



Met Society Newsletter

For a printable pdf of this newsletter: <http://metsoc.rsnz.org/Newsletter/clipsapr2009.pdf>

Those members who have chosen the postal option will receive a hard copy of this in their "June" newsletter

Blessing for launch of weather radar project

<http://www.gisborneherald.co.nz/Default.aspx?s=3&s1=2&id=10686>

Gisborne Herald 4 April 2009

Construction of MetService's new Mahia weather radar was launched with a blessing ceremony conducted by the local iwi Rongomaiwahine today.

The new radar will have a 300 kilometre range covering the Gisborne and Hawke's Bay regions, and across the Urewera into central North Island - allowing better forecasting of torrential rain events in those areas.

The Mahia radar is the second of five new radars being funded from MetService's contact with the Ministry of Transport to help provide data to support the issuing of weather warnings for severe weather and severe thunderstorms.

Resource consent for the project was received from Wairoa District Council this week. "It will provide a valuable extension to our network", says MetService national weather services manager Rod Stainer.

"The reaction from local Maori and landowners has been very positive, and we are delighted to have the project launched with a ceremony in keeping with local traditions" said MetService project director Tony Quayle.

Further radars will be installed in the Bay of Plenty, on the West Coast of the South Island, and in Northland over the next three years. (abridged)

Weather looking good for Easter holiday fun

Thursday Apr 09, 2009 By [James Ihaka](#) New Zealand Herald



Olivia Judd (left) and Shana Martin from the US practise log rolling skills for Auckland's Royal Easter Show. Photo / Paul Estcourt

After a cold start for many on Good Friday, the long Easter weekend promises mainly fine and settled weather. MetService forecaster Cameron Coutts said frosts were expected tomorrow morning from Waikato southwards.

"It will probably be one of the coldest mornings yet, but temperatures will warm probably into the late teens."

Similar conditions were expected on Saturday morning, but the rest of the weekend should bring fine weather and normal temperatures.

"It will be good for the people travelling to their holiday haunts, in the North Island anyway," said Mr Coutts.

Parts of the Bay of Plenty, Gisborne and Hawkes Bay are the best bets for an April tan, with northwesterly winds boosting temperatures there to highs of about 22C on Saturday and Sunday.

Weatherwatch head analyst Philip Duncan said the weekend was not likely to produce any extreme weather. Those travelling north to holiday spots could expect a sunny start tomorrow. Fine weather was expected over the weekend with temperatures around 19C.

Warning: Make the most of sun this weekend

Saturday Apr 18, 2009 By [Alanah May Eriksen](#) NZHerald



A couple pose for wedding photos at Mission Bay. The dark clouds do not match up with the fine weather forecast for the weekend but are a pointer to what is in store next week. Photo / Paul Estcourt

Make the most of the fine weather this weekend - forecasters predict storms on the horizon. The MetService says the so-called "Indian summer" - with some April mornings as warm as a typical January day - was probably a popular reaction to the cold snap before Easter.

"It got cold there for a while," said forecaster Marylin Avery. "It feels like a bit of a reprieve with this nice weather coming back."

"April weather is very changeable, very varied. You don't know what's going to happen next. With school holidays at the moment, I guess you'd better make the most of it."

Philip Duncan of the Weather Watch Centre said a low formed yesterday and would deepen quickly during the weekend. It might warrant heavy rain warnings, most likely in Northland and on the Coromandel Peninsula and bring gale force winds across the Hauraki Gulf and Eastern Waikato.

"Farms, gardens and water tanks are drying out across the country," Mr Duncan said.

"We went from a wet February to a very dry March and first two weeks of April."

Drought plan as rain arrives

<http://www.stuff.co.nz/dominion-post/news/hawkes-bay/2348468/Drought-plan-as-rain-arrives>

By BERNARD CARPINTER - The Dominion Post 21 April 2009



Gisborne Herald

GOOD WEATHER FOR DUCKS: Consistent rain has started to fall in parched areas of Gisborne, with a farmer saying it is perfect to soak into the ground. Although more rain is predicted till Friday, Agriculture Minister David Carter says it will not be strong enough to break the drought.

The Government has announced it will give drought assistance to farmers in Gisborne and Wairoa the same day a heavy rain warning was issued for the parched region.

Agriculture Minister David Carter revealed the aid package yesterday, after meeting the local drought committee in Gisborne.

The package will include tax assistance measures, cash for farm management advice and funding for rural support trusts.

A spokeswoman for Mr Carter said it was hard to put a figure on the package as it depended on how many farmers asked for help. At present, 75 farms were severely affected but conditions on more were deteriorating as the drought continued. Apart from January, Gisborne's rainfall has been well below average each month since July last year. Hawke's Bay farms have also been hit by drought.

However, yesterday MetService issued a severe weather warning for the area, with up to 90 millimetres of rain expected to fall between Coromandel and Wairoa during 24 hours. Rain began falling about mid-afternoon yesterday and police reported several crashes on State Highway 29, through the Kaimai Range in western Bay of Plenty. They urged drivers to be cautious as wet weather made roads slippery.

Amanda Cave, whose family farms in hills 30 kilometres west of Gisborne, said the dry summer and autumn had left their property parched. But yesterday's consistent rain was perfect to soak into the ground. "It's very relaxing."

More rain is forecast for Gisborne through to Friday, but Mr Carter said it would not be enough to alleviate the effects of the drought. "East Coast farmers are bearing the brunt of three years of extreme weather. The Government knows this is putting severe pressure on rural communities and that they need help to get through this."

Federated Farmers spokesman Frank Brenmuhl welcomed the Government's rapid response, but said that other regions were also at risk, including inland parts of Wairarapa and Hawke's Bay. (abridged)

It's autumn and it's cool

<http://www.stuff.co.nz/dominion-post/news/central-north-island/2359547/Its-autumn-and-its-cool>

24/04/2009 The Dominion Post



ROBERT KITCHIN/The Dominion Post

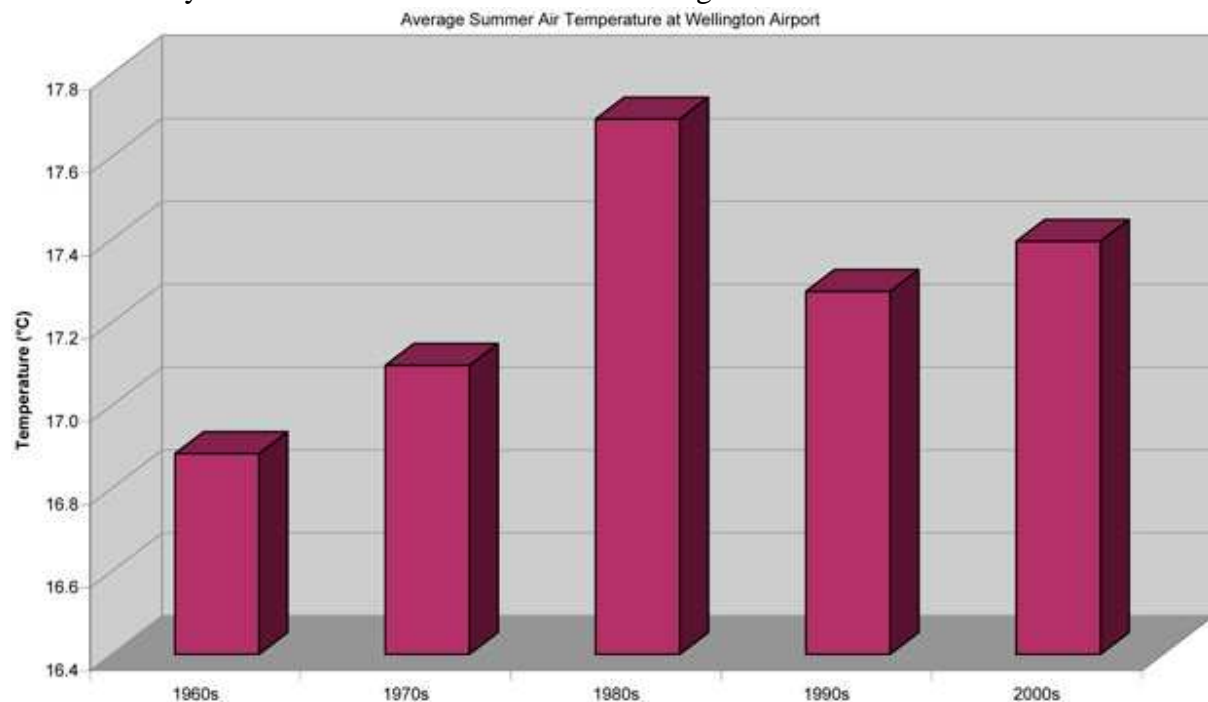
AUTUMN DAYS: Annabel Twomey playing in the leaves at Masterton's Queen Elizabeth Park in Masterton, the coldest place in New Zealand this week, with a seven-degree frost.

MetService spokesman Bob McDavitt said the frosts were over, and it would be warmer by the weekend. Heavy rain is forecast for Northland and the West Coast but Wellington should be overcast and about 15 degrees celsius on Anzac Day.

Longing for the lazy, hazy days of summer

<http://www.stuff.co.nz/dominion-post/wellington/2354619/Longing-for-the-lazy-hazy-days-of-summer>

23/04/2009 By REBECCA THOMSON - The Wellingtonian / Dominion Post



HEATING UP: NIWA figures show Wellington's summers have been getting warmer, with particularly hot summers during the 1980s.

Did summers seem longer and hotter 20 years ago?

One of our readers thinks so. In a letter to the editor, Pamela Stainton recalled hot, dry summers during the 1970s and 80s. "Am I imagining things or was this summer colder than usual?" she asked.

It turns out that our weather-conscious reader might be at least partially right. The 1980s was an especially hot decade. National Institute of Water and Atmospheric Research figures show that this summer, temperatures were, in fact, between 0.5 and 1.5 degrees higher than average. Summers have actually been getting warmer since the 1960s, but there was a spike in temperatures during the 1980s.

The summer period is December 1 to March 1. During the 1960s, the average temperature during this period was 16.8 degrees Celsius. This decade summer temperatures have averaged 17.3C. During the 1980s, summer temperature averaged 17.7C.

Climate scientist Dr Andrew Tait attributed the hot 1980s to fewer anti-cyclones (highs) to the west of the South Island. "This weather pattern results in south-westerly to southerly flow over New Zealand, which tends to be cooler," he said. "In addition, anti-cyclones generally have low moisture content, and that might also explain the higher than average relative humidity observed in Wellington in this decade."

Summertime humidity has risen since the 1960s, when the average was 73.8 per cent. During the 1980s, humidity averaged 78 per cent and this decade humidity was 75 per cent during summer (abridged).

Whakatane's sunshine claim discredited

<http://tvnz.co.nz/national-news/whakatanes-sunshine-claim-discredited-2672604>

24 April 2009, NZPA / TVNZ



Whakatane has lost its fight with the government boffins to be crowned New Zealand's sunshine capital.

The National Institute of Water and Atmospheric Research (Niwa) issued test findings on Thursday which, it claims, show the sunshine recorder at Whakatane's oxidation ponds is making faulty measurements.

Whakatane's recorder logged up 2703 sunshine hours in 2008, well ahead of second-placed Blenheim with 2505 hours. But Niwa said that was too good to be true. Setting up its own recorder alongside Whakatane's, Niwa ran tests over 30 days, from March 11 to April 9 inclusive, and Thursday's report says the Whakatane instrument notched up an average of 12.1 minutes a day more sunshine than Niwa's.

Over the 366 days of 2008, that still only comes to an extra 73 hours, leaving Whakatane outshining Blenheim, but Niwa says the faulty readings are enough to invalidate the Eastern Bay result.

Mary Hermanson, marketing manager of Eastern Bay economic development agency Toi-EDA, still reckoned Whakatane was New Zealand's sunniest spot but said -whatever the result - the publicity the issue had generated had been a huge plus for the region. Whakatane's recorder has now been adjusted to measure the golden rays in the same way as Niwa's, and she was happy to wait until the end of 2009 for the sunshine crown to come to "its rightful place". (abridged)

Face of NIWA sacked for talking to media

<http://tvnz.co.nz/national-news/face-niwa-sacked-being-too-public-2673255>

Friday April 24, 200 TVNZ



ONE News sJim Salinger

One of New Zealand's top climate scientists has just been fired from his job at the National Institute of Water & Atmospheric research (NIWA).

Dr Jim Salinger has been the public face of the organisation for three decades, but says it was his unauthorised talking to the media that's got him sacked.

Salinger, whose work as a science communicator has earned him accolades and even contributed to a Nobel Peace Prize, says he is now planning to sue his former employer for unjustified dismissal because according to him, he cannot understand why he was sacked.

"It's not as though I'm doing bad science, it's not as though I'm not performing and so I'm really astounded".

What got Salinger fired is something that in the past brought him high praise - talking to the media.

Salinger says he always believed that his media work actually brought NIWA into repute.

And indeed, NIWA is not claiming any concern about what their principal scientist actually said to the media. It's that he defied new policy - speaking publicly without gaining prior approval.

One instance of what NIWA calls "serious misconduct" was when he participated in a ONE News story about the shrinking of New Zealand's glaciers.

Another case where he was quoted was described as insubordination.

But Salinger says the reasons given for his dismissal are not strong enough to get him fired.

"As scientists we're all a bit eccentric and we all might slightly break protocol, but it's not going to destroy NIWA".

And Dr John Lancashire from the NZ Institute of Agricultural & Horticultural Science agrees with Salinger's views.

"I'm not aware of any other country sacking a Nobel award winner or for that matter a companion of the Royal Society of NZ, so that's a bit strange I'd have to say".

NIWA says it will not talk about an employment issue publicly, but says it had given him warnings before his dismissal.

Late Thursday, Dr Salinger arrived home from NIWA for the last time. He may head the World Commission for Agricultural Meteorology, but now has no job to go to in his own country.

His work now is to make room for over 30 years of scientific papers - the quality of which is not in question.

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View Jeanette Fitzsimmons question in the house at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P-Bj9khD97s>

Or listen to a Radio NZ interview

http://admin.radionz.co.nz/_data/assets/audio_item/0010/1926694/ckpt-20090424-1828-jim_Salinger_sacked_from_NIWA-m048.asx

Slip blocks road in stormy weekend

<http://www.bayofplentytimes.co.nz/localnews/storydisplay.cfm?storyid=3797418&thesubsection=localnews&thesubsection=&thesecondsubsection=>

27.04.2009 by Vicki Waterhouse and Lauren Owens Bay of Plenty Times



PICTURE CLAIRE DE BARR: Oropi Gorge Rd disappeared beneath a torrent of dirt and scrub this morning.

A massive slip on a rural road blocked traffic this morning, apparently forcing vehicles, including a school bus, to reverse back up the treacherous incline.

Firefighters responding to a call to remove a log blocking a road instead found the slip on Oropi Gorge Rd, that occurred after a weekend of heavy rain.

The MetService said Tauranga had 18mm of rain in the last 24 hours. The heaviest period was last night between 4pm and 6pm when 12mm fell.

Greymouth hit by 'weather bomb'

<http://www.stuff.co.nz/national/2370278/Greymouth-hit-by-weather-bomb>

28 April 2009 Greymouth Times

A sudden deluge in Greymouth has badly damaged a number of houses and it will be several weeks before the residents are allowed to return.

Greymouth appeared to suffer the worst from a band of heavy rain that moved up the country last night - prompting rain warnings from the MetService and cautions on road conditions. Eleven people were evacuated in Greymouth, including two from council pensioner flats, when more than 10cm of rain fell in a few hours.

Grey District Mayor Tony Kokshoorn told NZPA that a "massive weather bomb and flash flood" saw one house knee-deep in water and the volume of water going down the road made it look like a little river.

The MetService said the heaviest rain in Westland had passed but there was a heavy rain warning for areas from Canterbury north to Taranaki. That has prompted a warning for drivers to drive to conditions ahead of heavy rain in Wellington region. (abridged)- NZPA

Haast highway closed by flooding

Otago Daily Times Tue 28 April 2009



Photo copyright to Matthew Haggart.

Flood-prone Pipson Creek near Makarora burst its banks and closed State Highway 6 yesterday afternoon, as torrential rain fell across the Main Divide.

Forecast heavy rain for the West Coast and Main Divide arrived as predicted on Sunday night and brought down slips further along SH6 to Haast, and flooded the coastal highway, further north. The remote mountain valley township of Pipson Creek recorded 84mm of rain in the 24 hours to 4pm, yesterday, according to the Otago Regional Council's water information website - only 6mm away from activating a first landslide monitoring warning.

Makarora Civil Defence co-ordinator David Howe said the creek had overflowed its banks about 11.30am. The main link to the West Coast was closed shortly after 1pm, he said.

Heavy rain also fell around Wanaka and Hawea, with about 26mm recorded in the 24 hours to 4pm yesterday. (abridged)