



FRESHWATER

FRESHWATER'S WORK FOR CLEAN AND SAFE DRINKING WATER

About 75 percent of Minnesota's drinking water comes from groundwater and is supplied from public water systems or private wells. However, high nitrate in private drinking water wells from agriculture, particularly in southeastern Minnesota, highlights the urgent need for legislative action to better manage and protect vulnerable drinking water sources.

Freshwater works to ensure everyone in Minnesota has access to safe drinking water, regardless of where they live. We collaborated with the Minnesota Department of Health to develop a Drinking Water Action Plan aimed at guiding future policies and programs across the state. Furthermore, we are actively engaging with legislators, partner organizations and state agency leaders to support clean water policies that prevent pollution of groundwater and surface waters.

Visit freshwater.org for more on our work to protect and improve the quality of Minnesota's drinking water.

JANUARY PHENOLOGY

Jim Gilbert's Nature Notes

50th edition phenology by Jim Gilbert is based on 2024 field notes with consideration of information from many other years. Observations are from the Lake Waconia, Lake Minnetonka and Twin Cities area unless noted.

First week of January

During January in the Northern Hemisphere, the Sun is low in the sky. Days are warmer and longer in the spring, summer and fall because the Sun is higher in the sky, concentrating more heat on each acre of land and water.

White-tailed deer bucks are dropping their antlers. The first bucks began shedding them in December and others won't lose their antlers until March.

2024: Many late freeze-ups for Minnesota lakes included: Budd and Hall Lakes at Fairmont, Little McDonald and Paul Lakes near Perham and Green Lake at Spicer. Mille Lacs Lake finally froze-over on January 4, Lake Hendricks in Lincoln County on January 8 and Lotus Lake in Chanhassen on January 10.

Second week of January

Watching nuthatches, blue jays and woodpeckers at a feeding station doesn't warm the day, but their actions warm the heart. Birdfeeder birds are around day after day, a reminder that life outlasts every winter. Think about land hibernating frogs – wood frogs, chorus frogs, spring peepers and gray tree frogs – lying frozen yet still alive, and they will survive.

2024: Very late lake freeze-ups included Grindstone Lake in Pine County on January 12 and Lake Minnetonka in Hennepin County on January 13 (latest on record for this lake). On January 14, the Twin Cities area had -10 degrees, along with beautiful sundogs that morning.

Third week of January

Three woodpecker species – downy, hairy and pileated – are heard drumming in response to the lengthening amount of daylight. They hammer on signal posts – usually resonant tree trunks and limbs – to announce territories and attract mates. Also, listen for the "whi, whi, whi," spring song of the white-breasted nuthatch, and blue jays in their noisy groups vocalizing their special "pump-handle" spring call, also known as the "speelunker" call. All are great sounds of nature.

Meanwhile, at night, great horned owls – the earliest nesting birds in Minnesota – continue duet hooting as they set up nesting territories. By the end of the month the first eggs, typically two in a clutch, have been laid, usually in an old nest of a large bird such as red-tailed hawk, great blue heron or American crow, and sometimes on top of a leafy squirrel nest.

Fourth week of January

If you are able, embrace this month of frozen elegance and go outside where you can feel the crunch of snow, gaze at tree silhouettes and listen for quiet sounds such as the whistled "fee-bee" song of the black-capped chickadee, telling us that one season slides slowly into the next. In a clear, sweet whistle, the chickadee gives two notes of equal length, the second tone lower in pitch than the first, making a "fee-bee" sound.

January 27, 2024: At Somerskogen Sugarbush in Minnetrista, the first sugar maple trees were tapped and many dripped sap. The Gunflint Mail Run Sled Dog Race was called off for the second time in a month because of the lack of snow.

January 29, 2024: With a record high temperature of 50 degrees in the Twin Cities, runners were out in shorts and T-shirts. Ice fishing houses were nearly gone from southern Minnesota lakes.

January 31, 2024: Sunny with a record high of 55 degrees in the Twin Cities. Marshall and Canby reported highs of 60 degrees, and International Falls a new record high of 53 degrees, their first time hitting 50 degrees in January.

LISTEN FOR ...



First northern cardinal
"what-cheer, cheer,
cheer... " spring song:

2024	Jan. 31
2023	Feb. 7
2022	Jan. 11
2021	Jan. 8
2020	Feb. 2
2019	Jan. 25
2018	Jan. 13
2017	Jan. 21
2016	Jan. 8
2015	Jan. 8



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