

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

**May 2012 WEATHER & PHENOLOGY IN REVIEW**

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Rain, rain and more rain. Nineteen days it precipitated... And, the rain days were spread throughout the month. Many days saw rainfall exceeding an inch. Only one storm of the several storms produced dime-sized hail, however a thirty-second blast of wind from a thunder storm on the 27th blew down several trees on North Freedom Rd. taking out the power lines. Power out for a couple of hours. Our good folks from East Central Electric were "Johnny on the spot" restoring the power.

Happy about all the rain - trees and most growing things. My lawn was happy. I had to mow six times! The drought, at least locally, seems to be history. Not happy about all the rain, farmers who are unable to get in their fields to plant and do other things. My question, will the rain continue?

**WEATHER LAST MAY:**

Colder - less precipitation. Four days saw the low temps in the 20's. The low was 23.1 degrees (F) on the 3<sup>rd</sup>. Most days saw lows in the 30's and 40's. The average high was only four degrees cooler. Notable, no 80's while this year there were six.

We had a good amount of rain, 4.65" which was above the average. Yes, we had SNOW on the first two days though only a trace. Yes, the winter of 2011 just did not want to go away. We ended with total rainfall of 10.81" for the year.

**WEATHER:**

Warmer and rain. The average low and high temperatures of 47.47 and 70.75 degrees (F) respectively are quite different from last year. Everything green was ahead of schedule. The coldest day, 35.6 degrees (F) occurred on the 12<sup>th</sup> while our warm day was a balmy 84.7 degrees (F) on the 19<sup>th</sup>. I think Rice or St. Cloud made it to ninety.

Our nineteen days of rain produced 8.78" in the rain gage. No, it was not a record precipitation month. That occurred in 1912 when 9.68" kept things wet. The most rain fell on the 2<sup>nd</sup> when I recorded 1.69". Of note, I recorded more than one half inch of rain on eight days. With the exception of six dry days mid-month, it seemed like it rained every day. So far this year, 15.10" of rain here at the N end of Little Rock Lake.

Although not a SIGNIFICANT WEATHER EVENT, we did have a STRANGE WEATHER EVENT. One of our short-lived thunderstorms that came through on the 27<sup>th</sup> produced a blast of wind that only lasted less than thirty seconds. It was quite a blast of wind downing several trees on North Freedom Rd. that making adjustments to lawn furniture and other items. The power was out for a couple of hours. The wind must have weakened trees as more fell across the power lines the next day causing another power outage. Yes, only a few seconds of wind did all that.

#### **MN WEATHER RECORDS IN MAY:**

Locally our coldest temperature was an 18 degree (F) reading on the 3<sup>rd</sup> in 1907 while our out state friends recorded 4 degrees (F) in Pine River on the 1<sup>st</sup>. Yes, SNOW fell in May when 3.2" fell in 1971. Warm - - Saw our local temperature make it to no less than 105 degrees (F) on the 31<sup>st</sup> in 1934 while the folks in Maple Plain saw 114 degrees (F) at the same time.

#### **PHENOLOGY:**

I was not correct when I thought that I would see a banner May for growing things, birds and "critters." Although our weather was several weeks ahead of schedule, many of our birds stuck to their schedule. Still, it was a month of transformation for nature. A lot of good things happened.

Birds & butterflies first. The repetitive call of the Whip-poor-will was first heard on the 2<sup>nd</sup> in the evening and on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Northern (Baltimore) Orioles arrived along with an Eastern Tiger Swallowtail Butterfly. On the 5<sup>th</sup> Jan and I were delighted to see the Ruby-throated Hummingbird at the feeder. I know spring has arrived when the "hummers" and orioles arrive. On the 6<sup>th</sup> I observed a Brown Thrasher in the garden looking for ants, one of its favorite foods and 7<sup>th</sup> brought the arrival of a Rose-breasted Grosbeak at the tower feeder. Still on the 7<sup>th</sup> Jan and I observed the first of several sightings of adult geese and their goslings. Seems

that there is more here this year than last year. Of interest to many, the arrival of the monarch butterfly occurred here on the 10<sup>th</sup>. They come all the way from Mexico and the Southern U.S.. On the 25<sup>th</sup> I noted that the pair of Eastern Phoebes had three babies in their nest by our garage eve. Last year they abandoned their nest when a Brown-headed Cow Bird deposited an egg in their nest. Although some birds will sit on the cowbird eggs until hatching, the phoebe will not propagate cowbirds abandoning their nest and eggs.

A very unusual bird made an appearance at our tray feeders on the 20<sup>th</sup>. It appears that we have inherited a species of parrot or parakeet. The closest we have been able to come to identifying it is that it all yellow in color with just a tinge of white on its wing tips. We believe that it is an escaped pet. It is the size of a robin and tolerates us coming within four feet. Jan and I have named it "Yellow Bird." We hope that we can capture it and bring it to the Tri-County Humane Society for someone who will care for it. It will not last the winter.

#### **General observations:**

It seems there are fewer Purple Martins and Tree Swallows, have not seen the Pileated Woodpecker for a month and fewer wood ducks.

#### **RESIDENT OBSERVATIONS:**

Darlene Hiscock of Rice observed a Black-headed Grosbeak at her feeder from the 3<sup>rd</sup> to the 5<sup>th</sup>. I'd never heard of that species and was forced to look in the bird book. Yes, there it was and quite distinctive too. Even Jim Gilbert, noted naturalist, was impressed and still on the 5<sup>th</sup> Emil Williams identified a pair of White-crowned Sparrows at his feeder on the way to Northern Canada. From the south end of LRL I received a report of a pair of loons with a baby. This is the first report I can remember of loons nesting on the lake. Today (31 May) there was a pair swimming in front of our house. Usually they have left. I suspect because the lake is quite clear, they can see fish to catch is why they are still here.

The most unusual observation comes from Randy Fernholz who resides on the west side of Little Rock Lake. His grandson, Cole Barthel, was looking out the window one morning and saw a squirrel hopping its merry way across the yard looking for acorns. It had not a care in the world. Suddenly, from over the house came the Red-tailed Hawk like a rocket. It went straight for our happy squirrel who was not paying attention to what was going on around him. In the blink of an

eye the hawk had the squirrel in his talons and headed for a tree where it landed and feasted on the once happy squirrel. The lesson, be observant of your surroundings (situational awareness) or, enjoying a meal to becoming a meal can happen in a heartbeat. Quite an observation for a twelve-year-old boy, one he will remember for a lifetime.

**LITTLE ROCK LAKE ITEMS:**

Rainfall north in the Brainerd area caused LRL to crest on the 31<sup>st</sup> with water at the deck level for many docks. Some shore erosion occurred. Water is on the way down.