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Review of *Weather Extremes of the West* By Tye W. Parzybok

John Nielsen-Gammon
Texas A&M University

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Weather Extremes of the West. By Tye W. Parzybok. Missoula, MT: Mountain Press Publishing Company, 2005. ix + 281 pp. Maps, photographs, tables, references, glossary, index. \$24.00 paper.

Some books can serve multiple purposes. *Weather Extremes of the West* is one of them— well suited for use as a resource for middle school and high school students, as a good read for any self-proclaimed weather nut or person fascinated by the weather, and as a bathroom book fit for sporadic bursts of reading spread out over several months.

The title is a bit of a misnomer, since the book covers typical weather and climatic conditions as well as the more exciting unusual events. Tye Parzybok divides the West into thirteen climatic regions, discussing each in turn. The Great Plains merits three regions and about 30% of the book's content. While its geographical range nominally extends only as far east as the 100th meridian, real weather doesn't stop there, and anyone from eastern North Dakota to eastern Oklahoma will also find the book to have local value.

Each chapter begins with a discussion of a region's typical temperature and precipitation over the course of the year, and then discusses four to eight weather phenomena of particular local relevance. For the Great Plains, the list ranges from blizzards, tornadoes, floods, and hail to heat bursts, chinook winds, and temperature "flip-flops." A scientific explanation of each phenomenon is accompanied by descriptions and lists of the most significant of these weather events. The explanations are tolerable for the general public, but frequent minor errors will annoy meteorologists.

The author has included all the events I was hoping to find, from the Big Thompson and Rapid City floods to the 100-plus degree temperature changes in 24 hours observed in Montana in 1916 and 1972. Also included

are interesting bits of weather trivia, useful for those who like to boast that their weather is worse than anywhere else. For example, we learn that the coldest winter ever recorded in the lower 48 states was at Langdon, North Dakota, in 1936-37, when the average temperature for the whole season was -8.4°F . Most descriptions are accompanied by full-color photos and helpful diagrams, making this a pleasant book to read.

Weather Extremes of the West also includes a useful glossary and lists of books, journal articles, and Web sites. The volume also contains an introductory chapter describing the territory as a whole and providing a concise introduction to the forces that drive the weather. This suggests yet another use for the book: as a basic introduction to weather for the casual reader, told in a factual and event-based manner. **John W. Nielsen-Gammon**, *Department of Atmospheric Sciences, Texas A&M University*.