



APRIL PHENOLOGY

A reflective look at 2011

by Jim Gilbert, Naturalist

Mild days with occasional rain or snow and a greening landscape characterize the month of April. 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 this year with last.

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The landscape is about three-fourths snow-free now and people rake and clean up their yards. Bald Eagles incubate their eggs, and the first female American Robins return.



Apr. 2 * Today's high of 54°F in the Twin Cities is the warmest so far in 2011, contributing to excellent maple sap runs. The first garter snakes are out sunning, and the first Purple Martins arrive.

Apr. 3 * Today is the ice-out date for small ponds. Great Egrets arrive and the first western chorus frogs call. Canada Geese pairs claim their wetland nesting territories. More first arrivals include: Hermit Thrushes, Red-breasted Mergansers and Black-crowned Night Herons. The first migrating Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers arrive in Minneapolis, Eagan, Burnsville and Avon.

Migrating Yellow-rumped Warblers, Northern Flickers and Ospreys first arrive; then 14 Common Loons appear on Lower Sakatah Lake in Rice County.



Apr. 6 * The season's first painted turtles sun themselves on a pond log. Tree Swallows flit over marshes.

Apr. 10 * The temperature reaches above 70°F today. The last snow pile remnants melt. Wood ticks emerge from hibernation and pasqueflowers bloom on prairies as the maple sap/syrup season ends.

Apr. 12 * The first Brown Thrashers arrive. Some Canada Geese, Common Mallards and Wood Ducks incubate eggs. Bloodroots bloom.

Apr. 13 * Today is the ice-out date for Lake Waconia (average is April 12). Gardeners plant onions, potatoes, peas, beets, carrots and lettuce. Observers record the first Eastern Bluebird egg in Faribault (about 5 days ahead of normal).

Apr. 17 * Dutchman's-breeches, forsythia and vernal witchhazel shrubs bloom. It's the last day of skiing this season at Lutsen Mountains.

Apr. 18 * The first rhubarb is ready to harvest.

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Snow! The spring landscape whitens from an inch of fresh snow. Song and Chipping Sparrows, American Robins and Red-winged Blackbirds sing as snow falls. A few very-late-to-migrate Dark-eyed Juncos linger.



Apr. 25 * Homeowners dust off their lawn mowers for the first time today. White-throated Sparrows and Ruby-crowned Kinglets pass through the Twin Cities area. Large-flowered bellworts begin blooming.

Apr. 26 * As ice retreats from northern Minnesota lakes, Common Loons arrive.

Apr. 30 * The first Baltimore Orioles, Rose-breasted Grosbeaks and Chimney Swifts return today.

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