



SEPTEMBER PHENOLOGY

A reflective look at 2013

by Jim Gilbert, Naturalist

Summer morphs into autumn in September with warm days and chilly nights. Listed below are a few observations from a year ago in the Twin Cities Metro area, Waconia and areas beyond when indicated. These events can be used to anticipate upcoming happenings and will help you compare 2014 with last year.

September 1 * Crows return to gathering in communal roosts. Male Wood Ducks are now in their breeding plumage. Wood Ducks, Wild Turkeys, Red-bellied Woodpeckers, white-tailed deer and black bears gather and eat acorns, which are vital to their diets. In the Tofte/Lutsen area, thimbleberries, red raspberries, pin cherries and serviceberries are ripe. Fall warblers, such as Magnolia and Chestnut-sided, migrate southward.

September 3 * A good share of the Baltimore Orioles leave for Central America by this date each year; they are among the night migrators. Along the North Shore of Lake Superior, moose maples begin to turn orange and red and some paper birches are displaying golden-yellow foliage.

September 4 * About 660 Chimney Swifts gather in the Zion Church bell tower at LeSueur, just after sunset.

September 5 * Zestar, Sweetango and Ginger Gold apples are ready for harvest. Monarch butterflies migrate through southern MN; their numbers are way down this year. A few late fireflies can still dot the night skies.

September 6 * Today's high is 92°F in the Twin Cities, 94°F at Brainerd and 88°F at Duluth. Nearly 80 percent of the state is abnormally dry. Turtlehead, flat-topped white aster and spotted touch-me-nots bloom in wetlands.

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Gray Catbirds and Rose-breasted Grosbeaks are among the birds feeding on wild black cherry fruit. Migrating Common Nighthawks flock over the Northfield area.



September 9 * Today's high is 94°F. In southern MN, common and great ragweeds continue to shed pollen, farmers chop corn and pumpkins are now bright orange. Swallows line up on utility wires as they stage for migration.

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43 Bald Eagles and 7,228 Broad-winged Hawks are among the migrating birds counted today over Hawk Ridge in Duluth.



September 15 * Today is the last recorded visit of a Baltimore Oriole at a feeding station. White-lined sphinx moths (hummingbird moths) visit gardens.

September 16 * The commercial and garden grape harvest is underway and the sweet corn harvest continues. The "green prime" has passed—touches of red sprinkle across sugar maples, sumac shrubs and Virginia creeper vines and yellows progress across eastern cottonwood and native basswood trees.

September 20 * Farmers pick McIntosh and Honeycrisp (official MN state apple since 2006) apples. Giant water bugs come to bright lights in the evening.

September 21 * Clearing skies and northwest winds carry 136 Bald Eagles, 208 Turkey Vultures, 607 Sharp-shinned Hawks, 2,975 Broad-winged Hawks, and 5,599 Blue Jays over Hawk Ridge in Duluth.

September 25 * Photographers, landscape painters and others mesmerized by nature's handiwork experience the fleeting pleasure of truly spectacular autumn colors at Oberg Mountain, near Tofte.

September 27 * Fall colors are coming on fast. Virginia creeper vines drape through trees and on fences like red garlands. Black bears in northeastern MN begin hibernation.

September 30 * Dahlias, mums and garden roses are in full bloom. Some final Ruby-throated Hummingbirds come to feeders. White-tailed deer trade gray-brown winter coats for their rusty brown summer ones. Fall foliage colors peak across extreme northern MN.