

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

OCTOBER 2012 WEATHER & PHENOLOGY IN REVIEW

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WEATHER:

There are only a few contrasts this October compared to last year. In the temperature department the average low of 33.86 degrees (F) was five degrees colder than last year of 38.90 degrees (F). That surprised me. On the warm side of things we were again much cooler than last year averaging 55.69 degrees (F) compared to 61.98 degrees (F) last year. Our coolest day was a reading of 18.5 degrees (F) on the 12th while our warm reading was a comfortable 77.9 degrees (F) on the 2nd. There were a lot of mornings when ice covered the bird bath.

Rainfall - none until the 18th. Our dry spell continued. Then we received precipitation on nine days to the end of the month totaling a meager 0.87 inches. The most rain fell on the 25th when I recorded 0.37 inches. Enough for growing grass, but the trees are still in trouble. We ended the calendar year with 27.86 inches of precipitation, and, yes, SNOW entered the picture on the 25th when I measured 0.2 inches of the white stuff. Brown ground at the end of the month.

LOCAL WEATHER RECORDS IN OCTOBER:

We did not break any this month as far as I know. Our local low temperature was a chilly 2 degrees (F) in 1896 while in 1925 a very warm 90 degrees (F) was a cause for skimpy clothing. Just a few years ago in 2005 we recorded the most rain, 8.22 inches for a really soggy month. The record snowfall for the month occurred in 1995 when 6.0 inches fell covering the ground.

PHENOLOGY:

With the transformation of summer to fall well underway the leaves started a major color change on the 2nd. The reds, deep maroons and yellows decorated the trees next to Benton County #2 just east of Rice. They were just gorgeous. I'm sure the dry weather was the reason the color did not last long. By the end of the month most of the trees were bare. Almost all the plants are dormant and ready for snow and cold weather. Only the Monks Hood with its bright blue flowers decorated the garden for the first part of October. Most of the berry bearing trees and shrubs are also bare—eaten clean by robins, cedar waxwings and other birds.

One of our senior citizens, Harold Legatt, was driving near Pierz when he saw a bobcat running in a field heading right for the highway. Harold said "The darn bobcat slowed, but sure enough it ran into the car, bounced off and ran off in another direction. It really surprised me." Talking with local hunters, I learned bobcats are seen frequently in this part of the state which was new to me too.

Winter birds are making use of the feeders and suet. The Pileated Woodpecker has returned along with juncos and nuthatches. Additionally, In large numbers, blue jays have returned. One morning I counted no less than thirteen different species of birds at the feeders and in the yard

in just more than one hour. The first junco arrived on the 7th. I was very surprised to spot a lone grackle on the 9th. I thought they had all left. The pocket gophers are still producing mounds at a brisk pace in fields. It is time to visit your local meat processor before they start processing deer to obtain suet. It's your best bet to get suet at a reasonable price.

LITTLE ROCK LAKE AND WATER ISSUES:

Water levels stayed about the same. At the beginning of the month the water temperature in the lake was 59 degrees (F) but by the end of the month it had dropped to a really chilly 37 degrees (F). There is a lot of ice in the backwaters of creeks and fingers of ice appear in the mornings on the lake. With lower water temperatures the lake is really clear, algae almost gone. I can also report that no Zebra Mussels were observed on any of the docks when they came out of the water. When will Little Rock Lake freeze over? It can happen in November!

NATURE NOTE:

About 650 bird species are found in North America. Of the 427 bird species sighted in Minnesota, 60 or so stay all winter and about 15 visit feeding stations. *Jim Gilbert's Minnesota Nature Notes pp 260*. You can hear Jim on WCCO Radio (830 AM) on Sundays at 7:15 A.M.. His program, Nature Notes, is informative and a joy to listen to. You can call in with your observations on most Sundays and be part of the program.