

DARCY SIME | MEADOWLARK | ALBERT LEA, MN

LOST SONG OF THE MEADOWLARK



What is that medium-size brown bird with a bright yellow breast crossed by a black V, who can sing a clear whistled “tee-yah” song? That’s the eastern meadowlark – a once-common bird we know and miss observing, except on rare occasions. The eastern meadowlark, and its close relative the western meadowlark, once thrived on Minnesota’s vast prairies, meadows and fields. However, changing farm practices and urbanization have taken away the sights and melodious songs of the meadowlarks. What to do? Encourage prairie and other grassland restoration, along with conservation easements, which provide much-needed meadowlark habitat.

FRESHWATER

ORGANIZE A SHORELINE CLEANUP EVENT

Want to keep our waters healthy? **Anyone** can mobilize a group and plan a cleanup event, or adopt a shoreline that you clean up each year. Our Adopt a River program will support you with the planning tools you need!

Why organize a cleanup? Make water safer for all, prevent pollution downstream and connect with fellow volunteers.

When should I plan a cleanup? Earth Day or anytime!

Where should I clean? Any shoreline – river, lake, stream or wetland. Consider one where you work, live or play.

Who should I invite? Cleanups are great for family, work teams, social groups, scouts or your groups/teams, and more.

How do I get started? Check out our online toolkit at freshwater.org/adopt-a-river.

Think you don’t live near a shoreline? Think again! Most storm drains send water directly into lakes and rivers untreated, carrying everything it picks up along its journey. A neighborhood cleanup anywhere helps our waters!

APRIL PHENOLOGY

Jim Gilbert’s Nature Notes

First week of April

Pussy willow twigs are perfect for cutting to bring indoors for a touch of spring. Waterfowl returning include red-breasted mergansers, northern pintails, blue-winged teal, white-fronted geese and tundra swans. Garter snakes appear above ground to sun themselves. More chipmunks, woodchucks and other hibernators are out and about.

April 2, 2023, marked the first 50-degree day of the year in the Twin Cities, but a foot of snow still covered the winter wonderland-like landscape. At Faribault, the first of year boreal chorus frogs were calling, and a raft of American coots was seen on still partly ice-covered Wells Lake.

On April 3, 2023, big flocks of migrating red-winged blackbirds and common grackles arrived at Faribault, and American woodcocks displayed about 8 p.m.

Second week of April

Look for pocket gopher mounds and the first 13-lined ground squirrels. Some Canada geese have begun incubating eggs. Dark-eyed juncos are still numerous at feeding stations. Crocuses and Siberian squill bloom nicely. Red admiral, mourning cloak and comma butterflies that hibernate as adults are on the wing. Many bald eagles, red-tailed hawks and rough-legged hawks are migrating over Hawk Ridge in Duluth.

Apr. 8, 2023, was the first 60-degree day of the year in the Twin Cities area. However, there was still up to 18 inches of ice on Lake Minnetonka. By April 10, the temperature was 70 degrees, and red-winged blackbirds and American robins were very vocal. The first purple martins returned to Fairmont. At Faribault, 54 migrating common loons were counted on Wells Lake, and numerous boreal chorus frogs and wood frogs were calling from wetlands.

Third week of April

The morning bird chorus is great, featuring northern cardinals and American robins singing, mourning doves cooing, and red-wings trilling. Look for the first purple martins, barn swallows and brown thrashers. Gardeners rototill and plant leaf lettuce and radish seeds. Farmers begin working the soil in preparation for planting. Ice covers begin leaving central Minnesota lakes. Maple syruping ends around this time in southern Minnesota and Wisconsin, but good sap runs can still be expected in the north.

Fourth week of April

April 22 this year marks the 55th anniversary of the first Earth Day, and is a good reminder for each of us to be good stewards of the air, water, soil, plants and animals

that share the Earth with us. Gardeners may be seeding in carrots, peas and beets, cutting asparagus and pulling rhubarb. Daffodils, Siberian squill, hyacinths and Northern Sun forsythia shrubs bloom nicely. Farmers in southern and western Minnesota are preparing soil and planting barley, oats, spring wheat, sugar beets and corn.

Fifth week of April

Bald eagle pairs build nests as other pairs are incubating eggs or feeding young. The first house wrens are back and singing. Notice a green tinge in rural and urban forests as boxelders,

willows and more are first leafing out. In southern Minnesota and Wisconsin, a dozen or more woodland wildflowers are blooming, including Dutchman’s-breeches, spring-beauty, wild ginger, jack-in-the-pulpit, large-flowered trillium and several violets.

A few 2023 Minnesota lake ice-outs for the last week in April included: Grindstone Lake in Pine County April 28, Big Stone Lake at Ortonville April 29, Green Lake at Spicer and Lake Minnewaska in Pope County April 30.

LOOK FOR ...



First leaves emerging in tree tops (Carver County)

2023	April 28
2022	May 6
2021	April 6
2020	April 26
2019	April 25
2018	May 4
2017	April 13
2016	April 15
2015	April 27
2014	May 4



EDWARD LEE | AMERICAN WHITE PELICAN | DULUTH, MN

