or have no spots), and are approximately 1/4 inch (6.5mm) in diameter.



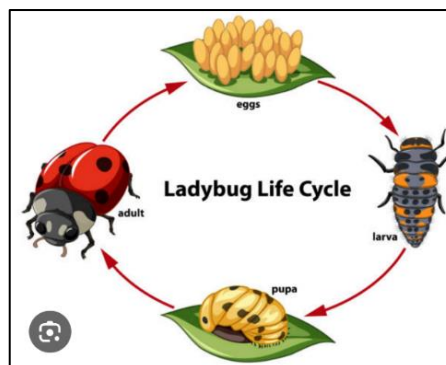
Seven-spotted Lady Beetle

Photo Courtesy of David Cappaert,
Michigan State University, Bugwood.org

The seven spotted lady beetle (*Coccinella septempunctata*, originally native to Europe) and convergent lady beetle (*Hippodamia convergens*, native to North America) are two of the more common in the southeast. Several other common lady beetles have very different colors and dots including the convergent ladybug, spotted pink ladybug, and Parenthesis ladybug.

There are several native species of ladybugs including the two-spot, the nine-spot, and the transverse ladybugs, which were once common but now are very rare. The good news is that they are not extinct and there may be some in your backyard right now! Cornell University sponsors a "[The Lost Ladybug Project](#)" and provides information about how you can help to locate and identify the endangered nine-spotted ladybug.

There are four stages to the life cycle of a lady beetle. The adult lays spindle shaped eggs (top) that are yellow to orange in color and usually laid in clusters. The eggs develop into larvae with blue-black with orange markings. The larvae are active predators that feed on aphids and other small insects in large numbers. Inside the pupa, the ladybird undergoes metamorphosis, changing its body structure to become an adult.



Lady beetles are frequently found on declining plants because they eat aphids and other garden pests that cause plant damage. Unfortunately, the beetles are often blamed for the plant damage and are destroyed. Gardeners can learn to recognize these beneficial insects and encourage them in the landscape by adding desirable plants to the garden or flowerpots. These little garden gems prefer herbs such as chives, cilantro, and dill; and flowers such as marigolds, sweet alyssum, and yarrow. They also like oregano or thyme, which can be used as perennial groundcovers.

The NC State Extension article "[Beetles in the Landscape](#)" does not recommend purchasing lady beetles because they are more likely to fly far from your garden looking for aphids. The article recommends that if you do purchase ladybugs with the intent to control a "raging population" of aphids, sprinkle the area with water first and release the beetles in the cool of the evening.

What Bears Do in August from BearWise.org and the NRSC

August At A Glance: Bears have many ways to stay cool during hot summer days. By August, most cubs are weaned. Cubs can often survive on their own if they have to. Bears feast on ripening berries and may travel great distances to dependable food sources. Bears can also decipher complex messages left in the scents of other bears.



How Bears Beat the Heat

Bears don't have sweat glands and can't take off their fur coats, so they can't cool off the way people do when temperatures soar. However, bears do lose much of the dense underfur that helps keep them warm when the temps drop. Shedding some of that fur lets air circulate while still "shading" their skin from the sun. They also pant like dogs and dissipate heat through their paws and other areas with little hair.

Bears avoid the hottest parts of the day and often relax in daybeds under a nice shady tree. They will also spread out on their lightly furred bellies and take a cool mud bath or chill out in a wetland. Bears will sometimes seek shelter from the sun on a cool, shady stone patio, under decks and porches, or in crawl spaces.

Bears are excellent swimmers and paddle around in lakes and sit in streams to cool off. They've also been known to plop down in the kiddie pool or koi pond, run through the sprinklers and do laps in the pool.



Cubs Are Weaned

Most cubs are weaned during August, giving mom a chance to focus on fattening herself up along with her cubs. Cubs may continue to nurse if they're permitted to, but it's time for them to start feeding themselves. Cubs still stick together and follow mom around learning the finer points of foraging. These lessons will be very important next year when they go out on their own.

Cubs born this year typically weigh between 25 and 40 pounds in August and already look quite a bit different from the big-eared, blue-eyed balls of fur and claws that emerged from the den in spring. While most cubs of the year will stay with their moms until next spring, once they are weaned cubs are often capable of surviving on their own.

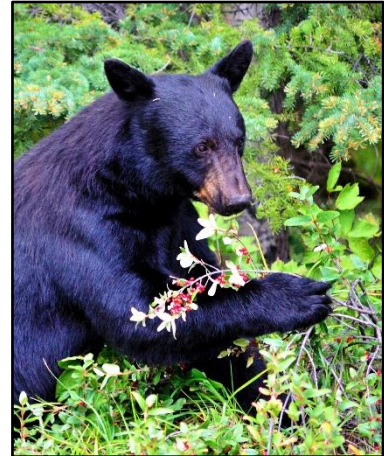
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(Bears In August Continued)

August Means Berry Good Eating

Berries, called soft mast, are a very important food source for bears. Blueberries, raspberries, wild plums, blackberries, pin cherry, chokecherry, crab apples, serviceberries, viburnum, pawpaw, and other seasonal berries ripen in July and August and persist into September in some parts of the country.

Berries are small and grow in dispersed patches; a pound of most wild berries has fewer than 300 calories. Bears are big and trying to get bigger, so they need to find and eat as many berries as possible. Once a bear finds a good patch it will spend many hours patiently stripping off the berries with its tongue and lips.



Social Signals Influence Bears

In August and September many bears travel extensively throughout and even beyond their home ranges searching for those elusive bumper crops of berries and nuts. How do they know where to go? Some head to reliable sources they've used in the past. Some bears rely on other bears to lead the way. A bear's nose is so sensitive it can decode a lot of information just by sniffing claw marks, tracks and scat. Scents left behind can help them decide if they want to follow along.

Bad Food Years Impact Travel

You might think that a bear would naturally go exploring if it was slim pickings at home, but bears seem to have an ability to figure out if a food failure is local or widespread. If it's local, they will leave. If it was a widespread regional failure, like a late frost or an insect infestation or natural disaster that wiped out berry crops, many bears will stick closer to home and explore all their options. That's because traveling long distances and burning lots of calories for no reward isn't a good investment of bear energy. So, remember to be extra-vigilant if your area has been impacted.

IF YOU ENCOUNTER A BEAR IN YOUR BACKYARD

- From a safe distance, make loud noises, shout, or bang pots and pans together to scare away the bear.
- When the bear leaves, remove potential attractants such as garbage, bird seed/feeders, or pet food.
- Ask neighbors to remove attractants.
- Check your yard and surrounding areas for bears before letting out your dog. ([Dogs + Bears = Trouble](#))



Explore our online resources at [BearWise.org](https://www.BearWise.org) so you can avoid attracting bears.

Thank you for doing your part to keep bears and other wildlife wild!

Thank you, Minnesota Department of Natural Resources for the swimming bear photo BearWise®. Created by bear biologists. Supported by State Wildlife Agencies.

Dedicated to helping people live responsibly with black bears.

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