

OUTDOOR ALMANAC

DECEMBER 2019

1 Both Short-tailed and Long-tailed Weasels molt from brown to white in the fall. In winters with little snow cover their white pelage makes them easy to see if they are out and about in the daytime.

15 Mercury is only visible at its greatest separation from the sun and is never very far above the horizon. Right now it can be seen just to the west of the sun shortly before sunrise.



3 **Eastern Bluebirds** feed on Virginia creeper berries and crabapples.

16 The winter diet of White-tailed Deer—mostly buds and twigs, some evergreen leaves, acorns—is very dry, which means their scat is dry as well. The piles of small, oval pellets they leave behind are easy to identify.

6 Now that the leaves are gone, Eastern Gray Squirrel dreys, which look like a large ball 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.

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.



8 Most Great Blue Herons have migrated but you can still find a few where the water is not completely frozen. With warmer winters we now see a few of them all year.

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.



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

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



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

20 Look for miniature “cones” on leafless branches in woody thickets along the edge of freshwater. These aren't cones but the fruit of Speckled Alder.

12 **Full moon.** This is the Full Cold Moon or the Long Night Moon. A full moon is always directly opposite the sun, and since the sun is at its lowest point in our sky in midwinter, this full moon has the highest trajectory of the year.

22 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.



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.

22-23 The Ursid meteor shower, which originates from the Little Dipper (Ursa Minor), is the last meteor shower of the year.



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

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

