August shatters global heat records for 16th month in a row

September 20 2016, by Kerry Sheridan

A string of unusual heat across land and sea surfaces is "the longest such streak in the 137-year record," said the monthly climate report by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

Last month was the hottest August in modern times and marked the 16th month in a row when global records for heat were shattered planet-wide, US authorities said Tuesday.

The string of unusual heat across land and sea surfaces is "the longest such streak in the 137-year record," said the monthly climate report by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

The NOAA report also found that global temperatures over the entire year so far have been "the highest on record."

Average temperature for the year across global land and ocean surfaces was 1.82 Fahrenheit above the 20th century average of 57.3 F.

That was enough to surpass 2015, the previous record-holder, by 0.29 F.

Climate scientists say the upward trend of heating is driven by the burning of fossil fuels, which add to greenhouse gases that trap heat around the Earth.

The record heat trend has been exacerbated by the El Nino weather phenomenon, which boosted warmth in the Pacific around the equator in the first half of this year.

August records

Taken alone, August's temperature across global land and ocean surfaces was 1.66 Fahrenheit above the 20th century average of 60.1 F.

"This was the highest for August in the 1880-2016 record, surpassing the previous record set in 2015 by 0.09 F," NOAA said.

Africa and Asia each saw record high average temperatures for the month—the hottest since continental records began in 1910.

The world's oceans, which absorb much of the heat from the atmosphere, were the second warmest on record, just a tad (0.04 F) behind 2015

"Much-warmer-than-average conditions engulfed the vast majority of the world's land surfaces," said the NOAA report.

"Record warmth during the first eight months was present across Alaska, western Canada, northern South America, central and southern Africa, southern Europe, Indonesia, and across parts of Central America, the Caribbean, northern and central Asia and Australia."

Bahrain experienced its second warmest August since national records began in 1902, with an average temperature of 97.5 F—or 4.3 F above average.

New Zealand has seen its hottest year since national records began in

1909.

Hot water

The world's oceans, which absorb much of the heat from the atmosphere, were the second warmest on record, just a tad (0.04 F) behind 2015.

Record warmth was observed in the Atlantic along the US East coast, the central southern Atlantic Ocean, and across parts of western Indian Ocean and the western and southeastern Pacific Ocean, said NOAA.

"Cooler-than-average conditions were limited to small areas" of the Pacific, the southern Atlantic Ocean and southeastern Indian Ocean.

The warming trend of El Nino subsided in July and neither El Nino nor La Nina are expected to prevail for the rest of this year.

In another troubling indicator for the planet, sea ice in the Arctic continued to retreat.

"The average Arctic sea ice extent for August was 23.1 percent below the 1981–2010 average," said NOAA.

"This was the fourth smallest August extent since records began in 1979."

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