

BURNT UMBER" SNOW FALLS IN THE ROCKIES —DID YOU SEE IT?

FORT COLLINS, CO — Thursday, February 16, 2006

CoCoRaHS eyes on the snow

We have had several reports of colorful snow falling last night. We got a phone call from Rocky Mountain National Park headquarters this morning describing fresh snow that was a "burnt umber" color and laced with what appeared to be "colorful fine particles". Since our snow here in Fort Collins (nearly 5" of it AT LAST!!) was "white as snow" -- and I'm color blind anyway -- I couldn't comment on their observations, but I got on the CoCoRaHS website and clicked on "View Data" and then clicked "Daily Comments Report". There I found some comments from one of our observers in the mountains of Boulder County that said,

"Overcast with light snow still falling. Now for the weird part: the lower and middle layers of this snow are red. The melted snow yielded a fine red/burnt-orange sediment. I am sending a sample to NSIDC at the U of C."

So I looked farther and found this comment from near Durango in southwestern Colorado which said,

"Airborne dust reduced visibility to 7 miles Wed. afternoon, but clear this morning."

And looking farther still I found these comments from down near Great Sand Dunes National Park,

"Gosh-awful windy all day. The SLV (San Luis Valley) floor was one big dustbowl all day as observed from here. Snow fell overnight - time unknown - obviously after wind settled down. Calm this morning. Saw large bird on the ice of lower Lake of the Falls after sunset. Think it was a Sandhill Crane - too dark to identify positively. Will call the FWS to see if any other sitings this early in year. It struggled to walk from a puddle of water on the ice to the downwind shore, being knocked down twice by the wind. Made sure the dog was out only on the chain so she couldn't go down to the lake. "

A new observer in Silverton, Colorado, sending in her first report with a brand new rain gauge, noted:

"CAIC (Colorado Avalanche Information Center) reported 100mph gusts above Red Mt Pass. I detected some dust in the gauge while cleaning it this morning."

So alas, we no more than mentioned the importance of observer notes and comments, and we immediately enjoyed the fruits of this labor. 264 of us sent in remarks of some sort today and they were VERY USEFUL. Thanks!!

Big snow in Wyoming

Studying the snowfall maps today, Wyoming took their turn at getting buried. The greatest reported 24-hour snowfall was 21.5 inches in Goshen County, northeast of Cheyenne. These remarks provided some insight into conditions there.

"Did the best I could to keep up with snowfall but during the night it was snowing and blowing really hard so snow could be off couple of inches either way."

That's the reality of measuring snow.

Did others of you notice the colored snow??

If any of you observed the colored snow, let me know. When did it fall, and how long did it last? That's just one more of the endless amazing things we can see if we keep our eyes open.

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Snow nearly gone back east

After the huge weekend snow storm back east, snow depth reports today from MD, VA and PA show that it has melted fast. One Maryland observer that previously had over 10" of snow on the ground reported today,

"Many bare spots where sun shines most of the day. Today should melt the rest of the snow with temps in the 60's"

Happy mid-February to you all (13 degrees F here as we speak), and keep those observations coming. (812 SO FAR TODAY)

Maybe I'll see a few of you at the Ogallala Symposium in Wray, Colorado this Monday. We'll be talking about drought in the Central Great Plains.

Nolan

P.S.: Over 40 people are now signed up for the "1000 Hail Pad Party" on Feb 25th. Yippee!! This IS going to be a party.