

# December Phenology

a reflective look at 2009

by Jim Gilbert



**1** American Tree Sparrows arrive at many feeding stations in the Twin Cities.

**3** Small ponds begin freezing over. Wintering American Robins enjoy heated birdbaths.

**4** Below normal temperatures around the state result in the freeze-up of hundreds of lakes including North Silver Lake near Fairmont and Caribou Lake near Lutsen. Remember: It takes 4" of solid ice to support a human's weight. A snowmobile needs 6" and 8-12" are needed for a car.

**7** Upper Mississippi River (St. Paul to Guttenberg, Iowa) closes to barge traffic for the season.

**8** First winter storm: 4.7" of snow fell at MSP Airport. Big flocks of Canada Geese, high up and flying mostly SE, were out ahead of the storm.

**9** First below-zero temperature of the season in Waconia. From yesterday and today, the Twin Cities received 7.4" of snow, about a foot of snow fell in the Rochester and Albert Lea area, and Minnesota City in Winona County received 16.3."

**10** Freeze-up date for Lake Waconia (2008: Nov. 29), Lake Minnie Belle near Litchfield, and Green Lake at Spicer.

**15** Freeze-up date for Lake Minnetonka (2008: Dec. 7).

**19** In the Mankato area's National Audubon's 110th Annual Christmas Bird Count 42 species were recorded including: 351 crows, 203 juncos, 184 turkeys, 109 cardinals, 30 robins and 16 Red-tailed Hawks.

**20** During the Christmas Bird Count for Itasca State Park, 11 observers found 30 species including 298 chickadees, 115 Red-breasted Nuthatches, 43 White-breasted Nuthatches, 41 Red Crossbills, 23 White-winged Crossbills, 6 Ruffed Grouse and 4 Bald Eagles.

**21** This first day of astronomical winter, the winter solstice, we received only 25 percent of the solar intensity we had on June 21.

**23** Juncos and American Tree Sparrows are busy at feeding stations.

**25** White Christmas! A foot of snow covers the landscape.

**27** House Finches, Mourning Doves and White-breasted Nuthatches are among early morning visitors drinking from heated birdbaths.

**30** The ice cover on Lake Waconia averages 12." Walleye are biting.



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