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Photo by R. Whitescarver

SWOOPE - Despite this week's temperature drop, the Earth is gradually awakening from the cold slumber of winter in our legendary Shenandoah Valley.

Days lengthen, migrations begin, chloroplasts awaken and absorb the energy from the sun's photons - photosynthesis begin ... pastures slowly turn from brown to green.

Life's energy is on the move.

March usually brings the most severe weather, and it's our busiest month on the farm because we begin calving.

One hundred thirty-eight pregnant cows are all due to give birth in the next 90 days.

Red-wing blackbirds arrived in Swoope at the end of February and that, for me, signals the beginning of the great avian migration. Each day I look for a new arrival. A fox sparrow one day, hooded mergansers and buffleheads another, an osprey.

Killdeers amass. Bluebirds start looking into the nest boxes we put up for them and other cavity nesters.

Each day we feed the cows we check a nearby pond for migrating birds. Eagles nest nearby.

One day as we drove slowly across the dam I scanned the far end of the pond and "Oh my God," there were several Sandhill Cranes.

They are on their way to breed in Canada above the Arctic Circle.

This is very rare for Swoope, and I'll take it as a welcome sign of spring.



Photo by R. Whitescarver

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