

OUTDOOR ALMANAC

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 fruits, including plums, grapes, blackberries, and apples.

3

The shape and size of White-tailed Deer scat reflect 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.

7

Full moon.



9

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.

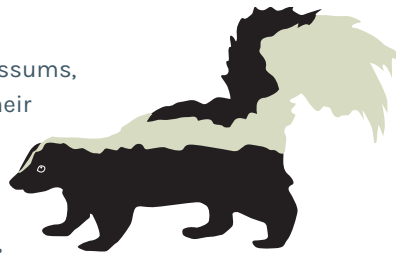


10

On cold nights at the beginning of winter, damp or wet areas of the ground can form ice needles.

11

Not true hibernators, **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 the full winter cold to put out bird feeders.



18

Most **Asian lady beetles** 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.



19

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

21

Today is the winter solstice. It's the shortest day and longest night of the year, and the official start of winter. Even though daylight increases from now until June, our coldest weather is still to come.

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 Polyphemus cocoons are rounder, less securely attached, and often covered with a leaf.

