

# MARCH PHENOLOGY

*A reflective look at 2013*

by Jim Gilbert, Naturalist

*March can be a snowy time, but end-of-the-month storms are more likely to bring rain than snow. 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 spring occurrences and will help compare this year with last.*

**March 1** \* March comes in like a lamb. About 6" of snow covers the landscape.

**March 2** \* Northern Cardinals sing loud and long. Pine Siskins and Common Redpolls are just two of 21 bird species coming to area feeding stations. Horned Larks flit along country roads. The first eastern chipmunk is out and about. Maple syrup producers are tapping their trees.

**March 5** \* Birdfeeders are bustling with activity. Heavy snowfall, continuing from yesterday, results in many schools being closed. A total of 9.3" of snow accumulates at MSP International Airport.

**March 18** \* On this day, the ice on Lake Waconia is about 2 feet thick. In contrast, this was the ice-out date for the same lake just last year.

**March 20** \* Today is the coldest first day of astronomical spring in 48 years! The low temperature is only 5°F and the high is 21°F, with 8" of snow still on the ground. And yet, spring songs from White-breasted Nuthatches and Black-capped Chickadees ring through the bitter air. The first Sandhill Cranes return to Sherburne National Wildlife Refuge.

**March 23** \* The first Great Blue Heron arrives to the area.

**March 27** \* Today's high reaches 43°F; our warmest temperature since December 12, 2012!

**March 28** \* Red-winged Blackbirds, Common Grackles and Wood Ducks arrive. Pairs of Canada Geese stand on the ice of marshes and other wetlands, loudly declaring their nesting territories.

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**A flock of migrating Snow Geese travel over Waconia. The first Eastern Bluebirds return to southeast Minnesota.**



**March 12** \* This is the average date for Wood Ducks to return. Get those nesting boxes cleaned out and ready!

**March 13** \* Dark-eyed Juncos are singing their musical, trilling spring song.

**March 14** \* Redosier dogwood twigs look bright red—the veins of spring.

**March 15** \* First migrating American Robins return; they're whimsical and noisy. An American Crow carries nesting material.

**March 17** \* 42 Wild Turkeys congregate at a feeding station in North Branch. A fantastic green aurora display streaks above Duluth-area skies this early morning of St. Patrick's Day. Low temperatures of -29°F at Embarrass and -28°F at International Falls chill residents.

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**The first Killdeer arrive.**



**March 30** \* Today marks the first 50°F or above day (high of 56°F at MSP Int'l Airport) and first thunderstorm of the year. Temporary ponds dot the landscape, which is half snow-free. Tundra Swans, Song and Fox Sparrows, Tree Swallows, and Golden-crowned Kinglets return.

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**About 25 percent of the landscape is still snow-covered. This March goes on record as the coldest since 2002.**

