

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

April 2012 WEATHER & PHENOLOGY IN REVIEW

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Up until the 13th, I thought we were going back to arid times. Then, lots of rain for the remainder of the month. With really nice warm temperatures at the start of the month I was convinced that all the birds and other critters would arrive in abundance. Not so. Early ice out of Little Rock Lake reinforced this view.

Normally, I'm reporting ice out this month. I think cool low temperatures played a roll in the non return of migrating species. Ice covered the bird bath on numerous occasions late in the month. At least there was no snow. Last year the white stuff covered the ground on several occasions as late as the 20th.

With all the concerns about drought conditions there were burning restrictions for the first half of the month. Then, a lot of rain for the remainder of the month. Hopefully, May will stay wet. (It is starting that way...)

WEATHER LAST APRIL:

Colder with SNOW on seven days. The low temperature was a 21.9 degree (F) reading on the 5th. A 69.8 degree (F) reading was recorded on the 26th for the high temperature. Although I recorded about an inch less rain (2.47") it rained and snowed on 19 days of which snow fell on 7 days. Snow totaled 3.2" for a year total snowfall of 67.3" compared to only 28.1" this year. No wonder we are so thankful for such a nice spring. The ice went out of Little Rock Lake on the 13th.

WEATHER:

Warm temperatures for the first two weeks, cool for the next two weeks then a little warmer at the end of the month. The low temp was recorded on the 11th when 16.7 degrees (F) froze the bird bath solid. The warm temp was 74.6 degrees (F) on the 15th. Most notable was the copious amount of rain. Good measurable rain on the 14th and 15th was followed by no less than 1.63" on the 16th. I'm forced to admit that I did see a few snowflakes. However, there were so few I did not bother to record them. From the 14th to the 25th it rained every day except the 20th. It brought the total for the month to 3.37" and for the year 6.32". I think it is safe to say we will not get any more snow. I only got the snow blower out three

times. (Yea!) I put the machine to bed in March.

MN WEATHER RECORDS IN APRIL:

Our local record cold day occurred in 1975 when the mercury plunged to -3 degrees below zero (F) while our greater MN folks suffered a -22 degrees below zero (F) on April 6th 1979 in Karlstad. On the pleasant side of things our record warm temperature was a balmy 96 degrees (F) in 1980. Hawley MN recorded a short sleeve day of 101 degrees (F) in the same year. 8.42" was the most rain for an April locally in 2001. Only four years ago (2008) we received no less than 15.7" of SNOW. Yes, I'm still forced to mention the snow issue.

OTHER RECORDS:

The most fatalities from a single tornado occurred right here in St. Cloud, Sauk Rapids and Rice on the 14th of April 1886 when a funnel was spotted about 4:00 P.M.. Seventy-two folks lost their lives. Some from a wedding party. The Benton County Historical Society has a lot of information about that event. The Red River crested record levels in 1997 while the Minnesota River crested record levels in Montevideo and Jordan in 1965 and the Mississippi crested the same year in St. Paul and Winona. I remember 1965. It was a tough year for a lot of Minnesota people.

PHENOLOGY:

I was hoping to be able to report lots of things. Not so. On the 1st I spotted an Oregon colored Junco with Slate-colored Juncos and noted the arrival of a pair of Wood Ducks making a home in one of my houses.

On the 8th I spotted the first Purple Martin scout checking our houses in the morning. I did not see any more martins until nearly the end of the month. I found it interesting while at the Border View Lodge located on the Rainy River, Baudette, MN (26 - 29) there were lots of martins. Are they mad at us in Central MN?

On the 9th the tree swallows arrived and on the 14th a Yellow-rumped Warbler was taking seeds from one of the feeders and a Northern Flicker was grubbing for ants in the garden.

On the 21st the familiar sound of the Grey Catbird was heard. Which reminds me,

the Brown-headed Cowbirds are here in numbers. On Sunday the 22nd while listening to *Nature Notes on WCCO Radio* I spotted a pair of Wood Ducks near shore, a Chipping Sparrow and two Purple Finches were at the feeder. On the 30th I spotted (and heard) the first wren. I've received reports of their arrival earlier but this was the first one here. All four species of woodpeckers are still here.

I would be remiss if I did not mention all the plants that are turning green and forcing sprouts from the ground. This could be a stellar year for the Hostas and Ligularia. Our tulips that my wife Jan planted are the best ever. This is the first year that high winds did not flatten them.

RESIDENT OBSERVATIONS:

John Perske who makes his home in Texas noted that the normal song birds came a little late this year. On the 22nd he noted the arrival of Rose-breasted Grosbeaks, Northern Orioles, Orchard Orioles and different species of hummingbirds. Locally, on the 9th Steve Bogie observed a Red-shouldered Hawk near the N. end of Little Rock Lake, not to be confused with the Red-tailed Hawk. On the 11th Fred Segler spotted an American Kestrel near Staples, MN and on the 12th Emil Williams was pleased to note the arrival of his Eastern Phoebe that nests at his house every year.

NATURE NOTE:

Although I've not seen them yet, the arrival of the Northern Orioles and Ruby-throated Hummingbirds will be arriving soon. Make sure to have the grape jelly and hummingbird food ready. Remember to place a few pennies in the birdbath to keep the algae at bay. While writing this article, (03 May) "Debbie" from Foley called to inform me that the Northern Orioles arrived today about 10:00 A.M. I'm putting the grape jelly out today!