

Superior National Forest

Fall Color Report

September 10, 2010

When the goldenrod is yellow,
And leaves are turning brown -
Reluctantly the summer goes
In a cloud of thistledown.

When squirrels are harvesting
And birds in flight appear -
By these autumn signs we know
September days are here.
- Beverly Ashour, September



Goldenrod



Thistledown

There was frost last night in the north country.

The town of Embarrass west of the Forest had a low of 28 degrees. Our

family stayed warm, spending the night in a steamy fragrant kitchen canning applesauce, preserving some summer days for winter evenings. Before bed, we tucked our still green tomatoes under a blanket in hopes we might still get some summer before winter takes a firm hold.

Little signs like these in houses and woods all across the Superior National Forest that just last week read "Summer" are this week flipping over and reading "Autumn"

You may have noticed an increase in some bird activity as the birds prepare to travel south or wait out the winter. Flickers are all over, eating as much as they can before they head on. Blue jays are gathering in large raucous flocks, and white throated sparrows are almost literally piling up under feeders. Hummingbirds, once plentiful, are down to a few stalwart (or maybe lazy) individuals while their companions have left.

Trees too are switching to autumn, just here and there so far. Most trees are still green, but individual leaves, and sometimes a whole tree will have flipped over to yellow or red. Many birches and aspens are brown this year, but that isn't a sign of autumn, it is a sign of a leaf miner. Leaf miners are insects which spend their larval stages comfortably embedded in between the top and bottom layer of a leaf. They eat the middle of the leaf out, and live in the space they create, carving their home out of their food. Trees with heavy infestations may look terrible, but usually the tree will survive with little permanent damage.

As you travel the Forest looking for fall color, don't forget to look for all the other signs of fall too. Step out of the car, stand quiet on the trail. Hear chickadees and downy woodpeckers forming winter flocks and notice the red squirrel with a mouth so full he can hardly hold his head up. Spot some red rose hips bright in the bushes, or fireweed gone to seed. More than just leaves change in the fall, look for those other indicators that once noticed pop out like one yellow leaf on a green tree.



Fireweed



Large leaf aster



Honeymoon Trail Sept 10



Leaf miners



Rose hips