

OUTDOOR ALMANAC

FEBRUARY 2019



2 **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.

5 On warmer, sunny days look for basking spiders. A very small percentage of our spider species overwinter as adults and mostly stay in the subnivean space. When the weather is good they can be found out and about looking for prey, which are often Snow Fleas.



8 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.

13 Traditionally our maple sugaring season began in mid-February, given the proper weather conditions—an alternating sequence of short warming trends and cold spells—for sap flow. With climate change our season generally starts earlier, often with significant flow as early as January. Watch for little icicles at the tips of sugar maple twigs that signal flow has started.



15 Downy and **Hairy Woodpeckers** drum year round but the frequency picks up as they set up territories. Hairy Woodpeckers drum very fast with long pauses—at least 25 taps/second; 20 seconds between—while Downy Woodpeckers drum more slowly with shorter pauses—15 taps/second; a few seconds between.

19 **Full moon.** February's full moon is often called the Snow Moon or the Full Hunger Moon, referencing the continuation of winter and the difficulty in finding food. In a more hopeful vein, the Algonquin called this the Ice in River is Gone Moon as the larger rivers began to open up.



20 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.

24 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.

