



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

Pasqueflowers are blooming on Minnesotan prairies. Watch for returning great blue herons and American coots, plus large V-formations of tundra swans on their way to nesting grounds within the Arctic Circle.

On a spring day in the 50s, it's possible to get a glimpse of a mourning cloak butterfly, one of a few adult butterfly hibernators. Their purple-black wings with yellow margins act as solar panels, absorbing heat from the Sun, making flight possible. Canada geese incubate eggs, while American robins and blue jays build nests.

Second week of April

Soon after we see the first common dandelion flowers, we can expect the first purple martins to return. After wintering in southern Brazil, a certain population of purple martins come to Minnesota to feed on insects and to nest.

Wood frogs, which make barking calls, and boreal chorus frogs that sound like metallic clickers, can be heard from shallow ponds. In northeast Minnesota, ruffed grouse begin drumming and migrating dark-eyed juncos are numerous.

Third week of April

Magnolia trees, forsythia shrubs and crocuses could be blooming, and lawn grasses greening. More common loons and ospreys arrive. Eastern bluebirds are nest building. Little brown bats return to bat houses. Look for early blooming woodland wildflowers such as sharp-lobed hepaticas and bloodroots.

April 13, 2024: This was the first 80-degree day of the year for much of southern Minnesota. The high hit 85 degrees in the Twin Cities and 88 degrees at Mankato. Apricot trees were in bloom.

Fourth week of April

The air is filled with spring bird music. We hear the rattling sounds of belted kingfishers, woodpeckers drumming, the chattering of tree swallows, mourning doves cooing, the "cheer-up" song of the American robins and the remarkable melodic accomplishments of the song sparrows.

White-tailed deer bucks begin growing antlers. Gardeners plant potatoes and onions, and seed in leaf lettuce, radishes, peas and spinach.

The first Earth Day, celebrated on April 22, 1970, was dedicated to raising awareness about adopting sustainable lifestyles to reduce waste and environmental destruction.

Over the past 56 years, significant strides have been made in cleaning up rivers and lakes, protecting natural ecosystems, recycling and more, but we have a long way to go if we are to live sustainably in harmony with nature.

Fifth week of April

Crabapple trees and common purple lilacs could be blooming. Wild ginger, large-flowered bellwort, Virginia bluebells and Dutchman's-breeches are among the blooming woodland wildflowers.

Daffodils, native to Europe and Asia, bloom from bulbs planted in early autumn. The flowers have a star of petals around a trumpet-like structure, and come in yellow, white, yellow and white, or yellow and orange combination. There is no need to lift daffodil bulbs after bloom time until they become crowded. Just enjoy the blooms each spring.

Southern, central and western Minnesotan farmers plant corn, soybeans, spring wheat, oats, sugar beets and green peas.

LOOK FOR ...



First leaves emerging in tree tops (Carver County)

2024	April 15
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



DOUGLAS HARTFORD | SPRING AWAKENING | ARDEN HILLS, MN



But by the end of the month, all eyes turn to the start of the growing season. In the Twin Cities, the average final frost isn't until the beginning of May, so have patience, gardeners!

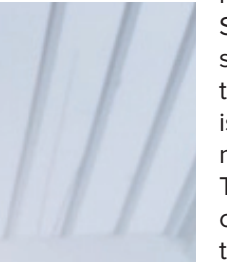


MPRnews

Spring snow increasing?

Prince famously said sometimes it snows in April. Our long-term trends show April snowfall is increasing in Minnesota. In the Twin Cities, our April snowfall average was 2.4 inches in the 1981-2010 data set. That increased to 3.5 inches in the 1991-2020 climate normal! So, why is it snowing more in April?

Some climate scientists believe the jet stream is becoming more erratic. That can push colder air into the Midwest late in the snowfall season. So, we're not out of the woods with accumulating snow in April in Minnesota!

A wooden thermometer is shown vertically, partially buried in a layer of white snow. The thermometer has a wooden body with black markings and numbers. The numbers visible are 20, 25, 30, 35, and 40. The top of the thermometer is marked with a snowflake icon and the number 45. The temperature indicated by the red liquid column is approximately 34 degrees Fahrenheit. The background is a soft, out-of-focus white, suggesting a snowy environment.

Deep April snow in 2018. Photo by Paul Huttner.

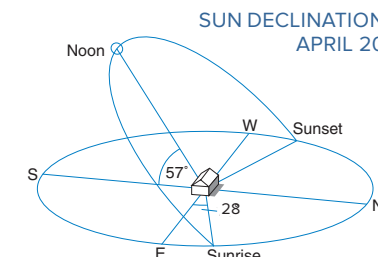
MY NATURE NOTES

ASTRONOMY

Ron Schmit

Morning sky

Mercury reaches Greatest Western Elongation on 4/3, as far away as it gets from the Sun in its orbit this year, which should make it easy to see. But despite being 27.8° west of the Sun, it is only 2.6° above the horizon 30 minutes before sunrise, low in the east-south-east. A Moon pass will occur on 4/15, then joining Saturn and Mars on 4/20, which will only be 0.5° apart. Mars is becoming easily visible in the east at month's end.



Evening sky

Venus spends the entire month slowly climbing into the evening sky. It gets a visit from the Moon on 4/18. Jupiter is now heading eastward, getting a visit from the Moon on 4/22. On 4/25 at sunset, find the quarter Moon to the south. As darkness falls, you will notice a star emerging from the Lunar limb. That's Regulus, the brightest star in Leo the Lion. Westward, the Winter Circle exits the sky, leaving the night to Leo and the stars of spring.

Highlights

Looking northward this month, you will find five stars making a large “W” pattern. This is Cassiopeia, the Queen of Aethiopia and wife of King Cepheus. A more extensive survey of this constellation will reveal 50 stars visible to the naked eye – one for each year of the Weatherguide. While the constellations do their seasonal parade along the southern horizon, there is no such variation in the north. Wheeling about the pole star throughout the year are the same five constellations: Draco, Ursa Major, Ursa Minor, Cepheus and Cassiopeia. The proximity of these constellations to the North Star means that at latitudes greater than 35° north (most of the U.S.) they never rise and never set. Seen from the North Pole, all constellations are circumpolar, while none of them would be at the equator, so this label is subject to your geographical location.



Image: Stellarium

SPECIES HIGHLIGHT by Jim Gilbert



DOMINIQUE BRAUD | OTTER | ROSEMOUNT, MN

River otter (*Lontra canadensis*)

Found throughout much of the U.S. and Canada, the river otter is about 3.5 feet long including the thick tail, and weighs 10 to 20 pounds. Their legs are short and feet webbed, ears are small and they have glossy dark-brown fur. This mammal is adapted for an aquatic life. Occasionally they wander across land and in winter slide in the snow. Its home is a burrow in the bank of a lake or stream, with the entrance usually below water. The otter gets most of its food from the water. Its diet consists of various fishes, amphibians, crayfishes, insects and snails. The river otter is another of the splendid animals that people enjoy seeing in the great outdoors.