

# **"Peak Autumn" about to hit Alton, brace yourselves for fall colors galore**

by Cory Davenport, Contributing Writer  
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GRAFTON – This weekend is set to be peak colors in the Riverbend, Urban Fishing Coordinator at Pere Marquette State Park Scott Isringhausen said Tuesday.



Isringhausen had just completed a scenic drive from Pere Marquette State Park to Alton by way of the Great River Road when he interviewed with Riverbender.com. He said this year's peak leaf change was again later than usual – a trend in recent years he said.

When he began work at the park two-and-a-half decades ago, he said the best time for colored leaves in the area was hovering around the middle of October, specifically around the 15th. This year, however, he said leaves will not peak until this weekend.

“When I first started working at the park, the 15th of October was a great time to be out,” he said. “But that was 25 years ago. The last few years in particular, it's been early November. It has to do with the weather, but I guess the weather has changed compared to what it used to be.”

Leaves change in the autumn due to longer nights and shorter days. Leaves are normally green because of chlorophyll, a solar-powered chemical which nourishes plants and gives leaves their green coloration. Without as much sunlight, however, leaves stop producing chlorophyll and turn the vivid golds, reds and oranges people love to see along the Great River Road's majestic limestone bluff faces.



This year saw hot weather through September and a generally dry autumn, which Isringhausen blames as the reason for the late peak. Despite the delayed arrival, however, Isringhausen said the leaves do not disappoint this year.

“It's a pretty year, it's not the prettiest I've ever seen, but it is great this year,” he said. “People have been coming up to the park with their tripods and taking pictures of all the leaves. There are a lot of vivid reds and golden colors out there right now. I'd say the next few days till the weekend will be peak fall around here.”

When it comes to the best, most eye-catching and vivid leaf changes, though, Isringhausen said warm sunny days are required as well as cool nights, and an appropriate amount of precipitation. Many people, he said, claim the best leaf changes come after a frost or a hard freeze, but Isringhausen said that will make the leaves turn brown instead of the fall colors everyone seems to enjoy.

Once peak leaf colors hit the Riverbend, Isringhausen said people will have at least around 10 days to enjoy them before the wind, rain, cold and the rest of the winter hooligans begin stripping the wooden stalks bare.