

Anticipating November's Weather

by Graham Brazier

“We can never know about the days to come
But we think about them anyway”

wrote Carly Simon in 1971*. They are the opening lines to her hit song “Anticipation”. Some may remember it better as: “Anticipa-ay-tion”.

She went on to concede: “I'm no prophet, I don't know nature's ways”.

So, in trying to anticipate “nature's ways” and November's weather for this place, it seems that we may benefit by looking at past Novembers, where, not surprisingly, we will surely find an abundance of precipitation, or, if you like: precipita-ay-tion.

Just how much and in what form will it be? Rain or snow? Perhaps the weather data collected and recorded at Comox airport over the past 75 Novembers will offer some clues. Between November 1, 1944 and November 30, 2018 we have fairly detailed weather data for 2,250 days in November. A meticulous review of that data reveals that precipitation was recorded on 73% or 1,641 of those days. Put another way, if the past is a reliable indicator, we can anticipate roughly 7 or 8 days in November without any precipitation at all. It seems that the best we can hope for was recorded in both 1952 and 2014 when slightly more than half the days of November were precipitation free. Furthermore, in both those years, 10 consecutive days without rain or snow were also recorded. That, it seems, is the driest, and in some peoples' view, the best we can anticipate for November 2019. Rain or snow on only half the days in November....whoopee!

On the other hand, if we look forward to restoring ground water levels we may celebrate the five occasions (2016, 2009, 1998, 1988, and 1955) when precipitation was recorded on 28 of the 30 days in November. That is, only two November days were precipitation-free in those five years. In 2016, for example, we experienced the wettest November in 75 years when a total of 388.6 mm. of rain was dumped on us. Only November 9 and 28 were rain-free. So, as there has never been a rain-free November, it seems

that we can safely anticipate some rain. How much, of course, is another question. A safe bet would be that it will fall somewhere between the smallest amount recorded and the largest amount recorded. That would be somewhere between 55.7 mm. recorded in 1957 and the downpour of 388.6 mm. of 2016. Even the minimum recorded in 1957 works out to be almost 2 mm. per day while the maximum clocks in at a generous 13mm of precipitation per day.

It must be noted, however, that snowfalls in November have not been uncommon. Most Novembers, in fact almost 60% of those between 1944 and 2018 (44 of 75) delivered some snow. The most severe was not so long ago, when a five day snowfall in November of 2006 dumped 65.4 cms. on this place. On two occasions in the past, snow fell on 12 consecutive days in November; one in 1985 and the other way back in 1955. More recently, however, we experienced five consecutive snow-free Novembers between 2012 and 2016. While there seems to be a trend toward more snow-free November days there has also been a discernible trend to increased overall precipitation in November since 1944. In the first three decades that records were kept at the Comox airport the average precipitation for November was 186 mm while in the subsequent five decades the average precipitation for November has climbed to 197 mm. representing an almost 6% increase. Evidence of climate change in our own backyard?

However, average temperatures over the past 75 Novembers offer no clear confirmation of this trend but they do provide evidence that November is a transition month where we are neither in summer nor winter, but somewhere in between and consequently there is an astonishing range of temperatures recorded in Novembers over the course of the past 75 years. From the coldest of -13.3 on November 27, 1985 to the warmest of 17.2 on November 5, 1975 is a range of 30.5 degrees — a temperature range unimaginable in either summer or winter.

So, what does all this tell us about what we can anticipate for November 2019? Precipitation for sure! Nothing less than an average of 2mm per day for the month as a whole though it's more likely that it will be twice or even 3 times that amount. Although, if recent trends continue we may get by snow-free. But regardless of what might or might not be, perhaps the act of

anticipation is, in itself, reason enough to conclude, as a youthful and vigorous Carly Simon did in 1971, that “These are the good old days.”

*<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4NwP3wes4M8>