



APRIL PHENOLOGY

A reflective look at 2015

by Jim Gilbert, Naturalist

April arrives on the heels of winter, greening grasses and bringing the first wildflowers and tiny tree leaves. Migrating birds continue to arrive. Listed below are a few 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.

April 1 * Today's the first 80°F or above day this year, a record high of 84°F in the Twin Cities and the first thunderstorm. Grasses green on south-facing slopes and migrating flocks of American White Pelicans arrive. It's the ice-out date for Lake Calhoun in Minneapolis and Big Stone Lake near Ortonville.



APR.

2

Canada Geese begin to lay and incubate eggs. Today's the official ice-out date for Lake Waconia (average is April 10).

April 3 * American Woodcocks continue their "peenting" and aerial displays. Greater Prairie Chickens are "booming" and displaying on their grounds in Clay County.

April 4 * Wood Ducks bob in and out of nest boxes; they're beginning to lay eggs. Eastern Bluebirds begin bringing dry grasses into nest boxes. Sandhill Cranes do courtship displays at Sherburne National Wildlife Refuge. Maple syrup season ends in southern Minnesota.

April 5 * It's the official ice-out date for Lake Minnetonka (average is April 13).

April 7 * Northern Sun Forsythia, vernal witch-hazel, common snowdrops, and snow trillium bloom at the U of MN Landscape Arboretum. The first Ospreys arrive. Lake Superior is still about half ice-covered.

April 11 * Beekeepers now install packages of honey bees. Deer shed their winter coats. Crocuses and daffodils bloom in gardens.

April 12 * The first Purple Martins arrive. Ice disappears from Gull Lake near Nisswa, Lake Carlos near Alexandria, and Otter Tail Lake in Otter Tail County. As ice leaves, common loons arrive. More than 34,000 migrating

American Robins migrate north along the Duluth-Superior shoreline.

April 13 * Eastern Phoebe and Belted Kingfishers arrive in northeast Minnesota. A first raft of American Coots arrives on Lake Waconia. Wild ginger begins blooming.

April 14 * Leopard frogs begin calling and green darner dragonflies take flight. Magnolia trees, forsythia shrubs and woodland wildflowers such as sharp-lobed hepatica, bloodroot and Dutchman's-breeches are blooming.

April 15 * Northfield- and Waconia-area farmers begin planting corn. Leech Lake's ice is out (average is April 28). Black bears are leaving their winter sleeping quarters, and Ruffed Grouse drum in NE Minnesota.

April 16 * A green tinge appears across urban forests of the Twin Cities as new tiny leaves emerge on boxelders, quaking aspens and willows.

April 18 * The first bumble bees take wing. Lawnmowers roar into service for the first time. American toads begin trilling. Chipping Sparrows arrive.

APR.

22

Brown Thrashers and Gray Catbirds return. Black-capped Chickadees and Eastern Bluebirds lay eggs. White-throated Sparrows migrate through the area.



April 24 * Warblers arrive, including Palm, Yellow-rumped and Orange-crowned species.

April 29 * Barn Swallows arrive. Common purple lilac shrubs start flowering.

April 29 * Masses of common dandelions bloom. It's the ice-out date for Lake of the Woods.