

RUFFED GROUSE DISPLAY



This ruffed grouse is in fall display, with its black neck feathers (ruffs) extended and its tail fanned out – telling other grouse that, “this is my territory.” If this was a spring display, in March through May, the grouse’s distinctive drumming would also be heard. Ground-dwelling, non-migrating, chicken-like birds of brushy woods, ruffed grouse are found throughout many of Minnesota’s forests, along with those in Appalachia and the Pacific Northwest, across Canada, and up into Alaska. Those living where winter snow is plentiful spend most of the season buried in 10 inches or more of powder; they emerge for only short periods once or twice a day to partake in a meal of aspen buds.

FRESHWATER

SALT SMART THIS WINTER

Salt buildup in lakes, streams and groundwater is a growing problem in Minnesota. It is toxic to freshwater organisms, can damage infrastructure and is permanent. It only takes one teaspoon to permanently pollute five gallons of water. You can help this winter by following these steps:

- 💧 **Shovel:** Clear walkways before snow turns to ice.
- 💧 **Scatter:** Use salt only where critical. There should be 3-4 inches between salt granules.
- 💧 **Switch:** Salt doesn’t melt ice below 15 degrees. Use sand or other grit for traction when it’s too cold.
- 💧 **Sweep:** Clean up leftover salt to save and reuse as needed.

NOVEMBER PHENOLOGY

Jim Gilbert’s Nature Notes

First week of November

Tamarack trees continue showing smoky-gold needles. On warm sunny days, common milkweed pods keep opening and spreading their brown seeds on silver-white carriers. Most deciduous forest trees are now bare, but one species – common buckthorn – stands out with its branches full of bright green leaves that will stay green even after a hard frost. This nonnative small tree/tall shrub was brought to North America from Europe sometime prior to 1850. Now classified as a noxious weed, buckthorn has spread across two thirds of lower Minnesota and parts of the north.

November 1, 2023, had a low temperature of 24 degrees in the Twin Cities, and the first thin ice covered small ponds. A late season thunderstorm then came through on November 7.

Second week of November

The low angle of the sun now and through winter makes driving more difficult during mornings and afternoons. Weeping willow trees, which are native to Europe and Asia, are exhibiting golden-yellow leaf fall color. Gossamers (single strands of spider silk) hang from tree and shrub branches, glistening silver-white in the sunshine. Migrating waterfowl include American wigeons, northern pintails, canvasbacks, lesser scaup, buffleheads, ruddy ducks and tundra swans.

Third week of November

Evergreens such as pines, spruces, firs, yews and arborvitae add much interest to the late November landscape. Fresh-cut evergreen trees for holiday decoration appear on retail lots. Common dandelions still bloom, but on very short stems. Late corn combining continues. Serious gardeners are covering rows of carrots with straw so they can harvest them through winter. The mating season, or rut, of white-tailed deer reaches its peak the last two weeks of November. November 19 is the average date for the arrival of lasting snow cover in the Twin Cities.

Fourth week of November

Downhill ski and snowboard areas hope to have at least some runs open by now. An official “ice-in” date occurs when a lake freezes over at least 90 percent and remains ice-covered for the season. Caution and safety are the two big concerns when it comes to ice cover on ponds, lakes, streams and rivers. Consider what the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources states: “Ice is never 100 percent safe! Ice conditions can change rapidly and should be checked frequently.” Ice should be a minimum of four inches thick over stationary water to support someone on foot, five to seven

inches for a snowmobile, nine to 12 inches for a car, and 13 to 17 inches for a truck, according to the DNR. In 32-degree water, a person will only last about 15 minutes before losing consciousness.

In 2023, many thousands of Minnesota lakes, from north to south, froze over during this week, a typical happening. However, many of these lakes opened up again during an unusually warm December, and some didn’t freeze-up until January 2024.

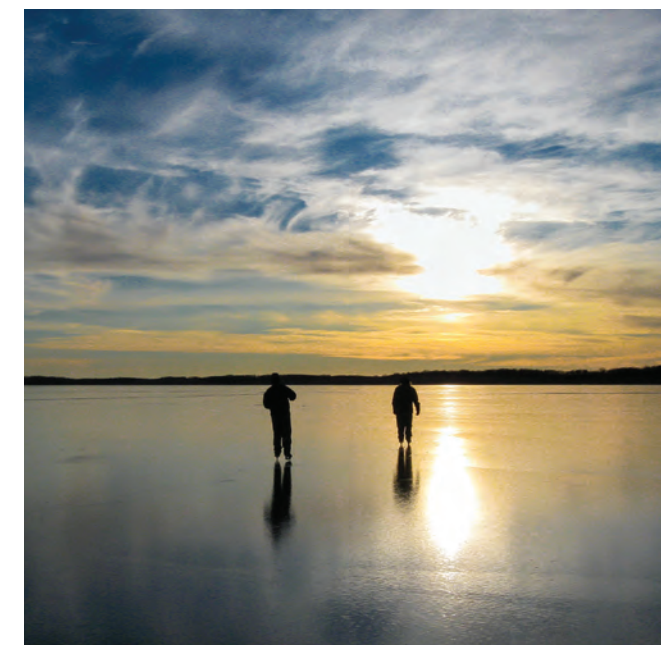
A few of the many northern Minnesota lakes that froze-over this week in 2023 and remained ice covered for the winter include Upper Red Lake on November 25, Lake Vermilion and Lake Itasca on November 28, along with Lake Winnibigoshish on November 29.

LOOK FOR...



Freeze-up for Lake Waconia (Carver Co.)

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|------|-----------------|
| 2023 | Open to 1/24/24 |
| 2022 | Dec. 4 |
| 2021 | Dec. 7 |
| 2020 | Dec. 24 |
| 2019 | Dec. 2 |
| 2018 | Nov. 28 |
| 2017 | Dec. 7 |
| 2016 | Dec. 9 |
| 2015 | Dec. 19 |
| 2014 | Nov. 21 |



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