



# OCTOBER PHENOLOGY

*A reflective look at 2011*

by Jim Gilbert, Naturalist

*October is a month of colorful landscapes.* It's often punctuated by warm spells known as an *Indian Summer*, a period of above-normal temperatures with little or no wind following the first frost. 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 2012 with last year.

**October 1** \* Spectacular fall foliage erupts throughout the state, including golden yellows on native basswood and paper birch trees, and big patches of bright reds and burnt-oranges on sugar maples.

**October 3** \* Today is the last record of a Ruby-throated Hummingbird spotted in Minnesota.

**October 4** \* Today is a great day to view fall colors throughout the central and southern parts of the state. It's the overall peak for fall colors in the Twin Cities, Waconia, St. Peter and Northfield.

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**Fox Sparrows join White-throated Sparrows and Dark-eyed Juncos at feeding stations; their presence announces that cold weather is imminent.**



**October 9** \* Apple growers pick Haralson, Regent, Honeygold and Fireside varieties. Autumn's illuminated woods continue. Along the North Shore at Lutsen, there are still pockets of fall colors such as golden-yellows on groves of quaking aspens, and lingering reds and oranges on moose maples.

**October 11** \* In southern Minnesota, the bare trees of deciduous forests offer favorable bird watching conditions. The last annual cicadas buzz.

**October 13** \* The first Harris' Sparrows arrive at feeding stations. The last of the warblers migrate through the area. Turkey Vultures head south.

**October 15** \* Today is the last recorded sighting of a monarch butterfly in Minnesota. Noisy flocks of American Robins migrate through central and southern Minnesota.

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**Today 4,958 Sandhill Cranes gather in a wildlife area in Sherburne County.**



**October 19** \* The first Purple Finches arrive at feeding stations today. Lingering pockets of fall colors remain.

**October 21** \* A 32°F reading at the MSP International Airport marks the official end of the growing season—171 days after the last 32°F temperature on May 2.

**October 23** \* An astounding count of 3,030 Common Loons collect on Mille Lacs Lake as they stage for migration.

**October 24** \* American Tree Sparrows arrive.

**October 27** \* Afton residents record their first Pine Siskin of the fall. Vocal flocks of Red-winged Blackbirds continue to assemble.

**October 28** \* Spotters in St. Paul record a visit from a small flock of Common Redpolls.

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**Migrating flocks of Tundra Swans arrive.**