



MARCH PHENOLOGY

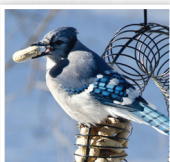
A reflective look at 2015

by Jim Gilbert, Naturalist

Winter transitions to Spring in March. Galoshes replace snow boots, ice houses exit lakes, and the first blooms peak through. Listed below are a few observations from a year ago in the Minneapolis/St. Paul and Waconia area, and beyond when indicated. These events can be used to anticipate upcoming spring occurrences and will help compare this year with last.

March 1 * Today marks the first day of meteorological spring. We've just finished the average 90 coldest days of the year and have gained 2 hours and 24 minutes of daylight since the solstice on December 21.

On this snowy day, Northern Cardinals, Blue Jays and about a dozen other winter birds are abundant and busy at feeding stations.



March 5 * The low of -7°F this morning is the low for the month of March at MSP Int'l Airport. Icicles grow as the day's high reaches the teens. A -37°F recording at Brimson, MN, is the low for the nation.

March 6 * Wintering male Mourning Doves begin their cooing and a wintering American Robin sings its first song of the season. Dark-eyed Juncos also begin singing.

March 7 * We reach a high of 44°F with sunny skies. Maple sap begins to run. A first Turkey Vulture arrives. Common Redpolls and Pine Siskins flock to Lutsen area feeding stations.

March 9 * The first migrating Canada Geese return. Lawns and fields are free of snow, but there's still about 2 inches of snow on forest floors.

March 10 * It's the first 60°F day of the year—the warmest temperature since last October 27. March 29 is the normal first 60°F day. Today's high of 66°F in the Twin Cities ties the record set in 2012.

March 12 * The first migrating American Robins return. Some golf courses are open.

March 13 * Wood Ducks, Eastern Bluebirds and Killdeer arrive. It's the peak of Bald Eagle migration through Sibley and Carver Counties. The fuzzy silver-gray pussy willow catkins are out.

March 15 * We reach the first 70°F reading of 2015, a high temperature for the month and new record high for this date in the Twin Cities. The first male Red-winged Blackbirds and Song Sparrows sing. A mourning cloak butterfly is on the wing.

March 16 * Common snowdrops begin blooming.

March 17 * The first Sandhill Cranes announce their arrival with enchanting, rattling calls.

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American Woodcocks arrive and perform courtship displays. Hooded Mergansers and other waterfowl make use of the rings of ice-free water around lakes. There's an influx of Dark-eyed Juncos.



March 22 * Today's the biggest snowfall of the season for parts of MN. Zumbrota receives the most at 12 inches, Burnsville 7 inches and MSP Int'l Airport only 3.6 inches.

March 23 * The wet snow sticks to trees and is a stimulus for very good maple sap runs. American Tree Sparrows, Dark-eyed Juncos, Northern Cardinals, Red-winged Blackbirds and others crowd feeding stations.

March 28 * The March 22 snowfall and temperatures close to 40°F each day result in bountiful maple sap collection.

March 31 * Today's high is 65°F and only a trace of snow is left. Fox Sparrows and Tree Swallows arrive. The first wood frogs and western chorus frogs begin calling. The first painted turtles are up on logs, sunning. We hear Red-wings and juncos trilling, Canada Geese honking, and American Robins singing. Yes, spring is here!