

No-Show-Snow

By Judy Colbert

Late January and early February produced a tornado of weather-related news stories, from the snow drought to a variety of the groundhog's (and other animals) predictions. Real life also destroyed several old wives' tales, including the one about winter thunder meaning imminent snowfall. At least we had something to discuss other than taxes, and the children didn't have to hear about how we (or our grandparents) trudged through six feet of snow uphill both ways to attend school.

A snow drought is any extended length of winter time when we don't have a measurable (1/10th of an inch) amount of snowfall. It can be described as either **dry or warm**, depending on whether the drought is a result of below-normal cold-season precipitation (dry) or a lack of snow accumulation despite typical amounts of precipitation, usually as a result of warm temperatures that cause precipitation to fall as rain rather than snow.

In 2022-2023, when we received that 1/10" on February 1, we had gone 325 days without snow. It was the third-latest first snow event for the area since the National Weather Service started keeping track in the 1800s. The area's latest first snow occurred on Feb. 21, 1973. During the winters of 1972-73 and 1997-98, only 0.1 of an inch of snow was measured.

Tom Kines, senior meteorologist for AccuWeather, says "There hasn't been a lot of snow to talk about this year, but it's not the first time we've gone through January and December with a snow drought. Storms haven't disappeared. If you go back to last year, we had an 8-9" snow storm. We've had the cold and we've had the precipitation, just not at the same time. The big thing is if March temperatures are below temp, then true spring will be delayed. Any vegetation—plants/shrubs or trees that try to blossom in March, say dogwoods—will be delayed. It's something to watch."

The problem arises when there's too much rain that drains quickly and dilutes the Bay's salinity, or too little rain that increases the salinity. The result disturbs this year's fisheries yield, and maybe into the future.

Don't give up hope for snow, though. It was a little late for an April Fool's Day joke, but a spring Nor'easter hit the area on April 3, 1915, dumping 15" of snow for the biggest late-season storm on record. According to the National Weather Service,

we typically have about a foot or so per year, but, usually in dribs and drabs. Stan Ruddle, whose photography graces the covers of *Kent Island Neighbors*, remembers, "There was a blizzard six weeks after we moved here in 1985. And I wrecked a car on the only curve in a road on Kent Island." Locals recall another massive storm that fell Jan 22-23, 2016. Then, there were the "Snowmageddon" or "Snowpocalypse" storms that dumped snow on the area on February 5-6 and again on February 9-10 in 2010 that was measured in feet, not inches. Four feet plus of the heavy white stuff stopped everything for more than a week.

Jack Broderick, president, Linda Moore, interim treasurer, and Nancy Cook, of the Kent Island Heritage Society, have different views of the no-show-snow. The ladies are thrilled they don't have to cancel and reschedule meetings. Cook says, without snow, "We don't have the treacherous driving. I'm hoping for some snow, though." She remembers a storm in February of 1977. "We couldn't move around here. We don't need a couple of feet."

On the other hand, Broderick, an outdoorsman, bemoans the lack of lower temperatures. The waterfowl season ended on January 31 and the ducks, particularly his favorite the canvasback, had not migrated this far south yet. "We see literally thousands normally and my son and I usually end up with 20-30 ducks with a two-duck-a-day limit."

According to the *Farmers Almanac*, don't put your winter duds away. Snow is predicted for the week of March 8 through 12. Temperatures are expected to be below normal in April, finally changing to above normal rain and temperatures for May.

Broderick is concerned that the weather change will mean more Lyme ticks, thus more Lyme disease. And more of a need for Dr. Paul Beals, the Lyme expert. "The Society was planning for its fall annual picnic last year. One member had been out on the property and came back with ten bites. We contacted an exterminator and decided we didn't want the drastic treatment he suggested. We canceled the picnic."

Judy Colbert is the author of It Happened in Maryland and It Happened in Delaware, books that explain 25 things that happened in each state that changed state or national history. Published by Globe Pequot.

Trivia Tidbits MARCH

- 1. Until the early 19th century, Kent Island was used almost entirely for these three things.
- 2. In colonial times the Kent Narrows was known as the _____.
- 3. Who is the president of the Kent Island Heritage Society?
- 4. In American folklore, _____ is a sea monster said to live amid the Chesapeake Bay.
- 5. What did the Matapeakes called Kent Island _____.

Answers in the next edition!