



MUSIC TO YOUR EARS: WINTER TURNS TO SPRING

As day length and the sun angle increase, the natural world changes its rhythms. The March sunshine readily melts snow on all surfaces. Overnight refreeze often results in the formation of icicles hanging off rooftops and tree branches. The impending sunlight shines on the icicles, leading to their melting and a musical beat of drops landing on the surfaces below.

Take a walk and observe the sounds of the emerging spring season. Listen to the sounds of your footsteps on different surfaces such as snow, mud, grass and in a puddle. Periodically stop and listen to nature; the dripping of water, the singing of birds, and the wind interacting with the tree branches.

Gather your observations in a journal. Include both descriptions of the sounds and a list of sounds you hear. Compose a rhythmic poem or song inspired by the music and feel of the day.

For more outdoor learning resources, visit jeffersfoundation.org.

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	93
Big Sandy	Aitkin	April 21	3/16/2024	5/12/2013	95
Big Stone	Big Stone	April 10	3/14/2024	5/8/2013	75
Clear	Waseca	April 3	3/1/2024	4/29/2018	151
Green	Kandiyohi	April 16	3/15/2024	5/8/2013	128
Gull	Crow Wing	April 21	3/17/2024	5/18/1950	75
Itasca	Clearwater	April 23	3/26/2012	5/18/1950	96
Leech	Cass	April 28	4/2/2012	5/23/1950	89
Lake of the Woods	Lake of the Woods	May 3	4/8/2012	5/21/2014	38
Mille Lacs	Mille Lacs	April 25	3/16/2024	5/16/2013	75
Minnetonka	Hennepin	April 13	3/11/1878	5/5/2018	170
Minnewaska	Pope	April 15	3/13/2024	5/11/2013	119
Osakis	Todd	April 19	3/8/2024	5/14/1950	158
Pepin	Goodhue/Wabasha	March 29	2/29/2000	5/20/1843	182
Rainy	Koochiching	May 4	4/6/2012	5/22/1950	95
Shetek	Murray	April 4	3/2/2024	4/24/1962	65
Tetonka	LeSueur	April 4	3/3/2024	4/29/2018	52
Vermilion	St. Louis	April 30	3/28/2012	5/23/1950	132
Waconia	Carver	April 10	3/7/2017	5/4/2018	85
White Bear	Ramsey	April 13	3/8/2024	5/4/2018	97

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

MARCH PHENOLOGY

Jim Gilbert's Nature Notes

First week of March

Maple sap flows well when day temperatures are above 40 degrees. If we have a warm spell, pussy willow twigs can be cut and brought indoors for a touch of spring. In southern Minnesota, temporary ponds may begin to dot the landscape as snow melts and frost remains in the ground. Wild turkeys have started their spring courtship with the tom turkeys gobbling and flaring their tails.

March 3, 2024: Record temperature high of 74 degrees in the Twin Cities, where the old record of 65 degrees was set in 1905. High of 71 degrees in Waconia where Goose, Reitz and Swede Lakes lost their ice-covers.

Second week of March

In southern Minnesota, eastern bluebirds claim nesting boxes, and early-arriving red-winged blackbirds are seen and heard on their wetland territories. House finches are investigating nesting sites; they often nest in old holiday wreaths and hanging plant baskets.

More American crows and bald eagles return to northern Minnesota, where deep snow usually covers much of the landscape, offering the best cross-country skiing and snowshoeing of the entire winter.

Third week of March

Most years, sugarbush operators look for some of the best maple sap runs of the season. This can also be the week of many firsts, as killdeer, song sparrows and brown-headed cowbirds return. The first garter snakes may come out of their underground dens for some early spring sunning. Woodchucks that went into hibernation in October can once again be seen above ground. Pairs of American crows check out possible nesting sites and carry nesting materials in their bills.

Fourth week of March

Some early returning bird migrants may include American woodcocks, eastern phoebes and great blue herons. Gray and fox squirrels begin birthing pups. By the end of March, storms are more likely to bring rain than snow.

The ruffed grouse is a permanent resident throughout the deep woods of Minnesota from the southeast to the northern half of the state except the western tier of counties. The males make a drumming sound with their cupped wings moving in the air, which is most frequently heard in the spring. A male ruffed grouse stands on a log, stump or boulder, raises the tuft of feathers on his head, fans his tail feathers and drums with his wings to take claim to his territory and to attract females.

March 31, 2024: American robins were singing, red-winged blackbirds trilling and sandhill cranes calling this early morning as a big V-formation of tundra swans flew over Lake Waconia heading northwest.

LOOK FOR ...



First migrating
American robin arrives
(Carver County):

2024	March 5
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



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TRADITIONAL ACTIVITIES FOR SPRING (ZIIGWAN) by John Roterman

Traditionally, spring is when the Ojibwe tapped Maple trees for clear running sap that was then boiled to make maple syrup and sugar. This activity is called sugarbush (zhiwaagamizigan'ike). This is also the season when the Ojibwe fished on frozen lakes and streams using spears. Hunting and trapping also occurred every springtime.



Dr. David A. Clark

MPRnews

Earlier ice-outs

MY NATURE NOTES

[illegible]

ASTRONOMY

Ron Schmit

Morning sky

Evening sky

Highlights

The diagram is divided into two parts. The top part shows a cross-section of Earth with its axis tilted at 23.5 degrees from the perpendicular to the ecliptic plane. The Moon's orbit is shown as a green ellipse tilted at 5.14 degrees from the ecliptic plane. The bottom part shows the Sun, Earth, and Moon in a system where the Moon's orbit is tilted at 5.14 degrees from the ecliptic plane, with labels for the Sun, Earth, Moon, Node, Axis, Ecliptic, and Lunar Orbit.

Image: Ron Schmit

SPECIES HIGHLIGHT by Jim Gilbert

Gray wolf (*Canis lupus*)

A photograph of a coyote standing in a field of dry grass, looking back over its shoulder. The coyote has a mix of tan, grey, and black fur. The background is a blurred field of dry grass and some trees.

JEAN BRISLANCE | GRAY WOLF | LUTSEN, MN