

Ice Storm '07 Ends on a Sunny Note

Wasn't that some week? First floods, then bone-chilling winds and finally a layer of ice—varying from a quarter to a half inch out here at the Biology Station—covering everything in sight. I don't think we went below about 28 degrees but that wind sure made it feel colder. And when was the last time we had 8 consecutive days of precipitation?

While it was nice to have the enforced holiday, I must admit that cabin-fever was setting in by late Tuesday. There wasn't much to do but read, work at the computer, watch TV, or watch the birds at the feeders. The last was my preferred time-waster 'cause you can only do so much of the first three and it was a lot more fun watching the birds slide off the tops of the feeders every time they tried to perch on one.

By Wednesday morning the icicles had begun to resemble bars on a prison cell (now *that's* cabin-fever). Frantic has nothing on a Cardinal kept from the feeders by ice-bars across the feeder perch on an icy-cold morning! Spending more than the usual time watching the birds at the feeder, though, made us aware of a few singletons—a Lincoln's Sparrow, a Junco, a Sapsucker, and, for the first time since the winter of '98-99, a male Golden-Fronted Woodpecker.



A twig in stasis. Covered with a half inch of ice, the buds on this Hackberry twig become a photo opportunity.

I took the pooches for a saunter (Scout recognizes w-a-l-k unless we avoid it or spell it (and then we have to think about it) and I swear he can read it over my shoulder) out to the pond before noon and took more than 150 photos. It's not often you get to photograph ice-covered lichens, glazed resurrection ferns, top-heavy pine saplings and deep-frozen tree buds. There were 3 dozen Ring-Necked Ducks on the fog-en-shrouded pond—photo ops everywhere!

The last big ice storm that we had had (December '01) was far more damaging than this one. Then we lost at least 2 or 3 branches off of just about every tree in the residence yard—with the cedars being especially hard hit—and lost power for three days. This time, a few brownouts and one major switch reset but no real loss of power (kudos to the folks at Bluebonnet) and few of the trees were damaged.

In fact, the thaw was more damaging than the freeze (ice floats, folks—think about that for a second) and I found some oak and cedar branches down on Sun-day. Appropriate name this week, eh? As cold, gray and blustery as the week was, it sure ended on a high note.