

HIDDEN POND NATURE CENTER

Almanac for February 2022



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

First Week

Groundhogs or woodchucks do occasionally emerge from their winter sleep to explore their world. We now hear the mournful coo-cooing of the mourning dove, an early sign of spring. The doves are pairing up and may start nesting next month. We are gaining about two minutes of sunshine each day, and our average daily high and low temperatures now slowly begin to rise. Fox tracks in the snow are easily recognized as they carefully place their hind feet in the tracks left by their front feet, unlike our clumsy dogs. Red-bellied woodpeckers now excavate nesting cavities. These cavities may be used later by other birds like titmice, wrens, and chickadees that also nest in holes in trees. Jupiter is high and very bright in the southwest after sunset.

Second Week

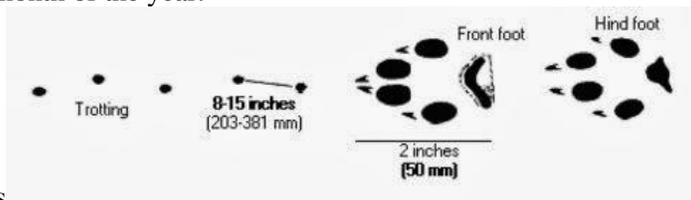
The constellation Orion is high in the southern sky in the evening. His belt points down to the left toward Sirius, the brightest star in the sky and only 8.6 light years away. Sap begins to flow in the red maples. Their red buds are swelling and on days with below freezing temperatures, sap leaking from the buds may form “sapsicles”. Smooth alder, a shrub found alongside streams and ponds is now in bloom with yellow and purple three inch long catkins. Eastern grey squirrels bear three to five young this month, the first of two litters each year. The other litter will come mid-summer.

Third Week

Full Snow Moon February 16. Red shouldered hawks now perform their courtship displays, wheeling and screaming high in the air. Their distinctive cry is described as a slurred two syllable *kee-yer, kee-yer*. Our wooded stream valleys are the red shouldered hawk’s preferred habitat. Chipmunks now awaken from their deep sleep or torpor. They are omnivorous, feeding on seeds, nuts, berries, bulbs, insects, worms, snakes, other small animals and even birds. Red fox kits may be born this month.

Fourth Week

Yews are in bloom and release clouds of pollen when nudged. Wood frogs find puddles and call for a mate with a faint quacking which sounds sort of like rubbing two balloons together. Their eggs must develop very quickly into tadpoles, then into small frogs, in a race against the time when the puddles dry up in early summer. Squirrels really do find some but not all the acorns they buried last fall. The buried nuts they don’t find often sprout into young oaks. Warm days find many birds singing, especially the cardinals who seem to say “*what cheer-what cheer!*” or maybe “*wet year, wet year.*” Or maybe they sing to celebrate surviving perhaps the toughest month of the year.



Fox tracks

