

The Catch

COCORAHS MONSOONAL UPDATE—AND DO IT YOURSELF DATA ANALYSIS

FORT COLLINS, CO — Monday, July 25, 2005

CoCoRaHS folks - ready for rain—and enjoying cooler temperatures.

The long-awaited arrival of somewhat humid air into parts of our region has triggered numerous and locally heavy rains these past two days. More is possible today. Not everyone will see rain, but it is great to at least see clouds and temperatures in the 80s instead of the 100s. With 3 days of 100+ temperatures here in Fort Collins last week, that goes down as second only to 1954 in terms of days of 100 F. I know that not all of you have had the same experiences, but one way or another, it has been hot.

Thanks to several of you for hustling to send in "Intense Rain" reports. There was some flash flooding reported yesterday in several areas with localized heavy downpours. This is the time of year where we really wish we had 10,000 volunteers or more since storm rainfall is EXTREMELY variable. (Check out the Albuquerque, NM precip map for 7/24, or the Cheyenne, WY (Laramie County) map for 7/24 or the Larimer County, Colorado map for 7/24 and 7/25, or the Denver Metro Area map for 7/25 -- for a few good examples. The more stations we have, the more obvious the huge local variations in rainfall become.

Remember, there is a menu selection that you have to click on when you are in "My Data Entry" in order to select "Hail", "Intense Precipitation", "Multi Day Accumulation", or "Monthly Zeroes". "My Data Entry" always defaults to your daily precipitation report, but with just one quick click you can be ready to fill out the other important reports. If you have never used one of those reports, I suggest you click on each to see how easy they are to fill out.

Do your own analysis!

If you have the time and inclination, you can all be your own independent climatologists and hydrologists. We are striving to make our website easy to use and eventually faster on dial-up connections -- like mine at home.

The goal is to be able to quickly and accurately tabulate, map, and analyze the wealth of data we are getting from CoCoRaHS observers.

Here are a few examples of analyses you can do at home.

Checking your own data.

It is always wise to go back and check your own reports over the past days, weeks and months to make sure you entered data correctly.

Some reports you may want to try are:

>From "My Data" (assuming you are logged into your account) you can
>select
"Daily Precip", "Hail", "Intense Precipitation", or "Multi-Day Accumulation"

I just clicked "Daily Precip." and I immediately see that for my station, CO-LR-273 I have submitted a total of 2345 daily precipitation reports since the project started. But I see that I forgot to enter data for 7/18 and 7/23. Had I not checked, I may have forgotten.

I also know by clicking "Hail" that I have had 16 hail storms that I was aware of at my home since the project started. So please do remember to send in a "Hail" report after each storm so that the storm files for your station are as complete as possible.

Our "Intense Precip" records from the old system have not yet been moved to the new database, so we will not be able to provide complete stats on the number of intense rain reports you have submitted during the history of the project.

Whether or not you are logged in, You can also check your data, and data for any and all stations, by going to the "View Data" and selecting from the choices on the menu. To look at daily reports from a single station or up to 3 stations at the same time go to "Station Summary Precipitation Report" or "Station Snow Summary Report". You have to know the new station numbers for the stations you want to compare, but you can list and total the daily precipitation for any period of time you select.

Rather than explaining each report to you, I simply encourage you to take a look when you have time -- or don't if you don't feel like it. Try each report and see what it shows.

I really appreciate that I can now quickly analyze precip totals for a state, a county or individual a station. For example, by clicking on "Total Precipitation" and selecting my home county of Larimer, Colorado I can quickly see that total

precip for the month of July has ranged from only 0.00-0.03" at some stations up to 1.00" plus at 6 stations peaking at 1.72" west of Bellvue.

By selecting "All Counties" in Colorado I see that there have been 16,273 daily reports so far and the July 1-25 precip totals range from 0.00 up to a maximum of over 3" at two stations. So while most areas have been very dry so far this month, there have been some local exceptions.

Hail Summary

It is really amazing what we can do with our hail data. It took me barely 20 seconds, with a dial-up connection no less, to see that we have had 754 hail reports submitted so far this year. By clicking on any column heading that is underlined, we can immediately sort the data so I clicked on "Largest" and I see that the largest stone reported so far this year has been 3" in diameter. Only 10 out of 754 reports had hail of 2" diameter or greater. An additional 7 reports showed 1 3/4 inch hail. Our crew (Katie and Steven) are busily counting dents and photographing hail pads, so soon you will be able to click on each report and get a photo of the hail pad to go along with each hail report (if the observer had a hail pad and turned it in, that is).

So what used to take months or years of work we can now do in a matter of seconds with the help of all of you volunteers in combination with a MySQL database and the internet. It is amazing indeed.

Working to make website faster

WE have collected a few dozen suggestions for how to improve our website, and Julian is now working towards a major upgrade of the system sometime before fall. Thanks to some of you for taking the time to share your suggestions with us. One of the big issues is that we would like the system to run faster and update quicker for those of us who have dial-up connections and slow download speeds. We are streamlining some processes in an effort to shave off a few seconds and waste less time.

Settle back and enjoy what remains of summer

I'll be taking a two week vacation soon, so you won't hear much from me until mid August. In the meantime, do enjoy summer. The worst of the heat is hopefully behind us now, and perhaps some rain will fall for most of us.

We do thank you for your ongoing help.

Nolan Doesken