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

Jim Hovda, Rice MN 56367-0265 jhovda.rice@jetup.net

WEATHER: What comes to mind first and foremost, temperatures hot and very humid. At the north end of Little Rock Lake we were spared by several degrees a number of the 90 degree plus temperatures the good citizens of Rice and St. Cloud endured. Here, only three and Rice probably six. The humidity part of the equation made us feel more miserable. If you can believe it, it was warmer last year when I recorded six days with 90 degrees (F) readings. Part of the problem was the night temperatures stayed warm forcing us to keep the AC on and the windows shut. The low temperature was a chilly 45.3 degrees (F) on the 3rd while it was a hot and humid 92.6 degrees (F) on the 28th. Average low and high temperatures were 56.33 and 81.6 degrees (F) respectively. Not far off the averages for the last five years.

Nearly everything that lives outside suffered from the lack of rain. Rain on three days produced only .64 inches of precipitation. The normal average is 4.3 inches. It was last year at this time the drought started and the same pattern seems to be the same this year. We can hope that we do not mirror last year when September only blessed us with .49 inches of rain. This year we ended the year with 23.86 inches of precipitation, 2.86 inches less than last year.

LOCAL WEATHER RECORDS IN AUGUST: Several daily records for temperatures were set in St. Cloud, all in the hot and humid category. It dropped to a chilly 33 degrees (F) on the 31st in 1974 and we sweltered in 1936 when the mercury made it to 105 degrees (F) on the 15th. Only three years ago we received 9.37 inches of rain. Next month starts the possible SNOW season!

PHENOLOGY: Some general observations first. I believe because of the very dry month we have had, many of the insect eating birds are low in numbers. Purple Martins and wrens are gone and there are only a few tree swallows. Few butterflies of all species, especially monarchs. I have yet to see a swallowtail butterfly. Turtles, almost non-existant. Abundant in numbers: Northern Orioles, Ruby-throated Humming birds, a variety of sparrows, Turkey Vultures, Mourning Doves and a few Blue Jays. Geese are on the wing practicing for their trip south. Oh, yes, a single garden snake observed in the garden probably looking for a grass hopper or other large insect.

In the “green things” department the lack of water has been an issue. My lone mountain ash tree looks good with lots of orange berries only because I’ve put a ton of water on it the past couple of weeks. The same goes for our garden flowers that have weathered the drought with the help of the garden hose. Shrubs and trees without water are really showing stress. Wilted leaves, sumac and some trees are already turning color. Non-irrigated farm fields are in serious trouble.

LITTLE ROCK LAKE: Is only one of two lakes in Benton County and is the largest. The summer algae have been bad, not as bad as a couple of years ago. Water temperature was 68 degrees (F) at the beginning of the month. It peaked at 80 degrees (F) on the 27th then on the 31st it dropped to 74 degrees. I think it is colder water from here on out until freeze up. The lake water level has remained constant throughout the month.

NATURE NOTE: Soaking trees would be good. It takes time for the trees to get the water. Because the roots are a little deeper a slow sprinkle would greatly benefit them. Pine and spruce have more shallow roots and suffer the drought more quickly with no visible signs of their plight until it is too late. A clean and filled bird bath is really helpful. I counted many species taking a drink or bath in the hot weather. I sure hope September is a wet month.