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Massive Arctic heatwave reignites Siberian forest fires

BY KAREN GRAHAM YESTERDAY IN ENVIRONMENT

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Global warming is no longer a distant threat as exceptionally warm temperatures in some parts of the Arctic reach as much as 16 degrees Celsius (29 degrees Fahrenheit) higher than the usual, according to meteorologists.



"Climate change is no longer a distant threat, but is already bringing about a new reality for many," Robert Rohde, lead scientist at Berkeley Earth, tweeted on May, 19, reports [Newsweek](#).

Russia has experienced the warmest winter ever recorded. Average temperatures in Russia from January to April were almost 6 degrees Celsius above historical norms. "That's not only a new record anomaly for Russia," said Rohde. "That's the largest January to April anomaly ever seen in any country's national average."

The high temperatures and below-normal precipitation has led to numerous wildfires in the country's boreal forests, with some of the fires starting in March and April this year. An early start typically means a longer fire season, [according to academics](#) at Swansea University.



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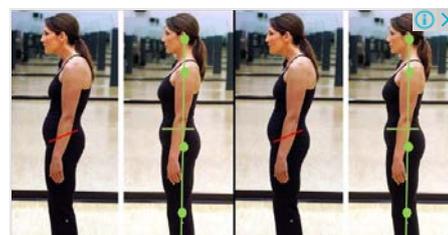
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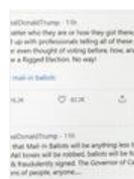
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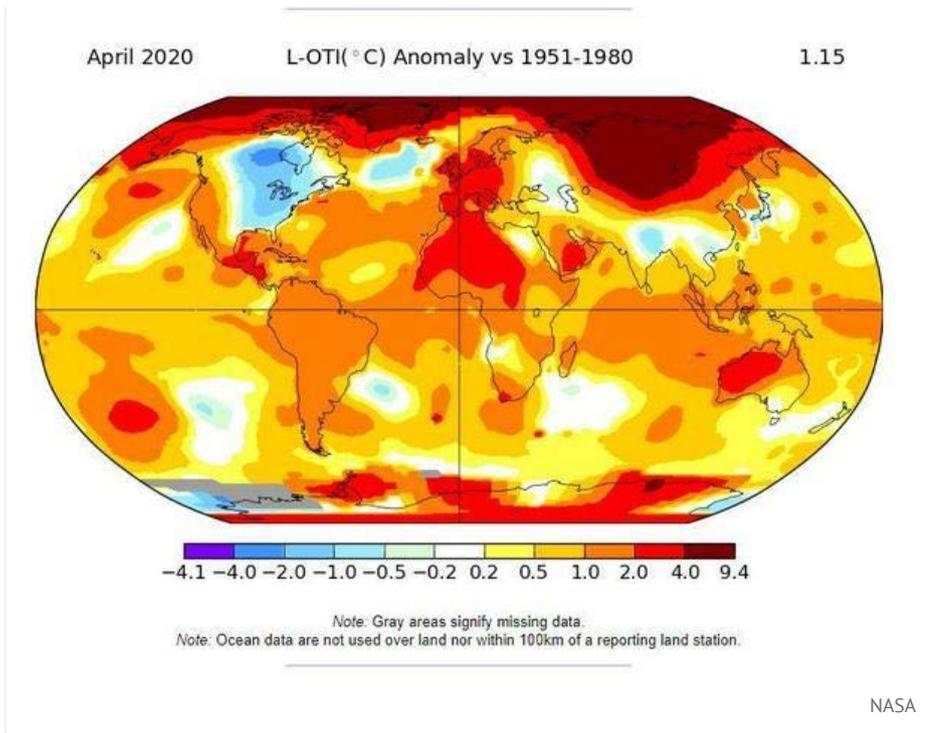
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“Siberia has a lot of stored carbon,” said Cristina Santin Nuno, associate professor at Swansea University. “What happens to it will affect the planet in a substantial way.”

Scientists at Europe’s **Copernicus Climate Change Service** are already forecasting sweltering temperatures and little rainfall this summer, adding to what was a mild winter and threatening droughts.

In fact, April was the hottest month on record, ever for the globe, driven by high Arctic temperatures that averaged an astounding 17 degrees Fahrenheit (9.4 degrees Celsius) above normal, according to **NASA data**.

Martin Stendel, a climate scientist at the Danish Meteorological Institute, in talking about the unusual May heatwave that has pushed things into overdrive, told the Washington Post that the mid-May warmth is “quite extraordinary...there is no similar event so early in the season.”



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Siberian #wildfires🔥 within the #ArcticCircle❄️ at 67.5°N, #SakhaRepublic, #Russia🇷🇺 18 May 2020 Enh. nat. col. + IR overlay #Copernicus #Sentinel-2🌐📡 Full-size ➡ flic.kr/p/2j3dbvJ #RemoteSensing #scicomm #OpenData #Siberia #Arctic #wildfire Image is about 18 km wide



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For whatever reason, the heat flowing out of Siberia and over the North Pole is extraordinary and could pose a threat to sea ice, which saw its fourth-lowest extent on record for April. The abnormal warmth has also hit Greenland, where the ice sheet’s annual melt got started two weeks early, reports [Gizmodo Earther](#).

Perhaps the worst thing happening right now is the massive wildfires raging in Siberia. They have been quietly burning, with millions of acres being consumed, for the last month. Satellite monitoring expert Pierre Markuse tweeted an image on Monday showing fires creeping across the tundra in the Republic of Sakha that makes up most of eastern Siberia.

We need to remember that the Arctic is warming twice as fast as any place else on Earth. And even though these heatwaves have become somewhat commonplace to many people, it still shouldn’t make them any less shocking or alarming.

More about [arctic](#), [hwrwave](#), [siberia](#), [forest fires](#), [hottest winter on record](#)

Arctic

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