



# OCTOBER PHENOLOGY

*A reflective look at 2012*

by Jim Gilbert, Naturalist

*Historically, October is a sunny month.* Expect frost several times, followed by days with little or no wind and above normal temperatures—known as *Indian Summer*. 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 2013 with last year.

**October 1** \* Fall foliage reaches full color peak from the Twin Cities to southern Minnesota, despite drought conditions. Golden yellows light up eastern cottonwoods and paper birches, sunny yellows paint wild grapes and silver maples, and mixes of rich magentas and burnt-oranges crown sugar maples.

**October 2** \* American Goldfinches transform into their somber winter plumage. 77% of the state is in modest to extreme drought.

OCT.

3

**White-lined sphinx moths, also called hummingbird moths, dine on nectar from flowers in gardens. Sunny, light winds and a high of 78°F provide us with another Indian Summer day.**



**October 4** \* Apple growers pick Haralson, Regent and Honeygold apples. Annual gardens continue to bloom. In northwestern Minnesota, an early winter storm dumps 14" of snow on the town of Badger.

**October 7** \* A last Ruby-throated Hummingbird buzzes through the area on its way south.

**October 13** \* Migrating White-throated Sparrows and Fox Sparrows arrive at area feeding stations.

OCT.

14

**Migrating American Robins flock. Masses of Red-winged Blackbirds and Common Grackles travel in a river-like manner across the southern part of the state.**



OCT.

16

**Tamarack trees display beautiful smoky-gold needles. Leopard frogs head for hibernation sites in lakes and ponds.**

**October 21** \* There are still dazzling fall colors around. Red oaks burst with reds, yellows and rich browns; paper birches and quaking aspens display golden yellows. Before sunset, Red-winged Blackbird flocks gather in wetlands for the night. Their trilling songs recall a sound of spring.

**October 25** \* It's the first snow in the Twin Cities area. Snowflakes melt as soon as they contact the ground.

**October 26** \* The Sandhill Crane count at Sherburne National Wildlife Refuge is 6,755 birds; the highest count so far this year.

OCT.

27

**Snow Buntings flock in the Lutsen/Tofte area, while Pine Siskins gather to dine at nearby feeding stations.**



**October 29** \* Weeping willows are now golden yellow. The crunching and aroma from fallen leaves makes walking in the woods feels special at this time of year.

**October 31** \* Rafts of American Coots on area lakes may contain more than a thousand individuals. A thin layer of ice glistens on ponds this morning. The end of October is a perfect time to begin feeding wild birds. Now is when birds are establishing their feeding patterns for winter.