



# Hidden Pond Nature Center

## March Almanac, 2024



Natural events, happenings and fearless predictions based upon 40 years of observations at Hidden Pond Nature Center. Important disclaimer: Your observations may vary! Hidden Pond is not responsible for errors, erratic behavior, or other whims of nature.

### First Week

Masses of wood frog eggs may be found in woodland puddles. The frogs responsible have by now already left the puddles and returned to the moist woodlands where they dwell the rest of the year. Male woodcocks perform elaborate aerial displays over open areas just after sunset. Squirrels greedily feed on swollen tree buds and flowers. Lawn grass might be getting greener. Red maple flowers consisting of clusters of two tiny red flowers on slender dark red stems bloom now, giving wooded hillsides a faint burgundy hue.

### Second Week

Periwinkle, *Vinca minor*, which was often planted in cemeteries long ago to keep out weeds, is now in bloom. Cardinals, robins, doves, chickadees, wrens and all our other year-round resident birds are now singing. Warm weather will bring out mourning cloak butterflies that have spent the winter hidden under loose bark, in woodpiles and other protected places. Soil has now warmed a little so worms come to the surface and because of that, robins can change from their winter diet of berries to their summer diet of worms, grubs and other critters living in chemical free lawns.

### Third Week

Vernal or spring equinox, the astronomical first day of spring is March 19. The sun is now up more than 12 hours, and we gain more than two minutes each day. On this day, the sun will rise due east and set due west. At solar noon, the sun rises to about 51 degrees above the southern horizon so that it no longer seems to always be in our eyes. Spring beauties bloom. These and other spring ephemerals appear in the same places year after year making it easier to learn them. Purple martins return, looking for suitable real estate. Phoebes used to appear now but are not seen much anymore around here, perhaps due to the disappearance of many flying insects. Spring peepers, pickerel frogs, American toads, chorus frogs and leopard frogs may all be heard this week calling for mates.

### Fourth Week

Red-shouldered hawks incubate 2-5 eggs in nests usually located in our stream valley treetops. The adults prey upon many small animals including frogs and toads which are somewhat distracted and exposed this time of year. Young American beech trees have kept their old brown leaves all winter and they shed them now; a folklore sign that there will be no more frost. Willow trees are among the first to show green leaves. Trout lilies bloom. Tiny tent caterpillars hatch exactly coincidentally with the emergence of the tender green leaves of the wild cherry trees that they feed upon. Spring thunderstorms wake up the snakes, it is said. Full moon is on March 25.



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