

OUTDOOR ALMANAC

1

On your New Year's walk, look and listen for Northern Cardinal's *purdy, purdy, purdy* song; Dark-eyed Junco's musical bell-like trill; White-breasted Nuthatch's *ankh, ankh, ankh* calls; and Black-capped Chickadee's *chick-a dee-dee-dee* song. And if you are walking among pines or spruce, look up in the treetops and you may see a Red Crossbill or hear their *jip, jip, jip* or *chuppity, chuppity, chuppity* chatter.

2-4

From a dark location, after midnight, look north toward the Little Dipper to observe the Quadrantid meteor shower—now at its peak with up to 40 shooting stars per hour.

6

Male white-tailed deer grow a new set of antlers every year. Since mating season has ended this is the time to look for shed antlers on the ground.

7

Observe your shrubs and fruit trees after the first snows. Chewed twigs and evergreen leaves with ragged edges are a sign of deer. Cleanly nipped, angled twig ends close to the ground or top of the snow are a sign of rabbits.

10

Spend an hour outside after dark listening for hooting owls. This is the best time of year to hear Great Horned Owls, **Barred Owls**, and Eastern Screech-owls as they set up territories and find mates.



12

Look for Eastern Bluebirds, Tree Sparrows, **Snow Buntings**, American Goldfinches, and other songbirds scratching in the dirt or piles of snow along on the edge of the road. They are swallowing grit to help their gizzards grind up the hard seeds and fruit pits that make up their winter diet.



16

When ice forms on interior lakes, Bald Eagles move to river mouths along the coast where they can fish in the open water. The mouth of the Merrimack often has a number of wintering eagles.

17

Full Moon



18

Signs of coyote breeding season can be found in parallel **coyote tracks**, scent markings, and duet howling.



23

The beauty of bark is most easily appreciated in winter. Look for the distinctive coverings of white ash (interconnected narrow diamonds); quaking aspen (pale, grayish green, smooth on the branches and rough on the older trunk); American beech (silvery gray and very smooth); and sugar maple (grayish, thickened vertical strips broken into irregular rectangles).

26

Muskrats do not store food for the winter so they have to forage every day. If the water has minimal ice, they can be seen on the ice or pond edges eating water plants, and occasionally snails or small fish.