



FRESHWATER

Methods to determine ice-out vary from lake to lake, so researchers and agencies like the DNR look for consistency from their volunteer monitors. This chart shows ice-out statistics for 20 Minnesota lakes.

Lake Name	County	Median Ice-out	Earliest Ice-out	Latest Ice-out	Yrs of Data
Bemidji	Beltrami	April 26	4/2/2012	5/22/1950	92
Big Sandy	Aitkin	April 21	3/16/2024	5/12/2013	94
Big Stone	Big Stone	April 10	3/14/2024	5/8/2013	74
Clear	Waseca	April 3	3/1/2024	4/29/2018	150
Green	Kandiyohi	April 16	3/15/2024	5/8/2013	127
Gull	Crow Wing	April 21	3/17/2024	5/18/1950	74
Itasca	Clearwater	April 23	3/26/2012	5/18/1950	95
Leech	Cass	April 28	4/2/2012	5/23/1950	88
Lake of the Woods	Lake of the Woods	May 3	4/8/2012	5/21/2014	37
Mille Lacs	Mille Lacs	April 25	3/16/2024	5/16/2013	74
Minnetonka	Hennepin	April 13	3/11/1878	5/5/2018	169
Minnewaska	Pope	April 15	3/13/2024	5/11/2013	118
Osakis	Todd	April 19	3/8/2024	5/14/1950	157
Pepin	Goodhue/Wabasha	March 29	2/29/2000	5/20/1843	181
Rainy	Koochiching	May 4	4/6/2012	5/22/1950	94
Shetek	Murray	April 4	3/2/2024	4/24/1962	64
Tetonka	LeSueur	April 4	3/3/2024	4/29/2018	51
Vermillion	St. Louis	April 30	3/28/2012	5/23/1950	131
Waconia	Carver	April 10	3/7/2017	5/4/2018	84
White Bear	Ramsey	April 13	3/8/2024	5/4/2018	96

HISTORICAL LAKE ICE-OUT MEDIAN DATES AND EXTREMES FOR MINNESOTA LAKES

MARCH PHENOLOGY

Jim Gilbert's Nature Notes

First week of March

This is usually the time to tap sugar maple trees and begin collecting sap to make maple syrup. Red and silver maples, along with boxelders (also called ash-leaved maples), can also be tapped, but are normally not as productive. Listen for male ring-necked pheasants rowing; the "double squawk" is the call of a courting rooster. Tiny springtails, also called snow fleas, hop on the surface of the snow in forest edges near wetlands when the air temperatures are above 27 degrees.

March 1, 2024, marked a historic early ice-out for Clear Lake at Waseca, breaking the long-standing record of March 6, 1878. A new record was also set for Lake Osakis in Todd County on March 8, breaking another 1878 record of March 13. Meanwhile, Lake Nokomis in Minneapolis experienced ice-out on March 3, after only being ice covered since January 10 – less than two months of ice cover.

On March 7, 2024, the season's first ruffed grouse was observed drumming in the Lutsen area, while black bears were out and about in Sax-Zim Bog area.

Second week of March

Look for the first returning American robins, killdeers and common grackles. Sounds of spring include Canada geese honking, house finches singing, red-winged blackbirds trilling and sandhill cranes calling. Migrating bald eagles return to the North Shore of Lake Superior.

In 2023, pasqueflower was blooming on Kasota and Ottawa prairies near St. Peter. Sharp-lobed hepatica also began blooming in the forests near Faribault.

On March 10, 2024, a huge gathering of migrating white-fronted geese and snow geese, estimated at 60,000 birds, was observed at Salt Lake in Lac Qui Parle County.

After only two months of ice cover, March 13, 2024, was the official ice-out for Lake Minnetonka – missing the 1878 record by just two days. It also marked the fifth day in March with high temperatures above 60 degrees in the Twin Cities area.

Third week of March

Most years, this week holds some of the best maple sap runs of the season, with sunny warm days and freezing nights. Watch and listen for male red-winged blackbirds claiming their wetland nesting territories. Look for the first or more eastern chipmunks and woodchucks to be out of their winter underground tunnels. Listen for male mourning doves cooing.

March 16, 2024, was ice-out for Mille Lacs Lake, which had only been frozen over since January 4; that's just two months and 12 days of ice cover!

In 2023, March 17 had a low of just 7 degrees in the Twin Cities. Beautiful sundogs were seen on this coldest St. Patrick's Day in 30 years. March 17 is also the average opening date for the shipping season on the Mississippi River at Saint Paul.

Fourth week of March

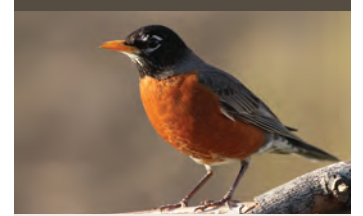
Rhubarb and chives begin to poke up in gardens.

Expect to see elms and silver maples blooming, with honey bees and other insects gathering pollen from the tiny flowers. Eastern bluebirds and wood ducks claim nesting boxes. Black bears in northern Minnesota and Wisconsin usually begin emerging from hibernation; some in cooler habitats will wait until April.

On the night of March 23, 2023, there was a great display of the northern lights, seen by many observers in northern and southern Minnesota.

On March 30, 2023, the sounds of spring continued with American robins and red-winged blackbirds very vocal, along with the first spring thunderstorm. Hooded mergansers and wood ducks returned in numbers, but we ended the month with a snow depth of about a foot in the Twin Cities area.

LOOK FOR ...



First migrating American robin arrives (Carver County):

2023	March 8
2022	March 14
2021	March 8
2020	March 6
2019	March 19
2018	March 9
2017	March 15
2016	March 6
2015	March 12
2014	March 19



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