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A season to remember

By **MATT JOYCE SPECIAL TO THE GAZETTE**

The cool and wet weather that graced Colorado Springs this summer and prompted endless water-cooler conversations deserved the attention — it made history.

This summer was the coolest on record for Colorado Springs, as temperatures for June, July and August averaged 64.8 degrees, according to the National Weather Service.

Rainfall in the city during the same period totaled 14.98 inches, making this summer the second-wettest on record. The wettest was 1965, when 16.85 inches fell.

Meteorologists attributed the respite from the heat and dust of recent summers to cool air pushed down from Canada and monsoonal flows that brought rain from the Pacific Ocean.

This summer was cool enough to tie the June record low of 33 degrees and the August record low of 35 degrees, said Skip Evans, a meteorologist at the Air Force Academy.

The summer was so rainy that more than 4 inches of rain fell in July, compared with a historical average of 2.4 inches, he said.

This summer's weather, however, does not signal the end of the drought that has plagued the Front Range since 2000, said Eric Peterson, a weather service meteorologist.

"The summer really helps, but the key is going to be getting heavier-than-normal snowfalls in the mountains over the next winter," he said. "That's what we need to really end the drought."

Colorado Springs Utilities spokesman Steve Berry said the city's water system remains at 64 percent of capacity; 84 percent is normal capacity level for this time of year.

The above-average rainfall relieved the strain on the the city's water supplies because residents didn't need to water lawns as much, Berry said. More than 50 percent of the city's water usage is for outdoor watering.

Peterson said he expects a cool front to move in today, bringing temperatures in the 60s and 70s for the Labor Day weekend and possible rain showers and thunderstorms Saturday.

A wet weekend could disrupt the Colorado Balloon Classic, which attracts dozens of balloons and tens of thousands of spectators to Memorial Park. Last year, the balloons were grounded for all three days because of the weather.

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