

Book Review

Title: Skywatch: The Western Weather Guide

by: Richard A. Keen, Ph.D.

Publisher: Fulcrum, Incorporated; Golden Colorado.

Copyright: 1987

QC984,W38K44 1987 551,6978 87-11871

ISBN 1-55591-019-X

Bibliography, index, and appendices with tables; 158 pages.

Price: \$13.95

Soft cover bound.

Keen's *Skywatch, The Western Weather Guide*, colorfully depicts the numerous vagaries of the weather which concern those who live near to and west of the 100th meridian within the United States. The book treats the subject of western weather in fourteen chapters; included in the topics are fronts, jets, cyclones, water supplies, snow and rain, thunderstorms, tornadoes, twisters, hurricanes, whirlwinds, dust devils, the Washoe Zephyrs, El Niño, climate change, and the hobby of weather watching and recording of the same. At the conclusion of each chapter is a list of dates and places where certain records were made or broken; these records pertain to the same weather phenomena which were discussed in the particular chapter completed.

First, the origin of the earth's weather is described; contrasts and comparisons were made with conditions existing on the surfaces of other planets in our solar system. Keen then introduces various concepts of meteorology, starting with fronts and progressing to less known topics, some of which the reviewer was not even aware! Take for example the Washoe Zephyr; this is a type of dynamic wind storm which frequently occurs east of the high mountain chain; this "zephyr" occasionally contains sufficient wind velocities so that buildings and trees are damaged. This Washoe Zephyr is not that same mild breeze which may cool your face on a hot summer's day! Many additional meso-scale features are examined, including chinooks, mountain waves, whirlwinds, lee eddies, dust devils, Santa Ana winds, sea breezes, mountain-valley winds, and inversions. In addition, the physics of precipitation processes are discussed and illustrated with beautiful photographs.

Skywatch, in fact, encompasses practically all the concepts a "western" observer should know when he or she is studying the local weather and recording it. The book is well illustrated with excellent black-white and full-color photographs, diagrams, and maps. These illustrations depict particularly unique and fascinating phenomena; some of these are as follows: the characteristics and violence of a typical "western" thunderstorm, localized cold front weather conditions in the mountains, desert wind storms, small-scale "man-made" weather, hailstorm's aftermath, rare and

destructive aspects of lightning, cloud classifications, tornadoes and twisters, whirlwinds and dust devils, hurricanes, floods, mountain waves, climate changes, and of course, the benign rainbow!

At the conclusion of the book, Keen presents a key to weather map definitions which illustrate the station model, an extensive bibliography for further reading and research, climate data for principal western cities, wind velocity and tornado intensity scales, and complete instructions for the building of a thermometer shelter. A serious weather observer or hobbyist, after completing this book, will be well equipped to commence the art and science of weather observing.

Skywatch is well written; Keen's style is concise, accurate, easy going, and at times, humorous. The book is free from typographical errors, and the science is valid. Credit is given to all sources. In the reviewer's opinion, the book will be an excellent asset to the library of any weather observer or hobbyist, whether he or she is a beginner, an experienced watcher, "western," or even "eastern"!

Merlin W. Zook
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SKYWATCH THE WESTERN WEATHER GUIDE



RICHARD A. KEEN

"... you can't go wrong acquiring this new book. It is a clear, easy-to-comprehend, authoritative explanation of Western weather and the weather of the whole world." —Walter Orr Roberts
Boulder Daily Camera

"SKYWATCH is delightful, intriguing and informative. Richard Keen's style is easy, open and, most important, accessible. While the book is full of anecdotes and humor—a truly personable and enjoyable work—it is also serious to the core, chock full of valuable information. Read this book for the fun of it, for the adventure."

—John Nichols, author of
The Milagro Beanfield War
and *A Fragile Beauty*

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SKYWATCH

The Western Weather Guide

Richard A. Keen, Ph.D.


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