

A couple of days ago we picked the first strawberries of the season. I duly noted it in my journal. That made me think about "firsts" and how we keep track of them in our minds or on paper. So, I took out my journal books for the past several years to see just what kinds of "firsts" I had recorded. I did not write every day during some years, so what I discovered now is in no way complete. And, I did not always think to jot down a "first." But, this is some of what I found:

In 2010: On March 15th, we heard the first frogs. This was ten days earlier than last year. On April 4th, I saw the spring's first tree swallow. On June 12th, we picked the first strawberries of the year, about the same time as 2016. On the 13th, Runo mowed the first hayfield of 2010. On July 9th, we had the first tomato--from a plant that had been in our unheated greenhouse early in the spring.

In 2011: March 8th brought the sighting of two Canada geese, the first of the season. On March 16th we heard both killdeers and sandhill cranes. On April 1st, I noted that the tomato seeds are beginning to emerge. On April 6th, I heard the first spring peeper of the year. On the 9th, I saw the first tree swallow. On June 13th, Runo mowed the first hayfield--same day as last year. On the fourth of July, we ate the first new potatoes! On October 28th, it snowed for the first time this year.

2012: On March 2nd, we had thunder and lightning. According to the old saying, we should have frost on September 2nd. On the 10th of March, we saw two sandhill cranes. We heard the frogs on the 14th. The next day, we saw a Blanding's turtle. On May 10th, we saw the first goslings of the season. On the 20th of June, we had the first small new potatoes. On December 12th, I took the first ski tour of the winter.

2013: On April 17th, I noted that the tree swallows were back. On May 23rd, we saw a chick with the cranes. It was June 19th that year when we picked the first strawberries. On September 14th, the first really hard frost finished the garden. On October 23rd, it snowed. The next day, the 24th, I found the first two eggs from the young pullets. On the 28th of November, Runo fed the sheep hay for the first time this fall.

2014: March 19th brought the sight of a killdeer. We also saw two redwing blackbirds. On the 20th, I planted the first seeds of the season--

to start inside. On March 22nd, we saw the first Canada geese. On April 2nd, the first lamb was born. On September 11th, I started the first batch of sauerkraut.

2015: That first killdeer came on March 10 this year. On the 14th, we saw the pair of swans and three geese. On the 16th, we heard the cranes for the first time this season. On April 1st, we saw a turtle for the first time--on a snowbank. And the next day, we heard the first frogs. The first tree swallow did not appear until April 12th. On the 8th of May, we saw hummingbirds and orioles. And on May 13th, I heard the first bobolinks of the year. On July 23, I picked the first green filet beans. On October 17, it snowed.

That brings us to the present year. There have been a few "firsts" this year also, and I am sure there will be more. Some of them will find their way into notes in my journal. Others will pass without any special mention. But, it is always interesting to look back and see--just when did that tree swallow appear in previous years? Does this mean an early spring? When did it snow for the first time in the fall, or the last time in the spring? It would be nice to have a memory that could catalog and bring up all these facts with ease. But, for most of us, the written word--in the form of a journal, is more reliable.