

Antarctica set record of -135.8 F (-93.2 C)

December 9 2013, by Seth Borenstein



Image: National Science Foundation

Newly analyzed data from East Antarctica say the remote region has set a record for soul-crushing cold.

The record is minus 135.8 degrees Fahrenheit (minus 93.2 Celsius).

A new look at NASA satellite data revealed that Earth set a new record for coldest temperature recorded. It happened in August 2010 when it hit -135.8 degrees Fahrenheit (-93.2 Celsius). Then on July 31 of this year, it came close again: -135.3 degrees Fahrenheit (-93.0 Celsius).

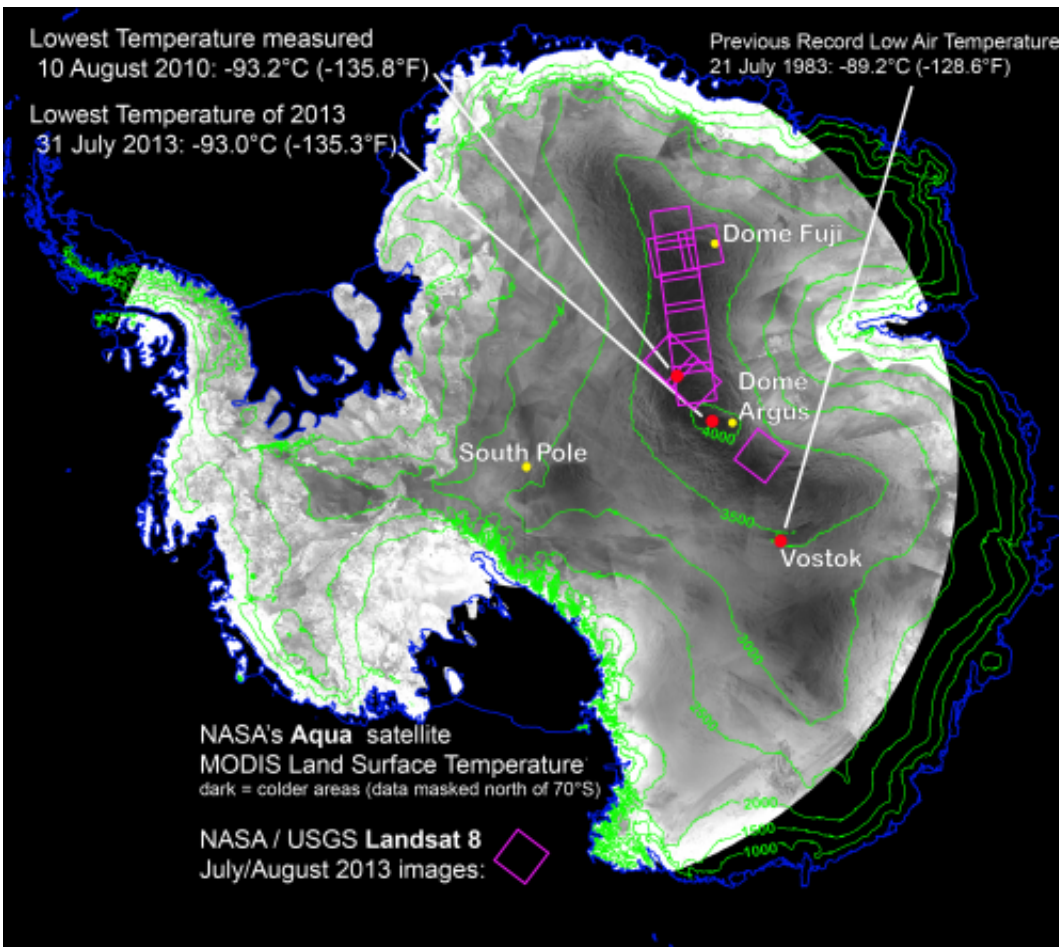
The old record had been -128.6 degrees Fahrenheit (-89.2 Celsius).

Ice scientist Ted Scambos at the National Snow and Ice Data Center announced the cold facts at the American Geophysical Union scientific

meeting in San Francisco Monday.

"It's more like you'd see on Mars on a nice summer day in the poles," Scambos said, from the American Geophysical Union scientific meeting in San Francisco Monday, where he announced the data. "I'm confident that these pockets are the coldest places on Earth."

However, it won't be in the Guinness Book of World Records because these were satellite measured, not from thermometers, Scambos said.



This image shows the location of record low temperature measurements for Antarctica. The red dots show where the record satellite-measured surface temperatures and the earlier record low air temperature occurred. Shades of gray

are a compilation of the lowest MODIS-sensor land surface temperature readings made by NASA's Aqua satellite during 2003-2013, with darker grays representing the coldest areas. Landsat 8 thermal images acquired in July and August of 2013 provided more detail on the coldest areas (purple squares). Elevation of the Antarctic surface is shown in green lines, and a blue lines provide an outline of the Antarctic continent, its islands, and the edge of its floating ice sheet. Credit: Ted Scambos, National Snow and Ice Data Center

"Thank God, I don't know how exactly it feels," Scambos said. But he said scientists do routinely make naked 100 degree below zero Fahrenheit (73 degree below zero Celsius) dashes outside in the South Pole as a stunt, so people can survive that temperature for about three minutes.

Most of the time researchers need to breathe through a snorkel that brings air into the coat through a sleeve and warms it up "so you don't inhale by accident" the cold air, Scambos said.

Waleed Abdalati, an ice scientist at the University of Colorado and NASA's former chief scientist, and Scambos said this is likely an unusual random reading in a place that hasn't been measured much before and could have been colder or hotter in the past and we wouldn't know.

"It does speak to the range of conditions on this Earth, some of which we haven't been able to observe," Abdalati said.

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