

# around the year

A JOURNEY THROUGH THE SEASONS AND THE CHRISTIAN YEAR



## AUGUST DAYS

by John Burroughs

AN EXCERPT FROM *THE WRITINGS OF JOHN BURROUGHS*, VOL. XIII (1904)

One of our well-known poets, in personifying August, represents her as coming with daisies in her hair. But an August daisy is a sorry affair; it is little more than an empty, or partly empty, seed-vessel. In the Northern States the daisy is in her girlhood and maidenhood in June; she becomes very matronly early in July, and by or before August she is practically defunct.

A relative of the daisy, the orange-colored hawkweed (*Hieracium aurantiacum*), is often at the height of its beauty in August, when its deep vivid orange is a delight to the eye. It repeats in our meadows and upon our hilltops the flame of the columbine of May, intensified. The personified August with these flowers in her hair would challenge our admiration and not our criticism. Unlike the daisy, it quickly sprouts again when cut down with the grass in the meadows, and renews its bloom.

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# From the Editor's Desk

August 1, 2016

Dear Readers:

As you might have noticed, I'm pretty quick to sing nature's praises whenever possible. However, I must be honest and tell you that summer here in the Northeast has been h-o-t, **hot**, and I've found it a challenge to embrace the heat. As I was pulling together pieces for this month's newsletter, I found myself wishing it was September instead of August!

But, let's not succumb to despair (or the humidity!) just yet, because August does have its charms:

**Mushrooms, wildflowers, and birds** among them, as detailed by naturalist **John Burroughs** in his piece "**August Days**" (which leads off this month's newsletter).

Taking this decidedly optimistic view a bit further will bring us closer to the worldview of the famous American poet **Walt Whitman**, to whom everything and everyone on Earth is a **miracle** (see page 5).

And, speaking of miracles, don't forget to celebrate the **Feast of the Transfiguration** on August 6<sup>th</sup>. This special day in the Church year commemorates the moment at which Christ's divine nature was revealed to three of His disciples on the summit of Mt. Tabor—their eyes could finally see what had been there all along (see page 6).

This month's children's book titles might take some work to acquire (two of them are out-of-print) but if you can find them, you will be rewarded for your efforts! I'm particularly enamored with the **Molly Brett** book ***Two in a Tent***, which hails from a series of absolutely gorgeous paperback books published by the **Medici Society** in England during the 1960s through the 1990s. The series is quite collectible these days, but used copies are still fairly easy to find.

Despite the heat, I'm looking forward to spending the next few weeks with my children at home before the hustle and bustle of the school year starts back up again. I'd love to spend a day at the seaside before summer ends—what are your plans for the rest of the summer? Share them with us at

[facebook.com/aroundtheyear.org](https://www.facebook.com/aroundtheyear.org)!

*Kelli Ann Wilson, Editor*

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Coming to *around the year* in September:

Michaelmas, preserving autumn leaves, & more!



*continued from page 1*

Nature has, for the most part, lost her delicate tints in August. She is tanned, hirsute, freckled, like one long exposed to the sun. Her touch is strong and vivid. The coarser, commoner wayside flowers now appear,—vervain, eupatorium, mimulus, the various mints, asters, golden-rod, thistles, fireweed, mulleins, motherwort, catnip, blueweed, turtlehead, sunflowers, clematis, evening primrose, lobelia, gerardia, and, in the marshes, vast masses of the purple loosestrife. Mass and intensity take the place of delicacy and furtiveness. The spirit of Nature has grown bold and aggressive; it is rank and coarse; she flaunts her weeds in our faces. She wears a thistle on her bosom.

The characteristic odors of August are from fruit—grapes, peaches, apples, pears, melons—and the ripening grain; yes, and the blooming buckwheat.

About the most noticeable bird in August in New England is the yellowbird, or goldfinch. This is one of the last birds to nest, seldom hatching its eggs till late in July. There is no prettier sight at this season than a troop of young goldfinches, led by their parents, going from thistle to thistle along the roadside and pecking the ripe heads to pieces for the seed. The plaintive call of the young is one of the characteristic August sounds.

It is on the dewy August mornings that one notices the webs of the little spiders in the newly mown meadows. They look like

gossamer napkins spread out upon the grass,—thousands of napkins far and near. The farmer looks upon it as a sign of rain; but the napkins are there every day; only a heavier dew makes them more pronounced one morning than another.

August days are for the most part tranquil days; the fret and hurry of the season are over. We are on the threshold of autumn. Nature dreams and meditates; her veins no longer thrill with the eager, frenzied sap; she ripens and hardens her growths; she concentrates; she begins to make ready for winter.

—J.B.

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Image: Orange Hawkweed (known locally as Indian Paintbrush or Devil's Paintbrush) via *Wikimedia*

# THE HAY

by M.A.L. and Margaret Lane

AN EXCERPT FROM *ALL THE YEAR ROUND PART IV, SUMMER* (1896)

The new-mown hay lay on the sunny hillside.

"Yesterday," it said, "I was full of life, ready to do my part in the world. Why must I die? Dear Wind, can you tell me why?"

The west wind bent low with a sigh of pity. "Be comforted, dear

heart," he said. "It is true that the butterflies mourn for you to-day, and it seems hard to die. But in this way you will give your best gifts to the world.

"You have drunk deep of all earth's richness and goodness. Now you will give these again to man's helpers,—the faithful beasts of the field. Your fragrance is as sweet as the blossoming of flowers; but better than fragrance is a life nobly given in the service of others.

"There are plants not far from here that will never be cut down. They are large and strong, but they have none of your helpfulness and sweetness. When the day comes for them to die they will fall unnoticed because they are only useless weeds. Would you indeed change places with them?"

Then the hay was comforted and it slept.

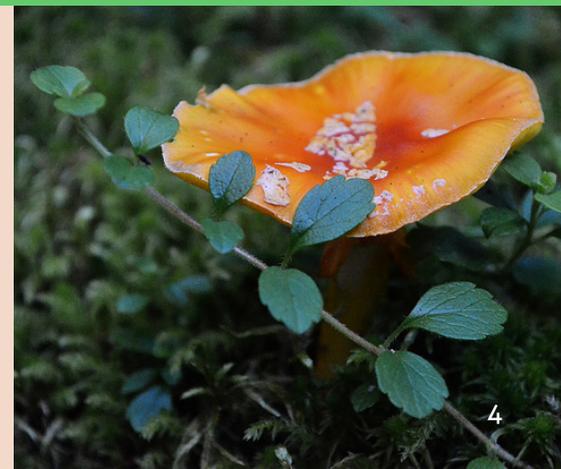
—M.A.L.L. & M.L.



## QUOTE

August is the month of the mushrooms,—those curious abnormal flowers of a hidden or subterranean vegetation, invoked by heat and moisture from darkness and decay as the summer wanes.

—John Burroughs





**Miracles** by Walt Whitman (1900)

WHY! who makes much of a miracle?

As to me, I know of nothing else but miracles,

Whether I walk the streets of Manhattan,

Or dart my sight over the roofs of houses toward the sky,

Or wade with naked feet along the beach, just in the edge of the water,

Or stand under trees in the woods,

Or talk by day with any one I love—or sleep in the bed at night with any one I love,

Or sit at table at dinner with my mother,

Or look at strangers opposite me riding in the car,

Or watch honey-bees busy around the hive, of a summer forenoon,

Or animals feeding in the fields,

Or birds—or the wonderfulness of insects in the air,

Or the wonderfulness of the sun-down—or of stars shining so quiet and bright,

Or the exquisite, delicate, thin curve of the new moon in spring;

Or whether I go among those I like best, and that like me best—mechanics, boatmen, farmers,

Or among the savans—or to the soiree—or to the opera,

Or stand a long while looking at the movements of machinery,

Or behold children at their sports,

Or the admirable sight of the perfect old man, or the perfect old woman,

Or the sick in hospitals, or the dead carried to burial,

Or my own eyes and figure in the glass;

These, with the rest, one and all, are to me miracles,

The whole referring—yet each distinct, and in its place.

To me, every hour of the light and dark is a miracle,

Every cubic inch of space is a miracle,

Every square yard of the surface of the earth is spread with the same,

Every foot of the interior swarms with the same;

Every spear of grass—the frames, limbs, organs, of men and women, and all that concerns them,

All these to me are unspeakably perfect miracles.

To me the sea is a continual miracle;

The fishes that swim—the rocks—the motion of the waves—the ships, with men in them,

What stranger miracles are there?



## CELEBRATING THE FEAST OF THE TRANSFIGURATION

*When the doors of perception are cleansed, then we would see everything as it is—infinite.*

—William Blake

The Feast of the Transfiguration is celebrated each year on August 6<sup>th</sup>. The Transfiguration is the occasion on which Jesus revealed His divine nature to Peter, James, and John at the summit of Mt. Tabor. Of course, Jesus was never anyone but Himself, but it is at the Transfiguration that His followers were able to truly see Him with clarity for the first time. Here is the story, as it is related in Matthew chapter 17, verses 1-9:

<sup>1</sup>Jesus took with him Peter and James and his brother John and led them up a high mountain, by themselves. <sup>2</sup>And he was transfigured before them, and his face shone like the sun, and his clothes became dazzling white. <sup>3</sup>Suddenly there appeared to them Moses and Elijah, talking with him. <sup>4</sup>Then Peter said to Jesus, "Lord, it is good for us to be here; if you wish, I will make three dwellings here, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah."

<sup>5</sup>While he was still speaking, suddenly a bright cloud overshadowed them, and from the cloud a voice said, "This is my Son, the Beloved; with him I am well pleased; listen to him!" <sup>6</sup>When the disciples heard this, they fell to the ground and were overcome by fear. <sup>7</sup>But Jesus came and touched them, saying, "Get up and do not be afraid." <sup>8</sup>And when they looked up, they saw no one except Jesus himself alone.

<sup>9</sup>As they were coming down the mountain, Jesus ordered them, "Tell no one about the vision until after the Son of Man has been raised from the dead."

The timing of the Feast of the Transfiguration coincides with the summer harvest, and indeed several Christian traditions reflect this connection. At mass on the Feast of the Transfiguration, the Pope of the Roman Catholic Church typically crushes grapes into the communion chalice, while in the Eastern Orthodox tradition priests bless the orchards on this day. Just as the fruit of the harvest can be seen as the

completion of the life cycle of the flower from which it grows, the Transfiguration can be seen as the maturation of the life of Jesus Christ.

Here are some ideas for celebrating the Feast of the Transfiguration:

- Walk in nature and observe the moment when the blooms of the field and forest have ripened into fruit, but have not yet been harvested.
- Offer up baskets of summer fruit to friends and neighbors
- If you have fruit trees or bushes growing on your property, this is the time for blessing them.
- Prepare a meal featuring grapes (or other summer fruit). Children might also enjoy arranging several varieties of grapes in a clean basket to be used as a centerpiece.

—K.W.

Sources: *Holidays and Holy Nights* by Christopher Hill; Charming the Birds from the Trees (blog) Image: *Landschaft mit Verklärung Christi* by Francesco Zuccarelli (1788)

## AUGUST 2016

(A) Anglican/Episcopalian; (R) Roman Catholic; (O) Eastern Orthodox

**August 6th: FEAST OF THE TRANSFIGURATION OF OUR LORD** (A)(R)(O)

**August 7th: Twelfth Sunday after Pentecost (Proper 14)**

**August 11th:** Feast of St. Clare of Assisi, patroness of goldsmiths and needleworkers.

**August 14th: Thirteenth Sunday after Pentecost (Proper 15)** and the Feast of Blessed Jonathan Daniels, martyr. (A)

**August 15th: FEAST OF THE ASSUMPTION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY** (A)(R)

**August 20th:** Feast of St. Bernard of Clairvaux, patron of beekeepers and candlemakers.

**August 21st: Fourteenth Sunday after Pentecost (Proper 16)**

**August 24th: FEAST OF ST. BARTHOLOMEW THE APOSTLE** (A)

**August 27th:** Feast of St. Monica, mother of Augustine (A)(R)

**August 28th: Fifteenth Sunday after Pentecost (Proper 17)** and Feast of St. Augustine, patron of brewers, printers, and theologians. (A)(R)

**August 31st:** Feast of St. Aiden of Lindisfarne, patron of firefighters. (A)(R)

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I'm currently looking for individuals who might be interested in contributing to *around the year* (both the website and the newsletters). If you would like to contribute, please contact me! [kelli@aroundtheyear.org](mailto:kelli@aroundtheyear.org)

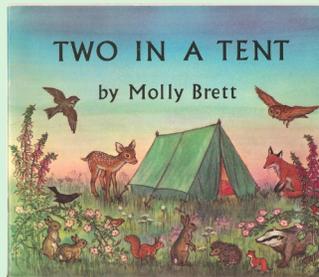


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## Recommended Reading

CHILDREN'S BOOKS FOR THE MONTH OF AUGUST



*Two in a Tent*, written and illustrated by Molly Brett

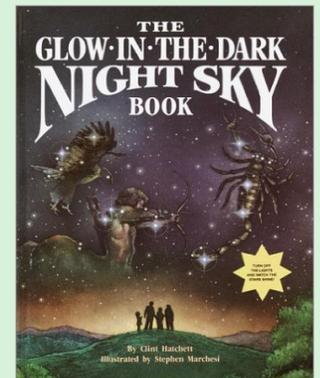
*From the publisher:*

The tale of Susan and David and their camping trip through the woods and all the wildlife they encounter. A great lead in for young readers interested in field study identification.

*The Glow-in-the-Dark Night Sky Book*, written by Clint Hatchett, illustrated by Stephen Marchesi

*From the publisher:*

Turn off the lights and watch 34 constellations glow in the dark! This unique, convenient guide to the night sky has star maps that shine after exposure to light. The maps, arranged by season, cover constellations of the Northern Hemisphere. Instructions on how to use the book are included. An appendix explains the mythology behind each constellation.



*Tiny's Big Adventure*, written by Martin Waddell, illustrated by John Lawrence

*From the publisher:*

Tiny Mouse has never been to the cornfield before, so he's thrilled that his sister will take him. It's the perfect place to play games, but it's also full of strange new sights that make Tiny quiver and call out for his sister, who helps him feel braver. With boldly animated illustrations and a sympathetic story, *Tiny's Big Adventure* captures all the excitement—

and trepidation—of a first-time experience.