

**From the North Shore of Little Rock Lake in pristine Benton Co.
JANUARY 2012 WEATHER & PHENOLOGY IN REVIEW**

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Another contrast from January 2011 to January 2012 weather. Much of this preface should be in the weather last January section but the contrast is such that it deserves at least honorable mention here.

Visibly, we saw a lot more snow on the ground last year. Snow depth averaged about 8" compared too under an inch this year. Much of this month had less than 1/4" of snow on the ground. Last January it snowed on twenty-three of the thirty-one days producing 1.02" of precipitation. If one coupled that figure with the 19 days that I recorded below zero temperature readings, it sort of puts it into perspective. Compared to this January, down right miserable.

Yes, this January was a walk in the park. I recorded no less than 13 days with above freezing temperatures compared to only one measly 32.1 degrees (F) reading last year. I think the only ones complaining (with good cause) are the folks who sell products that deal with winter (snow) recreation. The snow blower only came out of the garage twice so far this year. WOW!

WEATHER LAST JANUARY:

A few items. The low temperature average was -4.77 degrees below zero (F) with the low reading a recorded -31.8 degrees below zero (F) while the high average was 16.98 degrees (F). The warm day occurred on the 29th when I recorded 32.1 degrees (F). The most snow fell on the 11th when 1.7" of snow fell producing .18" of liquid. The month ended with 1.02" of precipitation and 9.7" of snow that produced 28.5" of show for the snow season. Nearly 10" more than this year.

WEATHER:

Word on the street, "Wow, what a super winter. Best ever." This is turning into the winter that never was . . . Just some statistics to print. The average low temperature was 7.65 degrees (F) and the low reading for the month was -21.9 degrees (F) below zero on the 20th. Not bad for the warm side of things, the average high temperature was 29.23 degrees (F) with the high reading recorded on the 10th at 52.5 degrees (F). No jackets that day. Snow/precipitation wise, only .54" of melted snow was recorded from the 6" of snow. So far I've only recorded 18.7" of snow for this snow season. Looking at my monthly report that goes to Benton County, it appeared that there was a lot of precipitation. Yes, it precip'd on 16 days. However, most of it was only a trace amount. Weather-wise WIMPY as the late Steve Cannon of WCCO Radio would have said. How many of you good folks remember that colorful man at the WCCO mike? He was a legend in radio broadcasting featuring Ma Linger and Backlash LaRue.

MN WEATHER RECORDS IN JANUARY:

Coldest locally, -50 degrees below zero (F) in 1885 while greater MN recorded -57 degrees below zero (F) in 1904, and 1996. On the pleasant side of things, locally St. Cloud recorded 56 degrees (F) in 1981 while Montevideo recorded a balmy 69 degrees (F) on the 24th also in 1981.

The most precipitation, 2.75" occurred locally in 1897. I suspect that it must have been a warm January as this would equate to a lot of snow. The snowiest January occurred (locally) 29.9" in 1975. I think we are safe from breaking snowfall records this year. Ya' never know though!

Some other records that are of interest: The most snow from one storm occurred in Lake County in 1994 when 36" of snow fell. This storm that lasted for two days also dropped the most snow, 47". The longest dry spell (79 days) ended in SW MN on the 26th. The highest pressure ever recorded in MN occurred on the 21st in Collegeville when the barometer recorded 31.11 inHg (1053.5 mb). Last, the lowest wind chill temperature (new formula) of -71 degrees below zero (F) was recorded in Northern MN on the 9th and 10th.

PHENOLOGY:

I believe because of all the bare ground not many birds were at the feeders and bird bath. Juncos, Finches, a variety of woodpeckers, Blue Jays and a pair of squirrels were just about it. When there was snow on the ground, more birds. I did observe a lot of water fowl in the Mississippi River. Literally hundreds of ducks and geese. Lots of open water due to the warm weather. And, the wild turkeys have returned to the N end of Little Rock Lake. I counted 39 at Vince Goerings. They have been here all month.

RESIDENT OBSERVATIONS:

Conrad Urbik observed a Ross's Goose swimming with several Canadian Geese. You should look this bird up in your bird book. It has a really short neck. This is an unusual goose for this area. It is not often seen according to Jim Gilbert, noted MN naturalist. **Dr. Ray Merritt**, vacationing in Florida (he has to listen to all the political advertising) said that this has been a really nice warm season so far. Ray, you are missing our non winter.

LITTLE ROCK LAKE:

Some interesting info. With all the warm weather, no less than seven fish houses have went through the ice. I thought this was a thin ice issue. Not so. Ice thickness averaged 10".

According to our resident experts, this happens when there is no snow to bank around the house. There was no snow. When there is a lot of wind (there was) the wind starts moving the water under the house in the holes that have been drilled and the water acts like a saw. It eats at the ice. This happens regardless of the outside temperature. Moving water does it. In the case of there being no holes, if warm sun hits the house and water forms under the house, the same thing happens.



The photo (taken by Vince Goering) was of one of my neighbor's house that had to be rescued from Little Rock Lake. Rescuing a fish house is not a simple task. Enough manpower, correct tools and knowhow can make it happen. If it is your house and you have the aforementioned, no cost. If you have to pay for the expertise and tools, \$500 to \$1,000. Not to mention repair to the house that will come in the Spring. Just another of Minnesota challenges for the outdoor folks. For some, the cost of fish may have gone up. What will February bring?