

Monday 12/13/10 Is it winter yet?

You would be hard pressed to find winter today. In fact it was more like spring mud season in today's hike. What a difference from just four days ago when the Suncook River was nearly frozen over from the view at my house. I drove by Northwood Lake Friday morning and it looked completely frozen over. All the smaller ponds had frozen over and ice fishing seemed just days away. The thermometer was at 3 degrees Friday morning. Some years when the Suncook River freezes a cool circular plate of ice forms at the swimming hole at Short Falls. Somehow the current is just right as the ice catches to form a pinwheel that rotates as it freezes creating a real neat circular patch of ice that slowly rotates until it freezes in. By last Friday that was the case at the swimming hole. Just kind of a cool thing to watch for each year although it has not happened the last few.

How a southern rain swept wind has changed things since Saturday evening. Gone is the ice from the Suncook River, Deer and Bear brooks as well. Winter was at hand by weeks end last week and now it is more spring like with temps in the 50's today. The official winter is just a week away according to a glance at my calendar. All our rivers and brooks are at low flood stage. My rain gauge reads just under an inch of rain. Local lawns are still green and snow less. What frozen ground we had by weeks end last week was nothing more than a squishy mess in today's hike.

My favorite little bird, the chickadees were in numbers at my feeders last week. I so enjoy standing close to the feeder perfectly still and have them coast through the air to land nearby. How they cock their heads to study me as I do them. Some scolding me with a series of chickadees. I remember spotting my first chickadee when I was four and living in a little house in Maine. I have loved that call ever since. I was fortunate as my father loved to watch and study wildlife as well. He had these neat little bird books printed in the early 1950's called "The Little Green Book of Birds of America" and Yellow and Blue and Red books too. In fact I own them now.

As a child I was fascinated by all the kinds of birds as I poured over them. Long before I could read. So I learned some birds early on in life. I remember by age six or seven that I told my parents that I wanted to be a forest ranger that works with animals. I didn't know there was such a thing as a wildlife biologist. My die had been cast. And what a wonderful life I have lived as a wildlife biologist. As I often say we are living in the "Golden Years of Wildlife". You have a better chance of seeing a deer, bear, moose, turkey, bald eagle or falcon than your great grandmother. Be sure to get outside to enjoy all that we have.