

The Catch

COCORAHS -- READY FOR SNOW ?

FORT COLLINS, CO — Tuesday, November 29, 2011

Dear winter rain gauge managers:

First, a welcome to all of you who are new to CoCoRaHS in the past month or so. A few hundred new CoCoRaHS volunteers have signed up in recent weeks -- with many from states such as South Carolina, Minnesota, Washington, California, Alabama, Texas, New Mexico and elsewhere. Winter is not the easiest time to get started in our volunteer rain gauge program, but it's an important time of year. Thanks very much for signing up to help. We are all happy to have you on our CoCoRaHS rain (and snow) gauge team.

Snow in TN, AR, AL, MS

Did you check the snowfall map for the country this morning? Western Tennessee was the epicenter of a late autumn snow. This is very early in the season to have snow this far south. We saw it coming but didn't have a chance to get a "*Snow Measurement Refresher*" reminder out to before the snow started. Based on the observations and the comments, we could tell that many of you were struggling a bit to figure out what to measure and how to report it.

The latest weather forecasts (www.weather.gov) are now showing more winter storm watches, warnings and advisories for many states. So it's time to buckle down and get ready for winter.

Some help measuring snow?

Snow takes a bit more time, concentration, and assessment than simply reporting the rain in the rain gauge. Each year about this time I send out a message summarizing when, where, and how to measure and report

fresh snowfall, total depth of snow (and ice) on the ground, and water content. I don't have time to do that right now, but I'll get something ready in the next day or two. In the meantime, if you are at all uncertain about how to measure and report snowfall, depth and water content, please refer to our online instructions, training slide show or our video. Or ask your local or state coordinator. Our online training materials can all be accessed from the main CoCoRaHS website: www.cocorahs.org You'll find links to "*Things to know*" and "*Training Slide Shows*" over on the right hand side of the page. You can also scroll down to the "Resources" menu on the left hand side of the homepage. Even if you're a fairly experienced snow observer, it's still worthwhile to take an occasional training refresher.

We had good turnout for our first-ever CoCoRaHS snow training webinar. More training opportunities are now being scheduled and we will soon be posting links to the archived webinars so you can view them at your leisure.

Prepare for more CoCoRaHS e-mails

Apologies for being so quiet lately. It has been several weeks since I last wrote with a CoCoRaHS update. Our daughter and son-in-law have been in town along with our one and only grandchild. We've had a wonderful time together watching him learn to walk, speak a few word-like syllables, and explore the farmstead in the old Radio Flyer wooden wagon. He loves all the animals except the geese. Tomorrow we celebrate his first birthday. Then, weather permitting, they all fly back to France on Thursday where they will be living and working for the foreseeable future (sigh). Wow, will I miss them.

As things settle down here, I'll be sending out several more CoCoRaHS messages in the next few days -- including some exciting news.

Poorly feathered chickens on strike

The neighborhood fox got into the hen house a few weeks ago while I was out of town. Most of our hens survived, (except for the two white hens that always preferred roosting on the ground for some odd reason). The survivors haven't laid a single egg since that incident. With colder temperatures and short days, egg production always falls off this time of year, but we've never (as best I can recall) gone a whole month without a single egg from this many hens. All I can say is that must have been a traumatic experience for our feathered ladies. And our "Watch Geese"

didn't earn their corn either. They didn't make enough noise to alert our dogs or my wife to what was going on. I guess we'll just let the hens rest, rejuvenate and complete their annual molt. If anyone can tell me why they lose their feathers this time of year, I'd sure like to know -- since climatologically it makes little sense.

Giving thanks

Thanksgiving day has come and gone. For some of us it was a great yer, but it's been a hard year for others, and many have endured pain and loss. And yet we have much to be thankful for. While it's trivial compared to many of life's trials, I am so thankful for all of you who were, are or plan to soon be a part of CoCoRaHS. It is a small effort that we make as individuals -- to check a simple plastic rain gauge and report that amount of new precipitation. But together each day we are tracking the arrival of our precious water supplies across our entire huge and beautiful country -- water delivered conveniently from the sky. Thanks indeed, and please keep up the good work.

Sincerely,

Nolan Doesken
Colorado State University