



# MARCH PHENOLOGY

*A reflective look at 2012*

by Jim Gilbert, Naturalist

*March can be a snowy time,* but by the end of the month storms are more likely to bring rain than snow. 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.

**Mar. 2** \* 4" of snow covers the landscape. First migratory American Robins return. They're flighty, calling and singing with great enthusiasm. Horned Larks linger along country roads.

**Mar. 6** \* First 60°F day of the year (April 7 in 2011). Early Song Sparrows arrive to sing and mark their new territory. The first American Woodcock and Killdeers, plus flocks of Canada Geese return. A large flock of waterfowl push into southern Minnesota; thousands of ducks and geese fly overhead. The first Great Blue Herons arrive at Faribault, where Eastern Bluebirds are also arriving.

**Mar. 7** \* Temporary ponds dot the landscape, which is now about half snow-free.



**Record high of 66°F in the Twin Cities. The first male Red-winged Blackbirds return, and they sing in wetlands across the state.**

**Mar. 11** \* Another record high of 66°F in the Twin Cities. Some golf courses open. The landscape is about 90% snow-free. This ends up being the last of the snow for the season (a total of only 22.3" is produced). First Wood Ducks and Common Grackles arrive. Eastern chipmunks are out and about. Common snowdrops are just first blooming.

**Mar. 14** \* First 70°F day (in 2012). Record high of 73°F in the Twin Cities. Good maple sap run. Western chorus frogs and wood frogs share their first calling.

**Mar. 15** \* Sandhill Cranes chatter. Ice-out date for both Wells Lake and Cannon Lake at Faribault.

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**Another record high for the year; this time 79°F at MSP International Airport. Much spring bird music is in the air, including Mourning Doves cooing and Red-winged Blackbirds trilling. Ice-out date for Lake Pepin in Lake City area.**



**Mar. 17** \* First 80°F of the year. The new record high of 80°F at MSP International is the earliest 80°F ever recorded in the Twin Cities. Results of the warm day include Common Loons arriving, American elms and silver maple trees blooming, and the first greening of grasses on south-facing slopes.

**Mar. 18** \* Ice covers leave Lake Waconia, Lake Harriet in Minneapolis and Lake Phalen in St. Paul.

**Mar. 19** \* The first thunderstorm rolls in. Sharp-lobed hepatica begin to bloom. Ice-out date for Green Lake at Spicer, and White Bear Lake.

**Mar. 23** \* Lawns are green. Wood Ducks and Canada Geese are laying eggs, and Tree Swallows are returning. Painted turtles are coming out of hibernation. The first bloodroot flowers open in woodlands. Apricot trees begin blooming, and Star magnolia trees and forsythia shrubs are loaded with flowers.

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**First Great Egrets return.**

**Mar. 31** \* Black-capped Chickadees and Eastern Bluebirds begin to build nests. Magnolia and apricot trees, and crocuses and daffodils are blooming nicely.

