

The Catch

COCORAHS - LEARNING ABOUT PRECIPITATION

FORT COLLINS, CO — Sunday, May 16, 2010

Good evening.

A quick thanks to all CoCoRaHS rain gauge volunteers who got up each day this past week and got your rain gauge reports sent in. We came so close to reaching the 9,000 report milestone, but we fell just a few short of the goal. Tuesday (May 11) was our best day with 8,897 reports. But I would have to say that Monday (May 10) was the most impressive showing for CoCoRaHS precipitation reporting. Even though it was a fairly dull day across the country in terms of precipitation, still, nearly 8,700 CoCoRaHS volunteers submitted their precipitation report even though most of us (about 6,000) had no rain or snow to report. 6,000 reports of ZERO in one day is really impressive. Good work.

By the way, if you did your measurements this past week but have not yet entered them on the CoCoRaHS webpage -- it's not too late. You can always go back and enter past reports. When you go to the data entry page, just use the up/down arrows beside the date box to select the correct date and then type in your report. If you had no precipitation to report last week, please feel free to use the "Monthly Zeros" report to quickly and easily fill in all the dry days you've been having.

<http://www.cocorahs.org/Admin/MyDataEntry/MonthlyZerosReport.aspx>

Learning

I don't know about you, but I've learned more about precipitation since joining CoCoRaHS than in all the rest of my climatological life combined. I know that it rains or snows somewhere in the country every day, and in any given 24-hour period usually between 20 and 35 % of us CoCoRaHS volunteers have something in our gauge to report. I've also learned that by far the majority of daily rain amounts are small -- just a few hundredths, but it's the big storms that catch our attention. I know my U.S. geography better now than ever before, and I have a much better

sense of how remarkably variable precipitation can be -- and usually is. I've never been there, but now that we have dozens of volunteers around Mobile Bay in extreme southern Alabama I've seen how time after time that area gets wildly variable rainfall -- many inches different over just a few miles. Today (Sunday) was another good example of that. The same is often true around Tampa Bay.

Texas takes its turn

Just two weeks after the huge rains in Tennessee, the other state that starts with T (Texas) took its turn with heavy rains. The Austin - San Antonio - Victoria areas had been drying out quickly the past few weeks, but that changed in a hurry. Over 30 locations had daily rainfall totals in excess of 5" (mostly Friday and early Saturday morning). The largest one-day rainfall was a frightening 10.60" at a station in Bandera County.

The snow is gone, the grass is green, the lilacs are blooming

When I last wrote it was snowing hard and I feared for our trees. Fortunately, less snow fell than was forecast -- but still we ended up with a solid sloppy 4.1" of new snow (with close to 0.80" of water content) -- one of our 10 largest daily snowfalls in the month of May in our historic Fort Collins weather station's 122 year history. Some trees snapped under the weight of the wet snow, but at our place we only lost a few branches (which I still need to clean up). That snow brought our monthly total on the Colorado State University campus to 88" for the season -- ranking 3rd snowiest in recorded history. Just one more inch and we'd move into second place.

It took until Thursday for all the snow to melt, but now we are gloriously green and the grass is growing fast. The fruit trees still have some of their blossoms. In the last two days our lilacs have just begun to bloom. Their spring fragrance is so sweet and rich. For us, this is a little late for our lilacs to just be starting, but I'm glad they waited and maybe they will hold on until Memorial Day.

NPN Reminder

Speaking of blooming lilacs, this reminds me to remind you (or at least those of you who love watching and tracking the annual life cycles of assorted plants and animals) to please take a visit to the U.S. National Phenology Network (NPN) website

<http://www.usanpn.org/>. We all have a standing invitation to join NPN in tracking the annual life cycle stages of our favorite plants and animals. If you have these sorts of inclinations, please sign up to help out. Just like CoCoRaHS, the more watchers and reporters they have tracking the annual life cycles of plants and animals, the more they will learn about the connections with life and climate. Fun stuff.

Narrow Escape

It was a close call for sure. Angel -- our beautiful, huge Great Pyrenees that has been banned from our yard and lives next door with our son because of her appetite for chickens -- managed to get into our pasture yesterday while our son was loading firewood through the gate. I was gone, but fortunately he heard the commotion and found that Angel had found, captured and was quickly defeathering one of our white Chinese geese. We had a flock of a dozen thanks to someone's great marketing skills. But we're now down to just 3. That's a story for another day. The catalogue called them "effective weeder geese" and that's why my wife got them to help out in the garden, but we later found they only ate the weeds when they had already finished off the other garden plants that they like even more. Have you ever smelled a goose with garlic breath? Anyway, Joel heard the fuss, remembered the dog was out, raced across the irrigation ditch and pulled Angel away from the goose. The poor goose was rattled and half naked, but by this evening she seemed to have shaken off the trauma and was eating and squawking once again.

Thanks for your hail and significant weather reports

One more thanks to all of you who have made the extra effort to send in CoCoRaHS hail and significant weather reports. Those reports have special significance since they go directly and immediately to your nearest National Weather Service Office to help them out with severe weather warnings and verification. Since CoCoRaHS Hail Awareness week began 2 weeks ago, we've received over 315 hail reports and 439 Significant Weather Reports for things like heavy rains and flooding. Keep it up! And if you've never sent in such a report before, just remember they are on your reports menu when you bring up your "Daily Precipitation" report form. Please do not use "Significant Weather Report" forms for reporting tornadoes. That's what NWS Skywarn training is for.

As always, if you have any questions or need any help, just let us know. If you can, try to contact your local or regional CoCoRaHS coordinator

first and spread out the fun. If everyone e-mails me at the same time,
we're all in trouble :-)

Have a great week. Summer will be here sooner than you think.

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