



OCTOBER PHENOLOGY

A reflective look at 2014

by Jim Gilbert, Naturalist

Sunny skies light up October afternoons. We expect frost several times and Indian summer days—with little or no wind and above normal temperatures—after the frosts. 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 2015 with last year.

October 1 * American Robins, Red-winged Blackbirds and Common Grackles gather in large flocks. In the northern part of MN, black bears usually head for their winter dens between Sept. 24 and Oct. 24.

October 3 * Snowflakes and flurries appear at many Twin Cities area football games this Friday evening. A late Ruby-throated Hummingbird makes a pit stop at a feeder in Duluth.

October 4 * With gusty NW winds and periods of drizzle, a massive flight of non-raptors passes Hawk Ridge in Duluth. Among the species counted are: 405 Northern Flickers, 848 White-throated Sparrows, 1,074 Dark-eyed Juncos and 23,395 American Robins.

hickory and bigtooth aspen trees display golden-yellow leaves. Sugar maples sport fantastic foliage in saturated reds, burnt-oranges and golden-yellows. Flocks of American Crows migrate SW along the North Shore of Lake Superior.

October 19 * Boston ivy ignites with red foliage on the side of buildings. Woods appear illuminated with color, especially here in southern MN. Paper birches and quaking aspens have golden-yellow leaves and both red oaks and white oaks display dark reds and rich browns.

October 20 * Apple growers pick SnowSweet, Haralson and Regent.

OCT.
5

Migrating Yellow-rumped Warblers and Lincoln's Sparrows pass through the Twin Cities. The first corn-killing hard frost occurs in parts of southern MN.



October 10 * Large rafts of American Coots arrive on some southern MN lakes. Leaf watchers enjoy the patchwork of fall colors, like the golden-yellows on eastern cottonwoods and rich reds on sumacs, Virginia creeper vines and Amur maples. Annuals such as cosmos, zinnias, begonias, and marigolds vie for attention with vibrant, showy flowers.

October 14 * It's the overall fall color peak from St. Cloud to Lake Minnetonka, St. Peter, Northfield, all of the Twin Cities area and into western Wisconsin. Maples, aspens and white oaks reach striking peaks of fall colors.

October 15 * It's an Indian Summer day. Dahlias and garden roses still burst with blooms. Native bitternut

OCT.
21

American Tree Sparrows are back; they visit a feeding station in St. Cloud.



October 23 * Southern MN farmers are busy combining soybeans and corn.

October 25 * Dark-eyed Juncos are numerous at feeding stations; they like cracked corn scattered on the ground. American Robins and Cedar Waxwings feed on crabapple fruit. Snow Buntings arrive in the Lutsen/Tofte area.

October 26 * There are still pockets of beautiful fall foliage, like the sunny yellows on ginkgo trees and reds on pin oaks.

OCT.
31

Today there's ice on birdbaths and air temperatures in the mid to low 20s, killing the blooming geraniums and marigolds. It's the end of the growing season.



Photo by Jim Weisman