

Superior National Forest

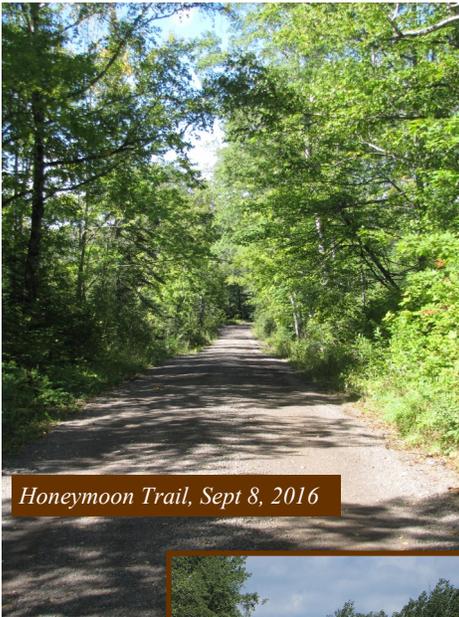
Fall Color Report September 9, 2016

"..even the insects in my path are not loafers, but have their special errands".

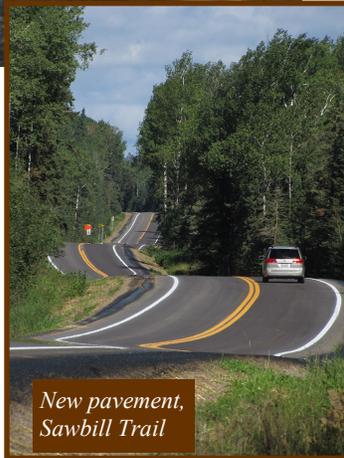
- Henry David Thoreau



Grouse



Honeymoon Trail, Sept 8, 2016



New pavement,
Sawbill Trail

Time moves on, kids return to school, the State Fair comes and goes, and we suddenly realize that the Halloween displays in the stores aren't quite as ridiculous as when they first appeared at the end of July. Fall is upon us somehow, and all those summer plans you had...well, some might have to wait for next summer.

Nature has no such luxury. Animals and plants can't procrastinate. Bears can't say, "Well, I'll just put off gaining that 40 pounds until next spring." As a result, even this early in the fall, you can see plenty of evidence that the natural world is busy preparing for winter. Fall may seem like a calm, peaceful season as the forest winds down for the year, but under the façade of tranquility, it is a hive of activity.



Tri-colored
bumblebee

Hives, in fact, are in fact truly abuzz. The final flowers of the year, the asters and the goldenrod, are in full bloom, and all the pollinators are taking advantage of the chance to gather nectar. While the entire hive survives in the case of honeybees, in many other colonial species of insect, only the queen survives. The diligent workers you see on the goldenrod are truly self-sacrificing - they will die before they ever get a chance to use the product of their labor. Most bees and wasps though are solitary, not colonial. They may be more selfish and laying in a supply for the winter, but others are being good parents and collecting just for the sake of their offspring.



Hoverfly

Disguised among the bees and wasps are the hoverflies. They are bee mimics, bearing the yellow and black warning stripes of a stinging insect, but lacking the sting itself. Most people can tell the flies don't look quite right to be bees, but may not be able to put their finger on the difference.

The insect's eyes are a little too big, and are a little too close together, and if you count the wings, there are two instead of four. Most people and animals don't really want to get close enough to a bee or wasp to count wings, so these mimics are left alone, just as though they could really sting. It's worth getting close though, most of the actual stinging insects are so preoccupied with gathering nectar that they aren't going to notice you. So, take a few minutes to really look at the next clump of asters, or flowering stalk of goldenrod in a meadow. You'll see that that the disguise of calm the meadow wears is just as false as the colors of the hoverfly. It's a very very busy place right now.



Moose maple keys

Colors are at about 1% of peak, just a very few leaves and branches showing anything. Birches are turning in a few spots, and the understory of bush honeysuckle, bindweed, large leafed aster, and sarsaparilla is quite full of reds and yellows. Hazels are yellowing as well, and the seeds on the moose maple are almost fluorescent red.



