
[Get Home Delivery](#) | [Log In](#) | [Register Now](#)

- [Home Page](#)
- [My Times](#)
- [Today's Paper](#)
- [Video](#)
- [Most Popular](#)
- [Times Topics](#)

Search All NYTimes.com

The New York Times

Wednesday, December 17, 2008

Science

- [World](#)
- [U.S.](#)
- [N.Y. / Region](#)
- [Business](#)
- [Technology](#)
- [Science](#)
- [Health](#)
- [Sports](#)
- [Opinion](#)
- [Arts](#)
- [Style](#)
- [Travel](#)
- [Jobs](#)
- [Real Estate](#)
- [Autos](#)

- [Environment](#)
- [Space & Cosmos](#)

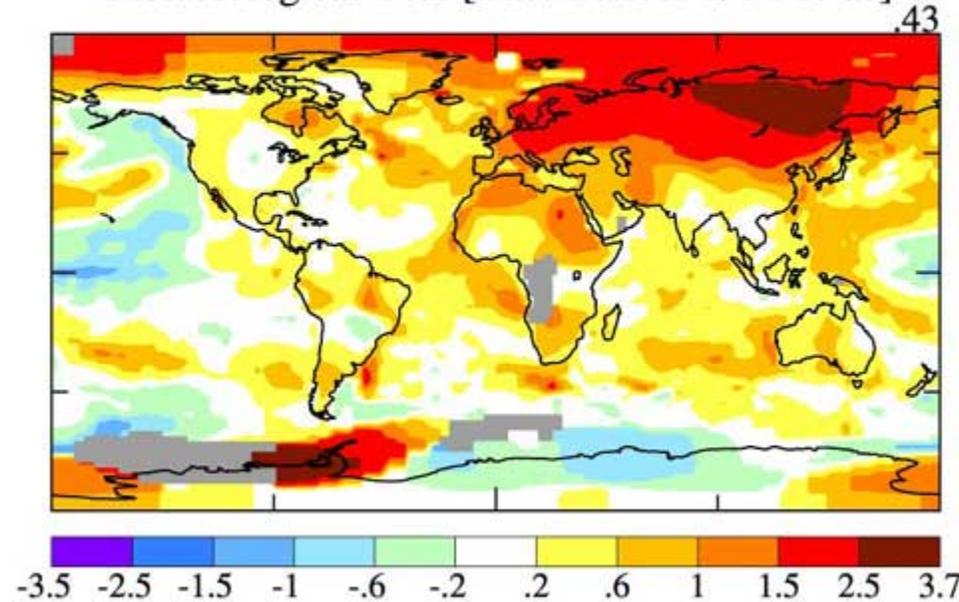


December 16, 2008, 11:00 am

A Cooler Year on a Warming Planet

By [Andrew C. Revkin](#)

2008 Surface Temperature Anomaly (°C)
Meteorological Year [Base Period: 1951-1980]



This map shows warm (reds) and cool (blues) deviations from the mean temperature from 1951 to 1980 for the “meteorological year” — December 2007 through November 2008. (Credit: NASA Goddard Institute for Space Studies)

NASA’s [Goddard Institute for Space Studies](#), the [World Meteorological Organization](#), the [National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration](#), and Britain’s [Hadley Center](#) have all issued recaps of the past year’s temperature patterns today.

The past year, according to the NASA group (the “meteorological year” from December through November), is between the 7th and 12th warmest (because of the range of uncertainty in readings) since systematic meteorological record-keeping began in 1880. But the Goddard scientists note that the 9 warmest years in the record have occurred since 1998. Some highlights: Over part of the past year, the Pacific was in its cyclical cool phase, called La Niña; the Arctic remained far warmer than usual for recent decades. (Many Arctic specialists say the [recent warming around the North Pole](#) is more widespread than an Arctic hot spell in the early 20th century, which was centered near Greenland.)

[INSERTED 12:30 p.m.:] Two teams using [satellite data to track global temperature](#) trends instead of surface measurements have charted different peaks and valleys but show the same overall trajectory. James E. Hansen, the head of Goddard and an [outspoken campaigner for prompt cuts in greenhouse-gas emissions](#), explained that the decades-long global warming trend and patterns of warming remain consistent with a growing influence on climate from the planet’s building blanket of heat-trapping greenhouse gases. He has warned that if all the world’s countries fail by 2030 to move away from burning coal for power (at least without capturing the emitted CO₂), it will be impossible to avoid a long slide toward Earth becoming “[a different planet](#)” from the one human societies have experienced for thousands of years.

[Some statistics specialists](#) have taken issue with some of the Goddard Institute's methods, but the differences between NASA's findings and those of the independent British group are "very small," said David Parker of the Hadley Center in an email.

Below you can see the Goddard Institute graphic showing the longer temperature trend. Again, I'll post other information as it becomes available. Also, Gavin Schmidt of the Goddard Institute has posted a useful piece on the [2008 climate summaries "and spin"](#) on Realclimate.org, which takes mild jabs at those reading too much (up or down) into the past year's wiggles.

[The Hadley Center in England](#), along with the Climatic Research Unit at the University of East Anglia, called 2008 the 10th warmest since 1850 in its tentative recap. In a news release, Peter Stott of the climate center described how the odds toward having warm years have been progressively tipped by the buildup of greenhouse gases: "As a result of climate change, what would once have been an exceptionally unusual year has now become quite normal," Dr. Stott said. "Without human influence on climate change we would be more than 50 times less likely of seeing a year as warm as 2008."

Here's the trend as the Goddard Institute has charted it:

over land and sea since 1880. (Credit: NASA) The global temperature trend

- [E-mail This](#)
- [Print](#)
- Share
 - [Linkedin](#)
 - [Digg](#)
 - [Facebook](#)
 - [Mixx](#)

- [Yahoo! Buzz](#)
- [Permalink](#)

[Climate Change](#), [science](#), [Climate Change](#), [climateaudit.org](#), [gloabl warming](#), [goddard institute](#), [greenhouse gases](#), [hadley center](#), [hansen](#), [nasa](#), [north pole](#), [statistics](#)

Related Posts

From Dot Earth

- [Big Coal Fires Back Over James Hansen's Criminal Complaint](#)
- [Warming Waters Driving Arctic Ice Retreat](#)
- [Ice Update and Unfiltered U.S. Climate Report](#)
- [Are Big Oil and Big Coal Climate Criminals?](#)
- [NASA's Hansen: Humans Still Loading Climate Dice](#)

- *Previous post* [Warming: Pollution or Technology Problem?](#)
-

Ads by Google what's this?

Climate change con
The real science on climate change is not being reported.
[www.douglasreport.com](#)

CO2 Inventory by E Source
Help measuring your CO2 footprint Free paper on voluntary programs
[www.esource.com/public/products/ghg](#)

BMW Climate Control Panel
Get Your Unit Rrepaired In Just \$49 Fast & Efficient Service. Call Now!
[www.BMW-Repair.com](#)



Search This Blog

- *Previous Post:* [Warming: Pollution or Technology Problem?](#)
-

About Dot Earth



By 2050 or so, the world population is expected to reach nine billion, essentially adding two Chinas to the number of people alive today. Those billions will be seeking food, water and other resources on a planet where, scientists say, humans are already shaping climate and the web of life. In Dot Earth, reporter Andrew C. Revkin examines efforts to balance human affairs with the planet's limits. Supported in part by a John Simon Guggenheim Fellowship, Mr. Revkin tracks relevant news from suburbia to Siberia, and conducts an interactive exploration of trends and ideas with readers and experts.