Big River

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Fall Birding Spots on the Upper Mississippi

By Pamela Eyden

Okay, you were busy. You had a great time birding last spring, but then your thoughts turned to other things — work, school, elections, national scandals, the stock market. Now you wake up on Saturday with a sinking feeling that it's too late: the bluebirds, rose-breasted grosbeaks and purple martins are all gone. Is there any reason to get out of bed and go off into the wild blue yonder with binocs around your neck?

Yes! Fall is a great time to go birding in the Mississippi River Valley. As one of the continent's four main migration flyways, it is full of ducks and geese from September through November, when the river starts freezing up. You'll find them diving and dabbling in shallow backwaters and protected bays from the Twin Cities to the Quad Cities. There are dozens of different kinds, and they're easy to identify and study this time of year. Pintails, buffleheads, ring-necks and mergansers — soon you, too, will have a favorite duck. Take your bird book and a folding chair.

Hawks migrate by the thousands along the bluffs, especially on clear, high-pressure days with winds out of the north and northwest. Try any of the bluff-top parks all along the river. It's an awesome sight that reminds you how lucky you are to live here.

You'll find a lot of bald eagles along the river, too. Some are permanent residents; others have come down from up north to take advantage of plentiful fish in the open water below dams and at the confluences of rivers. Don't let November end without making a trip to

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see the tundra swans, which stop to rest and feed here on their way from the Arctic to the Chesapeake Bay on the East Coast. Groups of these great white birds can be found almost anywhere from Lake Pepin to Ferryville, Wis., but for large numbers go to Rieck’s Lake near Alma, Wis.

Students of migration have a word for the migratory restlessness that comes over birds this time of year — “zugunruhe.”

Trumpeter swans, the largest waterfowl in the world, are a striking sight on the upper river, and can be found year round at several Hennepin County parks in the Twin Cities.

The weather in fall is more unpredictable and variable than at any other time of the year. Birds know it. Their excitement is audible and visible, from the anxious twittering of the last goldfinches on the sunflowers, to the miles-long rivers of blackbirds streaming over the fields, to the hypnotic conversations of ducks, geese and swans in the marshes. Students of migration have a word for the migratory restlessness that comes over birds this time of year — “zugunruhe.” Even captive birds show it and I think (the smartest) people do, too.

### Trumpeter Swan

*Cygnus buccinator*

- **Wingspan:** 72-80 inches
- **Weight:** 13-18 pounds
- **Length:** 52 inches

**Characteristics:**
1. They are the largest waterfowl in the world.
2. A large black beak with a red border on the lower mandible, and no spots.
3. Adult birds are all white, juveniles all gray. They are larger than the Snow Geese they sometimes fly with, who always have black wing tips.
4. Just as they become airborne they will pull their necks into a shallow “S” curve for a few wingbeats.
5. They are often, but not always, the last birds in a flock to take flight.

**Report sightings to:**
The Trumpeter Swan Society
3800 County Road 24
Maple Plain, MN 55359
(612) 476-4663

### Sites to See

**Chippewa National Forest, Grand Rapids, Minn.**
The Mississippi headwaters has the largest nesting population of bald eagles in the lower 48 states. Many stay all year; others migrate south in late fall. Check out the river and the larger lakes in the area — Cass, Reeds and Winnibigoshish.

**Monticello to Elk River, Minn.**
This 10-mile stretch of the river stays ice-free all winter because of warm water flushed from the nuclear power plant. Last year 280 trumpeter swans arrived in November and stayed until March. Eagles hang around, too.

**Coon Rapids Dam Regional Park, Anoka, Minn.**
Watch for bald eagles below the dam, and for golden-eyes, which arrive in November and stay all winter in between the islands.

**Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge**
This refuge near the confluence of the Minnesota and Mississippi Rivers is worth returning to several times in the fall, because the population of migrants changes constantly.

**Battle Creek Regional Park, St. Paul**
On the east side of the Mississippi River across from downtown St. Paul, this wooded ravine provides protection for late-flying migratory birds. The Minnesota Ornithological Union sponsors a tour there in late September.

**Bay City and Stockholm, Wis.**
Late fall brings thousands of common mergansers to Lake Pepin to rest and feed. Keep your eyes peeled for these striking black-and-white-headed birds.

**Rieck’s Lake Observation Deck, Alma, Wis.**
Staffed on weekends by volunteers equipped with knowledge, enthusiasm and spotting scopes, this small wayside park offers close-up views of the great white tundra swans in the marsh at the confluence of the Buffalo River and the Mississippi.

**Buena Vista Park, Alma**
A bluff-top park that lifts you several hundred feet closer to the hawks that migrate with favorable winds out of the north. (If the winds are out of the south, stay home. The hawks will, too.)

**Kellogg Weaver Dunes Scientific and Natural Area, Kellogg, Minn.**
The Weaver Dunes and the McCarthy Lake Wildlife Management Area together make up thousands of acres of sand prairies, oak savannas and wet meadows bordering the Mississippi southeast of Wabasha — good hunting grounds for hungry hawks migrating in late September

(Birds continues on page 4)
**Birds on the Move**

**Tundra Swans**, formerly called whistling swans, fly with necks out straight. They summer on south Baffin Island and the northern Arctic seacoast, then fly a dog-leg course to the Mississippi River Valley wintering grounds in Chesapeake Bay and New Mexico. An estimated 15,000 birds rest and feed in the Upper Mississippi in the fall between Alma and Genoa, Wis.

**Semipalmated Sandpiper**. Watch for sandpipers in mudflats or in sandy shallow-water marshes. They migrate in flocks of 20 to 100 from their nesting grounds in the High Arctic to their wintering places in Panama and South America.

**Osprey**, also called fish-hawks, are fast-flying diving birds that migrate like other hawks along the bluff tops. They spend the winter in Chile and northern Argentina.

**Minnesota Tourism Info**
1-800-657-3700

**Iowa Tourism Info**
1-800-223-0121

**Wisconsin Tourism Info**
1-800-372-2737

**Turquoise Goose** is nicknamed the blue goose because the young have remarkably blue-gray feathers. Their breeding grounds are on Baffin and Southampton Islands in the Arctic. Most spend the winter in Louisiana’s coastal marshes. Watch for them feeding in shallow pools of the river.

**Trumpeter Swans**, the largest waterfowl in the world, were once common in Minnesota and all of North America. Hunting, then DDT, nearly did them in by the 1960s. Now they’re making a comeback. Find them all year at parks in the Twin Cities (call Hennepin County Parks for specific information). They sometimes also migrate with other waterfowl, especially tundra swans.

**Double-crested Cormorants** resemble big black ducks with longish necks. They nest on the Upper Mississippi and migrate as far south as west central Mexico, the Bahamas and the Greater Antilles. They fly in groups, sometimes right above the surface of the water.

**Broad-winged Hawks**, with their boldly striped black-and-white tails, are easy to identify. They migrate in great numbers down the Mississippi River Valley, preferring days with north or northwesterly tailwinds to push them along. They ascend in thermals, spiraling up together in a kind of whirlwind of hawks called a kettle, and then glide smoothly along the ridgetops until finding another thermal. They mass in southern Texas, then continue on to Central and South America.
through October and cover for a mix of sparrows and other migratory birds.

**Prairie Island, Winona, Minn.**

Saved by the local bird club from its sorry status as an unofficial town dump, this restored prairie is now a great place to see eagles, osprey and migrating waterfowl, warblers and sparrows (chipping, clay-colored, field, fox, grasshopper, Lincoln’s, savannah, song, swamp, tree, vesper, white-throated and white-crowned).

**Trempealeau National Wildlife Refuge, Trempealeau, Wis.**

Named one of the world’s most important bird areas by the American Bird Conservancy, this refuge has a new visitor center and an observation deck with spotting scopes that make it easy to watch great numbers of ducks, geese, cormorants and tundra swans, as well as bald eagles and osprey.

**Long Lake Canoe Trail, south of Trempealeau, Wis.**

This four-mile trail includes quiet backwater sloughs, dense wooded islands and a bit of the Main Channel. Autumn bird-watching is excellent, but canoeists should avoid disturbing the rafts of waterfowl that may be gathering in the Big Marsh. Watch for common merganser.

**Hixon Forest Nature Center, La Crosse, Wis.**

Try the River-to-Bluff Trail, which starts at Riverside Park on the Mississippi, traverses the great La Crosse River Marsh and then up the bluff, all without crossing a single street.

**Goose Island Park, La Crosse, Wis.**

The canoe trail is closed from Oct 1 to Nov. 15 because so many ducks, geese and shorebirds stop here to rest and feed. But you can hike the trails and watch from shore. (Watch out for poison ivy!) This park occupies the steep bluffs above the river and is a good place to watch migrating hawks, eagles and turkey vultures.

**Bertom Lake, near Cassville**

Depending on how high or low the water is, you can hike quite a ways in from the road at the Bertom Lake area, south of Cassville. One of the few places where you can get into the refuge on foot. (Watch out for poison ivy!)

**Eagle Point Park, Dubuque, Iowa**

This park has precipitous views of the river and spacious lawns upon which to lie, watching for migrating eagles, raptors and turkey vultures. Mines of Spain State Park, Dubuque, Iowa A lush, protected stopover for migrating hawks, eagles and turkey vultures.

**Lock and Dam 14 Eagle Area, Bettendorf, Iowa**

Eagles stay all year in this eight-acre Nature Conservancy preserve. Eagle count map is available.

**Environmental Scorecard**

The League of Conservation Voters scores representatives and senators from 0 to 100% based on their votes on several key environmental bills. Representatives in our area along the Upper Mississippi with the best record for 1997 (first session of the 105th session) are Minnesota’s Bill Luther (88%), Jim Ramstad (81%) and Martin Sabo (81%); Wisconsin’s Ron Kind (88%); and Illinois’ Lane Evans (88%). Ramstad is listed as one of the most improved since the 104th session, jumping from 54%. Minnesota’s James Oberstar has dropped from 65% to 31%.

High-scoring senators are Paul Wellstone, Minn., (100%), Russ Feingold, Wis., (100%), Herb Kohl, Wis., (86%), Carol Moseley-Braun, Ill., (86%), Paul Simon, Ill., (100%) and Tom Harkin, Iowa (86%). Feingold’s opponent, Mark Neumann, is on the League’s “Dirty Dozen,” based on his 29% House lifetime score.

Wisconsin’s 3rd District environmental score has improved since Ron Kind (88%) took Steve Gunderson’s place in Congress (23% in 1996).

For the area congressional scores after the 1st 104th session, see Big River, June 1996. For the full Environmental Scorecard, write LCV, 1707 L Street NW, Suite 750, Washington, DC, 20036, or call (202) 785-8683, or dial up their website through the link on Big River’s home page: www.big-river.com.

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Meetings were held aboard the Mississippi IV, the Army Corps of Engineers' 241-foot towboat (see "North Meets South on the Mississippi" Big River, September 1997).

Pregracke looked very uncomfortable when he stepped to the microphone in the crowded hearing room. He wore a worn baseball cap and his hands were shoved into his pants pockets as he stood stiffly before the head table. Facing him were four commissioners — including a two-star Army general and a Navy rear admiral — all seated in high leather chairs.

The commissioners knew this slightly-built young man, at least by reputation. For the past two years he has worked full time cleaning up the river he loves. Little by little, his efforts have been recognized and his amazing story told by the media (see "Roll Out the Barrels" Big River, November 1997). A year ago he appeared before the commission at a similar meeting held at Rock Island, Ill., when one of the members commented that the commission needed someone like him. That sparked his desire to become a member.

"You guys have as much power as the river," Pregracke said, warming up to his subject. "I think I can help you. I don't represent any special group, just the river. I'll even bring my own leather chair," he offered, bringing laughter from the audience and putting grins on the faces of the commissioners.

General Phillip Anderson, MRC president, explained that members are appointed by the president and confirmed by the Senate.

"You mean all I have to do is see Bill Clinton?" Pregracke asked. When the laughter subsided, he told the commission he was totally serious.

"We are impressed with your sincerity," Gen. Anderson said. "We appreciate your efforts."

After the hearing, Pregracke gave himself low marks. "I blew it," he said. "Whenever I get up like that to talk, I always choke up."

Pregracke is a resident of the Quad Cities area. For a time he lived on river islands and worked as a shell diver and a commercial fisherman. "Then I got sick of all the trash and decided to do something about it."

He and his helpers have pulled an estimated 100 tons of assorted trash from the Upper Mississippi River. Whatever you can name, chances are they have found it on the river bottom. So far, the largest object they've fished out was a Ford van. Pregracke's only financial support comes from a few industrial firms, but it's never enough. "Not when you try to work six people and three boats," he said.

Two companions, Rachel Carlin, 18, and Rodney Shaw, 30, accompanied Pregracke to the public meeting. "Rachel's the glue of this operation and Rodney is the muscle man," he said.

The three were working from a houseboat tied up below Burlington. Before the hearing, they spent three days gathering trash off shore from a Lee County (Iowa) Conservation Board site. "We got 146 tires and some other junk," Pregracke said.

Dean Gabbert writes about the river from his home on its banks in Nauvoo, Ill., (river mile 378.6). He is the retired publisher and editor of The Fairfield (Iowa) Ledger. His last story for Big River was "Julia Belle Swain Brings Grace & Charm to the River" (August 1996).
Saved by the Jacket

Were you ever saved by wearing a life jacket? Both the Minnesota and Wisconsin Departments of Natural Resources (DNR) want to hear about it. The National Safe Boating Council will use selected testimonials in its 1999 “Saved by the Jacket” safety campaign.

“We generally only hear about the fatalities, the accidents where the victims weren’t wearing their life jackets,” said Tim Smalley, Minnesota DNR boating safety specialist. “We’re interested in hearing about watercraft accidents with happy endings, too.”

Include details in your stories: the location; the conditions and, if possible, the type of personal flotation device. Minnesota residents should send their stories to DNR Boat and Water Safety, 500 Lafayette Rd., St. Paul, MN 55155-4046; Wisconsin residents to Bill Engger, DNR boating law administrator, PO Box 7921, Madison, WI 53707. The DNRs will forward the testimonials to the National Safe Boating Council.

More Spills

Minnesota — The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) are investigating two August fish kills in southeastern Minnesota.

One was traced to a 100,000-gallon manure spill in Houston County near the Iowa border. The manure apparently contaminated Waterloo Creek in Iowa. The MPCA is investigating the hog operation where the manure was stored, according to the St. Paul Pioneer Press (8-29-98).

The cause of another fish kill in a 1.9-mile stretch of West Indian Creek near Plainview has proven more elusive, as laboratory tests have tentatively ruled out viruses and parasites. DNR biologists estimate that more than 4,000 trout were killed, according to a DNR press release. Water samples from the kill area contained low dissolved oxygen levels and elevated phosphorus, ammonia and chloride levels.

“It’s very difficult to pinpoint an exact cause of the kill from pathology and water test results,” said Tim Schlagenhaft, a Lake City area fisheries manager.

Anyone with information should call Turn In Poachers at 1-800-652-9093.

Meanwhile in St. Paul, a pipe under the Mississippi near the Wabasha Street Bridge leaked several hundred thousand gallons of wastewater into the Mississippi River. The Pig’s Eye wastewater treatment plant reported the leak, which began August 24 and was sealed four days later. The MPCA said the wastewater was diluted by the huge volume of water in the river, and no dead fish or other evidence of environmental damage was found (St. Paul Pioneer Press 9-10-98).

“Now I’ve got him!”

Late summer anglers are catching record fish in the Mississippi River.

Jim Hendrickson, who lives near Brownsville, Minn., caught a 43-inch flathead catfish for nearly an hour with a 10-pound test line until a neighbor threw him a larger landing net. The catfish had a 28-inch girth and weighed about 45 pounds.

Just a few miles downstream, at Genoa, Wis., Kathy Morrison of Waterloo, Iowa, caught a seven-pound, five-ounce shovelnose sturgeon that set a world record, confirmed by the National Freshwater Fishing Hall of Fame in Hayward, Wis. The sturgeon toppled the previous record by several pounds, according to the La Crosse Tribune (9-3-98 and 9-17-98).

Big fish and stubbornness is a dangerous combination. In Ljubljana, Slovenia, an angler drowned when he tried to reel in a fish so large it dragged him under. Franc Filipic hooked a sheatfish (a type of catfish), and simply refused to let go, reported state-run news agency STA.

According to a friend, Filipic’s last words were “Now I’ve got him!” Filipic’s body, but not the fish, was found two days later. The friend swore the fish was over six feet long and weighed 110 pounds (Knight-Riddler 8-25-98).

And finally, two men after catfish on the Mississippi caught a two-and-a-half-foot-long alligator near Gladstone, Ill. (Associated Press 9-17-98). The reptile was taken home, where it has been feasting on hot dogs and live crawdads. A local pet store plans to take it in. The pet store owner believes the gator was an abandoned pet.

On the Comeback

After decades of hovering near extinction, the peregrine falcon is once again flying high toward recovery.

On August 25, U.S. Dept. of Interior Secretary Bruce Babbitt announced that the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) may remove the raptor from the endangered species list. “We have proved that a strong Endangered Species Act can make a difference,” he said.

The bird, one of the world’s fastest animals, can hit 200 miles an hour in a dive. It nearly succumbed to the pesticide DDT after World
War II. Recovery efforts in both the United States and Canada boosted populations to over 1,500 breeding pairs, well above the recovery goal of 631 pairs, according to the FWS.

Some of these breeding pairs nest in the Upper Mississippi River Valley, including the Twin Cities metro area and at the Effigy Mounds National Monument, near Marquette, Iowa.

The FWS will decide whether to take it off the list by the end of the year, but the bird will continue to be protected under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act.


Wild celery beds in Lake Onalaska, Wis., are also coming back after almost disappearing after severe droughts in the 1980s. Wild celery is a vital food source for waterfowl, especially canvasback ducks, who dive for the plant's starchy tubers. Thanks to the resurgence, over 67,000 canvassbacks were counted in Lake Onalaska in November 1997, and over 192,000 on Pool 9 of the Mississippi River (from Genoa to Lynxville, Wis.), according to the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources.

The abundant growth also helps panfish, which spawn and hide from predators among the plants.

**Wired Swans**

**Madison, Wis. —** Schoolchildren won't be the only ones toting backpacks this fall; 10 trumpeter swans will also be carrying them.

A $25,000 donation to the Natural Resources Foundation of Wisconsin will fund a project to outfit the swans with small backpacks containing satellite/radio-telemetry equipment, according to the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources.

Trumpeter swans are endangered in Wisconsin, but are slowly recovering. The backpacks will transmit information every other day while the birds are on wintering grounds and every fourth day on breeding grounds for up to one-and-a-half years. The units will indicate each bird's position about three to five times daily per "on" day to within 150 yards. The information will be posted on the World Wide Web.

Hunters sometimes shoot a trumpeter they mistake for a Canada goose or a snow goose. The mistake may cost over $2,000 in fines and restitution; intentional shootings can cost $4,000.

**Busy Port**

**St. Paul —** The No-Wake Cafe and the Padelford Packet Boat Co.'s Mississippi fleet will soon have new neighbors and competition.

Owner and operator of River Boats Inc., Eugene Cassidy, was initially rejected from docking his restaurant boat, ReJoyce, at the Watergate Marina when the city backed out of a tentative agreement in 1995, according to the *St. Paul Pioneer Press* (9-3-98).

Charging that he was treated differently than the Padelford company, Cassidy filed a lawsuit against the city and won. The settlement includes a 15-year lease to dock the ReJoyce at Harriet Island Park, where it will house a restaurant and fast-food window, and also a 5-year agreement to dock at least one excursion boat at the Watergate Marina. The city will also pay Cassidy $25,000.

**Shell Smugglers**

The nation's largest shell-buying company will soon be shelling out $1 million to the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation as part of a plea bargain for illegally purchasing mussel shells and shipping them to Japan, where mussel shell fragments are used to induce the growth of pearls in oysters.

The Tennessee Shell Company knowingly bought shells harvested illegally in several states, according to United States Attorney Veronica Coleman (UMRCC Newsletter July/Aug. 1998). After an investigation by special agents of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service working with state conservation officers in Tennessee, Kentucky, West Virginia, Ohio, Michigan, Alabama and Louisiana, 20 individuals were indicted on 136 counts of violating the Lacey Act.

In Davenport, Iowa, two men indicted in illegal commercial clamming activities with a Muscatine shell company are agreeing to plea bargains.

Harry Schultz of Muscatine and Craig Smith of the Quad City area pleaded guilty in connection with a case involving the Mississippi Valley Shell Company, which knowingly purchased illegally harvested mussels (KCLN-KLNT News 9-10-98). The company's owners Butch Ballenger and his wife Cheryl were also indicted.

**Runway Refugees**

**Twin Cities —** After two years of negotiations, the Metropolitan Airports Commission agreed to pay at least $20 million in a deal with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS).

A new runway at the Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport will send planes over the Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge at elevations as low as 500 feet. The 10,000-acre refuge, which runs along the Minnesota River from Fort Snelling to Jordan, is home to many species of waterfowl, songbirds and mammals.

The FWS argued that the runway will make the refuge less effective as a bird sanctuary and open-air classroom. The money will be used to replace refuge land, facilities and programs, according to the *St. Paul Pioneer Press* (9-22-98).
**Special Events and Festivals**

**October**

1. Fall Color Tours, Julia Belle Swain, La Crosse, Wis., 1-800-815-1005.
3. Oktoberfest, La Crosse, Wis.
4. Duck season opens, Wisconsin and Minnesota.
6. Flea Market, Marquette, Iowa.
7. Johnny Appleseed Days, Lake City, Minn.
8. Guided Hikes Along the Mississippi, 9 a.m. on Sat., 1 p.m. on Sun., West Coon Rapids Dam Park, Brooklyn Park, Minn., (612) 420-4300.
10. River Bluffs History Center Open House, Bay City, Wis.
11. Walk When the Moon is Full, 7 p.m., West Coon Rapids Dam Park, Brooklyn Park, Minn., (612) 424-8172.
12. La Crosse River Marsh hike, 5 p.m., Monitor St. and Lang Dr., La Crosse, Wis. (608) 784-8030.
13. Muck Minnow the Gill Boy, Billy Curmano's Swimmin' the Mississippi show, 8 p.m., Intermedia Arts, Minneapolis, Minn., (507) 864-2716.
15. Mississippi River Canoe, 10 a.m., Hennepin County parks, Minneapolis, Minn., (612) 599-6700.
16. Mississippi River Landscape Painting Series, noon - 3 p.m., Oliver Kelley Farm, Elk River, Minn., (612) 290-4160.
17. Hog Roast, Lynxville, Wis.
18. Fish Fry, Potosi, Wis.
19. Taste of Savanna, Savanna, Ill.
20. Fall Festival, Fulton, Ill.
21. Love It or Leaf It, Sabula, Iowa.
22. Flea Market, Marquette, Iowa.
23. Arts and Crafts Festival, McGregor, Iowa.
25. Fall Festival of the Arts and Woodcarvers Show, Red Wing, Minn.

**November**

3. North-South Highway referendum, La Crosse, Wis.

**Meetings and Hearings**

**October**

3. Rivers Council of Minnesota, annual meeting, University of Minnesota Forestry Center, Cloquet, (612) 676-1745.
8. Minnesota-Wisconsin Boundary Area Commission, 10 a.m., Phipps Center, Hudson, Wis., (715) 386-2305.
20-21. Minneapolis Riverfront Master Plan public meetings, 6 p.m. - 8 p.m., 20th at Logan Park Community Center; 21st at North Regional Library, Lowry at Fremont. Call (612) 661-4863 for copy of Park Board plan.
27. Coulee Region Sierra Club and Audubon Society, 7 p.m., U. S. Fish and Wildlife Office, Onalaska, Wis. 

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**Almanac**

*By Kenny Salwey*

In October things are falling all around us. A sudden gust of wind brings a rainstorm of multicolored leaves tumbling to earth. I've often sat on the river bank and watched a particular leaf fall into the water, then I've followed it as far as I could and wondered, where will it go? What will it "see"?

Falling acorns, hickory nuts and walnuts rap, knock and rattle their way through a maze of forest limbs. Most plants have fallen back to the earth. Walnut, ash and basswood trees stand naked, adding a touch of dark contrast to the brilliantly painted landscape. Aquatic plants lie tangled on the backwaters.

A full, blood-red harvest moon can inspire awe. Indian summer, when it happens, is a glorious time of balmy days when hazy air along the hills brings to mind the smoke from the many campfires of the ancient people who also called this magnificent valley home.

Young critters disperse to seek their own territories. The river is now a super highway for our feathered friends. They leave little sign of their passing... no trails, few footprints... only the whisper of their wings, the sweetness of their songs and the ghostly images in our minds, until the spring. 

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October 1998  

Big River