

And the heat goes on: warmest March on record

April 15 2010, By RANDOLPH E. SCHMID , AP Science Writer

(AP) -- And the heat goes on. Last month was the warmest March on record worldwide, based on records back to 1880, scientists reported Thursday.

The average temperature for the month was 56.3 degrees Fahrenheit (13.5 degrees Celsius), the [National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration](#) reported.

That was 1.39 degrees F (0.77 C) above the average for the month over the 20th century.

NOAA researchers said the warmer-than-normal conditions were especially notable in northern Africa, South Asia, Tibet, Delhi, India and Canada.

Cooler-than-normal regions included Mongolia and eastern Russia, northern and western Europe, Mexico, northern Australia, western Alaska and the southeastern United States.

Contributing to the record month was [El Nino](#), a periodic warming of the tropical Pacific Ocean that, combined with changes in winds and air pressure, can affect weather worldwide.

In addition, climate researchers have been reporting rising global temperatures for several years as a result of what is called the "[greenhouse effect](#)," in which rising levels of carbon dioxide and others

gases in the atmosphere trap heat instead of allowing it to escape into space.

NOAA also reported that in March [Arctic sea ice](#), which normally reaches its maximum in that month, covered an average of 5.8 million square miles (15.1 million square kilometers).

That was 4.1 percent below the 1979-2000 average expanse, and the fifth-smallest March coverage since records began in 1979.

More information:

NOAA: <http://www.noaa.gov>

National Climatic Data Center: <http://www.ncdc.noaa.gov/sotc>

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