

Text by **AUSTIN L. RAND**
Chief Curator of Zoology



JANUARY

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Lake Michigan; other winter birds, chickadees, woodpeckers, cardinals and evening grosbeaks come to feeding stations, and some mammals, such as rabbits, squirrels and raccoons leave trails in the snow.

Not until late in the month does winter relax its grip more than momentarily, with brief thaws that wipe away the snow. Then plant activity starts with the pussy willows coming out; resident birds, titmice and cardinals start to sing; great-horned owls hoot and nest; and the early spring migrants, doves, song sparrows, redwings and meadowlarks arrive and sing. When sun shines strong on snowbanks the tiny spring-tails or snow-fleas swarm on the snow, making it look as though dusted with soot; and skunk cabbage pushes up through the snow and dead leaves. While ice fishing continues on little lakes, goldeneye ducks court on Lake Michigan; tom cats begin to yowl; possums and coons become more active; and children fly kites.



FEBRUARY

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Spring—and the returning sun banishes cold and snow for longer and longer spells. The ponds thaw open and ducks, mallard, shovelers, and widgeon swim on them. The first frog chorus comes from shallow sun-heated pools, and robins and starlings join the morning bird song chorus; blackbirds roost in the marshes and feed on our lawns; lawns and winter wheat fields are greener; snowdrops and crocuses bloom in our yards, the maples along our streets, the

first wild flower, pepper-and-salt, in the woodlots, and skunk cabbage in the swamps. By late March the last of the shaded snow banks are usually gone.

MARCH

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A NATURE CALL

Soft warm breezes and sunshine, gentle showers, sudden squalls, thunder and lightning, hail, and even snowstorms—all make April weather. Green leaves appear on currant and honeysuckle bushes, daffodils and tulips bloom in gardens, and the tide of woodland flowers swells to form a living carpet of two dozen species in the still leafless woods. Smelts run upstream to spawn, small moths flutter against lighted windows, small grasshoppers and leafhoppers fly up from disturbing footsteps in the grass, butterflies appear, dragonflies skim ponds where turtles bask, and leopard frogs croak. Another wave of migrant birds, hermit thrushes, fox sparrows, and Bonaparte's gulls passes through; the pond ducks leave and purple martins arrive. Gardeners plant peas, farmers oats, and fishermen angle for perch and seine carp.



APRIL

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Green fields and roadsides with yellow dandelions and mustard and white daisy fleabane; growing leaves on trees cast a summer shade; blue lupine massed in dunes; yellow ladyslippers bloom in pinery.

Lavish display of pink-white blooms on fruit trees, shadbush, wild crab and dogwood; migration of warblers and scarlet tanagers at height—you can see 30 species in one woodlot; vegetable gardens growing, rhubarb ready for pies; scarlet poppies and blue iris brave in yards; young robins, thrashers and screech owls out of nest, and young foxes and squirrels running about; elm and maple seed strewn on sidewalks.

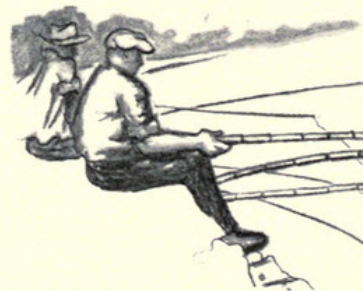


MAY

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Summer: brown fields of planted corn and soy beans at first contrast with the green woodlots and wheat and alfalfa, tall enough to wave in the wind; white daisies, red clover yellow clover, blackberries and later multiflora roses bloom along roadsides where catalpa trees also bloom and ragweed and milkweed are up enough to notice. Strawberries and some cherries and peas ripen,

and first hay is cut. In the yards are added peonies, red and white roses; white mock orange and pink beauty bush. Young crows and jays are noisy, and robins nesting again; cricket frogs click and bullfrogs boom in the marshes; crane-flies and lacewings like a haze over hay fields at sunset at end of month. Small flocks of English sparrows inspect ripening oats and wheat; and in the evenings fireflies rise like sparks from fields. Fishermen catching perch in Lake Michigan and sunfish in little lakes.



JUNE

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NDAR FOR 1960

Illustrations by RUTH ANDRIS



Hot weather begins; people flock to Lake Michigan beaches; yellow wheat and oats ready for harvest contrast with heavy summer green of rest of landscape. Full-grown young rabbits get run over on roads; young tree frogs transform and leave ponds; mud daubing wasps provision their nest chambers with paralyzed spiders; ant lions

JULY

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wait in their funnel-shaped pit-traps in the sand; in some years egrets arrive on ponds; first southbound migrants and sandpipers; blackbirds flock to sleeping roosts. Along roadsides are thistles, Queen Anne's lace and chicory; in yards zinnias, petunias, phlox and hollyhocks; gardens yield string beans, beets and carrots; swallowtail and cabbage butterflies are daytime visitors. In the dunes, blueberries ripen and cactus blooms.



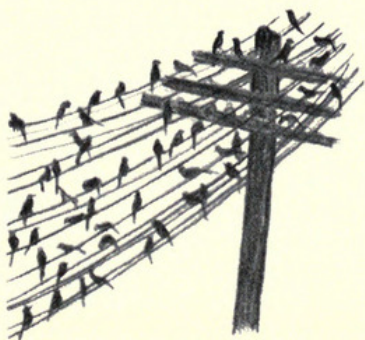
AUGUST

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blackbirds more conspicuous; gulls and terns arrive on Lake Michigan where picnickers crowd beaches; bats seem more common and some strays are trapped in houses; a few birds are singing after late summer lull—some start south. Crickets and katydids sing at night; grasshoppers are growing up and swarms of small insects come to lighted windows; big yellow garden

iders make their webs that trap grasshoppers. Swamp and swales richly tapestried with Joe Pye weed, boneset, ironweed and sedges; wild sunflowers and goldenrod. In yards are marigolds, ivy, cannas, and goldenglow.

It's autumn; the beach season ends on Labor Day; soon it is top-oat weather, smoke rises from chimneys and the countryside gets golden, olive tinge with rustling leaves and splashes of red and orange. Flycatchers and warblers join the southward exodus of land birds that travel by night, while hawks travel by day in long lines; leopard frogs move back to ponds; and families of woodchucks and ground squirrels break up and the young wander widely. Apples, plums and grapes ripen; honey harvesting starts; haws are red, elderberries are black. There are asters, welweed and sunflowers on the roadsides and zinnias and chrysanthemums in the yards. Monarch butterflies migrate southward. Blackbirds on wires or on marshes in big flocks.



SEPTEMBER

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The month of the colored leaves; early, the maples and sassafras, elm and hickory are red, orange and yellow; later these fall as the oaks change to purple reds and red browns. Now comes smoky, golden sunshine of Indian summer. The season of growth is about past. The falling bright leaves outshine the vivid autumn chrysanthemums, cover streets with a rustling layer and feed bonfires in the evenings.

Bittersweet berries break open orange; osage oranges fall, milkweed down floats on the breeze, cattail heads break open; asters bloom on the roadside and witch hazel in the woods of the dunes.

Corn picking starts, pumpkins and walnuts ripen; pond ducks arrive and geese go over; seed eating birds such as juncos arrive from the North, jaegers pass on the lake, and the blue racers gather to hibernate.



NOVEMBER

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Winter's here—it may be snowy like January, or bare and bleak like late November, or a mixture of the two. Bird feeding stations have a half-dozen regulars and the winter ducks and gulls increase on Lake Michigan. The ponds freeze over and the ice barrier starts to build up on Lake Michigan's shore. On December 21 comes the winter solstice when the sun reaches its farthest south and starts north again for a new cycle.



OCTOBER

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With leafless trees, bleached cornfields, green fields of winter wheat, here and there patches of color left over from October, and near freezing temperatures. Wind whistles around corners and sighs through bare branches. The last garden flowers, chrysanthemums, are nipped by the frosts, and the witch hazel flowers soon go; duckweed is conspicuous on wooded

swamps; acorns are being harvested by blackbirds, jays and squirrels; little bands of tree sparrows fly up from the roadsides and the great blackbird roosts in the cattails are soon deserted. Winter water birds appear on Lake Michigan—grebes and mergansers—and jaegers are passing along the shore. The highway maintenance people put little heaps of cinders and salt by the roadsides at hills, reminding us that slippery roads often come with a snowstorm about Thanksgiving Day.



DECEMBER

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Rand, Austin Loomer. 1960. "A Nature Calendar for 1960." *Bulletin* 31(1), 4–5.

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