



Skywatch Almanac

February 2012

by Mark Breen

Weather Highlights

4 - 1869: Heavy snow storm dumped 19 inches in Stratford, NH, and 22 inches in Craftsbury, VT. Thunderstorms reported in Antrim and Goffstown, NH. Snow depths were raised to 4 to 5 feet.

8 - 1861: A spectacular fall of temperatures in Hanover, NH; the thermometer fell from 37 on the afternoon of the 7th, to -32 on the morning of the 8th, 69 degrees in 18 hours.

14 - 2007: The "Sweetheart" Blizzard; Heavy snow and strong winds left 18 to 30 inches of snow, whipped into 6 foot drifts. It was Burlington's 2nd biggest snowstorm, 25.7 inches; 36 inches in Goshen and Cambridge, VT.

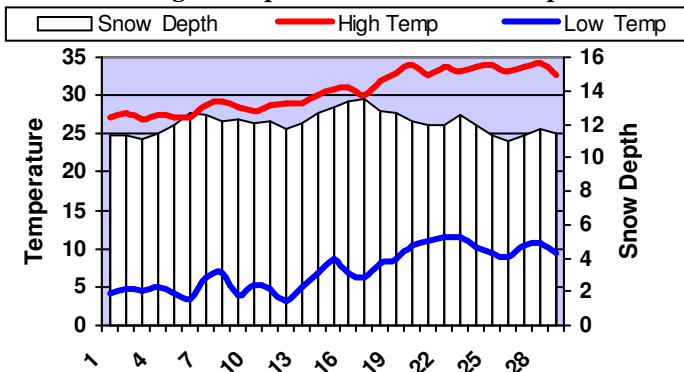
23 - 1972, following a fierce snowstorm which reached blizzard proportions on the 20th, a late-season spell of arctic cold gripped the north country. Readings plunged to -34 in West Burke and Enosburg Falls, VT, and -38 in Colebrook, NH

28 - Temperatures plunged to record levels on this date in 1920, reaching -17 in Burlington, and -30 in St. Johnsbury.

February Records and Averages

Warmest: 31.3°F/1981 Coldest: 6.1°F/1934
 Wettest: 4.93"/1981 Snowiest: 60.5"/1969

Average Temperature and Snow Depth



Astronomy Highlights



Orion remains the center-piece of the mid-winter skies, his three belt stars due south near 7:45 PM, flanked by the bright red star Aldebaran on his right, and the steely-blue Sirius, to the lower left. Meanwhile, the northern skies see the Big Dipper climb into the northeast, looking like a question mark. By that time, Leo, the Lion will climb into the eastern skies - his head shaped like a backwards question mark - hosting the planet Mars, brightening to a salmon-pink. Mars joins Venus, blazing in the west, and Jupiter, lowering closer to Venus, high in the southwest.

7 - Mercury slips between the Earth and Sun, and will edge into the evening skies late in the month.

14 - Valentine's Day finds Mars and Venus on opposite sides of the sky, after all, "men are from Mars, women are from Venus".

25 - Venus is high in the west-southwest, next to the Crescent Moon.

28 - The Moon is just shy of its First Quarter (half-Full) as it passes below the Seven Sisters.

29 - Mercury is low in the west, 45 minutes after sunset. It will climb just a little higher during the upcoming weekend.

FAIRBANKS MUSEUM & PLANETARIUM

1302 Main Street St. Johnsbury, VT 05819

Phone 802 748-2372 Fax 802 748-1893 info@fairbanksmuseum.org www.fairbanksmuseum.org

**THE FEBRUARY
SUN AND MOON**



**Full "Snow" Moon
on the 7th**



**Last Quarter Moon
on the 14th**



**New Moon
on the 21st**



**First Quarter Moon
on the 29th**

Sunrise February 1 7:07 AM EST
Sunset February 1 4:57 PM EST
Length of Day 9h 50m

Sunrise February 29 6:26 AM EST
Sunset February 29 5:35 PM EST
Length of Day 11h 9m

Ground Hog Day

has much less to do with woodchucks than with calendars. February 2nd was the traditional date marking the half-way point from Winter to Spring. European lore marked this point by watching for bears to come out of caves, or badgers from their dens, as well as checking on winter stores to be sure there was enough to last for the second half of winter.



"February sun is dearly won."

"The cold was our pride, the snow was our beauty. It fell and fell, lacing day and night together in a milky haze, ..."

Weather notes:

We are now entering the second half of winter, which has a very different character. There is still a tremendous capacity for snow and cold, so it is not surprising that February holds the record for the snowiest month in many places, as well as the coldest. Yet the sun is no longer just a pleantry, helping to take the edge off the chill. By late in the month it brings average daytime temperatures above freezing, and awakens the sap in the maples, and the spring songs of the winter birds.

