

The Catch

COCORAHS—NEW MEMBER IN THE COCORAHS FAMILY

FORT COLLINS, CO — Tuesday, November 13, 2007

Dear fellow weather observers

I just want to pass along a little news and then ask a favor of you.

As you may know, one of the key individuals in CoCoRaHS is Julian Turner -- our web developer and also the person who answers hundreds of our e-mail questions every week -- especially the ones about problems with logging on to the computer. We wouldn't be here without him. He has patiently helped thousands of new observers get started in CoCoRaHS.

There is some exciting news in the Turner household. Julian's wife, Kristin, gave birth to their first child on Friday -- a son.

Julian is taking some well-deserved time off. What this means for CoCoRaHS is we'll now get to test the CoCoRaHS website to see how well it runs in "unattended mode". Wish us luck :-)

Some of you may have questions, but this is a great time -- even if you have pressing website comments or computer questions -- to just hold off a few days and give Julian and family some rest. It is also tempting to send "congratulations e-mails", you may want to hold off on that, too. It's been many years since our first child was born, but I still remember the excitement and apprehensions. It kind of puts weather observing on the back burner.

Appreciating Precipitation

Have you ever just watched, listened, smelled the air, and marvelled at how in the world the atmosphere can haul all that moisture around and then drop it down on us -- sometimes in gentle all-day rains covering hundreds or thousands of miles, and sometimes in brief furies only a mile or two wide? It is an amazing process. Those in the Southeastern states that are so hurting for rain right now were accustomed to regular downpours. But now for the past several months every drop has become increasingly rare and precious. At first they scoffed at the

CoCoRaHS Motto -- "Every Drop Counts", but the fewer there are the more special they seem (and the easier they are to count).

I'm not going to explain how and why it rains and snows right now. There are great books on the subject. I will encourage you, however, to stop to watch, listen and smell -- and think just a little about this amazing process.

Forecasting months in advance

Many of you are in professions (farming, ranching, natural resources, sales, etc.) where it sure could come in handy to know what the weather was going to be like later this winter, or next spring and summer. Meteorologists have made steady progress in improving forecasts for the next 1-4 days. Even the forecasts for 5-10 days in advance now have some skill. But forecasting months in advance is a different ball game. In an upcoming letter when I have some more time, I'm going to share a little bit about the El Nino Southern Oscillation and how that may affect our chances of being wet or dry, warm or cool. Currently we are in the cool phase of this oscillation (i.e. cooler than average sea surface temperatures in the eastern Pacific off the coast of South America) and forecasters are concerned this could contribute to a continuation of drought conditions both in the Southeast and also on the Southwestern U.S. This is worth keeping an eye on in the weeks and months ahead.

For some good leisure reading and education, try this website:
<http://www.elnino.noaa.gov/>

Best wishes to all,

Nolan