

# February Phenology

a reflective look at 2009

by Jim Gilbert



**1** The average ice thickness for Lake Waconia is 26." Eight inches of snow covers the Twin Cities; two feet at Lutsen. Flocks of redpolls come to feeding stations for Nyjer seed. A Great Horned Owl is on a nest in Dakota County. It's our earliest bird species to nest each year. Great Gray Owl seen at Wahkon.

**2** It's time to prune apple and oak trees, and to plant begonia and geranium seeds indoors. Quite a few Red-tailed Hawks are wintering-over in southern Minn. Groundhogs, also known as woodchucks, are hibernating in their burrows. Their internal clocks usually awaken them near the end of March.

**3** Pileated Woodpeckers eat American mountain ash fruit from trees along the North Shore of Lake Superior.

**6** The first bird migrants, Horned Larks, return from their southern journey.

**8** Cardinals sing loud and long more than half-hour before sunrise. We have gained 1 hour and 21 minutes since the winter solstice (Dec. 21). High temperature 37 degrees.

**10** With rain and a high of 47 degrees, temporary ponds dot the landscape and two-thirds of the area is snow-free. Lichens are bright and growing. Around 4:15 p.m. crows are seen flying to their communal roosts.

**12** Raccoons are out most nights and are very vocal. It's an irruption year for redpolls; these tiny capped finches flock to feeding stations in waves, often mixed

in with Pine Siskins and goldfinches. Still many reports of wintering robins and bluebirds.

**15** First House Finches heard singing their spring territorial songs.

**17** High of 40 degrees. Landscape about 90 percent snow-free. First woodchucks out sunning. Goldeneyes, mergansers and mallards seen in open water at Coon Rapids Dam.

**21** Back to winter wonderland again with 4-6" of new snow covering the Twin Cities area.

**24** Robins are eating hackberry tree fruit. Redpolls and siskins continue coming in numbers to many feeding stations. With temperature highs of 40 degrees in the Twin Cities and 54 degrees at Pipestone, the snow is going fast.

**26** The Twin Cities received 4-8" of snow. There is a frenzy of feeding action with juncos, cardinals, finches and nuthatches at feeding stations.

**28** Cardinals, Red-bellied Woodpeckers and Black-capped Chickadees fill the below zero air with spring music. Sunny all day and icicles grew. About 5" of snow covers the ground.



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