

## JANUARY 2009 WEATHER & PHENOLOGY IN REVIEW

From the North Shore of Little Rock Lake

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*HAPPY NEW YEAR*

WEATHER LAST JAN:        Warmer and less snow. The average low was -3.06 degrees below zero (F). Only eighteen days the low temp ventured below zero. The coldest reading was a -24.7 degree below zero on the 20<sup>th</sup>. The average high was a balmy 20.67 degrees. The warmest temp was 39.3 degree reading on the 9<sup>th</sup>. On the precipitation side of the picture, it was a very dry month. Only .14" of precip melted from 1" of snow. A rather bleak month for septic systems. A good month for Jerome Nelson who pumps them. We started the month with 5.8" of snow on the ground and ended with 4.0". Total snowfall for the snow season stood at 13.9" A dry nearly snowless year so far.

**WEATHER:** COLD - COLD & COLD. A short explanation of why it is colder here than in St. Cloud. The north end of Little Rock Lake is about thirty feet lower than the surrounding area. The cold settles in low areas. My readings when I take them at 7:00 A.M. are within a degree or two of others who I meet for coffee on some mornings and hear their readings. On the average, I'd say that it is about ten degrees colder here than the official readings at the airport in St. Cloud.

Now, on to the weather. One daily record cold temp was set. **The average recorded low temp was -14.59 degrees below zero. (F)** Only three days did the low temp rise above zero. The coldest day occurred on the 16<sup>th</sup> when the digital thermometer displayed a -34.4 degrees below zero. Twelve days the low was below -20 degrees below zero. A common wind chill reading was in the -40 degree below zero window. The average high was only 14.86 degrees. (F) (Above zero!) We did have a one day warm up on the 31<sup>st</sup> when the west wind blew in a warm blast of weather causing the thermometer to climb to 45.8 degrees. Snow melted off the roofs and compacted on the ground. The only happy campers with the cold were the LP and natural gas folks. It cost me \$12.95 a day for heat and hot water.

Only 6.2" of the white stuff fell that melted into .55" of precip. Total snowfall for the snow season is 35.90". Fortunately, the foot of snow on the ground saved nearly all the septic systems from freezing. The most snow

fell on the 4<sup>th</sup> when 2.2" hit the ground. We started the month with 11.2" on the ground and ended with 11.1".

**WEATHER RECORDS:** The record low temp in St. Cloud was a -50 degrees below zero (F) in both 1885 and again in 1888 while the out state cold reading was -57 degrees below zero (F) in 1904, and 1996. On the warm side of things, St. Cloud recorded a 56 degree reading in 1981 while a reading of 69 degrees was recorded in Montevideo in 1981. (Both on the same day.) The most snow fell in 1975 when 32.6" fell. In 1997, a one day snow fall of 12.7" was recorded. **OTHER RECORDS:** The longest dry spell in MN history ended on Jan 26<sup>th</sup> that had lasted 79 days in SW MN. The most snow involved a storm in Northern MN that lasted from the 6<sup>th</sup> to the 8<sup>th</sup> (in 24 hrs) 36" on the 7<sup>th</sup>, and the most snow in one storm, 47", occurred in Lake County in 1994. The most fatalities from a state wide winter storm (up to 200) occurred in 1888 on the 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup>. The highest pressure reading ever recorded (31.11 inHg - 1053.5 mb) occurred on 21 Jan 1922 in none other than Collegeville, MN. The lowest wind chill (estimated) -71 degrees (F) below zero in 1982 in Northern MN.

**PHENOLOGY:** Sort of a mundane month for bird and critter sightings. I've noted, and also listened to reports of Jim Gilbert's radio program on WCCO Nature Notes, many sightings of Robins. Several times I've seen them here. They are most interested in the heated bird bath. My friend, Maureen Graber, sent the attached picture of a lonely Robin on her birdbath braving the cold and snow.



Lot's of Junco's, Chickadee's, Red-breasted Nuthatches and a variety of finches. Pileated, Downy, Hairy and Red-bellied woodpeckers were at the suet constantly. It seems I have a larger than normal number of Blue Jays who devour suet at an alarming rate. I've placed the fourth large chunk of suet on a tray in the yard. A frequent visitor enjoyable to see, is the very large Red Shouldered Hawk. It comes about once a week to feed on a hanging deer carcass and suet. This bird glides beautifully from one perch to another. The other birds seem to pay this hawk no mind. Unlike when the Sharp-shinned hawk appears. Last year I observed 5 - 8 Mourning Doves. This year only one comes to the feeder every other day or so. So far, I have not heard the "spring is coming" songs of the Chickadee or Northern Cardinal.

Rick & Ron Burski and Mark Saldana, local contractors, report that there is about 1.5' of frost in the ground where there is a lot of snow.

**LITTLE ROCK LAKE OBSERVATIONS:** Randy Fernholz reports that there is about 2.5 ft of ice on Little Rock Lake and water clarity is about 7 ft. The extreme cold that caused the lake to crack poured a lot of water around his fish house. One needs to be careful for slush under the snow. Driving anywhere but plowed ice is hazardous. Regardless of the cold, ice can be really thin in spots and open water is common by the highway #10

bridge. Fishing is slow.....

**NATURE NOTE:** A chickadee's body temperature may drop by 18 to 22 degrees, providing a 20 percent energy savings. Their normal body temperature is 107 degrees. *Jim Gilbert's Minnesota Nature Notes pp 30.*