Storm Chasing Season is here

At this time of year thousands of people flock to the plains of North America with one aim in mind. They often carry expensive photographic equipment, communicate by mobile phones, use social media extensively and use GPS for location purposes. They drive for many thousands of miles and often spend hours sitting waiting for something to happen. These people are storm chasers, or simply chasers, and they are there to experience some of the most extreme weather that the planet has to offer.

Storm chasing can become a passion, some might say obsession, and storm chasers make huge efforts in the hope of catching different kinds of extreme weather. Their motivations vary from scientific to leisure and thrill seeking and many will photograph or video storms. Youtube is full of excellent videos where chasers drive out and film tornadoses, supercells and other phenomena. The storm chasing community is growing, both online and with more people out on the Plains each year from all different parts of the world. There are plenty of educational websites and forums where you can find out more about chasing, ask questions and learn about when and why these storms occur. However, storm chasing can be a dangerous business, even for experienced and careful storm chasers. Last year storm chasers Tim Samaras, his son Paul Samaras, and veteran chasing partner Carl Young all died chasing a tornado near Oklahoma City. Less serious, but quite common, is damage to vehicles from things like hail and wind.

Storm chasing happens mainly in the spring and early summer, particularly May and June across the Great Plains of the USA in an area known as Tornado Alley. This is the area with the highest frequency of tornadoes in the USA and is located between the Appalachian and Rocky mountain ranges. In this area there are sometimes many hundreds of chasers active on any one day and companies organise storm chasing holidays.

Storm chasing can definitely be addictive and for some the combination of technology, in the form of a good camera, and extreme weather in the form of a good supercell or tornado is irresistible. Two Society members, Cammie Czuchnicki and Tim Moxon regularly fly out to Tornado Alley for the season and are out there as I write. You can read their blog here [1], which details from day to day the different kinds of weather encountered, along with some really fantastic photos.

More storm chasing links >> [2]
Storm chasing blog >> [1]

Photo courtesy Cammie and Tim

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**Links**