

From the North Shore of Little Rock Lake in Pristine Benton Co.

AUGUST 2012 WEATHER & PHENOLOGY IN REVIEW

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Reviewing the August phenology noting that Brown-headed Cowbirds, Red-winged Blackbirds and Purple Martins have all left for warmer places made me realize that summer is almost finished. The start of the possible snow season is only fifteen days away (Sept 15th). Not only the birds are signaling summers wane, but the green things are doing the same thing. Asters are starting to bloom, Black-eyed Susan is plentiful along the road sides and ditches and milkweed seed pods are full and giving thought to opening. All signs of a summer that is slipping away.

August to me, seemed really hot and humid. Worse than last year. This was not the case as the average temperatures were nearly identical. We did, and still are, suffering from a moderate to severe lack of rain. The garden hose with a sprinkler has kept the grass and gardens green and in good health. This lack of moisture will have, if not corrected, a serious impact on trees. One should consider placing a sprinkler on low so your trees can get a much needed drink. It takes trees longer to recover from lack of water than garden plants and grass. Let's all hope for more rain in September.

WEATHER LAST AUGUST:

A little warmer and more rain. 5.73 inches to be exact. The most rain fell on the 13th when 2.12" was collected in the rain gage. Back to temperatures. The coldest day was a 50.9 degrees (F) on the 10th while our warm reading occurred on the 1st when the digital thermometer made it to 89.9 degrees (F). There were zero days with a 90 degree (F) reading compared to six this year. It was interesting to note that there were only two days when I recorded a low temperature in the 40s. There were ten of those days this year. The average low and high temperatures were 55.82 and 80.70 degrees (F).

It rained on ten days with the most rain falling on the 13th when 2.12" filled the rain gage. We ended the month with 5.73 inches and for the year 26.71 inches.

WEATHER:

Temperature averages were 51.72 and 82.24 degrees (F) for the low and high respectively. Pretty close to last years. Even with the hot and humid days, the low evening and night time temperatures made for good sleeping. Yes, it was a dry month. Discounting the heavy rain of 0.92 inches on the 4th, it was a very dry month. Only 0.67 inches fell the following twenty-six days. We ended the month with 1.59 inches and 26.56 inches for the year.

MN WEATHER RECORDS IN AUGUST:

Back in 1974 the local low temperature was a very chilly 33 degrees (F) while folks in Tower, MN chipped ice out of birdbaths when the mercury dipped to 21 degrees (F) in 1996 and again in 2002. Locally the 105 degrees reading in 1936 must have made residents look for a place in the shade. No AC in those days. Greater MN residents saw the temperature climb to 110 degrees (F) in 1947 and again in 1988. AC was just coming on line in 1947 if my memory serves me correctly.

August 2010 was a record month for rain when I recorded 9.37 inches at the N. end of Little Rock Lake. August is still a NO SNOW month.

OTHER MN RECORDS:

The most rain in 24 hours fell in Hokah. Well, I'm sure your question is, where the heck is Hokah. Well folks, it's about twenty miles NE of Caledonia. Right next to the border with WI. Hokah also has the distinction of receiving the most rain in one month (Aug) 23.86 inches. That's a lot of rain. Duluth had the earliest recorded snow, (a trace) on the 31st. On the 26th the longest track of a tornado with a broken path, 110 miles in N. Central MN. The highest wind (sustained) and highest wind gust occurred on the 20th in 1904 in St. Paul. I wonder if the legislature was in session and it was HOT AIR???

PHENOLOGY:

BIRDS - - mostly about the ones that have left. They include, Brown-headed Cowbirds, Purple Martins, House Wrens, Red-winged Blackbirds, Grey Catbirds and only an occasional Northern Oriole visiting the grape jelly. Yes, the seasons come and go. Summer is slipping by as signaled by the large number of swallows lined up on the power lines. A Northern Goshawk made two visits to our oak tree. This maybe the reason for the notable drop in the squirrel population. There are

only a couple here now and there was a lot more. Not seen in a couple of months, the Pileated Woodpecker and the Sharp-shinned Hawk.

ODDS & ENDS - - At least here, a very noticeable decrease in the number of yellow jacket hives under the eaves and like reports from neighbors. Wonder where they went? Yes, they can be a pain, but they do eat a lot of undesirable pests. Very few painted turtles. Where did they go? Still, zillions of leopard frogs leaping into the garden as the lawn mower approaches. I'm glad to see them. A good sign that we have a good environment. Dr. Ray Merritt reports his first sighting ever of a black squirrel. Ray lives on the south side of Rice. Found, one garden snake that met its demise from a car on North Freedom Rd. Hopefully, there are more in the area. Lots of frogs and locusts to eat.

LITTLE ROCK LAKE OBSERVATIONS:

The lake water level is dropping. At the beginning of the month it was 10.78 feet and ended at 10.51 ft down 27 inches. Lake temperature was 78 degrees (F) on the 1st and now is 70.0 degrees (F). Although the lake is quite green, none of the blue-green algae that also gives off a foul odor is present. A notable increase of lily pads. Just thick at the north end of Little Rock Lake by the bridge over Little Rock Creek. More at the south end of the lake. Sure would like to see cat tails. More and more folks are installing buffer strips by the shore of their property. Assistance from the Little Rock Lake Association and Benton County who help with the costs and plant selection. A good thing to help filter water runoff from lawns. My spies tell me that fishing has been very poor. Probably due to the warm water temperature.

NATURE NOTE:

Did you know that the Monarch is the Minnesota State Butterfly as of 2000? (Must have been a slow legislative session at the capitol!) Monarchs will fly anywhere from ground level to several thousand feet, the cruising altitude of many light airplanes. *Jim Gilbert's Minnesota Nature Notes pp 206.*

NATURE QUESTION:

How many species of hummingbirds are found in the world, all in the northern hemisphere?

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| A. 135 | C. 78 |
| B. 330 | D. 45 |

Answer is (B). The Ruby-throated Humming bird is the only one found in Minnesota. If you want to do this, let me know and I'll pose a nature question every month.

Jim Hovda