



OCTOBER PHENOLOGY

A reflective look at 2013

by Jim Gilbert, Naturalist

Historically, October is a sunny month, perfect for colorful walks in the woods and visits to local apple orchards. 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 2014 with last year.

October 1 * Native sugar maples morph from green to red and burnt-orange. Green ash trees and eastern cottonwoods transform to golden-yellow. A first migrating Red-breasted Nuthatch visits a feeding station in Faribault. Fall colors begin to peak from International Falls to Duluth.

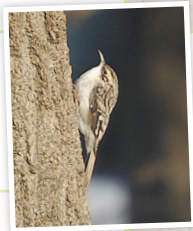
October 2 * Observers count 3,585 migrating American Goldfinches near the Lester River on the east end of Duluth. The first Dark-eyed Junco visits the Lutsen area, where warblers and kinglets also pass through.

October 3 * Farmers begin to harvest soybeans the Waconia area and other parts of southern MN, and big rafts of American Coots paddle across lakes.

October 12 * Eastern Bluebirds explore nest boxes; no doubt checking for next year. Mushroom hunters report finding white-colored giant puffballs about the size of a volleyball and a basketball.

October 13 * Twin Cities, Taylors Falls, Red Wing, and Faribault areas are in peak fall color. A scattered frost chills southern and western MN for the first time.

OCT. 16 **The first Brown Creeper arrives. Among birds at feeding stations are: Dark-eyed Juncos, Fox and White-throated Sparrows.**



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In Northern Anoka County's Cedar Creek Bog, about 30 Red-headed Woodpeckers remain; with a good acorn crop this year they may stay all winter.



October 5 * Northern Flickers, Blue Jays and American Robins migrate through southern MN and huge numbers of Red-winged Blackbirds and Common Grackles cross the landscape in long, dark "rivers" of life.

October 6 * It's the overall fall color peak from Duluth to Walker and Bemidji. The golden-yellow foliage on paper birches and aspens pops against the green of pines and spruces.

October 8 * Tomatoes are still ready to pick and garden roses, dahlias and annuals such as zinnias and cannas are still beautiful. Ruby-crowned and Golden-crowned Kinglets travel through the area. An observer records a late Ruby-throated Hummingbird. Dark-eyed Juncos arrive in the metro area.

October 10 * High temperature of 78°F. Today is the last record of an annual cicada buzzing.

October 20 * Today marks the first snow flurries and a trace of snow. Apple growers continue to pick Haralson, Fireside, Regent, Honeygold and Snow-sweet apples. These late season apples are crisp, juicy and have great flavors.

October 21 * Today marks the first ice on birdbaths.

October 22 * It's a frosty morning with 26°F recorded at the MSP International Airport. Steam rises from lakes. Frost kills tomato, zinnia, marigold and other plants. Wild Mountain is the first MN ski area to open.

October 25 * From the overlook on the Mississippi River just south of Brownsville, observers see about 200 Tundra Swans, 150 Bald Eagles and 100 White Pelicans, plus hundreds of migrating ducks including such species as Northern Pintails, Northern Shovelers and Green-winged Teal.

October 26 * Migrating Snow Buntings, Horned Larks, Lapland Longspurs and American Crows glide near the North Shore of Lake Superior.

October 31 * Hundreds—maybe even thousands—of Franklin's Gulls spend tonight and other fall nights floating near the center of Lake Waconia.