

April on Denman Island: What can we expect?

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Must we accept T. S. Eliot's pronouncement that "April is the cruellest month..."? Or, might we embrace Shakespeare's assessment that "April hath put a spirit of youth in everything"? Or how about Christopher Morley's conclusion that "April prepares her green traffic light and the world thinks go"?

However we chose to enter April, Mark Twain believes we should be prepared to experience "one hundred and thirty-six different kinds of weather inside of four and twenty hours."

Comedic exaggerations aside, variety and volatility are certainly evident in the last 75 Aprils documented at the Comox Airport weather station. Cruelly, perhaps, snow, yes that's right; 'snow' has been recorded in 32, or almost half, of those Aprils. More happily, however, it was only in measurable amounts in 11 of those years. Astonishingly, the heaviest April snowfall ever recorded was not even in the first half of the month. It was on April 27 in 1962 that 15.2 millimetres (more than 1/2 an inch) fell at the Comox Airport - our closest Environment Canada official weather station. In fact it was back in the 1960's that more than half the measurable snowfall recorded in all 75 Aprils fell; that is, of 51.6 millimetres of snow that has fallen in all the Aprils on record, 24.4 millimetres fell during the years of the 1960s. Oh those '60's so noteworthy for so many reasons, who would ever have thought that snow in April would be another reason to remember those years? Happily, the most recent measurable April snowfall was slightly more than 10 years ago, when a mere 1 millimetre was recorded on April Fool's Day in 2009. Could it be that, as the climate changes, snow in April will be a thing of the past?

Not surprisingly, temperatures have also been known to be volatile in April. Way back in 1951 freezing temperatures frustrated gardeners for six consecutive nights between April 19 and 24 with a record setting and, dare I say, cruel, -4.4°C recorded on the 20th. Offsetting this cruelty, many years later, in 1998, April ended with a temperature (unsurpassed until the

last day of June of that year) of 26.8°C or 31.2 degrees warmer than that recorded in 1951. Cruel?

But, of course, it can't be denied that "April showers bring May flowers". In that case, May of 2003 must have been a very good month for flowers as it rained on 25 of 30 days in the preceding month.

In the end, however, as we enter April 2020, we may find it difficult to challenge T. S. Eliot's proclamation.

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Part 2 of a brief history of Morrison Marsh, offered in January's issue of *The Flagstone* will resume when it is once again safe to visit various government offices and public archives.