

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

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WEATHER:

Temperatures about average. I had to break the ice in the birdbath on the 23rd when I recorded a low of 28.8 degrees (F). A picture of things to come. The warm reading occurred on the 4th when the digital thermometer maxed at 90.7 degrees (F). There were only three days when the high temperatures did not make it to 70 degrees (F). The average low and high temperatures were 43.48 and 77.76 degrees (F) respectively.

Our major weather event was rain. The lack of it has plants and especially trees showing signs of stress. We received rain on only seven days with the most rain falling on the 7th when I recorded .25 inches. We ended the month with only 0.49 inches of rain. For a year total of 26.99 inches. Here, it was the second driest September in history. More rain than St. Cloud received. It is not too late for watering trees. A slow soak will really help them thru the winter. Yes, we made it through September without SNOW.

LOCAL WEATHER RECORDS IN SEPTEMBER:

The record low temperature was a chilly 18 degrees (F) on the 28th in 1942. It was a no shirt day on the 10th when the record 106 degrees (F) was set in 1931. In 1926 rainfall totaled 10.72 inches. Our first snow of the season was recorded on the 21st when 0.2 inches of snow fell in 1995. My research notes that in 1926 St. Cloud received only .07 inches of rain for the record of non-rain.

PHENOLOGY:

This was a mundane month for critters and growing things. As we transition from summer to fall, the late bloomers in the garden are coming to full color. Asters are the most notable with their bright purple blooms. They have attracted a "gazillion" bees and some butterflies. Along with the asters are mums. At the end of the month monkshood with their beautiful blue flowers. Milkweed is seeding sending its seeds in the wind and covering parts of our garden with white. The frost on the 23rd took care of all the sensitive plants. Most notable, the tomatoes, which are now history. Fall also brings out the rich colors of different grasses.

Some of which have a brown almost maroon color with tassels of silver. It will be a notable contrast with the white snow that is sure to come.

More of our summer birds have left. The last Northern Oriole visited our feeder on the 2nd. The Ruby-throated Hummingbirds stayed until the 19th. I left their feeders out until the end of the month but I think the only drinkers were bees. Cedar Waxwings have been feeding on berry bearing bushes and trees, especially mountain ash with their bright orange berries. No Red-breasted Nuthatches or Juncos yet. I was surprised to observe two Common Grackles at the feeder on the 22nd. I thought they had left for the season.

Still on the wing, Mourning Cloak, Red Admiral, Clouded Sulphur, Orange Sulphur butterflies and a skipper on the asters on the 29th. Also on the 29th were multiple sightings of a large female MOOSE grazing in a cornfield about a mile east of Rice. It will be interesting to see if there are more sighting of the moose in October.

Maybe not quite phenology, the first dock was removed from the North End of Little Rock Lake by Jeb Willis on the 23rd marking the end of summer water sports activities.

The lake water temperature at the beginning of the month was 70 degrees (F) and 57 degrees (F) at the end of the month.

NATURE NOTE:

Bird feeders need cleaning and a check to ensure that the bird bath heater is working and a supply of bird feed is on hand. All things to help our feathered friends survive the winter.