



OCTOBER PHENOLOGY

A reflective look at 2010

by Jim Gilbert, Naturalist

Historically, October is a month of sunny skies. Expect several early frosts followed by pleasant Indian Summer warm-ups. An Indian Summer day is one with above-normal temperatures and little or no wind. Listed below are a few observations from a year ago in the Twin Cities Metro area, Waconia and areas beyond.

October 1 * The number of Dark-eyed Juncos builds up, so expect to see them visiting your backyard. Dahlias, mums, garden roses and many annuals continue to bloom.

October 3 * The first frost settles in low spots and on rooftops. Young red pine needles are golden brown and begin to fall to the ground. Apple growers pick SnowSweets®, Regents and Haralsons.

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Suet feeders attract Downy, Hairy, Pileated and Red-bellied Woodpeckers.



October 6 * It's the time of the illuminated woods, and leaf peepers are out in numbers. Now is the time of overall peak fall color for the Twin Cities Metro area south to Mankato. Both red and white oaks display golden yellows, reds and rich browns. Sugar maples are aglow with burnt oranges, yellows and reds.

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Fox Sparrows arrive and join White-crowned and White-throated Sparrows at feeding stations. They all like to eat millet and cracked corn that is spread on the ground.



October 10 * Golden-yellow leaves appear on eastern cottonwoods, some willows, quaking aspens, paper birches, elms and black walnut trees.

October 14 * Between 5:00 and 5:30 pm thousands of Sandhill Cranes fly into Crex Meadows (Wisconsin) for the night; they create a wonderful sight and sound to behold.

October 16 * This is a perfect time to walk through crunchy leaves in the woods, enjoying that special fall aroma and searching for lingering pockets of fall colors. Watch for Red-winged Blackbird flocks gathering in wetlands for the night, and before sunset listen for their trilling calls to recall the sounds of spring.

October 19 * A late-to-migrate monarch butterfly flutters amongst the last of the annual flowers. Flocks of American Robins and Cedar Waxwings feed on crabapple and mountain ash fruit.

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Sherburne Refuge staff counts a record 4,314 Sandhill Cranes leaving the refuge roosts this morning.

October 25 * Flocks of Snow Buntings gather along the North Shore of Lake Superior and as far south as Sherburne and Dakota Counties.

October 29 * The first widespread frost in Minnesota.

October 30 * Flocks of ducks and geese fly south over the land. Numerous Tundra Swans gather along the Mississippi River and backwaters at Brownsville.

