

March Phenology

a reflective look at 2009

by Jim Gilbert



1 About 5" of snow covers the landscape. Listen for the wintering Mourning Doves to begin cooing. Goldfinch males continue to show more yellow coloration. Syrup producers have started tapping maple trees.

2 In Pine County, ravens carry nesting material.

4 Common Redpolls are numerous at feeding stations. Two dozen Bald Eagles are seen at Colville Park in Red Wing. Ice on Lake Pepin is 22"; when it gets down to 16" tugs are allowed to plow through.

5 High of 42 degrees. Maple trees first running; each drop of sap striking the bottom of a bucket was a tiny drumbeat of spring. In the Chatfield area, newly arrived Eastern Bluebirds check out nest boxes.

6 High of 45 degrees. Temporary ponds dot the landscape that is now about half snow-free. The first chipmunk is seen, and also the first Canada Geese flying north. In the Grand Marais area, Pine Grosbeaks, Cedar Waxwings and Bohemian Waxwings feed on American Mountain Ash fruit.

10 Landscape white again with 3" of new snow.

12 First migratory male Red-winged Blackbirds return and sing in a marsh. Minus 35 degrees F at Embarrass.

13 Turkeys heard gobbling. First crocuses blooming.

14 First 50 degree temperature of the year. Good maple sap run. The first migratory American Robins arrive. Ospreys return to Coon Rapids Dam. At Wabasha, the first bluebirds and Turkey Vulture arrive.

15 Grackles return. First batch of maple syrup.

16 First 60 degree or above day this year. High of 66 degrees in the Twin Cities. First Wood Ducks and Killdeers. Garter Snakes out sunning, and first ants on sidewalks.

17 High of 56 degrees. Song Sparrows and Tree Swallows arrive at Coon Rapids Dam. The peenting of an American Woodcock is heard in Houston, Minn.

19 First Great Blue Heron is sighted, along with the first Redheads and Hooded Mergansers at Coon Rapids Dam.

20 Build-up in numbers of Dark-eyed Juncos at feeding stations as they prepare for their return trip north.

21 Tundra Swans migrate overhead.

22 Wood Ducks begin investigating nesting boxes.

23 High of 50 degrees. Rainy spring day. First earthworms on sidewalks. The last snow piles and drifts melt away. First towboat and barges arrive in St. Paul. Severe ice storm hits the North Shore between Silver Bay and Grand Portage. Miles of birch and aspen trees snap from the weight of the ice.

25 First Eastern Phoebe.

26 First Fox Sparrows. Great Egrets seen at Faribault.

30 An estimated 620 Tundra Swans flew over Ft. Snelling at 8:30 a.m., all headed WNW. At the Port of Duluth, the shipping season opened today.

31 Another rainy spring day means more Twin Cities area lakes lose their ice. Wood Ducks begin laying eggs. At Diamond Lake in Hennepin County, 61 Bald Eagles are counted. A foot of snow fell at Alexandria and Grand Marais.

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