

The Catch

COCORAHS - HAPPY 2010 NEW YEAR!

FORT COLLINS, CO — Tuesday, December 29, 2009

Dear CoCoRaisins -- Rain Gauge Readers -- friends and family

2010 -- Really?

It is nearly a new calendar year and a new decade. Ten years ago CoCoRaHS was just getting started here in Colorado and we were fretting Y2K and wondering if anything bad would really happen at midnight as the calendar switched from 1999 to 2000. Ten years later\ CoCoRaHS has reached to all 50 states, and our frets are now focused on local and global economy, health care, energy, how much e-mail we're getting, how it feels to be 10 years older, and how hard it can be to get up and read the rain gauge on these cold, dark and sometimes windy mornings.

Five for CoCoRaHS -- Update on our fund raising effort

As we finish the second week of our six week "Five for CoCoRaHS" giving campaign (which goes through the end of January 2010) we want to say a big "Thank You" to all of you who have already donated a few dollars to help keep CoCoRaHS going.. We are off to a good start and are very encouraged.. For those who haven't yet made a donation, but would like to take advantage of a possible tax deduction for the 2009 calendar year, we encourage you to make your on-line gift or mail in your check by midnight on December 31st . Donations made after this date will fall into the 2010 tax calendar year. We really appreciate your support! For more info, please click on:

<http://www.cocorahs.org/Content.aspx?page=donate5>

Surprise, surprise -- that \$10 million endowment that I dreamed about that could support CoCoRaHS indefinitely has not yet come to pass -- but I'll keep dreaming :-). You just never know.

Survived the yurt!

It was cold -- really, really cold. It never got above -10C (+14F) and temperatures were well below zero F much of the time.. Sometimes the wind blew making it brutally cold. Most of the time it snowed. It wasn't easy fitting seven people into one small yurt. But now that we're home safe and sound, I can say that our family journey to the North Fork Canadian yurt near Gould in Jackson County, Colorado for Christmas 2009 was a blast and a rich family time. I was worried at first seeing the forecast for potential blizzard conditions and temperatures well below zero. But when all was said and done, we dressed well, avoided mistakes, the wood stove and firewood did their jobs, and our food supplies were excellent. Our daughter was kind enough to pick a yurt that was an easy ski in. Also, the younger generation was kind to my wife and I, and they packed the heaviest loads in their backpacks. I'm not sure I would want to do this every year at Christmas, but we're glad we did it once. I didn't miss my laptop one bit.

Instead of dealing with e-mail, there was lots of time to stoke the wood stove, eat, ski, play games, and watch and examine snow crystals. Three out of the four days we were there we got to watch millions of tiny little single ice crystals dropping from the sky -- almost too small to see without a magnifying glass. But they piled up almost like sand and made a solid base for cross country skiing. I didn't bring my rain gauge with me, but I'm guessing that each inch of snow contained between 0.10 and 0.13" of water making this subzero Fahrenheit snow denser than most snows that fall at much warmer temperatures. But it made it easy to gather buckets of snow to melt on the fire for our water supply.

Stormy weather

While we dealt with the elements in our comfortable yurt, many of you dealt with even wilder weather. Blizzard conditions from north Texas up to southern Canada, and flooding rains and high winds from Arkansas to the Atlantic Ocean (all caused by one huge swirling low pressure area) made for a very interesting Christmas holiday for millions.

Sunrise-Sunset

This is the time of year that I am most keenly aware of sunrise as it comes way too late, and sunset because it comes way too early. This is also the one time of year that I notice the asymmetrical nature of the daily cycle.. For example, since I walk or bicycle home from work each day, I'm noticing that there is already more daylight at the end of the day

than there was two or three weeks ago. The morning is a different story, though. Even though we're more than a week past the winter solstice, the sunrise has continued to advance later. It will be two weeks before it finally turns the corner and begins rising earlier in the morning. By the end of January, most of us will be getting another two minutes of day length each day (less in Hawaii and the far south, and more up in Alaska and other northern areas..

Why does this happen? It has to do with the shape of the earth, the tilt of the earth's axis and the irregularities of our orbit around the sun. If you're interested in sunrise/sunset times, and how they change for anywhere in the country, I suggest you pay a visit to the U.S. Naval Observatory website.

<http://www.usno.navy.mil/USNO/astronomical-applications>

They also specialize in such obscure but critically important information such as twilight -- the amount of light visible before sunrise and after sunset.

Sincerely and Happy New Year,

Nolan Doesken
Colorado State University

P.S. And thanks, again, to those of you who have made donations during the past two week to CoCoRaHS through the Colorado State University Foundation and to those of you who provided suggestions and contacts for other organizations who might help us in the future. Small contributions from a large number of motivated CoCoRaHS volunteers really can make a huge difference.

P.P.S. If any of you are coming to Denver for the National Western Stock Show this year, I'll be giving a talk on Stock Show weather and long term trends in Colorado climate. That will be on January 12th. Maybe I'll see a few CoCoRaHS folks there.