

(November 2016)

Rain, Rain and More Rain

by Graham Brazier

As I write, on October 21, rain pounds the island. No wind; just pounding rain. Earlier in the month, vigorous and threatening winds from all directions accompanied days of relentless pounding rain, but today we are spared the wind; it's simply raining.

It's hard to think about camping on Denman at this moment. Though I've set out to write a sequel to my September piece on camping on Denman Island in the 1860s, I can't seem to get past the feeling that October has skipped by us and we've gone straight to November, which I always think of as the wettest month of the year.

Historical weather statistics call to me and, as the rain continues, I click on Environment Canada's website for the Comox airport - our nearest official weather station. It confirms my suspicion. Over the course of the last few decades, rainfall in November has exceeded that for October by a significant margin (on average: 200.2mm for November to 122.8mm for October). It seems safe to conclude that, usually, November is a wetter month than October.

The website however also reveals data that suggests that this may not be a 'usual' year. As of October 20 of this year, we've had only three rainless days this month. On the other seventeen days we've accumulated more rain than usually falls on us throughout the whole month of either October or November. 257.4 mm have been measured at the Comox weather station so far this month. This far exceeds the averages for October and November recorded since 1944 when record keeping began at the Comox station. And, in fact, higher rainfall figures have been recorded on only 4 of the last 72 Octobers and 12 the last 72 Novembers.

Which means that, if we have no more rain in the next ten days, October, 2016 will be the fourth wettest in the seventy-two years records have been kept. On the other hand, if what is falling as I write, together with that yet to fall in the next ten days amounts to a mere 14.5 mm, October 2016 will become the wettest on record. November's record of 380.1 mm. in 1983 seems safe....though we've still got ten more days to have a go at it.

Historical weather records also indicate that, in our part of the world, October is a month of great variation. Just three years ago in 2013 we had a total of 15 mm. of rain for the whole month. This year we exceeded that month's total on seven different individual days. In contrast, if we go back to October 21, 1989 we find that not a drop of rain had fallen to that point in the whole month. What this seems to suggest is that any number between 0 and 257.4 should not be ruled out as a reasonable prediction for the amount of rain likely to fall in the first 20 days of October 2017.

Perhaps I'll be able to get back to thinking about camping on Denman Island once November ends and October gets underway.

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For further reading see: https://weather.gc.ca/city/pages/bc-61_metric_e.html