



# MARCH PHENOLOGY

*A reflective look at 2011*

by Jim Gilbert, Naturalist

*March can be a snowy month,* but with longer days and warmer temperatures spring is in the air. 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. 1** \*Today, day one of meteorological spring, about 21" of snow covers the landscape. We've gained 2 hours and 21 minutes of daylight since the winter solstice on December 21, and today's temperature lifts to 41°F under mostly sunny skies. Black-capped Chickadees and Northern Cardinals sing, and the first male wintering Mourning Dove coos. In northeastern Minnesota, Bald Eagles and Common Ravens build nests.

**Mar. 5** \*Today, the first eastern chipmunk darts about. The snow is about 18" deep.

**Mar. 12** \*The snow is still about a foot deep as sugar maple tree tapping begins.

MAR  
15

**With a high of 42°F, maple sap starts flowing a bit. An early pair of Canada Geese stand on a frozen pond. Eastern Bluebirds return to Faribault area, and New London residents report seeing a Great Blue Heron.**

**Mar. 16** \*The temperature hits 50°F today, and the first Red-winged Blackbirds, migrating American Robins and Tundra Swans return.

**Mar. 17** \*The first Sandhill Cranes, Killdeers, Wood Ducks and Common Grackles return on this day, which reaches a high of 53°F. Large V formations of Canada Geese head north: V after V after V.



MAR  
19

**More Wood Ducks and Great Blue Herons return. A Common Mallard hen investigates a nest site as the season's first thunderstorm rolls in. Song Sparrows arrive in Montgomery.**



**Mar. 23** \*Snowstorm! 4" fall in Chanhassen, 8" in Brooklyn Park, and about 13" in Brainerd.

**Mar. 25** \*A flock of Snow Geese glides over Lakeville.

**Mar. 26** \*A Ring-necked Pheasant crows a double squawk, Turkey Vultures appear and an American Woodcock puts on a display near Northfield.

MAR  
27

**The landscape is a persistent white, but the snow level is down to about 3" now. American Robins repeatedly sing "cheer-up," while Red-winged Blackbirds trill amongst the cattails. Common Grackles and Canada Geese add to the chorus.**



**Mar. 29** \*Spotters report a good hawk migration this season. Folks at the Linnaeus Arboretum in St. Peter spy their first 13-lined ground squirrel.

**Mar. 30** \*Maple sap runs well this season. Hundreds of Tundra Swans gather in flooded fields in Carver County.

**Mar. 31** \*The landscape is now about two-thirds free of snow cover. The first Hooded Mergansers, Belted Kingfishers and Eastern Phoebes enter the area.