


February

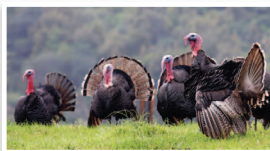
PHENOLOGY & CHECKLIST

Naturalist Jim Gilbert's observations from this time last year, plus a seasonal checklist of backyard tasks.

FEB 01 0.3 inch of snow falls at MSP Int'l Airport. (It'll turn out to be the only snowfall for February.) More **Northern Cardinals** now sing their "what-cheer, cheer..." song.

FEB 02  Lake Superior continues to be wide open with steam rising on cold days. Ice patterns form on shoreline rocks from wave spray. In northern MN, male **Common Ravens** perform awesome aerial acrobatics in the skies as part of courtship behavior. These elaborate flight maneuvers include steep dives, tumbles and rolls.

FEB 03 Near Northfield, 98 **Wild Turkeys** assemble in one field. At Lake Hendricks, in far southwest MN, 17 inches of ice—but no snow—covers the lake; walleyes and northerns are biting.




FEB 05 I hear my first-of-year **Ring-necked Pheasant** call his double squawk.

FEB 06 Just patches and old piles of snow dot the landscape.

FEB 08 A half-dozen **Horned Larks** flit around in a farm field near Afton.

FEB 09 Lake Waconia ice is 17–19 inches thick, northerns and sunfish bite during the day, crappies in the early evening, and walleyes at night. Pairs of **Horned Larks** appear in rural Faribault. The presence of migrating **Horned Larks** along southern MN country roads and in meadows, in pairs and in small flocks, is another spring sign.

FEB 10  High of 46°F. Maple syrup producers tap trees; it's the earliest tapping date in 50 years for one Waterville area syrup producer.

FEB 11 High temperature of 43°F. Maple sap flows for the first time today. About 2 feet of snow covers the Lutsen area where cross-country ski trails are in great shape, since 60 inches of snow has fallen this season so far. As much as 24 inches of ice covers Lake Mille Lacs.

☐ Provide foods loaded with fat and protein like **mealworms, suet, suet pellets, peanuts** and **sunflower out of the shell** to help birds refuel quickly during cold weather.

☐ Watch for winter visiting Pine Siskins, Red-breasted Nuthatches, Purple Finches and irruptive species like Red Polls, Great Gray and Snowy Owls.

☐ Keep an eye out for activity at typical Bald Eagle nesting sites; they begin nest building in February.

☐ Call the Wayzata store to arrange **vacation Feed-and-Fill service** to keep your feeders stocked while you are out of town.

☐ Deter ravenous squirrels by adding **Flaming Squirrel Seed Sauce** or **Fire Hot powder mix** to your seed. Also try **Flaming Hot Feast—Squirrels' Defeat seed cakes or cylinders, hot pepper suet cakes or plugs**. These taste hot to mammals, but not wild birds.



☐ Listen for the hooting duets of Barred Owls, the "wicker" call of the Red-bellied Woodpecker, the singing of House Finches and the cooing of the Morning Doves.

☐ Birds need a clean drinking water source year round. Provide a **heated birdbath**.



☐ Watch for American Goldfinches beginning to molt into their bright yellow feathers.

February

PHENOLOGY & CHECKLIST

(Continued from front)

FEB
13

High temperature of 48°F. **Red-bellied Woodpeckers** begin their loud, hoarse calls of spring. The maple sap run is good; Somerskogen Sugarbush produces its first batch of maple syrup in Minnetrista. According to NOAA, Lake Superior is only 6 percent ice-covered. At this time in 2014 it was more than 90 percent covered.

FEB
15

About 90 percent of the Twin Cities landscape is free of snow.

FEB
17

First 60°F reading of 2017. A 63°F temperature for the Twin Cities is a new record. Excellent maple sap runs continue. Somerskogen collects 750 gallons of sap from 1,000 taps.

FEB
19

Record high of 59°F in the Twin Cities. An early surge of waterfowl into Dakota County included 100s of **Greater White-fronted** and **Canada Geese**, plus ducks such as **Canvasbacks**, **Redheads** and **Northern Pintails**.

FEB
20

Rain falls from mid-morning to late afternoon. **Canada Geese** graze on old green lawn grasses. At Carpenter Nature Center near Hastings, **Sandhill Cranes** fly over and **Red-winged Blackbirds** sing. Nearby, a **Killdeer** calls during flight. In Houston County, an **American Woodcock** displays.

FEB
21

Record high of 62°F for the Twin cities; the old record of 59°F was set in 1930. At the U of MN Landscape Arboretum, honey bees visit common snowdrop flowers, and vernal witch-hazel shrubs are in full bloom. The fuzzy silver-gray pussy willow catkins are out in Anoka County.

FEB
22

Record high of 59°F in the Twin Cities. Male **Mourning Doves** begin cooing. The first male **Red-winged Blackbirds** arrive near the edge of Lake Waconia; we hear their trilled songs.

FEB
24

A **Peregrine Falcon** returns to a Golden Valley commercial building for nesting.

FEB
25

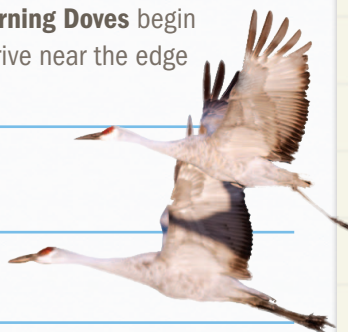
A pair of **Sandhill Cranes** returns to Ham Lake.

FEB
26

Northern Cardinals begin singing about a half-hour before sunrise.

FEB
28

Pairs of **Canada Geese** and **Trumpeter Swans** are on marsh and pond ice covers, claiming nesting territories. For the Twin Cities, 20 of 28 days this February were above average in temperature, and only 0.3 inch snow fell. According to the MN DNR, statewide data show this February was the 18th month in a row with warmer-than-average temperatures.



- ☐ Watch for the bill of the European Starling to return to its yellow mating season coloring this month.



- ☐ Refill your **heated birdbath** with cold water to reduce evaporation.
- ☐ Look for Red-tailed Hawks to return around the third week and commence their nest building.
- ☐ Keep an eye out for the arrival of spring migrants:
 - ☐ Horned Larks (early February)
 - ☐ American Crows
 - ☐ Wood Ducks
 - ☐ Red-winged Blackbirds
 - ☐ Common Grackles
 - ☐ American Robins
 - ☐ Canada Geese (end of month)

- ☐ Watch and listen for tom Wild Turkeys to gobble and fan their tails and for male pheasants to crow loud "squawk-squawks" in their mating displays.

- ☐ Participate in the **Great Backyard Bird Count** from February 16-19. See gbbc.birdcount.org for more information.

- ☐ Send your **backyard birding photos** to carol@wildbirdstore.net to be displayed on our digital sign in the stores or on our Facebook page.

- ☐ Check out what's new on our **blog** at wildbirdstore.com/blog.

