

January Phenology

a reflective look at 2009

by Jim Gilbert



1 About 6" of snow covers the landscape. High of 30 degrees F. A White-breasted Nuthatch is singing the "whi, whi, whi...." or "who, who, who...." spring song. Wintering American Robins seen in Waconia.

2 Pine Siskins, Common Redpolls and American Goldfinches are among the birds coming to feeding stations.

3 Heavy overcast and temperature not quite 20 degrees, and yet a cardinal in Golden Valley is reported singing its "what-cheer, cheer, cheer...." territorial spring song. About 60 Red-winged Blackbirds and close to 70 grackles are seen at a feeding station in St. Peter.

4 In Brooklyn Park, a pair of Great Horned Owls is duet hooting; they are setting up a nesting territory.

6 Robins, waxwings and bluebirds are spotted in the U of MN Landscape Arboretum.

7 Some Downy Woodpeckers like to roost in bluebird nest boxes. Near Delano, a dozen bluebirds come to drink from a heated birdbath.

9 Flock of about 75 robins observed in Eden Prairie. So far, 48" of snow have fallen this winter at Lutsen, where both Pine and Evening Grosbeaks are seen along the Caribou Trail.

10 First goldfinches are showing new yellow neck feathers. House Finches feed on green ash seeds and starlings relish crabapples.

12 Wildlife feeding stations are very busy on this snowy day. With over 5" of new snow, the landscape has a total of about a foot of snow cover. The new snow on boughs of pines, spruces and other evergreens is beautiful.

14 High of only -3 degrees F, but a chickadee "fee-bee" spring song could be heard. Arctic blast with a low of -43 degrees at Ely and -47 degrees F at Embarrass.

15 Minus 21 degrees recorded at Minneapolis/St. Paul International Airport; the coldest day in 5 years. Minus 33 degrees at Morris. A day of bright sundogs, extreme wind chills, closed schools and fluffed-up birds. A Screech Owl is found roosting in a Wood Duck house.

16 A dozen robins come to a heated bath in one yard. Overnight lows include -22 at the Twin Cities (Int'l Airport), -26 degrees at Chanhassen, -36 degrees at St. Cloud and -41 degrees at International Falls.

19 Heard first Downy Woodpecker drumming. Ice on Gull Lake, at Nisswa, is 14-18" thick. Flocks of Bohemian Waxwings feed on American mountain ash and highbush cranberry fruit in the Finland area, where 27" of snow covers the ground.

20 Near Watertown, two dozen White-winged Crossbills are spotted in a spruce tree taking seeds from cones.

21 High of 27 degrees F. First raccoon out and about.

25 Red Foxes are normally solitary but are now seen in pairs as the mating season approaches.

30 The number of Common Redpolls at feeders increases.

31 Finally a January thaw! First time above freezing for 2009 here in the Twin Cities where the high temperature hit 46 degrees F and tied the old record high set in 1995. It was a warm 47 degrees in Brainerd and 42 degrees at Duluth. Icicles disappeared and honey bees were out on cleansing flights.



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