Rain water: wild geese heard north

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In this pentad, the meteorological reckoning of season marked its first day of spring. And we have come to the last entry of the Illustrated Almanac. Since we embarked on this journey in September, 2011, we have completed 1 revolution around the sun covering some 940 million kilometres. The sun is once again at 150º on our imaginary ecliptic; it climbs higher every day and will do so until June 21st, 2013. In the meantime, the day continues to lengthen. In just a little more than a month, on October 7th, 2012, daylight saving will begin in New South Wales, Victoria and Tasmania. Hollis’ new bathers arrived in the post and I find myself thinking about summer clothes and cotton yarn. ... [read on]
This pentad began with a very warm spring day. Bellambi (AWS) recorded 26.7°C on Thursday August 23rd. Where we were in Sydney, the highest temperature reached 30°C. In the city, many people wore their summer ensemble perfectly at ease in the hot sun; leaving some of us, who caught off-guard by the sudden shift in weather, wandering with our woollens tied around our waists or stuffed in our bags from a cold country. Like a Proustian madeleine, the warm air jolts the body’s memories, and, for a brief moment, I was immersed in a hot Sydney summer’s day.
On a cheerfully sunny morning, Hollis and I visited the Botanical Gardens in Wollongong. Upon entry we were greeted by two roosters and a hen, free-ranging on the grass. As Hollis tried to make friends with the birds, I was drawn to inspect the impressive vegetable patch nearby. Bordered by bright marigolds and flanked by colourful rainbow chards and silverbeets, the extensive bed was offering full and round purple and white cabbages; in between fresh pale green broad beans were well on their way to offer up some pods.

Posted in Spring | No Comments »

START OF SPRING: DORMANT CREATURES TWITCH

August 17th, 2012
by Jo Law

One may interpret seasonal changes through a number of avenues: temperature fluctuations, hours of sunlight, precipitation and other weather events. Behaviour of living things contribute to the experience of spring. As budding new shoots make their appearance through the soil or on bare branches, those higher on the food web may sense that the time of plenty is drawing near. ‘Dormant creatures twitch’; some may come to the conclusion that it is a good time to breed. Thus, for many species, the reproduction cycle begins.

Posted in Spring | No Comments »

START OF SPRING: EAST WIND MELTS ICE
Yes, it is spring, according to the Chinese Almanac. The almanac uses astronomical calculations to reckon the seasons, where four positions of the sun on the ecliptic serve as reference points. These quarter points, as they are known, are the solstices and equinoxes. On the solstices, the sun observed from Earth to be directly overhead at the tropics (of Capricorn 23° 26' 16"S or Cancer 23° 26' 16"N). At these points, the sun 'stands still', it will go no further but instead 'reverses' direction. Allowing for a delay in the heating and cooling of earth’s air temperature (known as ‘season lag’), the almanac places the start of seasons at the mid-points between solstices and equinoxes … [read on]

Posted in Spring | No Comments »

MAJOR COLD: STREAMS AND MARSHES FROZEN SOLID

August 7th, 2012
by Jo Law
Beautiful sunny days continued into this pentad with the highest maximum reaching 20.8°C on Sunday August 5th. The highest overnight minimum was 11.5°C. No rainfall was recorded during this period and humidity remained low (between 30% and 62%). Far from ‘streams and marshes frozen solid’, feelings of cold melted away when one basked in the warm sun. My birthday is amongst these last days of winter. …{read on}

Posted in Winter | 4 Comments »

MAJOR COLD: VULTURE FLIES STERN AND SWIFT
August 1st, 2012
by Jo Law

In this second pentad of ‘Major Cold’, the sun was warm but the air felt chill. The daytime maximums returned to mid-teens after having reached higher temperatures in previous days. Correspondingly, night time minimums sank to below 10°C. On a sunny day, we surveyed the beach after a storm and saw that the ocean brought to shore mostly sponges and cuttlefish. Our effort to regain normality after a prolonged period of sickness was once again foiled by another bout of illness. I, too, now long for the end of winter. …{read on}

Posted in Winter | 2 Comments »
As the sun moves to 120° on the ecliptic, we enter the last solar term of winter. This first pentad of ‘Major Cold’ began with aptly wintry conditions with the daytime maximums reaching the mid-teens and overnight minimums hovering just above 10°C. Persistent light rains were followed by a glorious warm sunny Wednesday. It was succeeded by a moody overcast day that ended with a thunder storm. The pentad closed with another beautiful winter’s day.

The Chinese Almanac continues to focus on bird life but these ‘observations’ appear to be more a metaphorical gesture towards the raising yang than descriptive of actual phenological occurrences. Perhaps these images of spring activities fuel the hopes that the coldest season will soon draw to an end. ...[read on]
GO GO PARK, FLY FLY KITE

July 25th, 2012
by Hollis Bridgeman Law