

The Catch



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

CoCoRaHS -- Will Winter Ever End?

FORT COLLINS, CO -- February 19, 2014

Dear rain gauge watchers and caretakers,

Yes, winter will end and sooner than you think. But for now, much of the country remains buried under uncommonly deep snow. With March right around the corner, anything can happen.

I always recall the rhyme this time of year "As the days grow longer, the storms grow stronger".

[Post-Groundhog Day](#)

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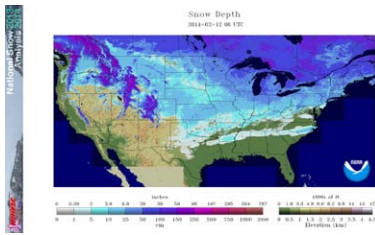
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17 Days After Groundhog Day

I am always amazed at just how much can happen in any 2-3 week period. Since I last wrote, winter has held a particularly strong grip on many parts of the country. Snow has continued to pile up across the



Midwest, Great Lakes, Ohio River Valley and from the Mid Atlantic States to New England. Some parts of New Jersey have had continuous deep snow cover now for nearly one month. The South took another hit with snow and ice last week. 10" of snow fell all the way to the coast of eastern North Carolina. The Rockies were clobbered with snow with several feet in parts of CO and WY. Parts of Washington and Oregon experienced heavy snow and local freezing rain earlier in February. In central Washington State (Chelan and Okanogan counties) heavy snow continues to fall and is now several feet deep.

Drought conditions finally eased a bit as heavy rains arrived in coastal Oregon and northern California. Nearly 70 CoCoRaHS volunteers in northern CA have measured 10" or more of rain since Groundhog Day, with a handful of stations receiving more than 20". Meanwhile in the Southwest from Texas to southern CA the weather has remained dry.

Webinar: What Does a State Climatologist Do?



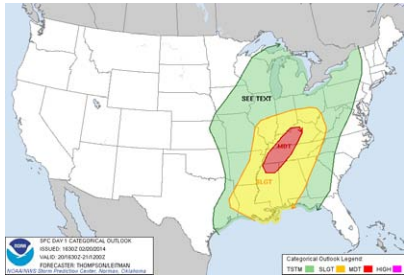
As many of you know, my job title is "State Climatologist" for Colorado. Nearly every state has a State Climate Office -- either at one of the state universities or somewhere in state government. And did you know, these positions have been around for many, many decades -- long before "climate change" was an issue.

I was an unusual kid as I knew about the State Climatologist from my years back in grade school delivering the "Champaign-Urbana News Gazette" in Illinois. Every month there would be at least one news story about the Illinois State Climatologist -- usually describing how wet, dry, hot, cold or stormy it was. I would read those articles with vigor and think "Wow, what a neat job that would be." By the time I went to college I was really interested in climatology, but my academic adviser (who knew jobs in climatology were scarce) recommended I choose a different specialty. I followed his advice but never lost interest. Fortunately, I was one of very few who found work in climatology in the 1970s and I've loved it ever since.

So, with that introduction, our special guest this month for our February WeatherTalk Webinar is Ryan Boyles from North Carolina State University. He will give an energetic presentation on what a State Climatologist does.

The webinar is Thursday, Feb 20. at 1 PM eastern time, noon Central, 11 AM Mountain and 10 AM Pacific. [Click here to register](#) and join the fun! And if you can't make it then, remember that most of our webinars are recorded and [can be viewed later on our YouTube channel](#).

The NWS Storm Prediction Center



Most of us have been paying attention to winter weather, but it's late February now and severe thunderstorms could erupt any day now. In fact, some are forecast east of the Mississippi River already by Thursday. Tornadoes and severe thunderstorms are most common in the southern states this time of year, but as we've learned several times in recent years,

there are exceptions to that rule.

When it comes to severe weather awareness, the best offense is a great defense. The [NWS Storm Prediction Center](#) is there to help -- looking out as far as 8 days in advance to help us be prepared for bad storms.

Please get familiar now with their resources. It's really great stuff.

Tracking Phenology - Plant and Animal Responses to Weather



Many CoCoRaHS volunteers love plants and animals as much as we love weather. If this sounds like you, consider being a plant [phenology](#) tracker. CoCoRaHS

works closely with the [National Phenology Network](#) and we are also good friends of [Project Budburst](#) with the [National Ecological Observatory Network \(NEON\)](#). Please check out these great programs and consider signing up to help track phenology.

A Trace (T) is NOT Zero (0.00)!

Every day we get many reports of 0.00" followed by notes in the comments saying "We had a few drops/flakes but not enough to measure". Remember, if you had a trace - even if it doesn't land in your gauge, report a trace. Replace the 0.00" in the precipitation field by moving your cursor over it and typing in T. That all it takes. Thanks.

Help Wanted - March Madness Starts Next Week



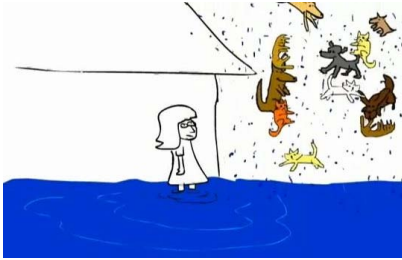
Every year we have a little fun and encourage states to compete against each other to see who can recruit the most new CoCoRaHS volunteers. We keep score in two categories -- the actual number of new recruits and "recruits per capita". Last year Texas won the raw count while Wyoming took the prize for most new volunteers per capita. In all, over 1100 new volunteers were recruited in just one month. With your help, we

could surpass that this year.

We have no idea what states might win here in 2014, but you can contribute. If you know folks who might share our interests in weather and water, ask them to sign up. And if you have friends or family that happen to live in one of the many CoCoRaHS "data voids" please encourage them strongly to sign up. We'll post results each week and on April 1 we'll announce the new winners.

Thanks for helping!!

"Significant Weather Reports"



I know -- I sound like a broken record sometimes. But I just want to encourage people to use the "Significant Weather Report" form to let us know anytime weather is occurring or changing that others may need to know about (high winds, thunderstorms, heavy snows, freezing rain, etc. etc.).

The most common reason I hear for not reporting is "I wasn't sure if it was significant or not" Let me simply say this -- if what you were experiencing seemed significant to you, then please report it!

Farm Story - The Great Orange Goose Caper

Considering all the cold and snow, things have gone pretty well on the farm. We're missing one chicken somewhere along the way, but that happens this time of year when the neighbor fox families get really hungry.

When you have outdoor animal chores to do every morning and evening, you get really familiar with the weather. We've gone from cold snow, to ice, to slush, to mush, to wild Chinook "snow eater" winds, to mud and now, in only a week's time, things are drying up already.

This story took place about 10 days ago when everything was still cold and snowy. We have one hen that for whatever reason insists on flying out of the chicken yard anytime she needs to lay an egg. She will not lay in the laying boxes. She first flies up onto the hen-house roof, then from there she flies over to the barn and lands in the east-facing stall door. Then, if necessary, she runs under one of our horses and scurries into the area between stalls where we keep 5-10 bales of hay for current feeding. She loves to kick around some loose hay, make a fluffy nest, cackle a bit, and then lay her egg there. When she's done, she flies back to the chicken coop and joins her sisters. Odd, indeed.

Well, about 10 days ago, she did her normal thing except that one of our two male geese objected. He wanted his mate to lay her goose egg in the same place. When I arrived there was wild squawking going on and it sounded like the hen was being killed. It wasn't as bad as it sounded, but neither the goose nor the chicken would back down. I tried to intervene but in the process the large goose flailed and ended up hooking his leg through a hole in the orange tarp we use to keep the hay clean. The next thing I knew the goose was flapping, honking and dragging a 10-foot bright-orange tarp into the other horse stall. The two horses there were startled seeing the giant orange goose. Soon they're bucking and braying and running willy-nilly and I had to tuck myself behind a barn door to stay clear. After the horses got out of the way, I chased after the goose, caught the end of the tarp, pulled it and the goose towards me and eventually had the goose upside down securely under my arm where I could extract his large orange webbed foot

from the frayed orange tarp. I let go and he scrambled back to his lady (who had already found another place to lay). This whole episode probably took no more than 2 minutes, but it was pretty funny while it was happening. Sigh. One never knows what the new day will bring.

Thanks very much for being a part of CoCoRaHS.

Sincerely,

Nolan Doesken
Colorado State University

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