

January Phenology

a reflective look at 2010

by Jim Gilbert



1 Close to a foot of snow covers the landscape. The high of 6 degrees and low of -9 degrees F in the Twin Cities was the coldest day since last January. Wintering American Robins are attracted to crabapples clinging to trees and to heated bird-baths. About 2,000 Common Mergansers were seen in open water near Lake Pepin.

2 A low temperature of -15 degrees F was reached at the Minneapolis/St. Paul Airport, -26 in Mankato, -30 at Brainerd and -37 at Orr. Birds came to feeding stations in droves.

3 Hearing the whistled “fee-bee” song of the Black-capped Chickadees on this below-zero day lifted our spirits as it’s considered to be a very early spring sign.

7 The “pumphandle” spring vocalization of the Blue Jay is first heard.

8 The “what-cheer, cheer, cheer” spring territorial song of the cardinal is first heard.

9 In parts of northern Minn., and Wis., Ruffed Grouse dive into powdery snow to keep warm. Lake Superior is wide open, but there are elegant ice patterns on shoreline rocks.

10 Flocks of Bohemian and Cedar Waxwings can be seen eating fruit in American ash trees in Lutsen and Grand Marais.

14 Great news! We have gained 22 minutes of daylight since the Dec. 21 solstice. The loud drumming sounds on trees made by Hairy and Downy Woodpeckers signal pair bonds and territories.

15 A flock of about 100 wintering robins was spotted near Lake Minnetonka.

16 First raccoon seen on the first above-freezing day since Christmas. High of 35 degrees F in the Twin Cities, and 43 degrees at Ely and International Falls.

19 A beautiful coating of white frost graces trees and shrubs. Great Horned Owls continue duet hooting as they set up nesting territories.

21 Lake Waconia’s ice averages 20” and walleye fishing is said to be the best in 30 years.

23 Rainy day with a high of 36 degrees. Black bear cubs are typically born this time of year while their mothers are still sleeping in dens.

30 Flying Squirrels are abundant in Minn. They come to feeding stations for sunflower seeds, suet and peanut butter. An outside light directed on the feeder will not scare them.

31 European Starlings are developing yellow on their bills, an early spring sign, as their bills change from black to yellow for the nesting season.



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