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The Catch



NOLAN DOESKEN'S MONTHLY COCORAHHS E-MAIL MESSAGE

CoCoRaHS -- Summer Breeze (or Rain) - Makes Me Feel Fine

Fort Collins, Colorado -- July 24th, 2015

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Hard to believe it, but it's late July already. The profoundly wet weather we had here in Northern Colorado in late spring is now history, but the grass is still green and I've never watered it once. Very nice! I'm OK with letting it turn brown now if the late summer rains don't materialize. I've done plenty mowing already this year.

Summer Vacation and CoCoRaHS Highlights

Many of you still have summer vacations ahead, but ours is over. Our trip to Michigan was fantastic – with all of our immediate family gathering plus a few of my cousins and their families and a few Upper Peninsula friends we've made. The 4th of July was particularly memorable in a small-town way – a simple parade, flags everywhere, immense amounts of candy, old-fashioned games (wheel barrow and gunny sack races, egg tosses, etc.), arts and crafts, huge family picnics, games of croquet, boat rides, and culminating with fireworks over the water. Having our 4-year old grandson with us made everything a bit "funner" (if that's a word). The weather was perfect, too, except the sun set an hour early into a sky of orange haze. I first thought it was summer haze escaped from the Midwest to the northern Great Lakes but later realized it was smoke from very distant Canadian wildfires. Nevertheless, it was a fine day for our family and many others. I set up my secondary CoCoRaHS rain gauge at the family cabin – but it barely rained the entire time we were there and I only needed to bail out the old wooden row

boat once.

Then, all too soon, it was time to say goodbye to the UP and begin the long 1400+ mile drive home. It was very nice across WI but increasingly hot and humid as we journeyed west over Iowa and Nebraska before drying out again, and then back to reality in Colorado. I'm now hopelessly behind at work but relaxed and ready for another fiscal year (ours start in July).

Storms where? Yes, southern CA! - and Other Highlights

As is typical for summer, every day heavy rains fall somewhere and dry weather is present somewhere else. All we need to do is look at the [CoCoRaHS national precipitation map](#) each day to get the picture (thanks to all of us and our rain gauges). The maps have been particularly speckled lately – wet spots and dry spots often very close together. The recent rains and flooding over southern California, thanks to remnants from Pacific Hurricane Dolores, reached farther north than usual and broke up the normal "zero" monotony of mid summer in CA.

Here are a few more CoCoRaHS highlights since I last wrote in June:

Much of Washington and Oregon have received no precipitation since early June. Parts of Texas have had no rain so far in July. Meanwhile, dozens of locations in Indiana, Kentucky and Missouri have gotten more than 20" of rain since June 10 with may more locations in Arkansas, Oklahoma, Illinois, Tennessee and nearby states exceeding 15" for the same period.

Some individual daily highlights included:

- more than 8" in 24 hours at a few stations in Texas and Oklahoma June 17-18
- over 7" in St. Croix County, WI on July 6
- 7"+ in NW Missouri July 16-17
- 6.12" in SW Carbon County, PA on July 1

Plus hundreds of other interesting and sometimes very serious local intense rains exceeding 4-5" inches.

Have you Noticed Canada?

Our neighbors to the north are adding new CoCoRaHS rain gauges left and right. Southern Ontario is well represented now, and the Red River valley (up to Winnipeg) is densely sampled. The Saskatchewan prairie is filling in with CoCoRaHS dots. Now it's Alberta's turn to grow and if you look far to the north, there is one loyal observer reporting year round from Yellow Knife. And for those of you who enjoy French, we will soon have a French version of our data entry app so that Quebec can join the team. (Spanish will be here soon, too).

Some CoCoRaHS Musical Creativity

We've had about 4 entries so far in our effort to find a CoCoRaHS theme song. We'll continue to accept ideas until we get the perfect song (or enough that we can vote on them -- or have an entire CoCoRaHS album :) .)

Endless Reminder - Please Submit Hail and Significant Weather (Heavy Precip) Reports

I don't mean to nag. But your reports of hail and heavy rain (and snow, and other heavy weather) really matter to us and the National Weather Service. If you have any

questions about when and how to submit this type of info, please write to info@cocorahs.org, or refer to our [training materials](#) or [animations](#). There is currently a [research project](#) taking place on the high plains that is requesting hail pads for every storm until mid August (observers in this target area have already received direct messages from me with more details).

Is it Possible to Be (and Stay) Excited About Reporting No Precipitation?

On any given day, some of us find rain in our gauges but most of us don't. It is hard to stay excited about reporting no precipitation – and I understand that. But when you see the data from our side of the fence, you quickly see why zero reports are so important. Where the CoCoRaHS maps are totally blank we simply don't know if it rained or not unless someone reports "Zero". Those zeros add greatly to the accuracy of our maps and their utility as a data resource to others. And, if you're in a place where the storms seem to split and go around you, we'll never know that unless we get the zero reports. We make it as easy as possible by inserting a default zero on your data entry form – so all you have to do is click on "[my Data](#)" and then hit "submit." Or you can use the "[Monthly Zeros](#)" report each week or at the end of each month to fill in the zero values by checking each dry day on the calendar.

And for all of you who report regularly, rain or shine – thanks a ton!!

Do you Know Dew? and Dew Point?

We received some questions from volunteers concerning our recent "Message of the Day" about dew point. The public seems to talk more in terms of relative humidity, but meteorologists (and heating and air conditioning engineers) pay more attention to the dew point and the wet bulb temperature. This is not the time for a long explanation, but [here is a link](#) to some simplified definitions. You may want to look up "dew point temperature" in a meteorological text book if you want to dig deeper. But simply said, the dew point is a great indicator of how much water is in the air. Here in Colorado a 60F degree dew point means look out for big storms, while in the SE states that would be a very comfortably dry day. Once the dew point gets up to 70F (and your glass of ice water is leaving a lake of water on the table from condensation, then that's plenty moist. With all the heavy rains this summer across the Midwest we've had some whopper dew points in the upper 70s and even approaching 80F. While the temperatures were "only" in the upper 80s to mid 90s, that was still a miserably uncomfortable sweaty heatwave.

Late Summer Reading Suggestions

I hate to admit this, but between my job, our little farm, our family and CoCoRaHS, I only get through about one book a year of leisure reading. I'm currently reading about John Wesley Powell and the Colorado River. But several new books have shown up on my bedside table – waiting for some attention.

- RAIN: A Natural and Cultural History. By Cynthia Barnett, 2015, Crown Publishing.
- The Weather Experiment. By Peter Moore, 2015, Penguin Random House UK.
- Storm Kings. By Lee Sandlin, 2013, Pantheon.

Thanks for those of you who brought these to my attention, and if you read (or have read) them, let me know what you think. (P.S. One of these books even mentions CoCoRaHS and has been responsible for some recent new recruits.)

Farm Story - Raccoons and Runaways

I am happy to report that our animals are all OK. We have a great house sitter (CSU veterinarian student who loves animals) and she made sure we came back from our vacation to find everything in better shape than we left it. Our old Arabian mare is having a great year carrying a neighborhood youngster to several 4-H blue ribbons in horsemanship (and is about to head off to county fair). Despite efforts to raise (to at least 6 feet) our yard fences, our smaller Aussie continues to get out of the yard but has not run far and has spent relatively little time playing in traffic. Our current challenge is raccoons. We had been raccoon-free for the past couple of years, but that all changed recently. The other evening we found two adults and 5 juveniles looking down on us from the tree and roof of our chicken coop. The adults growled while the kids all cried and whimpered as we kept the dogs away. Raccoons are no asset, for sure, but they are so cute – which leaves us with a dilemma

Thanks for all your help!

Please know, your efforts now and/or in the past to help measure and report local rainfall are greatly appreciated. Also, the efforts many of you have made to show CoCoRaHS to others (friends, family, coworkers etc.) has helped recruit a few thousand additional observers. That's huge! We've still got plenty of gaps on our national CoCoRaHS maps, but let's keep plugging along and fill them up.

Have a great rest of your summer.

Sincerely,

Nolan Doesken and the CoCoRaHS team
NOAA's Weather Ready Nation Ambassador Program
Colorado State University

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