

The Washington Post

Capital Weather Gang

Temperatures hit 100 degrees in Oklahoma and Texas, as simmering summerlike heat expands across the South

[+ Add to list](#)By [Matthew Cappucci](#)

March 27 at 1:38 PM

Stunning summer weather is on tap for much of the southern and southeastern United States into this weekend. The only strange part? We're barely a week deep into spring. But that won't stop temperatures some 25 degrees or more above average from heating up the southern tier of the nation, shattering records in many cities.

Record-challenging warmth has already swelled from the southern plains into the Southeast, due to a sprawling high pressure zone or dome of hot air, more characteristic of May or June.

The air temperature soared to 100 degrees in Hollis, Okla., at 4:20 p.m. Thursday, the first triple-digit reading in the Sooner State since Sept. 27. Average high temperatures this time of year in southwest Oklahoma tend to be closer to 70. The reading set a statewide [record](#) for the warmest temperature ever observed in Oklahoma on the date, with data dating back to the 1880s.

Farther south, Houston's temperature average over the past four days was the warmest on record in March, [topping the previous mark by a degree](#).

[AccuWeather reported](#) that Zapata, Tex., near the border with Mexico south of Laredo, soared to 108 degrees Thursday, tying the highest temperature ever recorded in the United States during March, last set in Rio Grande City, Tex., on March 31, 1954.

It has already been one of the warmest years to date on record for many in the Southeast, including Orlando, Raleigh, Cape Hatteras, and even farther north into parts of Pennsylvania. More unseasonably warm weather is in the making this weekend, with temperatures likely to hit 80 degrees as far north as Washington, D.C., on Sunday.

The records already toppled

The string of records got off to an impressive start on Tuesday, when a spattering of record highs occurred across much of the Deep South and Gulf Coast. In Texas, Austin, College Station and McAllen all set record highs, while Waco Regional Airport and Tyler came within a couple degrees of record highs.

According to the Southeast Regional Climate Center, Alexandria, La., also achieved a record high Tuesday.

The heat ramped up even more on Wednesday, when Houston hit 90 degrees some six weeks earlier than average. New Orleans fell just shy of 90, their 89-degree reading tying the monthly record for March and obliterating a daily record by 5 degrees.

Jacksonville, Fla., did tie a monthly record for March, hitting 91 degrees on Wednesday. The city hasn't broken 91 degrees any day in the year before April 7. Records there date back to 1872.

Unseasonably warm weather was even more widespread Thursday

as Interstate 20. A sharp stationary front, with cool air to the north, will lie roughly from Kansas City to Indianapolis. Anyone south of there will probably enjoy toasty warmth.

Houston was already 80 degrees at 10 a.m., forecast to climb into the upper 80s by late afternoon. The number to beat is 89, achieved in 1935.

Dallas will remain a bit cooler — mid-80s — thanks to cloud cover and a few possible late-day thunderstorms.

Elsewhere, Atlanta is predicted to tie its record of 86 degrees set in 1994, but there's a good chance that the city could overachieve and break that record too.



Ryan Maue

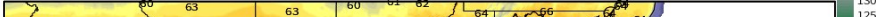
@RyanMaue

Record heat continues on Friday with the Southeast U.S. basking in sunshine and 80s - 90s. Hottest in Central Florida along Interstate 4 around 95°F.

Maybe foreshadowing an early, hot and very long summer.

NWS NDFD Daily HIGH Temperature [°F] Potential RECORDS
FORECAST INIT: 2020032703 -- VALID --> Fri 27MAR2020
RECORD HIGH MAXIMUMS n = 42 | RECORD LOW MAXIMUMS n = 0 OF POSSIBLE 369 WITHIN 1.5°F

MIN | MAX 51.0° | 94.0°F
weathermodels.com



138 11:41 PM - Mar 26, 2020

[81 people are talking about this](#)

In New Orleans, the forecast high temperature is 85 degrees, but if it reaches 86 degrees, it will mark the fifth-straight day with record-high temperatures.

Meanwhile, much of the Florida peninsula could flirt with or break records as highs soar close to 90.

Weekend and beyond

A strong cold front this weekend will begin shunting the core of the warmth to the east. On Saturday, the core of the heat should be relegated to the Deep South, including Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, Georgia and South Carolina. Temperatures in the lower to mid-70s could fringe the northern portions of Illinois, Indiana and Ohio. Along the shores of the Great Lakes, winds off the cooler waters will knock temperatures back a few degrees.

By Sunday, the front will be losing some of its oomph, its forward pace slowing enough to allow one more toasty day for the shores of the Mid-Atlantic into the Southeast. It's not out of the question that Washington, D.C., hits 80 degrees, along with many areas south and east of Interstate 95 in Virginia, the Carolinas and Georgia. Florida will remain stubbornly in the upper 80s to near 90.

The latest spate of heat fits into a pattern of overall warming as heat extremes rapidly outpace cold-temperature records. As the climate continues to be skewed hot and baselines routinely rise,

what's considered "normal" will need to be continually redefined.

Matthew Cappucci

Matthew Cappucci is a meteorologist for Capital Weather Gang. He earned a B.A. in atmospheric sciences from Harvard University in 2019, and has contributed to The Washington Post since he was 18. He is an avid storm chaser and adventurer, and covers all types of weather, climate science, and astronomy. Follow 