

OUTDOOR ALMANAC

FEBRUARY 2018



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Groundhog Day. This marks the halfway point between the winter solstice and the vernal equinox. According to many ancient traditions, if Ms. G, the official state groundhog of Massachusetts, fails to see her shadow, 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.



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



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Skunks emerge to mate about this time of year.

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Maple sugar season begins, given the proper weather conditions—an alternating sequence of short warming trends and cold spells—for sap flow. Watch for little icicles at the tips of sugar maple twigs.

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New moon. There are no full moons in February, but there is a new moon, which is barely visible to the naked eye. The lack of moonlight, though, allows the stars to shine a little brighter.

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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

Look for coyote and deer beds in the snow. Coyotes usually bed in a hollow under evergreen trees or rocky overhangs where they are well protected. Deer also bed under trees but usually pick a protected area where they can also have good views of their surroundings to watch for predators.

27

Listen for the peter, peter song of male **tufted titmice**. Titmice have many different calls that can be difficult to identify, but the distinctive repetitive mating song is a herald of the changing seasons.



28

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.

