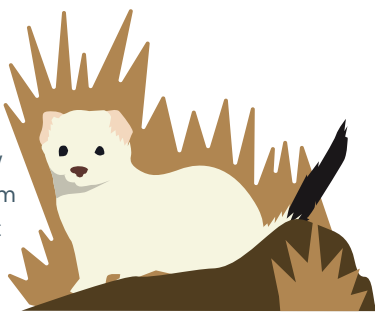


OUTDOOR ALMANAC

1

Both Long-tailed Weasels and **Ermines** 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.



3

Beavers resurface their lodges with a new layer of vegetation and seal them up with a mud shell in the late fall. They leave an unsealed circle in the center of the roof to allow ventilation, and on cold days you can sometimes see the steam of the warmer air rising out of the vent.

6

Gray Squirrel dreys, which look like a large ball of sticks and leaves, are visible high up in large, now leafless deciduous trees. Squirrels usually build more than one drey in late summer and early fall to use as winter shelters.

7

The shape and size of White-tailed Deer scat reflects what they eat. This time of year, the scat has transitioned from larger, moist, clumped pellets from the grasses, fruit, and clover of spring and summer to small, dry, individual pellets from the twigs, nuts, and leaves of winter.

8

Most **Great Blue Herons** have migrated, but you can still find a few where the water is not completely frozen. They used to all be gone by January as their access to fish froze over, but with warmer winters, a few of them remain year-round.



11

Not true hibernators, chipmunks, skunks, opossums, and raccoons may emerge from their shelters every few weeks. Other mammals, including coyotes, foxes, bobcats, fishers, deer, squirrels, rabbits, and porcupines, remain active all winter.

13–14

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



16

You may see Painted and Snapping turtles moving slowly under the ice. While their systems slow down in winter, they still need oxygen, which is more available in the water than in the mud.

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

Full moon. Not surprisingly, this is called the Cold Moon by most almanacs. Eastern Woodland tribes had similar names including Snow Moon, Frost on the Grass Moon, and Long Nights Moon.



19

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

20

Mating season for Red Foxes is December through February. Male foxes leave scent markings all year, but during courtship their urine develops a distinctive skunky odor that is very noticeable.

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.

21–22

The Ursid meteor shower originates from the Little Dipper (Ursa Minor).

25

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



28

Keep an eye out for giant silk moth cocoons on your winter walks: Cecropia caterpillars spin a gray-brown, spindle-shaped cocoon along the length of a small branch, while Polyphemous cocoons are rounder, less securely attached, and often covered with a leaf.