From the North Shore of Little Rock Lake in Benton Co. MN
September 2013 WEATHER AND PHENOLOGY IN REVIEW

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WEATHER: A little warmer than usual (except for 2009) with evening low temperatures mild. All in all, a pleasant month and no BELOW freezing temperatures. The low was 38.4 degrees (F) on the 16th while the high was a balmy 96.2 degrees (F) on the 7th.

Some of our badly needed rain came on ten occasions spread out somewhat evenly throughout the month. The most rain fell on the 15th when 1.01 inches filled the tube of the rain gage to over-full spilling into the larger container. Finishing the month, on the 28th and 29th .48 inches will carry us into October. The month ended with 2.96 inches and the calendar year 26.84 inches compared to last years 26.99 inches. Last year we received only .99 inches of rain in September making it a very dry month. We still need a lot more rain. The construction folks tell me that it is still dry below eight inches. A wet October would be helpful. At least the trees received some relief. When will we see our first SNOW?

LOCAL WEATHER RECORDS IN SEPTEMBER: The coldest temperature occurred in 1942 when the mercury dipped to a chilly 18 degrees (F) while in 1931 it was a blistering 106 degrees (F). Our precipitation record was set in 1926 when 10.72 inches of rain fell. Yes, we are back in the possible snow season. In 1995 we received .2 inches of the white stuff.

PHENOLOGY: Regardless of the mild month, birds, critters and green things are still preparing for winter. They have their nature clock. On the 9th Debbie from Foley reports that the orioles have left and I would say the same for me in Rice. Did you know that orioles migrate at night? Somewhere along the line the tree swallows have gone south too. On the 15th a wren was taking a drink from the bird bath. I thought wrens had left! I saw the last Ruby-throated Hummingbirds on the 18th but Jim Gilbert reports a few in Southern MN on their way to South America and our southern states. On the 20th when I was putting my boat away for the winter in my neighbor's barn I counted eight brown bats on his roof joists. Bats here have been in very short supply. Wild turkeys have returned to the woods to the rear of our house. None of the winter birds have arrived, notably the Juncos. It is time to make sure your suet feeders are ready to put out. How about a heated bird bath?

A first for me in this area, Jerome Nelson lives on the east side of Little Rock Lake reports a sighting of a Pine Martin. Jerome, a hunter and

knowledgeable about "critters" would validate this sighting. If true, the tree climbing rodents are in for trouble. This animal will run down a squirrel in the trees and have it for a meal. I'm going "Google" this animal to learn what is on its menu.

Green things (at least for a while): The first tinges of color are visible on some of the trees. Sumac has really demonstrated a lot of color. There is a bumper crop of seeds for the arborvitae and mountain ash trees as well as berries on many of the berry bearing bushes. Is this a sign of a hard winter? Fall flowers wild aster, monkshood, tamarisk, mums and a few I don't know the names of are either just starting, or are in full bloom. Many of the grasses are turning rust brown, their way of adding color to winter.

Odds and ends: No turtles. Usually I see a few. Snakes, only one all summer. Just a few squirrels, late spring, then, NONE. I wonder why they have disappeared. At the end of the month a Red Admiral and Clouded Sulfur butterflies were observed in the garden.

LITTLE ROCK LAKE: Water levels have remained constant. The high water temperature of 76 degrees (F) dropped to 70 degrees on the 30th. Algae have been a problem for most of the month. Lower water temperatures will help this issue. The few zebra mussels that were here last year have seemed to have gone??? We'll see??? We'll be checking docks as they are removed this fall.