

OUTDOOR ALMANAC

FEBRUARY 2017



2 Groundhog Day, which is halfway between the winter solstice and the vernal equinox. If **Ms. G**, the official state groundhog of Massachusetts, fails to see her shadow, according to many ancient traditions, the wintry weather will soon subside. Should a day of sunshine reveal the groundhog's shadow, the forecast is six more weeks of cold, inclement conditions.



6 Look for the occasional **purple finch** mixed in with house finches at your backyard bird feeder.

10 Between 5:30 and 7:45 pm, watch for the penumbral lunar eclipse, when the moon passes through the Earth's outer shadow (the penumbra) causing it to darken somewhat.

11 Full moon: the Ice Moon (Celtic) or Snow Moon (Native American)



12 **Skunks** emerge to mate about this time of year.

13 Maple sap begins running (given the proper weather conditions); an alternating sequence of short warming trends and cold spells is best for sap flow. Watch for little icicles at the tips of sugar maple twigs.

15 Look for various tracks on snowy fields and in woodlands; prints you may find include those of gray squirrels, coyotes, red foxes, **raccoons**, and fishers.



19 If there's a snowmelt, search for traces of tunnels dug by voles and shrews.

21 Listen for the buoyant spring songs of **black-capped chickadees** and tufted titmice.



23 Among the earliest of spring migrants, **killdeer** arrive as early as late February in exceptionally warm years. Listen for their *kill-deer kill-deer* call in fields and pastures, and on playgrounds, lawns, unpaved driveways, beach dunes, and other open areas.

