

# OUTDOOR ALMANAC

## DECEMBER 2018

**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** **Eastern Bluebirds** feed on Virginia Creeper berries and crab apples.

**6** Now that the leaves are gone, Eastern Gray Squirrel dreys (nests), which look like large balls of sticks and leaves, are visible high up in large deciduous trees. Squirrels usually build more than one drey in late summer/early fall to use as shelters in the winter.

**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 Jumping Mice hibernate, chipmunks, skunks, opossums, and raccoons remain active.



**12** Watch Red- and **White-breasted Nuthatches** as they husk and store sunflower seeds in bark furrows along the trunks of trees.

**13-14** 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.



**14** Join local **Christmas Bird Counts** in towns throughout the state until January 5.

**15** Mercury is only visible when it reaches greatest separation (elongation) from the sun, and it's never very far above the horizon. Right now, it can be seen just to the west of the sun shortly before sunrise.

**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.



**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.

**22** **Full Moon.** Not surprisingly, most of the Eastern Woodland tribes named this full moon with references to cold, frost, or freezing. Mohawks called it the Time of Cold Moon.



**22-23** 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.

