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Last month was the hottest January in recorded history

DAILY NEWS | THERESA BRAINE | Updated Feb 14, 2020



Last month was the hottest January in all the 141 years that the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) has been keeping track.

The global land and ocean surface temperature in January was 2.05 degrees Fahrenheit above the 20th-century average of 53.6 degrees, NOAA said. It surpassed the previous record, set in 2016, by 0.04 degrees.

Most telling was that this happened in the absence of an El Niño, which would normally influence temperatures, the agency said Thursday in its [monthly climate report](#).

Adding to the alarming signs in this year's climate are a snowpack that is below normal in many parts of the world for this time of year, and polar sea ice coverage that was below the average for 1981-2010, NOAA said.

It was the 44th consecutive January and 421st consecutive month with higher-than-average temperatures as compared to the 20th century average, NOAA said. Moreover, the four warmest Januaries have all happened since 2016, NOAA said, with the 10 hottest happening since 2002.

In Russia, parts of Scandinavia and eastern Canada, temperatures were at least 9 degrees Fahrenheit above average, NOAA said.

This news comes right after Antarctica registered its highest-ever temperatures last week, at 65 degrees.

[It is 65 degrees in Antarctica. That had never in recorded history happened until now](#)

The hottest January after the second hottest year on record "is one of those indications that things are warming dramatically," University of Illinois climate scientist Don Wuebbles told the [Associated Press](#).

NOAA's findings matched those of the European Copernicus Climate Change Service, released last week, as [CNN](#) reported.



NOAA also said that 2020 is already on track to be one of the top five warmest years on record globally.

This does not bode well for life on Earth, as a separate study suggests.

Given that the world's temperature rise shows no signs of slowing down – indeed, climate change seems to be accelerating, NOAA pointed out – another study pointed to the dire potential for life on Earth if this does not abate.

A study published in Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences this week indicates that as many as one in three species could face extinction if global warming is not reduced.

In what is among the first studies to use data from recent climate-related extinctions and rates of species movements, researchers at the University of Arizona estimated the broad-scale extinction patterns likely to be wrought by climate change.

From there they extrapolated into the future.

Cristian Román-Palacios and John J. Wiens, both at the university's Department of Ecology and Evolutionary Biology, analyzed data from 538 species and 581 sites around the world, the university said in a [media release](#), focusing on plant and animal species that were surveyed at the same sites over time, at least 10 years apart.

They matched that data to climate data starting with the first time each site had been surveyed, and found that 44% of the 538 species had already become extinct at one or more of them.

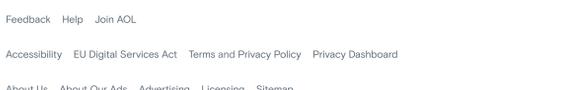
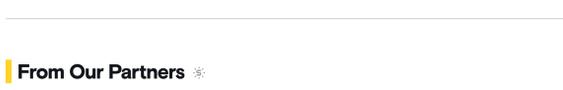
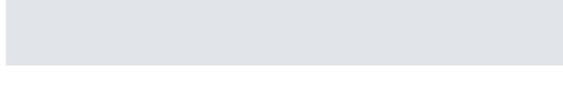
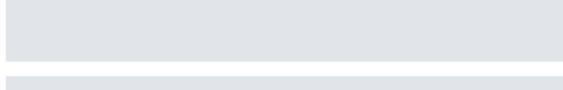
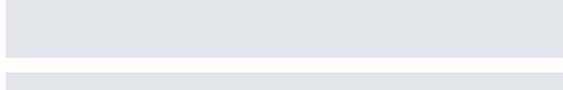
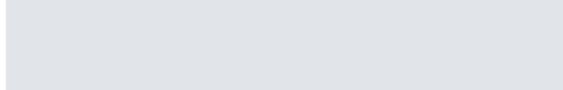
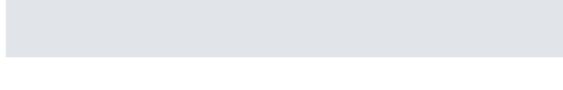
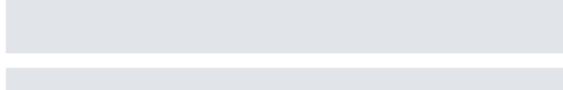
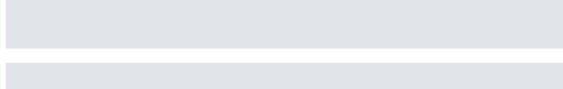
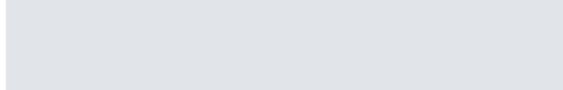
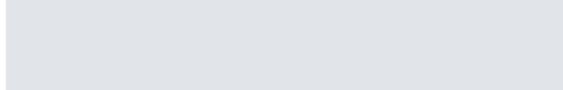
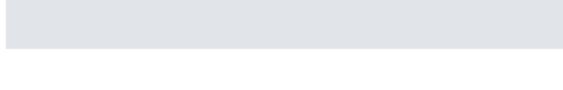
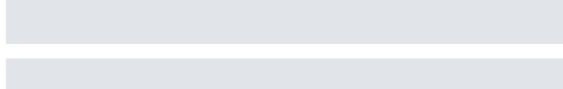
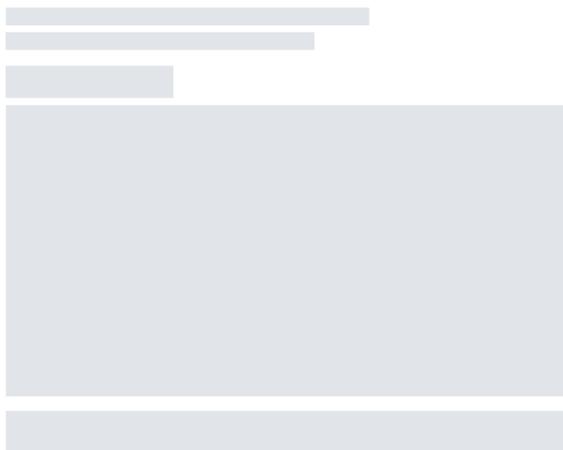
"By analyzing the change in 19 climatic variables at each site, we could determine which variables drive local extinctions and how much change a population can tolerate without going extinct," Román-Palacios said.

"We also estimated how quickly populations can move to try and escape rising temperatures. When we put all of these pieces of information together for each species, we can come up with detailed estimates of global extinction rates for hundreds of plant and animal species."

Previous studies have focused solely on species that move and have the power to migrate to other climates when their original habitat gets too hot. This study, though, looked at what factors drive extinction, studying the species that can't relocate.

"In a way, it's a 'choose your own adventure,'" Wiens said in the researchers' statement. "If we stick to the Paris Agreement to combat climate change, we may lose fewer than two out of every 10 plant and animal species on Earth by 2070. But if humans cause larger temperature increases, we could lose more than a third or even half of all animal and plant species, based on our results."

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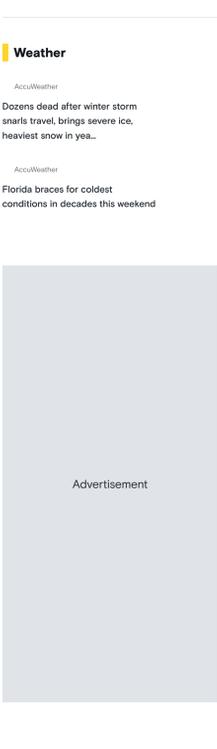
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