



MARCH PHENOLOGY

A reflective look at 2010

by Jim Gilbert, Naturalist

March can be a snowy month, but with warmer temperatures and longer days, spring is in the air! Mild days with occasional rain or snow and a greening landscape characterize the month of April. Below are some observations from a year ago in the Twin Cities and Waconia areas and beyond. These events can be used to anticipate upcoming spring occurrences and will help you to compare this year with last.

March 1 * Nearly 16 inches of snow covers the landscape. Crocus leaves are up about two inches near south-facing foundations. The Mississippi River is starting to open at Hastings.

March 2 * Warmest day yet in 2010. First 40°F air temperature reading. High of 42°F in Twin Cities and 40°F at International falls.

March 3 * First maple sap running.

March 5 * **First American kestrel returns to Faribault area**

March 11 * First thunderstorm. Snow depth down to just six inches. Earthworms on the sidewalk. At Lanesboro, first migrating eastern bluebirds arrives.

March 14 * Record high of 64°F in the Twin Cities. First crocus flowers open. Migration is breaking out in the Winona area, with great blue herons, American coots, killdeers and lots of red-winged blackbirds seen. Sandhill cranes heard and seen in Shoreview and Lino Lakes.

March 15 * **Migratory American robins first return.**



March 16 * First woodchuck out sunning. Flocks of tundra swans observed over Dakota County. Horned larks singing in fields near Hastings. In Maple Grove, wild tom turkeys seen fanning their tails in display and heard gobbling.

March 17 * High of 62°F. First western chorus frogs singing. V-formations of tundra swans fly overhead. There are many sightings of great blue herons. A dozen duck species—including northern pintails, buffleheads and hooded mergansers—are seen on open water spots.



MARCH 19

First wood ducks returned and were ready to check out nesting boxes.



March 21 * The flooded Red River of the North crests at Fargo/Moorhead.

March 24 * High of 55°F. Dramatic influx of wood ducks. Some golf courses open. Ice-out date for Lake Pepin at Lake City.

March 28 * First painted turtle up on log in pond sunning itself. Blue jays and white-breasted nuthatches carrying nesting materials.



MARCH 29

Eastern bluebirds begin nest building. Canada goose on nest in cattail marsh.

March 30 * First 70°F or above air temperature. High of 75°F at MSP International Airport. First wood frogs calling.