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Georgia temperatures have rarely been hotter than in 2023, data shows

The U.S. has also been hit by a record-breaking 23 separate billion-dollar disasters so far this year



[← Caption](#)

Credit: John Spink

NEWS

By **Drew Kann**

21 hours ago



With meteorological summer now in the rearview mirror, new federal data shows that Georgia is well on its way to having one of the hottest years in the state's recorded history.

The eight months from January to August 2023 were the second-hottest such period to start a year for Georgia since recordkeeping began in 1895. Temperatures statewide have averaged 67.8 degrees so far this year, almost three degrees above what was considered "normal" last century.

The rest of planet has also been sweltering.

[Earth likely just endured its hottest summer on record](#), according to the World Meteorological Organization and Copernicus, the European Union's climate monitoring service. The burning of fossil fuels and other human activities are driving up average temperatures across the globe and increasing the odds of potentially fatal heatwaves.

Average temperatures in Georgia from January through August since 1895

Temperatures in Georgia during the first eight months of 2023 averaged 67.8 degrees, almost three degrees warmer than the 20th century norm of 65 degrees, shown by the dotted orange line.



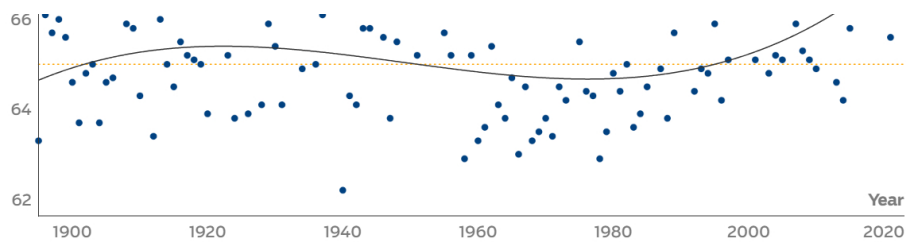


Chart: George Mathis · Source: National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

The Atlanta Journal-Constitution

Summer was warmer than normal across the Peach State, too, with June through August ranking as the state's 30th-hottest such stretch. Not only is the heat itself dangerous to humans, but it can exacerbate extreme weather and other natural disasters.

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The country as a whole has already endured a [record-breaking 23 separate billion-dollar disasters](#) so far in 2023, capped by Hurricane Idalia's destructive slog across the Southeast. And it's only September.

From fires in Hawaii to tropical storms in Florida, hardly any part of the country has escaped the natural disasters or record-breaking heat. Many of those events were made more intense and damaging by human-caused climate change, experts say.

It's possible that 2023 could finish as one of Georgia's warmest years on record. That's due in large part to the exceptionally hot winter that kicked off the year, said Pam Knox, an agricultural climatologist at the University of Georgia. The months from January to March 2023 were the hottest such period on record in the state, with temperatures averaging 6.4 degrees above normal.

The unusual winter warmth caused the state's trademark peach trees to bloom early, [leaving them vulnerable when freezing temperatures returned briefly in March](#). An estimated 90% of the state's peaches were destroyed in the cold snaps, [prompting the federal government to issue a disaster declaration for dozens of Georgia counties](#).

Disaster struck parts of rural Georgia again late last month in the form of Hurricane Idalia.

Idalia rapidly intensified over the unusually warm waters of the Gulf of Mexico, before making landfall on Aug. 30 in the Big Bend region of Florida as a Category 3 storm with sustained winds of 125 miles per hour. The storm weakened by the time it crossed into Georgia, but was still packing hurricane force-winds as it took a northeasterly track across the state.

Rural counties in deep South Georgia along a corridor stretching roughly from Valdosta to Waycross and on to the Georgia coast were among the hardest hit. Last week, President Joe Biden [approved federal disaster assistance for those affected in Cook, Glynn and Lowndes Counties](#).

The storm also appears to have taken a toll on some of Georgia's most valuable crops, especially pecans.

Lenny Wells, a professor and pecan specialist at the University of Georgia's Tifton campus, said it could be weeks before the full extent of the damage is known, but added that growers in areas in the path of the storm may have lost 50% to 80% of their crop. Wells estimated Idalia

claimed 15% to 20% of the state's total pecans, but cautioned that those numbers could grow.

"We still could see some losses that we aren't aware of at the moment just from the wind beating them around," he said.

Historically, [Sept. 10 has marked the peak for tropical activity in the Atlantic Basin](#), but it's possible Georgia and the rest of the Southeast will face more destructive storms before hurricane season ends in late November. Just last month, NOAA revised their hurricane season forecast upward and called for more storms than previously projected, in part due to the persistence of near-record ocean temperatures.

[NOAA's latest forecast for October through December](#) calls for Georgia to have a hotter than normal end of the year, especially in the southern part of the state.

A note of disclosure

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About the Author



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Drew Kann is a reporter at The Atlanta Journal-Constitution covering climate change and environmental issues. His passion is for stories that capture how humans are responding to a changing environment. He is a proud graduate of the University of Georgia and Northwestern University, and prior to joining the AJC, he held various roles at CNN.

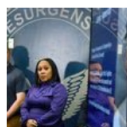
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