

# OUTDOOR ALMANAC

## DECEMBER 2017

**1** Look for the white, waxy bloom on raspberry and blackberry canes that helps the plants retain water and protects them from dirt and bacteria. This same bloom is also found on a variety of fruit, including plums, grapes, blackberries, and apples.



**3** **Full moon.** This year's Full Cold Moon is a supermoon, as it is closer to the earth and appears larger and brighter. Native Americans also called this full moon the Long Nights Moon.



**6** **Eastern bluebirds** feed on Virginia creeper berries and crabapples.

**8** While not common, glaucous and Iceland gulls ("white-winged" gulls) come down from the north. Look for them in flocks of herring and other gulls along the coast.

**11** While woodchucks and field mice are hibernating, chipmunks, skunks, opossums, and raccoons remain active.

**13** It's the peak of the Geminid meteor shower, with as many as 120 shooting stars visible in the dark sky from midnight to dawn.



**15** Watch red- and **white-breasted nuthatches** as they husk and store sunflower seeds in bark furrows along the trunks of trees.

**16** Nipped-off twigs with ragged edges on tree and shrub branches indicate that deer are roaming about and finding food.



**17** **Black bears** may still be out and about until nights are consistently below freezing. If you live in an area with bears, it's best to wait until full winter cold to put out bird feeders.

**18** Woody plants are in full dormancy with buds all ready for next spring. Look at different shrubs and trees to appreciate the variety of shapes and colors.

**19** If food supplies are scarce up north, crossbills, pine grosbeaks, and **redpolls** may be around by this time.



**20** Most **ladybugs** are hibernating outside, often in clusters of hundreds or even thousands in tree crevices or under bark, but you may find a few overwintering in your home.



**21** Winter solstice. It's the shortest day and longest night, and the official start of winter. Even though daylight increases from now until June, our coldest weather is still to come.

**23** The Ursid meteor shower, which originates from the Little Dipper (Ursa Minor), is the last meteor shower of the year.

**25** Look for shiny, leathery, evergreen **Christmas ferns** in the snowy woods.



**29** Mercury is at its highest point above the horizon for the best viewing. After sunset, look for the planet low in the western sky.

**30** Snapping and **painted turtles** can be seen swimming slowly below the ice. If there is no ice, painted turtles can even be found basking on rocks and logs on warm days.

