

Chilly forecast, falling iguanas in store for Florida Xmas

December 24 2020, by Mike Schneider



In this Jan. 22, 2020, file photo, a stunned iguana lies in the grass at Cherry Creek Park in Oakland Park, Fla., With unexpectedly cold weather in the forecast and pandemic-related curfews in some places, Florida is about to have a Christmas unlike any other in recent memory, and it might involve falling iguanas. (Joe Cavaretta/South Florida Sun-Sentinel via AP)

With unexpectedly cold weather in the forecast and pandemic-related curfews in some places, Florida is about to have a Christmas unlike any other in recent memory, and it may involve falling iguanas.

The National Weather Service earlier this week warned that South Florida could experience the coldest Christmas Day in 21 years. Morning lows on Saturday could drop into the low 30s and 40s degrees Fahrenheit, the [weather service](#) said.

"Brrr! Much colder temps expected for Christmas," the National Weather Service in Miami tweeted earlier this week. "Falling iguanas are possible."

Because they are cold-blooded reptiles, iguanas living in South Florida trees often become immobile in chilly weather, causing them to drop to the ground when the thermometer plummets, though they are still alive.

In Jacksonville, the temperature was expected to drop 50 degrees, from about 80 degrees Fahrenheit on Thursday to around 30 degrees Fahrenheit on Friday, putting it on the path to being one of the five coldest Christmas Days on record, according to the National Weather Service in Jacksonville.

A squall line with severe storms and fast-moving winds also was headed for north Florida on Christmas Eve.

Around the state, overnight shelters were opened to take in people who would otherwise be exposed to the cold, including several churches that were planning to hold Christmas services. Many of the shelters promised social distancing and [protective equipment](#) to prevent the spread of the novel coronavirus.



In this handout photo from the Florida Surf Museum on Florida's Space Coast shows a man dressed in a Santa Claus costume surfing Wednesday, Dec. 23, 2020, in Cocoa Beach, Fla. (Florida Surf Museum on Florida's Space Coast via AP)

The pandemic also was impacting a Space Coast tradition—Surfing Santa Day, which takes place the day before Christmas. Normally drawing hundreds of surfers in Santa costumes to the Cocoa Beach surf and thousands of their cheering supporters on the beach, this year's [event](#) was moved online. Participants were encouraged to individually go surfing or paddle-boarding at their favorite spot and post photos or videos to [social media](#).

But Santa was getting help from one Florida state official.

With tongue firmly planted in cheek, Florida Agriculture Commissioner Nikki Fried this week issued "a certificate of animal movement," permitting Santa Claus and his wife, as well as their reindeer, "to enter and exit all homes, domiciles, encampments, and premises in the state of Florida between the hours of 8:00 PM on December 24 and 7:00 AM December 25, through or over any U.S. border port."

"Given the challenges of this year, we want to ensure Santa Claus can safely travel the state and spread Christmas joy to all of Florida's children," Fried said in a news release.

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