

# The Catch

## **COCORAHS – DOG DAYS OF SUMMER**

CEDARVILLE, MI — Thursday, July 23, 2009

Good evening,

First, a big "Welcome" to the many new CoCoRaHS volunteers who have signed up this month from Connecticut and New Hampshire. We are also beginning to see activity in Maine as well. August 1st is the official launch day for CoCoRaHS in Maine but people are already signing up. Then all of New England will be filled in. There has also been a big surge of new volunteers from New Jersey and Colorado (finally :-)) Good job and many thanks to those who are helping. At this stage in CoCoRaHS, we can all view the national, state, and county maps and see the parts of the country where we are data rich and data sparse. By working together, we can gradually fill more and more of those gaps. Word of mouth is a great CoCoRaHS recruiting tool.

## **Silence**

It has been several weeks since I wrote the last CoCoRaHS update. I've been in Michigan since July 7th -- first for the annual meeting of the American Association of State Climatologists /(in Grand Rapids) /followed by vacation time here in the eastern end of the Upper Peninsula of Michigan. My grandfather first visited this area (Cedarville-Hessel - Les Cheneaux Islands) as a young man about 90 years ago. Since then, 3 more generations of our family have followed his footsteps enjoying water, wildlife, blueberries and the like. It's been a cool summer for the Great Lakes area. We've only seen temperatures over 75 degrees once or twice since we arrived and the water temperature is still in the low 60s. The only folks in swimming are under the age of 13. Not sure how they can handle it, but they don't complain. But the cool, damp air is invigorating. Today is cloudy with wisps of fog over the water. I travel with a rain gauge

now, so I set up a temporary CoCoRaHS station here and measured 0.32" this morning from a rumbling echoing thunderstorm yesterday.

### **Michigan CoCoRaHS one-year anniversary and volunteer appreciation dinner**

It was a great pleasure to meet several dozen CoCoRaHS volunteers from lower Michigan and northern Indiana at the recent "CoCoRaHS Volunteer Appreciation Dinner" in Grand Rapids on July 10th.. Since it coincided with our annual meeting of State Climatologists, Steve Hilberg, the CoCoRaHS state coordinator for Illinois, Laura Edwards, state coordinator for Nevada, and Henry Reges, CoCoRaHS National Coordinator, were also able to attend. I would like to personally thank Jeff Andresen (professor and State Climatologist at Michigan State University as well as Michigan CoCoRaHS state coordinator), his staff, and also the meteorologists at the Grand Rapids, MI National Weather Service for hosting this fun event at the beautiful Kent County Extension office and public gardens (thanks to the local "Master Gardeners). This was really fun and I highly recommend that other states try to organize similar events for their volunteers.

### **Missed another big one**

For reasons not easily explained, 2009 has been the spring and summer of big storms for my neighborhood in Fort Collins, Colorado. Here I was enjoying vacation in Michigan when the phone rang . . . it was my son describing the spontaneous tumult that erupted Monday night (July 20th) along the Colorado Front Range from Fort Collins to Denver. A mild summer evening quickly gave way to a brief but intense burst of severe weather -- all starting after 10 PM. In just one hour our supposedly semi-arid area of northern Colorado received another 3" of rain (20% of our annual average). We've now had our average annual precipitation in just 3 months. For good measure, it was accompanied by 50 mph winds and hail. Several of you were kind enough to send me photos of your rain gauges -- some of them nicely shattered by the impact of large wind-driven hail stones that pelted parts of the Denver metro area that same evening. Tis a hard year for gardeners, that's for sure.

### **Explanation and apology**

We recently posted a "Message of the Day" on the CoCoRaHS website that stirred the ire of a number of CoCoRaHS volunteers. Please know this message was intended to be encouragement and instruction, not

criticism. We talked about "rounding" and we encouraged weather observers to always report their daily precipitation to the nearest 0.01". We only brought this up because we have seen a disproportionately large number of reports that happen to come out to the nearest 0.10" or as 0.50, 1.00, 1.50, 2.00, 3.00, etc. I don't have a good explanation for this, but it looked like "rounding" or approximation. With the dandy 4"-diameter high capacity gauges that we use, there is no need to round the data. Always read to the nearest 0.01". If the water level is half way between two marks, I suggest that you "round up" to the next higher mark to account for the liquid that remains on the funnel.

### **Hardly a Hurricane**

It's still very early in the tropical storm season, but for now the tropics remain calm. The next 10-12 weeks are the time of year when some of the heaviest rains in the U.S. have occurred. Tropical storms are often the culprit. The warmer the air and the warmer the temperatures of ocean surface, the more water can be delivered by the atmosphere to feed late summer storms. I have never lived in an area susceptible to tropical storms, so I don't have much personal experience. But thousands of us live in areas that can be affected sometimes to the point of devastation. Because of the onset of El Nino (warm phase of the El Nino Southern Oscillation in the tropical Pacific) the Atlantic hurricane season is predicted to be a slow one. But that doesn't mean the U.S. is off the hurricane hook. Be wary and be ready!.

### **News from the farm**

I can't tell you much about the farm since I've been gone since July 6th. Our house/animal sitter did call to report one murder. Our old tough gander finally met his match. I can hardly imagine him losing a fight as he's had a career of biting my back side, chasing horses, damaging dogs (even helped fight off a couple of pit bulls that invaded the farmyard a few years ago).and driving off fox and raccoons. But something got him in the horse corral last week so the farm flag is flying at half staff.

With some trepidation, we decided to bring our Australian Shepherd puppy (Lily) along with us on this trip. So far, no regrets as Lily has been a good traveler, quiet, appreciative and very obedient. She has had no "accidents", and has learned several important commands (come, sit, stay) and remembers them very well unless there are other dogs nearby. She's only bitten one person and that was me -- out of exuberance, not fear. She loves the excitement of cross country driving where you never

know what you'll find and where you'll be the next time you get out of the car. She learned to swim in Lake Huron when she met a friendly Yellow Lab beachgoer. We haven't taken her out in the canoe yet, but there is still time if the weather clears.

### **Dog days**

Enjoy summer. It's going by quickly. We'll be back home soon and we'll see what we find. Apparently the weeds in our garden are growing faster than the vegetables -- and the garden is way behind where it should be this time of year. At least we still have a garden after this string of hail storms this year.

Best wishes and thanks for your daily reports (and your timely intense rain and hail reports when the big storms strike).

Sincerely,

Nolan Doesken  
Colorado State University