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Rising temps give rise to new colors

Brian Roewe | Jan. 10, 2013 Eco Catholic

A combination of a mild winter, a historically warm spring and a summer filled with droughts led to a logical and unsurprising conclusion: 2012 was really hot.

On Tuesday, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration confirmed that the past year was in fact the warmest year on record [1].

According to the NOAA?s National Climatic Data Center, 2012?s average temperature was 55.3 degrees Fahrenheit, or 3.2 degrees above the 20th-century average, and a full degree higher than the previous high temperature mark, reached in 1998.

Temperature records for the U.S. date back to 1895.

The year 2012 also saw its hottest spring ? including the hottest March on record ? and July 2012 posted the warmest monthly U.S. temperature ever recorded, with a nationwide average of 76.9 degrees Fahrenheit. In addition, 356 record high maximum temperatures were tied or broken across the country, and the U.S. has now experienced 16 consecutive months with temperatures above the long-term average, also a record.

At the same time climatologists in the U.S. confirmed record heat, meteorologists in Australia were preparing for new highs of their own.

The Australian Bureau of Meteorology, also on Tuesday, unveiled two new colors, deep purple and pink, to their interactive weather and wave forecast maps, anticipating temperatures that could exceed the charts? previous range high ? and national high ? of 50 degrees Celsius (122 degrees Fahrenheit).

According to the Sydney Morning Herald, forecasts for the coming week [2] are already tapping into the new colors, with some areas expected to extend into the purple 50-degrees Celsius range.

?The scale has just been increased today and I would anticipate it is because the forecast coming from the bureau's model is showing temperatures in excess of 50 degrees," David Jones, head of the bureau's climate monitoring and prediction unit, told the Morning Herald.

If those forecasts prove accurate, a new national high temperature could be recorded, topping the current high of 50.7 degrees (123.26 degrees Fahrenheit), reached in 1960 in South Australia. The country already saw one record topped on Jan. 8, as the national average temperature was 40.33 degrees Celsius (104.59 degrees Fahrenheit), .16 degrees Celsius above the previous 1972 record.

The Southern Hemisphere country has faced a heat wave entering 2013, with six of the new year?s first days ranking among the nation?s hottest average temperatures. The Australian summer season begins in December and extends through February.

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Links:
[1] http://www.climatewatch.noaa.gov/image/2013/by-a-wide-margin-2012-was-the-united-states-warmest-year-on-record-3
[2] http://www.smh.com.au/environment/weather/temperatures-off-the-charts-as-australia-turns-deep-purple-20130108-2ce33.html