



# OCTOBER PHENOLOGY

*A reflective look at 2015*

by Jim Gilbert, Naturalist

*October days light up with sunshine and colorful leaves.* Expect the first frosts and warm Indian summer days with little or no wind. 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 2015 with last year.

**October 1** \* A bounty of wild grapes are available as snacks for hikers, and of course for American Robins, Cedar Waxwings, Northern Cardinals, and other wildlife.

**A very-late-to-migrate Ruby-throated Hummingbird lands in Faribault and two last Chimney Swifts descend a chimney in LeSueur this evening.**



**October 5** \* Farmers combine soybean fields in southern MN. Other farmers harvest their fifth alfalfa crop, do some plowing, and begin combining corn.

**October 7** \* The Ely area displays colorful fall foliage; especially outstanding are the mostly red mountain maples.

**October 8** \* Autumn colors are beautiful from Hinckley to Moose Lake to Duluth and the North Shore of Lake Superior.

**October 11** \* Asian beetles are abundant in the Twin Cities and nearby. A very late migrating monarch butterfly flits through the area. It's a warm day in the Upper Midwest: 85°F in the Twin Cities, 83°F in Duluth, plus at least 50 MN communities report new high temperature records—including a new statewide record for this date of 97°F at Sabin and Wheaton on the western edge of the state.

**October 13** \* Dark-eyed Juncos arrive at many feeding stations. More than a dozen bird species can be seen at feeders offering suet, plus various seeds, and water.

**October 14** \* It's the overall autumn foliage peak for the Twin Cities, Hutchinson, Taylors Falls, Red Wing, Faribault, and areas between.

**October 15** \* The first Snow Buntings and American Tree Sparrows of the season arrive at Grand Marais.

**October 16** \* Today marks the first frost and first ice on birdbaths across much of MN, including: the St. Cloud area, the Twin Cities, LeSueur, and Northfield areas. Frost-sensitive plants like tomatoes and zinnias perish.

**October 17** \* Today is the second frost. The low temperature of 31°F at MSP Int'l Airport is the coldest since April 23 (29°F).

**October 21** \* The fall color season continues with leaves of golden yellow on quaking aspens, rich browns and reds on mature white oaks, and smoky gold on tamaracks. The last bumble bee alights on a flower, and leopard frogs head for lakes where they'll hibernate.

**October 22** \* Haralson apples and garden raspberries are still ripe for picking. Some native sugar maples continue to show golden yellow and burnt orange leaves.

**About 7,000 Sandhill Cranes gather at Sherburne NWR.**

**The late fall colors are especially nice this year.**

**Northern Shovelers, Wigeons, and Northern Pintails are some of the migrating ducks coming through. Rubs and scrapes on woodland trees, made by white-tailed deer bucks, indicate the start of the rut, or mating season.**



**October 28** \* The first snow flurries and snow showers are part of this rainy day.

**October 29** \* Dark-eyed Juncos and White-throated Sparrows are quite numerous at our feeding stations. They prefer eating seeds scattered on the ground.

**October 31** \* Geraniums, red salvia, alyssum, and begonias continue blooming in some gardens.

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