

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

Jim Hovda, Rice MN 56367-0265 [jhovda.rice@jetup.net](mailto:jhovda.rice@jetup.net)

Although I dedicate a portion of this article to the weather last February, it's incumbent that I do some immediate comparisons. The differences between this February and last February are stark.

Well folks, if you thought this was a really mild (non-winter) winter, your observations were correct. Precipitation wise, about the same. Snow-wise very different. This month started with less than an inch of snow on the ground and from the 2<sup>nd</sup> it was bare ground until the 21<sup>st</sup> when we received a couple inches of snow. Then more bare ground until the snow storm on the 28<sup>th</sup> when we received 5.9" and another 3" on the 29<sup>th</sup>. Essentially, a bare ground February.

Last February we had more than a foot of snow on the ground most of the month. Coupling that with very cold temperatures it was a brutal month. Fourteen days with below zero temperatures compared to only four this month. This was a real blessing when it came to paying the heating bill, not so good for the folks who sell the energy source.

**WEATHER LAST FEBRUARY:**

The cold temperatures were a stark contrast to this year. The month started out with below zero temperatures (F) and ended on the same note. Fourteen (half the month last year) days of below zero (F) readings produced an average low of .11 degrees (F). Almost a below zero average. The coldest day occurred on the 10<sup>th</sup> when I recorded a -27.7 degrees below zero (F). The warmest reading was a 50.7 degree (F) day on the 14<sup>th</sup>. This was just a one day warm up. I think God was telling us that spring would come eventually.

Precipitation wise, about the same at .89 inches of the liquid stuff. Although I recorded 20" of snow, most of it came in one storm on the 21<sup>st</sup> when 12.9" of the fluffy stuff came down. Add 3.5" the next day it totaled about 16" of snow making life difficult for many of us.

Some statistics are in order. We ended the month with average temperatures of .11 and 25.91 degrees (F) for lows and highs respectfully. When I added Jan and Feb precipitation figures it came to 1.98" of precipitation for the year so far. The month ended with 20" of snow for a total of 48.5" of snow in comparison to 26.7" this year. No wonder this year appears to be a non winter.

**WEATHER:**

About the only thing I can say about the weather this year is the lack of weather. With the non winter plugging along, the weather folks on the TV and radio really got excited about our end of the month snow storm. The hype and concern over the event made one think that this was the first time our hardy folks in Minnesota had to face such a problem. This appeared, at least to

me, a contest as to which station could muster up the most threatening forecast. (Ratings???) Snow fall predictions were all over the place from a few inches to almost two feet. When it was all over, just another snow event that forced me to get the snow blower out for only the third time. I will admit though, it was a really heavy snow. Had this been a twenty-eight day month, much of this would have occurred in March. Had this event happened in early January, I would have been discouraged. Spring is on the way.

#### **MN WEATHER RECORDS IN FEBRUARY:**

Our coldest local temperature was a -40degrees below zero (F) in 1896 while Tower recorded our record cold for MN with a -60 degrees below zero (F) in 1996. Locally our record for snow was recorded in 1971 when 21.6"fell.

#### **PHENOLOGY:**



As far as nature observations, another bleak month. The exception was the return of the wild turkeys. On the 19<sup>th</sup> nearly sixty of them ventured into our yard looking for left over bird seeds from the feeders. Five really large “toms” were there strutting their large fan shaped tails. They were busy herding their “girls” to the locations they desired they be.

Because of the large amount of open water in the Mississippi River and in the channel parts of lakes, copious numbers of water fowl are here. On more than one occasion I’ve counted in excess of one hundred assorted geese, swans and a variety of ducks. At the feeders and heated bird bath, our normal winter birds appeared but their numbers are way down. I’m sure that with little or no snow, lots of natural food was available.

#### **LITTLE ROCK LAKE:**

On the 11<sup>th</sup>, a fishing contest benefitting Boys and Girls Clubs was held on the north end of Little Rock Lake. I estimated nearly two hundred folks drilled holes. However, a strong NW wind made this outdoor event brutal. Had there been no wind, it would have been a beautiful day for grilling and other outdoor activities to go with the fishing.

Shore ground heaving, not good. I believe, because of no snow, the insulation that the snow provides ground heaving by the shores in many places around the lake will pose problems for home owners. In front of our house the “heaves” have reached almost four feet and Randy Fernholz reports nearly six feet. Most folks were looking for a place to get out of the wind.

Concerns over Curley-leaf-pondweed making a comeback are well founded. With little or no snow lots of sunlight comes through the ice making for good growing conditions for this invasive weed. We’ll see.

With daylight savings time (the 11<sup>th</sup> - spring ahead) says I know spring is not far away.