

December Weather Wrap

By Bill Kappel

December turned out to be about normal after all the numbers were added up, but of course the path to get there was anything but normal. We had some wild swings of weather and some late-month record cold. Fortunately, we also received a good amount of moisture, with the month ending with above normal precipitation.

Unfortunately, the year overall was much drier than normal, with only 15.26 inches of total precipitation recorded for the year. This was about 30% less than normal. Temperatures for the year were slightly below normal with a yearly average of 40.0F with our last freeze of spring occurring on June 1 and the first freeze of the season on Oct. 8. We also managed to hit 90 on a couple occasions, with one day in September, five days in July, and two days in June touching 90 or above.

Of course, as always around the Palmer Divide, we witnessed quite a variety of conditions, sometimes all in one day. April was a record dry month that could have led to some extreme fire conditions had we not been helped by Mother Nature in May with a heavy wet snowfall. Summer and fall were both fairly close to normal for both precipitation and temperature. But December did provide some excitement.

December started off quiet and dry, with no measurable precipitation from the 1st through the 11th. We did manage to squeeze out some flurries just before noon on the 6th, but that was it for that period. Temperatures were consistently 5-10 degrees warmer than normal as well to start the month.

But the pattern started to change with a cold front moving through late on the 12th. Snow and blowing snow filled in behind this system, with periods of snow and blowing snow continuing into the next afternoon. Most of us picked up 2-6 inches of snow during this initial storm. A second surge of cold air and light snow moved in during the afternoon of the 15th, bringing another round of snow through that evening with another 2-4 inches accumulating. Temperatures dipped well below normal for the period from the

13th through the 17th. Temperatures stayed below freezing during this entire period, which is certainly unusual for us as we generally can break out of the cold for at least a day or two between storms. It was also chilly each morning with lows right around zero each day.

Quiet conditions then returned for a few days as we set the stage for a major Arctic air outbreak that affected most of the country. The first signs of this surge of cold air started on Dec. 18 in the Pacific Northwest, where snow accumulated down to sea level and temperatures dipped to the single digits around Seattle and Portland. Cold air quickly moved into the northern Rockies and upper Midwest, with temperatures tumbling well below zero. The cold air continued to race toward Colorado, with temperatures falling 30-40 degrees in less than an hour as the front moved through parts of Montana, South Dakota, and Wyoming. The cold front reached the Colorado border during the morning of the 21st and pushed over the Palmer Divide early that evening. Temperatures took a sharp drop behind the front with Denver recording a 37-degree drop in 10 minutes. Temperatures were below zero by that evening and stayed below zero through the evening of the 23rd. During this time, temperatures reached -20F to -25F for most locations and high temperatures on the 22nd failed to get above zero. Snow fell with the front, with 2-4 inches of wind-blown snow accumulating.

Another interesting aspect of this cold air outbreak was the relatively shallow depth of the cold air, as most locations above 9,000 feet stayed above the cold with temperatures that were 30-40 degrees warmer than the surrounding lower regions. As the cold air continued to push off to the east over the next few days, we warmed up nicely. This was evidenced on the Palmer Divide when temperatures rose during the evening of the 23rd from just below zero to the freezing mark by midnight, the exact opposite of what would normally happen.

Mild air stuck around through Christmas before a final storm system moved through the end the year.

This storm was of Pacific origins and therefore continued relatively mild temperatures. However, the warmer airmass was also able to hold more moisture, and this produced a snowfall event that was much more similar to a spring storm than a winter storm. This storm produced a quick 8-12 inches of snow from the late afternoon of the 28th through the morning of the 29th. Beautiful Colorado blue skies and cool temperatures stuck around for the last few days of the month, allowing us to enjoy the fresh snowfall.

A look ahead

January can see the coldest temperatures of the year, but there is often a proverbial "January thaw" where mild temperatures make brief appearances. Of course, that's been the case all winter so far, so hopefully this January will see a shift in the overall pattern to cold and snowy conditions. Unfortunately, precipitation is usually on the low side, with amounts generally less than an inch. The month produces numerous sunny and windy days with quick shots of snow in between.

December 2022 Weather Statistics

Average High	41.0° (+2.7°)
100-year return frequency value max	50.5° min 32.6°
Average Low	13.0° (-0.3°)
100-year return frequency value max	22.4° min 5.4°
Monthly Precipitation	1.09" (+0.08", 8% above normal)
100-year return frequency value max	2.82" min 0.00"
Monthly Snowfall	19.4" (+1.7", 8% above normal)
Highest Temperature	58° on the 27th
Lowest Temperature	-20° on the 22nd
Season to Date Snow	32.6" (-6.9") <i>(the snow season is from Oct 1 to Sept 30)</i>
Season to Date Precip.	15.26" (-7.03") <i>(the precipitation season, Jan 1 to Dec 31) 22.29</i>
Heating Degree Days	1227 (-58)
Cooling Degree Days	0 (0)

Bill Kappel is a meteorologist and Tri-Lakes resident.
He can be reached at billkappel@ocn.me.

Letters to Our Community

Guidelines for letters are on page 31.

Disclaimer: The information and opinions expressed in Letters to Our Community are the responsibility of the letter writers and should not be interpreted as the views of OCN even if the letter writer is an OCN volunteer. The letters are in order by the author's last name.

Monument historic red barn gets a new home

In reference to the pictures and caption about the Sibells' barn that read "Historic Barn Razed" (OCN, December 3, 2022, page 28), I thought I would share the correct story of what happened to it and the horse picture.

The good news is the barn was donated to a military vet moving back to eastern Colorado who purchased property with no buildings on it and is wanting to start ranching. The barn was methodically and carefully dismantled to be reassembled in its new location, helping out a young family looking for a new start. Many local options were explored, including putting it up at a town park. Unfortunately, the cost to move it and place in a new location, following all building codes, rules, and regulations, was extremely high.

The painting of Baron the horse that hung on the barn was fittingly given to a Sibell family friend.

I wanted to inform readers of the very positive outcome that honors the history of the barn and to let them know it was in fact, not razed.

Terri Hayes

Trail rebuild—thank you

Forestry work was conducted north of the Palmer Lake reservoirs during October and November. Due to the heavy machinery involved, several hiking trails were pretty much demolished. After the machinery demobilized in mid-November, several groups of concerned citizens went into the forest and rebuilt the damaged trails. To these volunteers: Thank you for your hard work and con-

tributions to the community. Your efforts are one of the many reasons the Tri-Lakes region is such a wonderful place to live.

Stuart Klein

The County Master Plan is a sham

The recent Flying Horse North approval shows the El Paso County Master Plan does not apply to developers or our elected officials. This vital plan took two years to produce and cost us nearly a million dollars. Its purpose is to promote responsible growth while maintaining quality of life. However, when put to the test it failed. This developer brazenly disregarded guidance for the Black Forest with the confidence that the commissioners would support anything they want. And that is exactly what they did. The request made it past the Planning Commission and was enthusiastically approved by our Board of County Commissioners. Their vote is against the very Master Plan they so unanimously approved and promised to uphold. Their dereliction conveniently allows this developer to insert an approximate 4,000-person community, with a large hotel complex, directly into the cherished

Black Forest enclave renowned for its wildlife and open spaces.

The process revealed an intimate developer/commissioner relationship and an unfortunate disrespect for the impacted citizens: first, several commissioners proclaimed an owner can do whatever they want with their land, making a mockery of zoning and the master plan itself; second, the Planning Commission and Board of County Commissioners crafted their meeting agendas to help the developer by scheduling the topic at the very end to weed out constituents' voices; and third, at each proceeding, the board chairmen graciously gave the developer unlimited time to argue their position while admonishing the citizens to keep their opposing comments short. Enough is enough, our leaders just gave developers the precedence they need to exploit our county's pristine countryside, irrespective of official guidelines and public concerns. Our officials must cease their love for developers and start supporting the citizens they serve and the plan they approved.

Chris Sorenson.

Between the Covers at Covered Treasures Bookstore

Get cooking in the new year

By the staff at Covered Treasures

"I love to take something ordinary and make it really special."—Ina Garten

The new year is a wonderful time to get cooking whether it's on your own or with kids. Here are some splendid places to start.

Kid Chef Junior Every Day: My First Easy Kids' Cookbook

By Yaffi Lvova (Rockridge) \$19.99

The fun and easy everyday cookbook for kids ages 4 to 8. Help kids develop their cooking expertise as

they make tasty, wholesome meals the whole family can share. By helping cook their own meals, they'll learn essential skills and get excited to try new foods. This book covers safety practices and skills, filling ravioli, kneading dough, and tips and tricks to customize recipes.

