

Antarctic ice hits record low for January: climate monitor

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The Antarctic Ocean area covered by ice was the lowest on record for January, exposing Earth to even more planet-warming heat, scientists

reported Wednesday.

Last month was also the third warmest January on record in Europe, with temperatures on New Year's Day reaching all-time highs on some parts of the continent, according to European Union's Copernicus climate monitor (C3S).

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When white sea ice—which bounces up to 90 percent of the Sun's energy back into space—is replaced by dark, unfrozen sea, the water absorbs a similar percentage of the Sun's heat instead.

Globally, last year was the fifth or sixth warmest on record despite the cooling influence of a natural La Nina weather pattern.

Europe clocked its hottest summer ever, which fuelled deadly droughts and wildfires on the continent.

Copernicus said Wednesday that much of Europe saw above-average temperatures last month, including the Balkans and eastern Europe "where New Year's Day experienced record warmth".

Elsewhere, [warmer temperatures](#) were also recorded in the eastern United States, Canada and Mexico, the monitor said.

"These [extreme temperatures](#) remain a tangible indication of the effects of a changing climate for many regions and can be understood as an additional warning of future extreme events," C3S deputy Samantha Burgess said in a statement.

"It is imperative for global and regional stakeholders to take swift action to mitigate the rise in [global temperatures](#)."

Siberia, Afghanistan, Pakistan and Australia however saw below-average temperatures, the monitor added.

Antarctic sea ice extent was 31 percent below average, and well below the previous record for January.

Below-average sea ice concentration was also seen in the Arctic, where it was four percent below average, Copernicus said, the third lowest for January.

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