



APRIL PHENOLOGY

A reflective look at 2013

by Jim Gilbert, Naturalist

The season of frozen beauty and survival, April is winter's last act. The first half of the month usually remains cold and cloudy, but warmer temperatures and sunshine often appear mid-month and continue on into May. Listed below are a few observations from a year ago in the Twin Cities Metro area, Waconia and areas beyond when indicated. These events can be used to anticipate upcoming happenings and will help you compare 2014 with last year.

April 1 * There's an influx of American Robins and male Red-winged Blackbirds today. The landscape is nearly snow-free. It's a chilly 36°F high (normal high is 50°F) for the Twins baseball home opener.

April 4 * Today's a bit warmer—a high of 53°F—but it's only the second time this year at MSP Int'l Airport that 50°F or above is recorded. Dark-eyed Juncos gather at feeding stations, American Robins hunt on lawns, pairs of Canada Geese stand on ice of wetland territories, and male Red-winged Blackbirds sing from the cattails.

April 19 * The second spring snowstorm drops 11.5" of new snow in Chaska, 15" in Elk River, 18" in Duluth and 25" in Isabella. Robins gobble sumac berries.

April 20 * The 21°F low at MSP Int'l Airport today is the first record low temperature in nearly nine years. With great sap runs and high-quality syrup, this spring is the best maple syruping in 20 years.

APR.

5

The first Brown-headed Cowbirds arrive. Maple sap is running. The first Great Egret arrives in Rice, MN.



April 6 * Migrant species returning today include: Pied-billed Grebe, American Coot, Northern Shoveler and Eastern Phoebe. The first White Pelicans arrive in the Fairmont area.

April 7 * The first Ring-billed Gulls arrive. People are still ice fishing on area lakes. Last year at this time, we were running about a month early, ice cover was gone from nearly all northern Minnesota lakes, and southern Minnesota farmers were already doing field work!

April 10 * The first Purple Martins arrive.

April 11 * A spring snowstorm smothers Waconia in 6" of snow; St. Cloud receives 8.2" and Marshall gets a foot. Over 20 species of birds come to feeding stations; Dark-eyed Juncos are the most numerous.

April 17 * Small ponds become ice-free. Today is the ice-out date for Wells Lake in Faribault.

APR.

21

Wood Ducks are checking out nest boxes and some have begun laying eggs. Some Canada Geese are incubating eggs.



April 22 * Another spring snowstorm! 3" of snow falls in Waconia, 8" in Duluth and 10" at Northfield. Dark-eyed Juncos, Fox Sparrows, Red-winged Blackbirds and other bird species join in an eating frenzy at feeding stations.

April 25 * Today is sunny with a high of 51°F. Western chorus frogs and wood frogs have started calling. Sharp-lobed hepatica begins blooming in woodlands.

April 26 * We hit the first 60°F and 70°F marks today. Brown Thrashers arrive. The first mourning cloak butterfly takes flight. About two-dozen Common Loons gather in one of the only open-water spots on Lake Minnetonka.

APR.

28

The first Yellow-headed Blackbirds arrive. First 80°F day. Today's the ice-out date for both Lake Harriet and Lake Calhoun in Minneapolis.



April 30 * The first Baltimore Orioles visit several Twin Cities locations. Early House Wrens are back and singing. This month ended up being the 13th coldest and 3rd snowiest April on record.