



JANUARY PHENOLOGY

A reflective look at 2013

by Jim Gilbert, Naturalist

Signs of spring are present for the careful observer this month, as one season slides slowly into another. Still, January averages out as Minnesota's coldest month of the year. 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 2014 with last year.

January 1 * Five inches of snow covers the landscape on this New Year's Day. It's partly sunny, calm and -4°F at 8:30 a.m. when the first of the year nasal "whi, whi, whi-" song comes from a White-breasted Nuthatch and the first "fee-bee" whistled song comes from the Black-capped Chickadee. Both sounds are considered to be early spring signs.

January 12 * Watching animals coming to a heated birdbath is fun! One such backyard birdbath at Lutsen attracts chickadees, nuthatches, Blue Jays, deer, gray foxes, red squirrels and more.

JAN.

2

At least 200 Bald Eagles migrate south along the Mississippi River between Hastings and Wabasha.



JAN.

13

High temperature of only 9°F. Wintering American Robins continue to feed on crabapple and hackberry tree fruit, and they may come to tray feeders for suet mixes, raisins, bread, sliced apples and other fruit.



January 5 * First Northern Cardinal of the year sings the "what-cheer!" spring song.

January 6 * Now in the coldest month of the year, nature provides signs to tell us spring is on its way: we've gained 10 minutes of daylight since the winter solstice on December 21st, and pairs of Great Horned Owls hoot a duet to declare nesting territories.

January 8 * Twenty-three bird species frequent a Northfield-area feeding station, including Common Redpolls, Pine Siskins, Wild Turkeys, Northern Flickers, Northern Cardinals and several Mourning Doves.

January 10 * Over 300 Common Goldeneyes appear along the Mississippi River at Wabasha, and close to 50 Bald Eagles at Reads Landing. Some of the birds at the world-renown Sax-Zim Bog in northeast Minnesota include: Northern Hawks, Great Gray Owls, Sharp-tailed Grouse, Hoary Redpolls, Boreal Chickadees and Evening Grosbeaks.

January 11 * A January thaw drops snow level down to only 2 inches, and creates water coatings on top of lake ice. The high temperature is 41°F.

January 15 * Meteorological winter (Dec. 1, 2013) is now half over. Many of us now hear the sharp drumming sound Downy Woodpeckers make on dead tree branches or other signal posts to celebrate pair bonds and declare territories.

January 21 * Birds are numerous and active at feeding stations today. An arctic blast results in the first sub-zero high at MSP International Airport in four years. The Twin Cities had a low of -10°F and a high of only -2°F, with a wind-chill close to -30°F.

January 24 * 42 minutes of daylight have been gained since the winter solstice. Lake Waconia has a solid ice covering of about 15 inches.

January 25 * The spring "pumphandle" call of the Blue Jay is heard. It's egg-laying time for Great Horned Owls, the earliest birds to hatch young.

JAN.

31

We end the month with below zero temperatures, cold winds, 2 inches of snow cover and beautiful sundogs.

