



NOVEMBER PHENOLOGY

A reflective look at 2015

by Jim Gilbert, Naturalist

November usually starts out like autumn but ends up wintery.

Fall colors linger, dried grasses and herbs stand tall, waterfowl migrate, winter birds visit feeders, and ice appears. Listed below are 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 2016 with last year.

November 1 * We can still pick Haralson apples. The first migrating monarch butterflies arrive at their wintering sanctuary in Michoacan, Mexico; they may have come from Minnesota.

November 2 * Ginkgo trees display sunny-yellow leaves.

November 3 * Gardeners continue picking ripe strawberries and raspberries, and hikers gather wild grapes for refreshing snacks.

The first Pine Siskins of the season arrive at a feeding station in Faribault. Common witch-hazel, the last shrub to bloom each year, is in full bloom. Norway maples, Lombardy poplars and weeping willows show beautiful golden-yellow foliage.



November 11 * We were surprised to experience a rare November thunderstorm. The need for lawn mowing is ending.

November 14 * A very late leopard frog leaps to Lake Waconia. It's time to see and hear the V-shaped wedges of Tundra Swans overhead.

November 19 * About 10,000 migrating Canvasback Ducks can be seen on Lake Onalaska (backwaters of the Mississippi River).

November 20 * It's below freezing all day for the first time this fall, killing the remaining blooming snapdragons, petunias, red salvia, geraniums, and chrysanthemums. Feeding stations attract up to 15 bird species including Dark-eyed Juncos and Pine Siskins.

November 21 * Ice covers small ponds for the first time. Heated birdbaths are popular with birds and wildlife.

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Rafts of migrating American Coots continue to linger in some southern MN lakes. In late afternoon, long lines of American Crows head for their communal roosts. Signs of autumn persist: farmers still plow fields, an eastern chipmunk is still stirring, and dandelions bloom, but on very short stems.



November 26 * The first 1-inch snowfall of the season falls on this Thanksgiving Day. MN is home to about 40,000 Wild Turkeys, some of which come to feeding stations.

November 27 * Today is the freeze-up date for Lake Hendricks on the South Dakota border in Lincoln County, Lake George in Hubbard County near Itasca State Park, and Caribou Lake in Cook County; all remain ice-covered until spring. From the overlook 3 miles south of Brownsville, viewers observe about 10,000 Tundra Swans and numerous ducks on the Mississippi River and backwaters.

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Blue Jays relish peanuts in the shell. The low sun angle now makes driving difficult in mornings and afternoons.



Photo by Jim Weisman

November 30 * The first snowstorm of the season causes a feeding frenzy at feeding stations. Over 7 inches of snow falls at Luverne, over 6 inches at Willmar and about 4 inches in the Twin Cities.

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