

Winter weather both toasty and cold; a tale of two nations

February 19 2015, by Seth Borenstein



In this Jan. 7, 2015 file photo, Diego Porto Carreri, left, and girlfriend Monica Ochoa enjoy the hot weather at the Whittier Narrows Recreational Area in El Monte, Calif. It may be hard to believe for a country that's shivering from Maine to Miami, but 2014 has gotten off to a rather toasty start. Meteorologists said that last month was the second warmest January on record globally, behind 2007, with temperatures 1.4 degrees above 20th century average. The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration calculated that the United States in January was 2.9 degrees warmer than normal, making it the 24th warmest January since 1880. (AP Photo/Damian Dovarganes, File)

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Last month was the second warmest January on record globally, behind 2007, with temperatures 1.4 degrees above the average for the 20th century, according to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. Meteorologists calculated that the United States in January was 2.9 degrees warmer than normal, making it the 24th warmest January since 1880.

In America, January and the entire winter so far has been a tale of two nations: record hot in the West, bone-chilling cold to the East. While Boston is buried in more than 8 feet of snow, parts of Pacific Northwest that depend on winter snow have gotten next to nothing.

"Winter seems to have completely forgotten about us out here," said Kathie Dello, deputy director of the Oregon Climate Service at Oregon State University. "If we could find a way of sending that snow out here, we'd really, really appreciate that."

Flowers have already started popping out and the ski industry is desperate, Dello said: "You can't ski on rain, you can't ski on dirt."

But you can certainly ski in New England, if you can dig out.

California is having its warmest winter on record for a second consecutive year. And for the first time, San Francisco had no rain in January.

What's happened is that high pressure—nicknamed the ridiculously resilient ridge—has parked just west of California with unusually warm ocean water, preventing storms and cold from sneaking into the West, according to NOAA climatologist Jake Crouch. Then the jet stream dips

south from Canada, bringing the cold to the Midwest and East and the cold in the East combines with the warm water of the Atlantic to provide big snow in the Northeast, he said.



In this Feb. 10, 2015 file photo, Lee Anderson adds to the pile of snow beside the sidewalk in front of his house in Somerville, Mass., as his dog Ace watches. It may be hard to believe for a country that's shivering from Maine to Miami, but 2014 has gotten off to a rather toasty start. Meteorologists said that last month was the second warmest January on record globally, behind 2007, with temperatures 1.4 degrees above 20th century average. The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration calculated that the United States in January was 2.9 degrees warmer than normal, making it the 24th warmest January since 1880. (AP Photo/Josh Reynolds, File)

And while it had been chilly in the East and Midwest, up until this week it hadn't been too record breaking, especially compared to what's been

going on out West, Crouch said. There were 3,499 daily warm temperature records broken in January, compared to 775 cold ones, he said.

More information: NOAA: www.ncdc.noaa.gov/sotc/

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