

Superior National Forest

Fall Color Report *October 7, 2016*

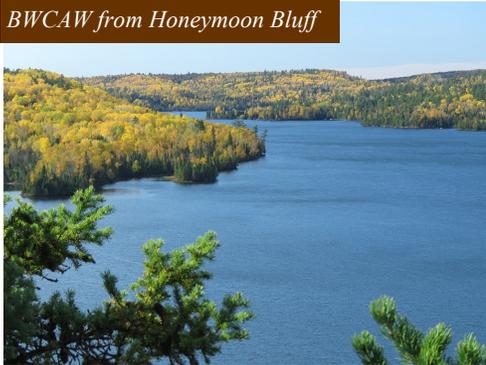
He found himself wondering at times, especially in the Autumn, about the wild lands, and strange visions of mountains that he had never seen came into his dreams. He began to say to himself 'Perhaps I shall cross the river myself one day.' To which the other half of his mind always replied 'Not yet.'

- J. R. R. Tolkien,
The Fellowship of the Ring, Chapter 2

Enough with the 'Not Yet': autumn is an excellent time to "cross the river" and explore the wild lands and the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness. Imagine yourself on an autumn canoe trip. You wake in the morning, not too early, because dawn in the fall isn't at 5 am like it is in the summer. At the shore, the fall leaves are reflected in a still lake, vibrant aspen and birches standing out against the dark conifers. The mist over the lake will soon be swept away by the sun, but for now it holds on to the shoreline, the last bits of night caught on the rocks in the bay. It was cold last night, with frost still showing in pockets behind rocks where the sun has yet to shine. A campfire's warmth feels good as water for coffee and cocoa heats on the fire grate, and soon the steam from your breath in the cool air is joined by the steam from the mug held in your hands.



BWCAW from Honeymoon Bluff

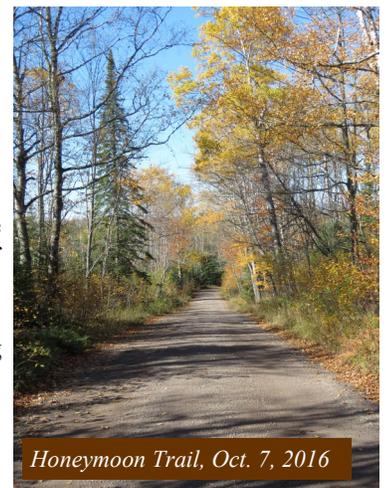


Autumn clothing even seems better suited for the Boundary Waters. Quick dry nylons and colorful t-shirts are replaced by red and black buffalo plaid flannel and the muted earth tones of wool, and people blend in and become a part of the scenery. Falling leaves stick to the flannel and need to be brushed off, and rolling up the tent is noisy with the crackle of leaves. After a check to make sure the fire is out and everything is packed, the canoe is loaded and ready to go. The water is cold to wade in, but the sun is rising higher and the warmth on your back is reassuring that you will dry out in a short time. On the lake, you're joined by a late pair of loons, soon to be off for a winter in the Gulf of Mexico. Other migrants visit as well,

including circling hawks so far overhead that they can hardly be seen, let alone identified. Portaging is easier. Trails that can be a bug infested sauna in summer are comfortable hikes in fall, and there isn't that desperate need for a water bottle at the end of every portage.

A campsite is found early as nightfall is around 7:30. Hot food seems like a great idea, and things like soup, chili, and stuffing with gravy are perfect for fall meals. Even though the skies are clear, the rainfly goes on the tent to keep out the cold night air, and the early sunset gives plenty of time to sit by a fire, or star gaze from the rock by the lake. If you're lucky, the autumn yellows and reds of the day are complemented by the greens of the northern lights at night. Later, when yawns become constant and the night air starts to hint at winter, it is time to crawl into the sleeping bag and in the comfort of its warmth reflect on how there is nothing like fall in the Wilderness.

The Boundary Waters, along with the rest of the Superior, is at, or a bit past, peak fall color this week. While maples are dropping their leaves, the birch and aspen are at their finest yellow right now, so it is impossible to say what peak fall color really is - so go out and see for yourself!



Honeymoon Trail, Oct. 7, 2016