

The Catch

NOLAN DOESKEN'S BI-MONTHLY COCORAHS E-MAIL MESSAGE

COCORAHS - THOUGHTS ON JULY RAINS

FORT COLLINS, CO — Thursday, July 8, 2010

CoCoRaHS greetings.

I haven't had a chance to write much lately. When the days are long (summer) and the thunderstorms are rumbling (now) there is always much to do both at home and work.

For those of you who are new to CoCoRaHS in the past few weeks, we warmly welcome you. Please get your rain gauge set up and review the instructions for setting up a gauge and sending in reports. Begin reporting your precipitation as soon as you can and be ready for sending in hail reports, too. Your data point, wherever you are, will be very important and will help us all track and map the remarkably variable precipitation patterns common to the summer months.

As the recent storms have shown each and every day:

Today, July 8 -- Green Bay, WI, Amarillo, TX, Columbia, MO

Yesterday, July 7 -- Sidney, NE, Bartlesville, OK

July 6 -- Ft. Lauderdale, FL

July 5 -- Dodge City, KS

July 4 -- Lubbock, TX

July 3 -- Houston, TX

July 2 -- Brazoria County, TX

June 30-July 1 -- Brownsville, TX

and so on and so forth

At this time of year, every day may be a flood in one part of the country while, other areas are drying out quickly. Texas is nearly drought free again, and the Rio Grande is a crazy torrent. The lower Rio Grande continues to rise and is flooding badly in some areas. After weeks of flooding in Iowa, things are finally starting to return to normal there. Meanwhile, northern Wisconsin and Upper Michigan have finally had much needed rains, while in the East drought conditions are developing and worsening daily. California is seasonally sunny, and the Pacific NW has finally warmed up after a very wet May and early June. Such is life in the U.S. -- and CoCoRaHS shows it very nicely every day -- thanks to you!

Also, thanks to those of you who have submitted Drought Impacts Reports.

<http://www.cocorahs.org/ViewData/ListDroughtImpactReports.aspx>

We've received over 50 Drought Impacts Reports already this month and the numbers are increasing daily. If an unusual lack of rain begins to cause impacts to plants, animals, forests, crops, rivers, humans, etc. in your area, please let us know by filling out a "Drought Impact Report".

Recent rains

Here in northern Colorado, we're having some very pleasant weather. Since our house doesn't have air conditioning, this has been much welcomed. While the East has been absolutely baking (100s are OK in Phoenix or Las Vegas, but a miserable thing in Baltimore, Philadelphia and New York), here we've been enjoying a few days of respite from summer heat and dryness. The 4th of July brought dousing rains and some lightning that was much more impressive than the soggy fireworks. Then yesterday we had a rare summer day of dark, overcast skies with a steady all-day drizzle and temperatures only in the upper 50s. Cheyenne, WY was even chillier with lower 50s and many of us broke out our sweatshirts. Green grass returned for a few days and the first sign of monsoonal thunderstorms rumbled over the central Rockies. This is good.

Significant Weather Reports -- So valuable

I know I sound like a broken record sometimes, but I must repeat and continue to remind you that "Significant Weather Reports" are really important. Any time that you receive heavy rain that is enough to begin to cause runoff and the makings of local floods, please make that special effort to send in a "Significant Weather Report". Even if it's not that bad but you can send in a quick report, it will help meteorologist know how bad the storm is and if the radar is estimating reasonably well or poorly. Let us know how much rain fell in the past XX minutes and how much has fallen so far today. That information may be just what it takes to help the National Weather Service issue an appropriate weather warning or advisory. Never exaggerate, of course, but report and describe what you see. If you've never needed to do one of those reports, take a look at your CoCoRaHS data entry form and you'll see that menu of report options on the upper left hand side of your computer screen. Then, when you've had a big storm, please remember to select "Significant Weather Report" and fill it out. Some day, a timely report of heavy rains may save lives downstream.

Comments -- Your local weather story

One of the things I try to do every day is go to "View Data" on the CoCoRaHS menu and list out the daily precipitation reports for the entire country. Then I click on "Total Precip. in" and the computer ranks all the daily precipitation reports from highest to lowest. I then click the little flashlight at the end of the row of data to see what comments the observer may have made. Today, the heaviest rain amount was 5.15" in Columbia, MO. There was no comment entered. However, the second highest total, also in Columbia, gave an excellent description of the storm. This is prized information now and even more valuable information later.

Fairly often we see little notes like "I bet nobody reads this" or once in awhile "if I don't hear back from somebody, I'm gonna quit." I will admit that I don't have time to read all the comments every day, but I read some comments every day and some of our leaders and volunteers try to read everything in their states. So don't worry, the comments are looked at. Sometimes they are closely scrutinized, and other times lightly skimmed, but never ignored. We do appreciate descriptive comments very much. I use the CoCoRaHS "Comments" to keep my weather journal because I can always go back and retrieve it and compare what I had to others around me.

Visitors

A number of CoCoRaHS travelers have gone out of their way to find the CoCoRaHS office here at the Colorado Climate Center and drop in to say "hi." We appreciate this very much. In just the last few weeks we've had CoCoRaHS friends stop in from New Hampshire, New Mexico, Missouri and Idaho. It was great to see you. We're really not that easy to find, either.

12 eyes

I've had some recent encounters with snakes and racoons -- not all at the same time, fortunately. The 5-foot bull snake mimicking the sound of a rattle snake scared the whiskers off both Lily (our boisterous young Australian shepherd) and me. It was curled up right by the gate to the garden. I like snakes, but I had never seen one quite so large and quite so close to our house. I know now that he/she probably lives under our woodpile and probably helps our cats keep the mouse population under control. But at the same time, I will never bend down to pull weeds or stack wood without at least thinking "Is he there?" It's funny how snakes have that effect.

And then there is the raccoon family. Now I understand why the raccoon got stuck in the chicken coop a few weeks back. She was pregnant, plumping daily, and misjudged her size and got stuck between the wall and the table where we feed the barn cats. She was so close to that dish of cat food but couldn't quite reach it. When I came in and surprised her, she couldn't go forward or backward and I really couldn't help her. Finally, I stepped out for a few seconds, she relaxed a bit, and then gravity did its work and she slid down the back wall and then hustled out and away.

This week --several weeks after the initial incident -- she was back again. I went out to do chores one evening this week later than usual.

As I came around the corner of the chicken coop with my headlamp on, I was greeted by the reflection of not 2 but 12 eyes all looking at me. Immediately there were shrieks of animal surprise and a scurry of fur and masks as one adult and 5 small young raccoons all did a quick but clumsy escape. I don't know that I've ever seen 6 raccoons at the same time -- and never so confused. All I can say is I'll be doing the chores

sooner now and getting the chicken coop closed up at night before the raccoon family comes back. Fortunately the raccoons leave the chickens alone. All they care about is that high protein cat food dispenser up on the table. The mom can't wait to give the young ones a taste. Then we'll all be in trouble.

Keep those reports coming.

I'll be away for a few days -- the annual meeting of the American Association of State Climatologists is next week and then I need to finish some project reports. Please keep your reports coming -- wet or dry. I cannot overstate just how important your data are and how much they are helping weather, water, agriculture and natural resources professionals all across the country.

So far this year, over 15,000 CoCoRaHS volunteers have submitted some data, but we still haven't reached 10,000 reports on any give day. I think we'll do it in September. We'll have another contest then.

Have a great summer, and enjoy the weather, whatever it may be. I'll be back in touch later in the month or in August. I won't be able to check e-mail every day so if you have questions or need to change your station location or e-mail address, please send the question or change to info@cocorahs.org You should get a quick response within a few days.

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