

# around the year

A JOURNEY THROUGH THE SEASONS AND THE CHRISTIAN YEAR

## THINGS TO DO THIS WINTER

by Dallas Lore Sharp

AN EXCERPT FROM  
*WINTER* (1912)

### 1

You should go skating—crawling, I ought to say—over a pond of glare ice this winter. Take the pond you are most familiar with. Go early on a bright day, before any skater arrives, and lying flat upon the clear, “black” ice, study the bottom of the pond and the fish that swim below you. They have boats with glass bottoms along the California coast, through which to watch the marvelous bottoms off shore. But an Eastern pond covered with glare ice is as good, for such ice is a plate-glass window into a wonder world.

### 2

Fight your way one of these winter days to the crest of some high hill and stand up against a northwest gale. Feel the sweep of the winds from across the plain beneath you;

*continued on page 3*



# From the Editor's Desk

January 1, 2016

Dear Readers:

*Hope smiles from the threshold of the year to come,  
Whispering 'it will be happier'...*

--Alfred Lord Tennyson

The start of the new liturgical year began with Advent at the end of November, but in the secular world the New Year has just arrived. I've never been one to fawn over the start of a new year--it's hard enough just staying awake until midnight, let alone withstand the pressure of all those resolutions!

Thankfully, January brings us much more than confetti in Times Square. In this month's newsletter you will find suggestions for outdoor cold-weather activities from an early 20th Century naturalist work entitled *Winter* by Dallas Lore Sharp (now in the public domain and found in its entirety at Project Gutenberg: [gutenberg.org/ebooks/42199](http://gutenberg.org/ebooks/42199)).

In the calendar of the Christian year, this month brings us **Epiphany** or **Three Kings' Day**, and you'll find in this newsletter some ideas for celebrating with family based on French traditions (see page 6). Hint: think tinfoil crowns and beans hidden in cupcakes!

>>>Visit [aroundtheyear.org/epiphany](http://aroundtheyear.org/epiphany) for additional photos and recipes.

To round out this month's offerings, you'll find poems by Muriel Spark and W.S. Merwin (see page 5), and some suggestions for children's books to explore, including one of my family's favorites: *Over and Under the Snow*, which illuminates the secret winter world right under our feet (see page 7). Don't forget to "like" *around the year* on Facebook ([facebook.com/aroundtheyear.org](https://facebook.com/aroundtheyear.org)) for additional content throughout the year.

*Kelli Ann Wilson, Editor*

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Coming to *around the year* in February:  
Candlemas, Valentine's Day, & more!

hear them speaking close in your ear, as they fly past; catch them and breathe them, until they run red in your leaping veins. Master them, and make them, mighty as they are, your own. And something large and free, strong and sound will pass into you; and you will love the great world more, and you will feel how fit a place, for the strong of heart, is this earth to live on.

### III



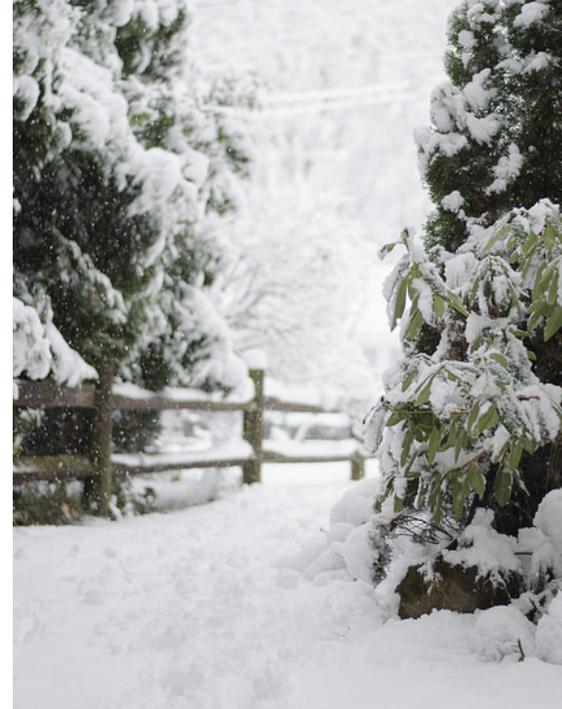
ONE KIND WORD CAN WARM  
THREE WINTER MONTHS.

-- JAPANESE PROVERB

Keep a careful list of the winter birds you see; and visit every variety of wood, meadow, and upland in your neighborhood—not neglecting the parks and city trees—for a sight of the rarer winter visitors, such as the snowy owl, the snow buntings, and the crossbills.

### IV

If you know little about the birds, then this is the time to begin your study. When they are so few and scarce? Yes, just because they are few and scarce. On a June morning (unless you are at home in the woods) you will be confused by the medley of songs you hear, and the shapes flitting everywhere about you; and you may be tempted to give up your study for the very multitude. Get a pair of good field or opera glasses and a good bird book, such as Hoffmann's, "Guide to the Birds," and go into the fields and woods—leaving the book at home. The first bird you see follow up until you can remember (1) his size, color—whether he has a white bar on wings, or small spots or large clear spots on breast; (2) his chirp, or call; (3)



something peculiar about his flight—a flirt of the tail, a habit of flying down to the ground in getting away. Then come back to your book and identify him from memory. If you cannot, then go out again and again; and it will not be long before either this first one, or others, will be accurately made out—the beginning of an acquaintance that you can extend in the summer, but which will be plenty large enough for your "coming-out" winter into bird society. For here is a list of the birds you may be able to find during the winter:—

*continued on page 4*

## WELCOME WINTER BIRDS

One may wonder how these tiny winter visitors survive in the bitter temperatures that arrive this time of year. Here are a few ideas to make things a little easier for them: provide a variety of foods, especially ones that are high in fat and calories like oil sunflower and suet; locate feeders out of the wind on the east or southeast part of your yard, and preferably near a row of trees or other roosting area; don't forget to include a ground feeder or scatter seeds for those birds who like to feed at ground level (juncos, mourning doves, etc); and offer peanuts, a favorite of blue jays and squirrels—choose the unsalted, dry roasted variety. **Source:** "Winter Bird Feeding," by Wild Birds Unlimited, [WBU.com](http://WBU.com)

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Screech owl, crow, robin, flicker, jay, goldfinch, tree sparrow, English sparrow, song sparrow, junco, golden-crowned kinglet, nuthatch, brown creeper, downy woodpecker, quail, partridge.

## V

See to it that no bird in your neighborhood starves for lack of food that you can supply. Tie a piece of suet to a tree or bush near the house (by the window if you can) for the chickadees and blue jays; keep a place on the lawn cleared of snow and well supplied with crumbs and small seeds for the juncos and the sparrows; hang a netted bag of cracked nuts out somewhere for the nuthatches; and provide corn and nuts for the squirrels.

## VI

Go out on a cold December day, or a January day, and see how many "signs" of spring—"Minor Prophets," as Mr. Torrey calls them—you can bring home. They will be mostly buds of various



sorts. Then, on a warm, soft day, go again to see what you can bring home—flitting, creeping, crawling things that the warm sun has brought from their winter hiding.

## VII

Make a map of your sky, showing the positions of the planets, the constellations, and the most brilliant stars, the points in the horizon for the rising and setting of the sun, say, in January, noting the changes in places of things since your last map drawn in October [Editor's note: the author wrote books for other seasons with instructions to draw sky maps; he assumes his readers have read the other books]. Any school child can do it, and, in doing it, learn the few large facts about the sky that most people are pitifully ignorant of.

## VIII

Go out after a fresh light snow and take up the trail of a fox or a rabbit or a partridge, as you might take up a problem in arithmetic, or as a detective might take up a clue, and "solve" it—where the creature came from, where going, what for, in a hurry or not, pursued or pursuing, etc. It will give you one of the best of lessons in observation, in following a clue, and in learning to take a hint.

## IX

Go out to study the face of the ground—the ridges, hollows, level places, the ledges, meadows, sandbanks, the course of the



IF WE HAD NO WINTER, THE SPRING WOULD NOT BE SO PLEASANT.

-- ANNE BRADSTREET

streams, the location of the springs—the general shape and contour, the pitch and slant and make-up of the region over which you tramp in the summer. Now, when the leaves are off and things swept bare, you can get a general idea of the lay of the land that will greatly aid you in your more detailed study of plants and birds, of individual things, in the summer. It is like an outline map in your geography.

## X

Winter is the time to do much good reading. A tramp over real fields is to be preferred to a tramp in a book. But a good book is pretty nearly as good as anything under the stars. You need both fields and books. And during these cold days—impossible days, some of them, for work afield—you will read, read. Oh, the good things to read that have been written about the out-of-doors! -- L.D.S.



## **The Three Kings**

*by Muriel Spark*

Where do we go from here?  
We left our country,  
Bore gifts,  
Followed a star.  
We were questioned.  
We answered.  
We reached our objective.  
We enjoyed the trip.  
Then we came back by a different way.  
And now the people are demonstrating in the streets.  
They say they don't need the Kings any more.  
They did very well in our absence.  
Everything was all right without us.  
They are out on the streets with placards:  
Wise Men? What's wise about them?  
There are plenty of Wise Men,  
And who needs them? - and so on.

Perhaps they will be better off without us,  
But where do we go from here?

## **To the New Year**

*By W. S. Merwin*

With what stillness at last  
you appear in the valley  
your first sunlight reaching down  
to touch the tips of a few  
high leaves that do not stir  
as though they had not noticed  
and did not know you at all  
then the voice of a dove calls  
from far away in itself  
to the hush of the morning

so this is the sound of you  
here and now whether or not  
anyone hears it this is  
where we have come with our age  
our knowledge such as it is  
and our hopes such as they are  
invisible before us  
untouched and still possible



Visit [aroundtheyear.org/epiphany](http://aroundtheyear.org/epiphany) for more recipes

## EPIPHANY (THREE KINGS DAY)



The 6th of January is the Feast of the Epiphany of our Lord, also called Three Kings Day or Twelfth Night. The word "epiphany" is derived from the Greek word Ἐπιφάνεια (*Epiphaneía*) which means "manifestation." The etymology of the word points to its origins in the Eastern Church, and it was historically a celebration of the manifestation of the Incarnation of Jesus Christ, varying locally in its observance of different events from Jesus's childhood. The first mention of an ecclesiastical celebration called Epiphany comes from the writing of the historian Ammianus Marcellinus,

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who noted in 361 A.D. that it was considered Christ's Birthday. In the Western Church a particular focus on the visitation of the Magi, also known as the Three Kings or Wise Men, has developed over the years.

My mother-in-law is a retired high school French teacher, and has introduced many French traditions to our family. The French celebrated Epiphany with great fervor until the time of the Revolution, when anything religious fell out of favor or was outright banned. Despite no longer being a public holiday, many in France still celebrate Epiphany with the *Galette des Rois* or Kings' Cake.

We have gingerbread cupcakes instead of a cake and my mother-in-law bakes a bean into one of them. Whoever finds the bean is crowned king or queen, and gets to wear the special tinfoil crown.

**Selected Sources:** "The Catholic Encyclopedia" by *NewAdvent.org*; "Origins of the Epiphany," by *TravelFranceOnline.com*

### Gingerbread Cupcakes des Rois

- 1 1/2 c all-purpose flour
- 1/3 c granulated sugar
- 1/3 c packed light-brown sugar
- 1 1/2 tsp ginger
- 1 1/2 tsp ground cinnamon
- 1 1/4 tsp baking powder
- 1/2 tsp ground cloves
- 1/2 tsp salt
- 1/4 c light molasses
- 1/4 c applesauce
- 1/4 c milk
- 3 Tbsp vegetable oil
- 2 egg whites
- 1 whole egg

Heat oven to 350 degrees. Line twelve 3.5-inch muffin pan cups with cupcake liners. Stir together flour, sugar, brown sugar, ginger, cinnamon, baking powder, cloves, and salt in a bowl. Whisk together molasses, applesauce, milk, oil, egg whites, and egg in another bowl. Fold in flour mixture until just moistened and spoon batter into muffin cups--don't forget to put a bean into one of them! Bake for 20-25 minutes until a toothpick comes out clean. Cool completely.

Adapted from *Family Circle Light & Easy Meals*, 1996

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**January 1st:** New Year's Day and **The Feast of the Holy Name of our Lord Jesus Christ**

**January 4th:** Feast of Elizabeth Ann Seton

**January 6th:** **The Feast of the Epiphany of our Lord**

**January 10th:** **The Feast of the Baptism of our Lord**

**January 18th:** Confession of St. Peter, Apostle

**January 21st:** Feast of St. Agnes of Rome, patroness of chastity, engaged couples, and virgins

**January 22nd:** Feast of St. Vincent, patron of vinegar- and wine-makers

**January 25th:** Conversion of St. Paul, Apostle

**January 28th:** Feast of St. Thomas Aquinas, patron of academics, philosophers, and students

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I'm currently looking for individuals who might be interested in contributing to *around the year* (both the website and the newsletters). If you enjoy what I've created and would like to become involved, please contact me! [kelli@aroundtheyear.org](mailto:kelli@aroundtheyear.org)

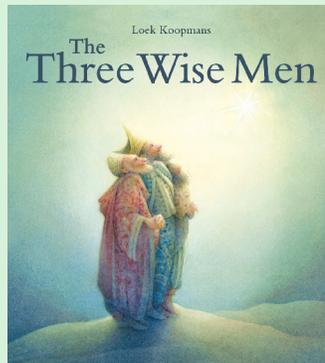


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## Recommended Reading

CHILDREN'S BOOKS FOR THE MONTH OF JANUARY



***The Three Wise Men***, written and illustrated by Loek Koopmans

*From the publisher:*

Long, long ago, a very special star appeared in the night sky. It shone more brightly than all the other stars. Three wise men called Melchior, Caspar and Balthasar gazed at the star in wonder. They had never seen anything like it before.

In this beautifully illustrated book for young children, the three Kings decide to journey west, following the star to a very special destination. Loek Koopmans' retelling of one part of the Christmas story is full of life and character, as well as mystery and wonder.

***Over and Under the Snow***, written by Kate Messner, illustrated by Christopher Silas Neal

*From the publisher:*

Over the snow, the world is hushed and white. But under the snow is a secret world of squirrels and snowshoe hares, bears and bullfrogs, and many other animals who live through the winter, safe and warm.

*Over and Under the Snow* takes readers on a cross country ski trip through the winter woods to discover the secret world of animals living under the snow.

