Last month was hottest January on record, US scientists say

February 13 2020

In this Thursday, Jan. 23, 2020 file photo, people stand on a balcony during flooding in Girona, Spain. A storm caused rivers to overflow and sea waters to inundate vast agricultural areas in eastern Spain. On Thursday, Feb. 13, 2020, scientists from the U.S. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration said the previous month was the hottest January on record since experts began keeping temperature tallies in 1880. (AP Photo/Emilio Morenatti)

Last month was the hottest January since scientists began keeping temperature records in 1880, U.S. government forecasters said Thursday.

The global average land and ocean surface temperature in January was 2.05 degrees Fahrenheit (1.14 degrees Celsius) above the average January temperatures for the 20th century, because of the changing climate, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration said.

In parts of Russia, Scandinavia and eastern Canada, temperatures exceeded the old averages by 9 degrees Fahrenheit (5 C).

Warmer temperatures mean melting snow and ice. The extent of Arctic sea ice was 5.3% below the average from 1981-2010, and Antarctic sea ice was 9.8% below the average.

The hottest January after the second hottest year on record "is one of those indications that things are warming dramatically," said University of Illinois climate scientist Don Wuebbles.

In this Saturday, Jan. 4, 2020 file photo, smoke from a fire at Batemans Bay, Australia, billows into the air as strong winds and high temperatures were forecast to spread flames. On Thursday, Feb. 13, 2020, scientists from the U.S. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration said the previous month was the hottest January on record since experts began keeping temperature tallies in 1880. (AP Photo/Rick Rycroft)

In this Sunday, Jan. 12, 2020 file photo, people sit on docks in the Charles River Esplanade park in Boston during unseasonably warm weather as temperatures climbed into the low 70s in many places in the state. On Thursday, Feb. 13, 2020, scientists from the U.S. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration said the previous month was the hottest January on record since experts began keeping temperature tallies in 1880. (AP Photo/Steven Senne)

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