

Winter Pays a Visit During May

By Don Sutherland

Just after 1 am on May 9, the cold rain that had been falling throughout much of the night turned into a burst of snow. The snow, carried by an increasingly stiff wind, seemed to fly in all directions. The snow ended shortly thereafter, but the temperature continued to fall.

The temperature bottomed out at 34° in New York City's Central Park. That surpassed the previous daily record of 35°, which was set in 1947. It was also the coldest temperature New York City experienced in May since the thermometer hit 32° way back on May 6, 1891. The trace of snow that fell tied the record for New York City's latest snowfall since modern record-keeping began in 1869. The record was set on May 9, 1977 when a trace of snow also fell.

At 5:51 am, New York City's wind chill reached 25°. At nearby White Plains, where the temperature fell to a May record-tying 32°, the wind chill reached 19° at 4:56 am.

The morning was mainly sunny but windy. Most of the people on the line to go grocery shopping at my local Trader Joe's were dressed in winter garments. The bright sunshine could not offset the chill of the wind's icy breath.

As the atmosphere above was exceptionally cold, the warming created by the strong May sun created intense instability. As a result, there were additional wintry "fireworks" during the latter part of the afternoon into the evening.

During that time, New York City and its nearby suburbs, experienced wild skirmishes between approaching summer and retreating winter as they fought it out on the battlefield of May. Sun, clouds, snow flurries, snow showers, and snow squalls alternated as a gusty wind amplified the unseasonable chill. During a large-scale snow squall, some claps of thunder resounded in the Bronx.

After the sun set, the weather calmed down. Sunday morning saw New York City record its third consecutive sub-40° minimum temperature. The only other times that happened in May were during 1891, 1923, and 1947.

Some photos from the late afternoon/early evening follow:



The approaching snow squall



During a May snow squall



During a May snow squall



The departing snow squall



The departing snow squall

Two short video clips are below:

[Looking toward Umbrella Point](#)

[Eastern redbud and falling snow](#)