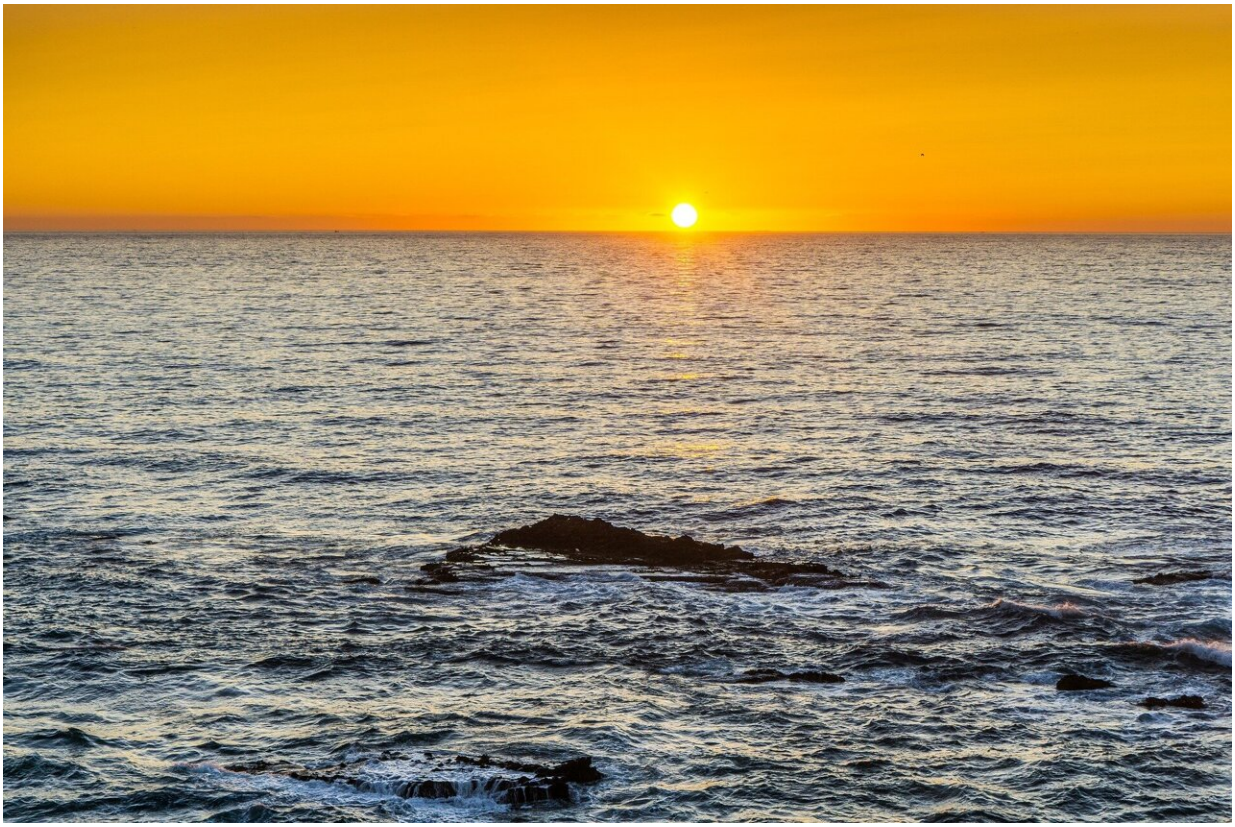
N. Atlantic ocean temperature sets record high: US agency

July 29 2023, by Lucie AUBOURG



Credit: Pixabay/CC0 Public Domain

On the heels of a new record high in the Mediterranean, the North Atlantic reached its hottest-ever level this week, several weeks earlier than its usual annual peak, according to preliminary data released Friday

by the US National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

The news comes after scientists confirmed that July is on track to be the warmest month in record history—searing heat intensified by global warming that has affected tens of millions of people.

"Based on our analysis, the record-high average sea surface temperature in the North Atlantic Ocean is 24.9 degrees Celsius," (76.8° Fahrenheit) observed Wednesday, Xungang Yin, a scientist at NOAA's National Centers for Environmental Information, told AFP.

The record is particularly startling as it comes early in the year—usually, the North Atlantic reaches its peak temperature in early September.

The previous record high was recorded in September 2022, at 24.89 degrees Celsius, Yin said.

NOAA, which has been tracking sea temperatures since the early 1980s, will need about two weeks to confirm the preliminary findings.

The Mediterranean Sea reached its highest temperature on record Monday, Spanish researchers said—amid an exceptional heat wave in Europe.

The record of 28.71 degrees Celsius was announced by Spain's Institute of Marine Sciences, which analyzed data from satellites used by the European Earth observation program Copernicus.

Those experts said they measure the daily median sea surface temperature, rather than the average, because it is less susceptible to extreme spikes in temperature in isolated areas of the sea.

The Mediterranean region, hit by record temperatures in July, has long

been classified as a hotspot of climate change.

Atlantic record likely to be broken again

The sea surface temperature in the North Atlantic is "expected to continue to increase through the month of August," NOAA's Yin said, adding it was "highly likely" the record would again be broken.

The new high of 24.9 degrees Celsius is "more than one degree warmer than a 30-year climatological normal, calculated from 1982 to 2011," he added.

Since March, which is the month when the North Atlantic begins to warm up after winter, temperatures have generally been warmer than in previous years, with the difference more pronounced in recent weeks.

The North Atlantic has become an emblematic observation point for the warming of seawater worldwide due to the effects of climate change caused by greenhouse gas emissions.

The Copernicus program, which uses different data than that analyzed by NOAA, told AFP on Friday that it had recorded a temperature of 24.7 Celsius on Wednesday in the North Atlantic.

A Copernicus spokesman said while that remained below the program's September 2022 record, slightly lower than the NOAA level at 24.81 Celsius, that record was sure to be broken "this summer."

"At this stage, it is just a matter of days."

'Extreme' situation

"This situation is extreme: we've seen maritime heat waves before, but this is very persistent and spread out over a large surface area" in the North Atlantic, Karina Von Schuckmann from the Mercator Ocean International research center told AFP.

The expert noted that the oceans have absorbed 90 percent of the excess heat produced by human activity since the dawn of the industrial age.

"This accumulation of energy doubled over the last two decades," fueling global warming, she said.

On a global scale, the average ocean temperature has been besting seasonal heat records on a regular basis since April.

A specific, striking example has been recorded in Florida where waters off the coast of the Sunshine State reached 38.3 degrees Celsius on Monday, according to data from a weather buoy—a temperature more associated with a hot tub.

If confirmed, the reading could constitute a world record.

Citation: N. Atlantic ocean temperature sets record high: US agency (2023, July 29) retrieved 28 April 2024 from https://phys.org/news/2023-07-atlantic-ocean-temperature-high-agency.html