



# JANUARY PHENOLOGY

*A reflective look at 2012*

by Jim Gilbert, Naturalist

*Here in Minnesota, January averages out to be the coldest month of the year.* Despite the cold, careful observers will notice signs of spring this month. Yes, one season slides slowly into another. 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 2013 with last year.

**January 1** \* Only a little over an inch of snow covers the landscape (in contrast, on New Year's Day 2011, one foot of snow covered the Twin Cities area and the high temperature was just 9°F). Flocks of Bohemian and Cedar Waxwings feed on American mountain ash fruit in the Grand Marais area.

**January 4** \* High of 37°F. A Northern Cardinal sings the first "what-cheer, cheer, cheer..." spring song. Nearly 25 percent of Minnesota is in a severe drought.

**January 5** \* Redwood Falls and Canby, MN reach record highs of 60°F and 63°F. According to the MN State Climate Office, there's never been a report of 60s during the first week in January, until today.

**January 6** \* High of 46°F. Black-capped Chickadees whistle their first "fee-bee" spring songs. Spotters across Minnesota report seeing Snowy Owls.

JAN.

8

**Spring bird music is in the air! We hear the nasal "whi, whi, whi,..." song of the White-breasted Nuthatch, the flicker-like spring call of the Red-bellied Woodpecker, the "pumphandle" call of the Blue Jay, and woodpeckers drumming. Songless Pileated, Hairy and Downy Woodpeckers drum on resonant objects.**

**January 10** \* The landscape is brown. Golfers enjoy the record high of 52°F. The first 10 days of January in the Twin Cities are the warmest for this period on record. Ice thickness is 10 inches on Lake Minnetonka and Gull Lake.

**January 14** \* White-tailed deer lose their antlers. Bald Eagles hunt where they find open water. We're halfway through meteorological winter, which began Dec. 1.

**January 16** \* A brown winter continues over much of Minnesota. The annual John Beargrease Dogsled Race, scheduled for later in January, is canceled due to lack of snow.

JAN.

18

**American Crows roost in large flocks of hundreds to a thousand-plus, a behavior called communal roosting. With a low of -1°F in the Twin Cities today, we tie the old record for the season's latest "first below zero" reading.**



**January 19** \* It's a low of -11°F, the coldest day of the month. A dozen bird species flock to feeding stations including Mourning Doves, Dark-eyed Juncos and Northern Cardinals. Near Faribault, seven Eastern Bluebirds drink from a heated birdbath.

**January 21** \* Pine Grosbeaks and Pine Siskins are numerous in the Lutsen area. A count in the Mississippi River bluffs area of SE MN and nearby Wisconsin and Iowa records 125 Golden Eagles.

**January 24** \* People report seeing Snowy Owls in Duluth and the Twin Cities area.

**January 29** \* Despite just giving birth to cubs, mother black bears resume hibernating in their dens. Common Ravens perform their spectacular courtship flights.

**January 30** \* Great Horned Owls begin nesting.

**January 31** \* High of 45°F. About two-thirds of the landscape is snow-free. Since the winter solstice on Dec. 21, we've gained 58 minutes of daylight.

