

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

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WOW!!! What a March. That said, again this month a comparison with last March and a few items about this March are well in order.

Last March was COLD and snowy. With an average low temperature of only .8 degrees (F) compared to 30.72 degrees (F) this year speaks volumes about our wonderful March weather this year. Then there were the 15.6 of snow compared to only 1.4" this year. Added to that were the concerns with rising water in Little Rock Lake. Would there be significant high water? It was not to be. However, many took an additional Maalox or two mid-month.

With all the hype about this year's weather I can only add a little to the mix. Professor Bob Weisman, the St. Cloud State weather guru published a lengthy article on his web site <http://www.stcloudstate.edu/weather/default.asp> (Go to community then weather.) Bob has a bushel of interesting information. In short, he reports: That this March we had the second most days with 70 degrees (F), 24 temperature records were broken, fewest days of zero or colder and the fewest days of highs of freezing or colder on record. What in the heck will April bring?

WEATHER LAST MARCH:

A lot colder and much more snow. Our low temperature of -12.8 degrees below zero (F) on the 2nd was one of seven days I recorded below zero readings. Eighteen days saw the low temperatures in single digits or colder. On the warm side of things only one day, the 18th, saw the mercury make it to 50 degrees (F). Most highs were only in the 30's.

Although not in the weather department, Little Rock Lake experienced rising water starting on the 17th finally cresting on the 23rd. It was enough for residents with buildings in low area to take note.

WEATHER:

Most if it has been said already. I'll throw in a few odds and ends. Remember that I'm recording weather on the north end of Little Rock Lake, not St. Cloud. There are differences.

Our coldest temperature was -3.9 degrees below zero (F) occurring on both the 5th and 6th. There were only fifteen days that low temperatures were recorded as below freezing. On the warm side of things not a single day was below freezing for my recorded high temperatures. The high reading was 71.9 degrees (F) on the 19th. On the 17th Minneapolis recorded its first 80 degrees (F) reading ever. My high readings here are tempered by a south wind that crosses the length of Little Rock Lake. Ice or water will cool things down a bit here. My low 70's here are near 80 in Rice. The average low and high were 30.72 and 53.24 degrees (F) respectively.

Liquids. Only 1.4" of the white stuff fell. Snow cover ended on the 11th. We ended the snow season (I hope) with 28.1" of snow compared to last year's total of 64.1". Yes, we were knees deep in snow most of the 2010-11 snow season. We did have a respectable amount of rain, 1.36" added to the .36" of melted snow. Most of the rain fell from the 20th on with the most rain falling on the 20th when I recorded .70". Currently, 2.95" of precipitation is the year's total. (From 01 Jan) I would be remiss if I did not note the first thunder storm made its presence on the 19th during the night.

MN WEATHER RECORDS IN MARCH:

- Locally our coldest temperature (since 1885) was a really chilly -32 degrees below zero (F) in 1948 while our out state friends in Pokegama Dam recorded -50 degrees below zero (F) the same year. (What a difference 64 years makes!)
- Our local warm temperature was a balmy 81 degrees set in 1910.
- The most snow that fell in March locally was a whopping 51.7" of the white fluffy (???) stuff in 1965 while record recorded precipitation was 4.53" in 1897.

OTHER RECORDS INCLUDE:

- The most snow in one month, 66" in Collegeville, March 1965
- Earliest tornado in season, 18 March 1968 in Truman
- Earliest tornado outbreak in season (2 or more) 29 March 1998
- The longest track (continuous path) of a tornado, 67 miles, SE MN on 29 March 1998.

PHENOLOGY:

First, **ICE OUT LITTLE ROCK LAKE on the 19th**. This is the earliest ice out I have recorded by nearly two weeks. That corresponds to the first dock in, Goerings, (N end of LRL) on the 31st.

Even with the warm weather, only a few of the summer birds have returned or passed through the area. Several area residents reported (mid-month) large numbers of swans and Canadian Geese resting on open water of which we had lots. On the 11th the first migrating robins were observed. On the 14th the first Common Grackles and Red-winged Blackbirds arrived at our feeder. Many of the normal winter birds are still here, even the juncos. A sharp-shinned Hawk looking for a meal at the bird feeder (not bird seed) glanced off the picture window with a very loud crash. After a couple of minutes it was able to fly away.

Other observations include a gorgeous hoar frost on the morning of the 5th. This was a photographers dream come true. The 16th brought the first tulip sprouts and on the 17th the first chipmunk was by the back door. The first of our many crocuses started sprouting along with buds on the service berry tree. The warm weather brought out the first green Leopard Frogs jumping across roads trying not to get squashed by the cars. Though I had heard reports of wood ticks, the first one appeared on my back on the 25th. My wife Jan put some liquid soap on it and it backed out right away. On the 28th the crocus plants started blooming their yellow and blue colors. And, on the 30th, all the leaves have dropped off our three swamp oak trees. Spring is coming/arrived. Welcome home the flying squirrels. They appeared several times off and on during the month. They were MIA for more than a month.

RESIDENT OBSERVATIONS:

On the 6th, Darlene Hiscock of Rice counted no less than six Eurasian Ring-necked Doves at her feeder. She thinks they will be gone for most of the summer. On the 13th Harvey Meinert observed the first Blue Bird. Since then, lots of observations of bluebirds. Steve Bogie, after careful observation, reported sighting a Fox Sparrow at his feeder. I

From John Perske in Texas. He reports on the 24th that the migration has started. Large flocks of red-winged blackbirds and blackbirds and a variety of ducks headed north. If you have an observation, drop me a line at jhovda.rice@jetup.net and I'll do my best to get in this report.

NATURE NOTE:

The Minnesota Gopher runs to 11" in length, and can weigh from 5 to 9 ounces. During hibernation, its heartbeat drops to just 5 beats per minute from a normal active rate of between 200 and 300 beats per minute. At the same time, the body temperature sinks from about 105 degrees to 37 degrees (F). *Jim Gilbert's Nature Notes. Pp 75.*