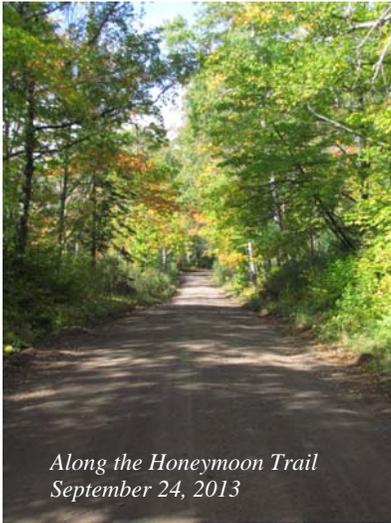


Superior National Forest

Fall Color Report, *September 24, 2013*



Along the Honeymoon Trail
September 24, 2013

**Autumn days come quickly,
like the running of a hound
on the moor.**

- Irish proverb



What is the percent color is the forest this week? Well, really the answer is the same for any week: 100% of the forest is some color! The question really should be "What color is the forest?" That's a harder question. In kindergarten, I could have told you. There are only eight colors in kindergarten. It says so, right on the crayon package. (Our beginning reader books had nine colored balloons on the back, but I wasn't dumb. I knew the gray balloon in the middle wasn't a real color, it was just to fill the empty spot on the three by three grid. Who ever heard of a gray balloon?) A kindergarten summer tree is a big green circle, with a brown trunk. A kindergarten fall tree is a big orange circle, with a brown trunk. Later in life, the box of crayons got bigger, and other colors crept in: burnt umber, raw sienna, brick red, and red-orange.

This week, the forest is definitely not made of kindergarten trees. You need the big box of crayons. The trees aren't the firm kindergarten green of summer anymore, but neither are they really kindergarten orange, or yellow, or red. The woods are yellow-green, with bits of burnt umber, bittersweet, and maize, against a cornflower blue sky. A percentage of change is hard to guess: nearly all the leaves are different somehow, but most still fall somewhere toward the green. While it is hard to say what the percent change is, it is easy to say that things are changing rapidly. From last week to this, the forest has become firmly rooted in autumn. You can't find a spot anymore where you can pretend that it is July.



Astronomically, we have also slipped over the edge.

The sun has crept over the celestial equator, and nights are now longer than days. The noontime sun is lower than 45 degrees off the horizon, and is sinking fast. Just as the leaves are changing quickly on earth, this is the time of the most rapid change in day length and solar elevation. We lost 3 minutes, 22 seconds of day length from Tuesday to Wednesday. At the end of this week, Saturday will be close to 20 minutes shorter than the previous Sunday was. Autumn is coming on fast and can't be stopped any more easily than that Irish hound running on the moor. So quit trying. Find a good spot where you can sit and watch, grab some cider, relax, and enjoy the show.

Drive carefully on narrow roads

