Climate4you update February 2013

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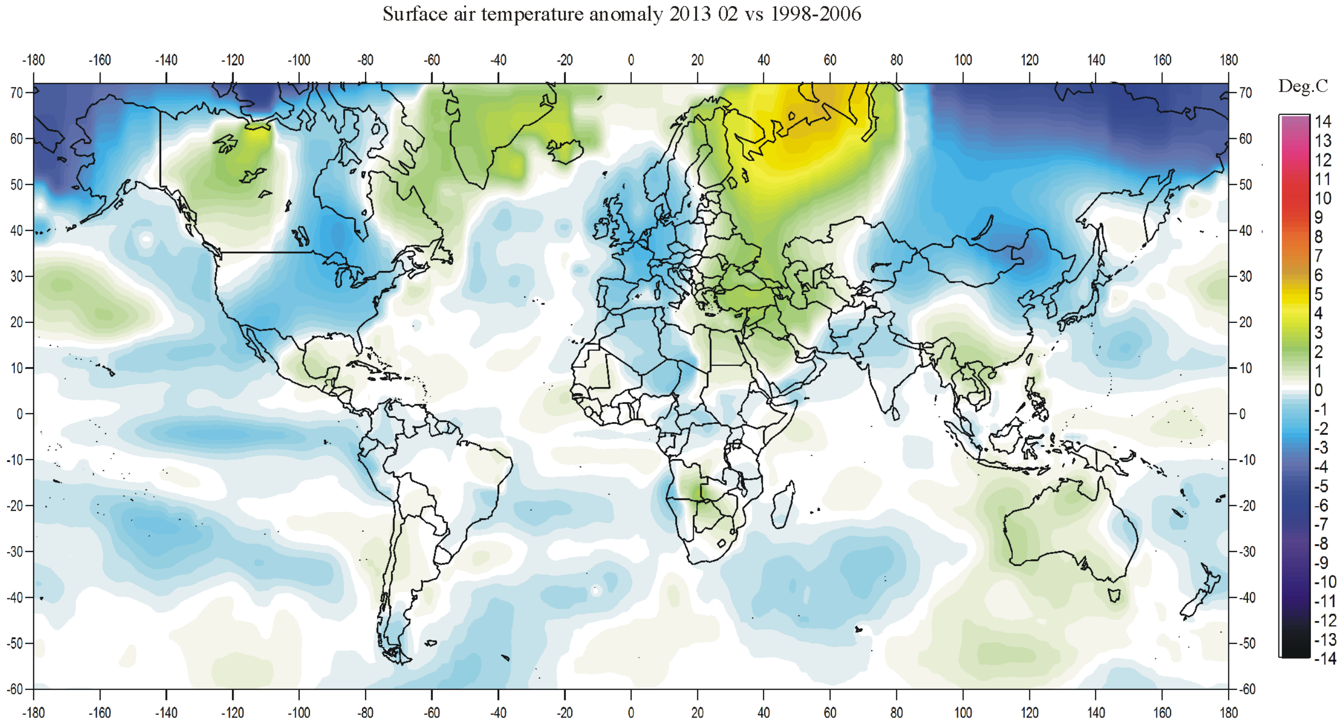
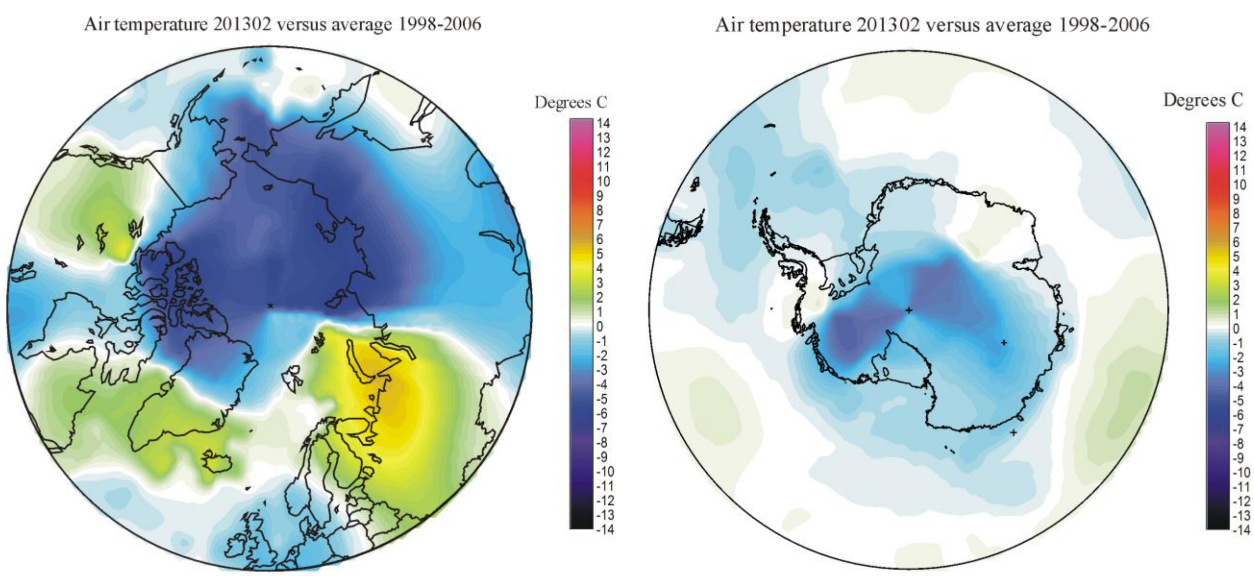
All diagrams in this newsletter as well as links to the original data are available on www.climate4you.com

February 2013 global surface air temperature overview





February 2013 surface air temperature compared to the average 1998-2006. Green-yellow-red colours indicate areas with higher temperature than the 1998-2006 average, while blue colours indicate lower than average temperatures. Data source: Goddard Institute for Space Studies (GISS)

Comments to the February 2013 global surface air temperature overview

General: This newsletter contains graphs showing a selection of key meteorological variables for the past month. *All temperatures are given in degrees Celsius*.

In the above maps showing the geographical pattern of surface air temperatures, *the period 1998-2006 is used as reference period*. The reason for comparing with this recent period instead of the official WMO 'normal' period 1961-1990, is that the latter period is affected by the relatively cold period 1945-1980. Almost any comparison with such a low average value will therefore appear as high or warm, and it will be difficult to decide if and where modern surface air temperatures are increasing or decreasing at the moment. Comparing with a more recent period overcomes this problem. In addition to this consideration, the recent temperature development suggests that the time window 1998-2006 may roughly represent a global temperature peak. If so, negative temperature anomalies will gradually become more and more widespread as time goes on. However, if positive anomalies instead gradually become more widespread, this reference period only represented a temperature plateau.

In the other diagrams in this newsletter *the thin line represents the monthly global average value*, and *the thick line indicate a simple running average*, in most cases a simple moving 37-month average, nearly corresponding to a three year average. The 37-month average is calculated from values covering a range from 18 month before to 18 months after, with equal weight for every month.

The year 1979 has been chosen as starting point in many diagrams, as this roughly corresponds to both the beginning of satellite observations and the onset of the late 20th century warming period. However, several of the records have a much longer record length, which may be inspected in greater detail on www.Climate4you.com.

February 2013 global surface air temperatures

General: On average, global air temperatures were somewhat below the 1998-2006 average, although with large regional differences

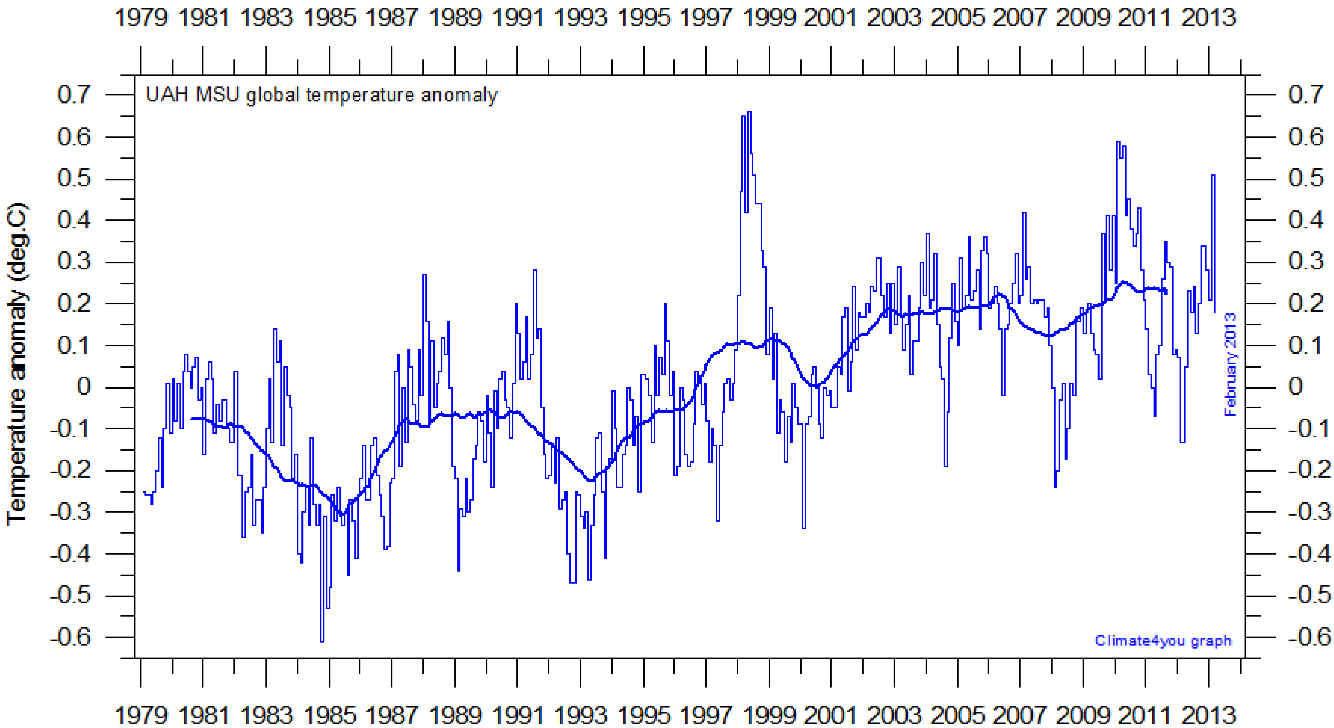
The Northern Hemisphere as usual was characterised by big temperature contrast from one region to another. Most land areas in the Northern Hemisphere experienced below average temperatures, and the only areas with higher than average temperatures were parts of Greenland and NW Russia. Most of the Arctic had below average temperatures. The marked limit between warm and cold areas over the Arctic Ocean represents an artefact derived from the GISS interpolation technique and should be ignored.

Near Equator temperatures conditions were near or below the 1998-2006 average.

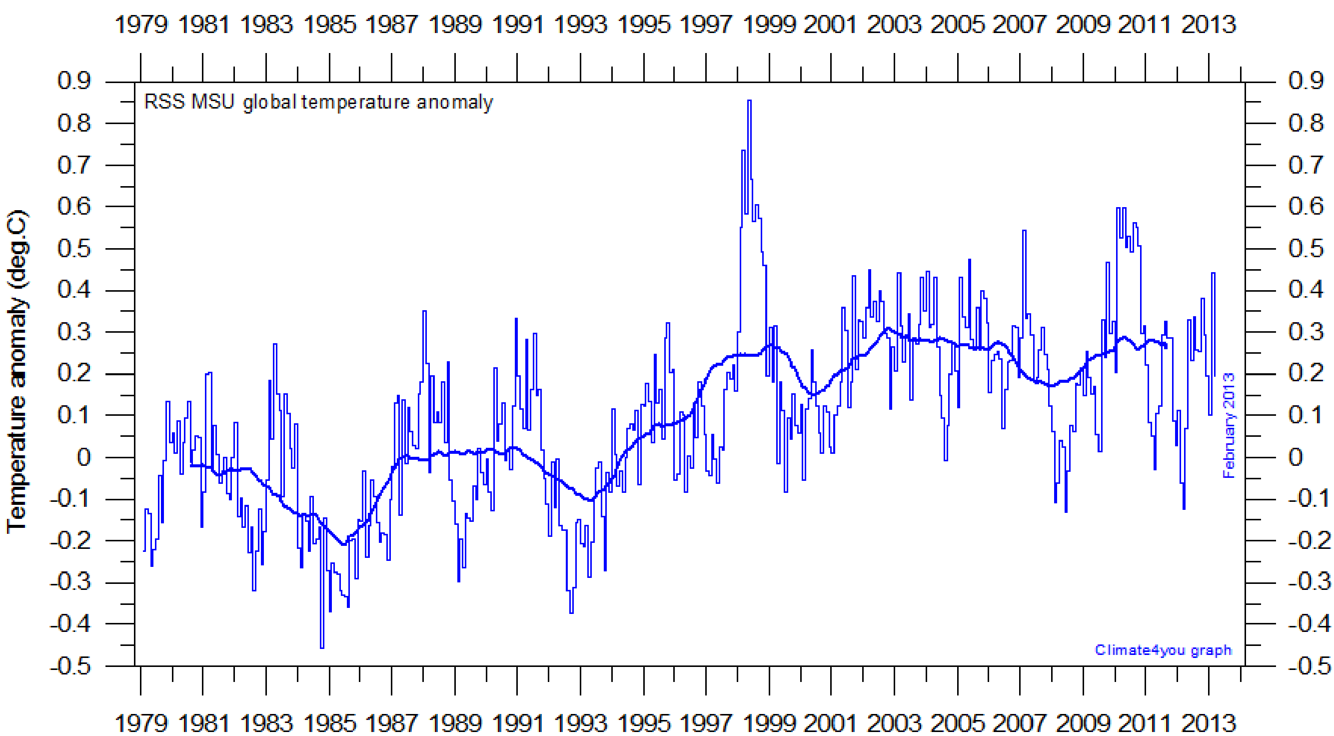
The Southern Hemisphere was mainly at or below average 1998-2006 conditions. The only important exception from this was the major part of Australia, which experienced temperatures slightly above the 1998-2006 average. The Antarctic continent was below the temperature average.

The global oceanic heat content has been rather stable since 2003/2004 (page 12).

Lower troposphere temperature from satellites, updated to February 2013

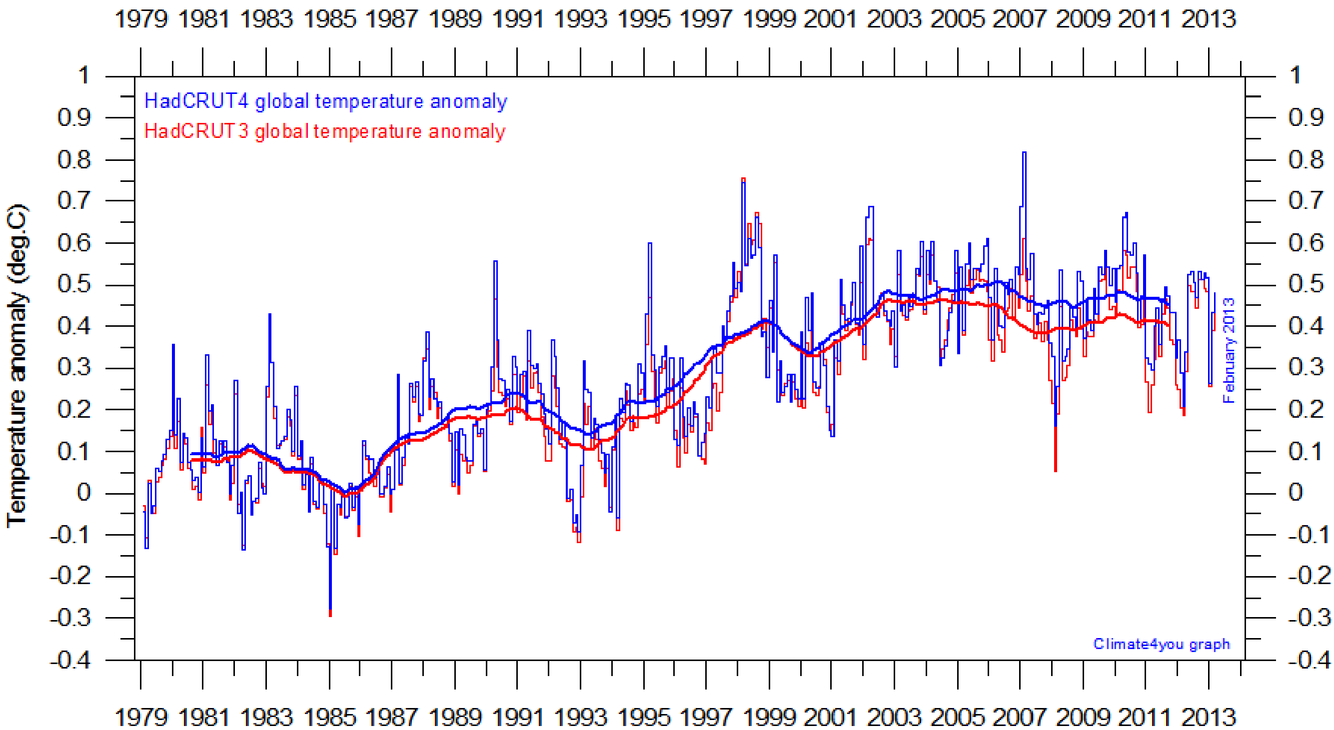


Global monthly average lower troposphere temperature (thin line) since 1979 according to University of Alabama at Huntsville, USA. The thick line is the simple running 37 month average.

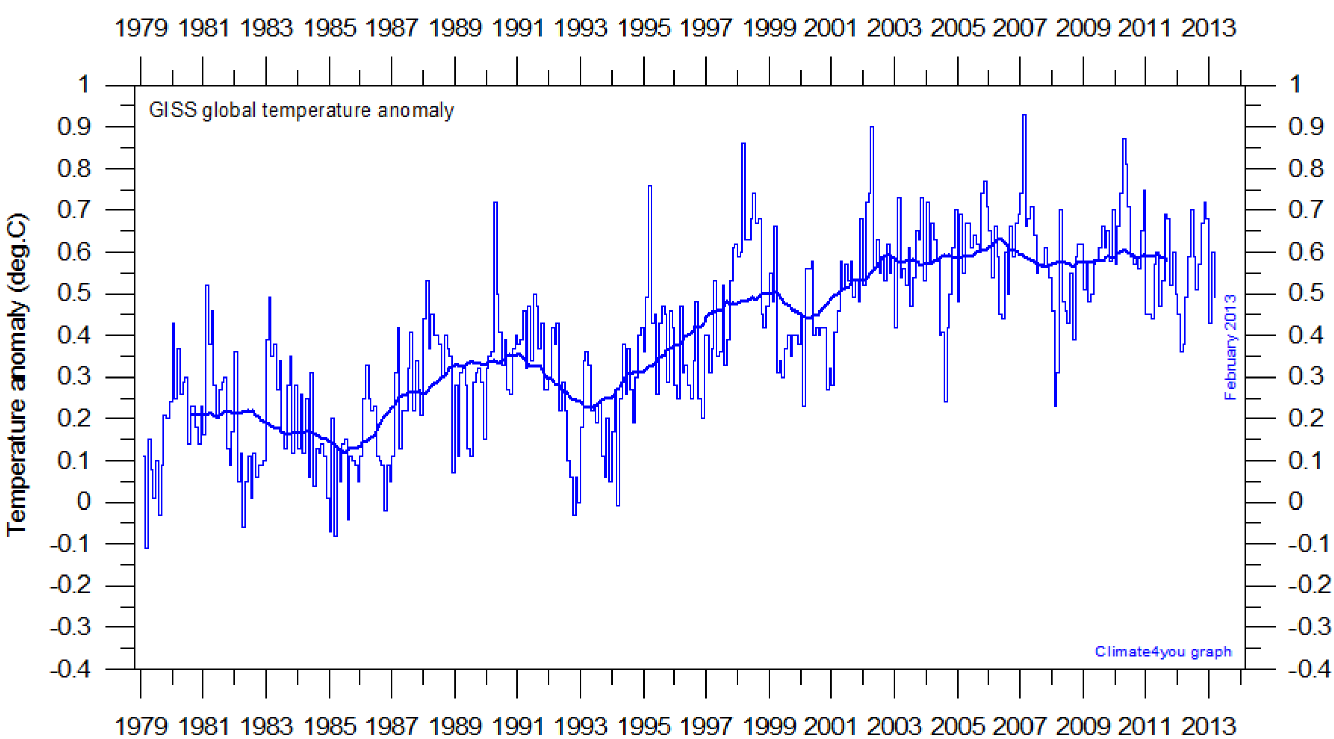


Global monthly average lower troposphere temperature (thin line) since 1979 according to according to Remote Sensing Systems (RSS), USA. The thick line is the simple running 37 month average.

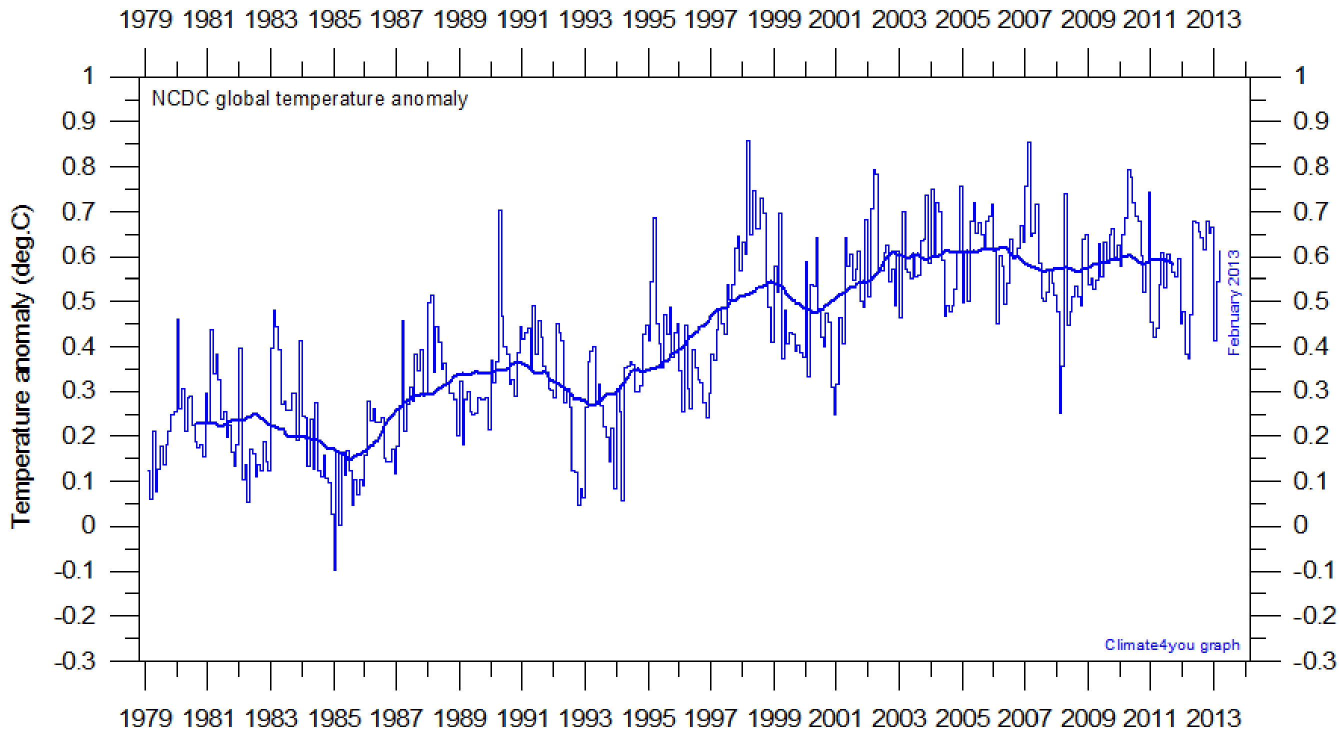
Global surface air temperature, updated to February 2013



Global monthly average surface air temperature (thin line) since 1979 according to according to the Hadley Centre for Climate Prediction and Research and the University of East Anglia's Climatic Research Unit (CRU), UK. The thick line is the simple running 37 month average. Version HadCRUT4 (blue) is now replacing HadCRUT3 (red).



Global monthly average surface air temperature (thin line) since 1979 according to according to the Goddard Institute for Space Studies (GISS), at Columbia University, New York City, USA. The thick line is the simple running 37 month average.



Global monthly average surface air temperature since 1979 according to according to the [National Climatic Data Center](#) (NCDC), USA. The thick line is the simple running 37 month average.

<u>A note on data record stability:</u>

All the above temperature estimates display changes when one compare with previous monthly data sets, not only for the most recent months as a result of supplementary data being added, but actually for all months back to the very beginning of the records. Presumably this reflects recognition of errors, changes in the averaging procedure, and the influence of other phenomena.

None of the temperature records are stable over time (since 2008). The two surface air temperature records, NCDC and GISS, show apparent systematic changes over time. This is exemplified the diagram on the following page showing the changes since May 2008 in the NCDC global surface temperature record for January 1915 and January 2000, illustrating how the difference between the early and late part of the temperature records gradually is growing by administrative means.

You can find more on the issue of temporal stability (or lack of this) on [www.climate4you](#) (go to: *Global Temperature*, followed by *Temporal Stability*).

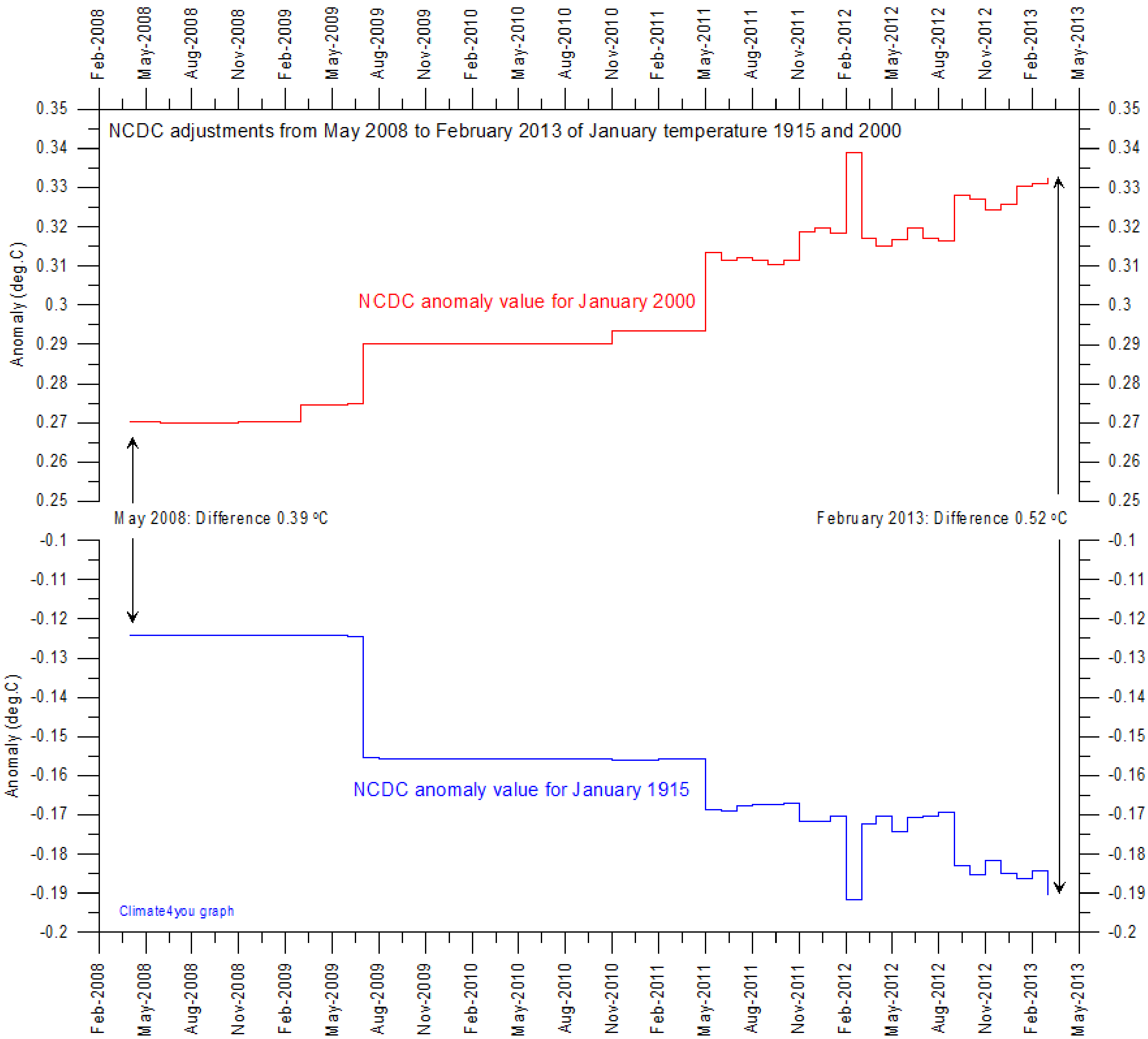
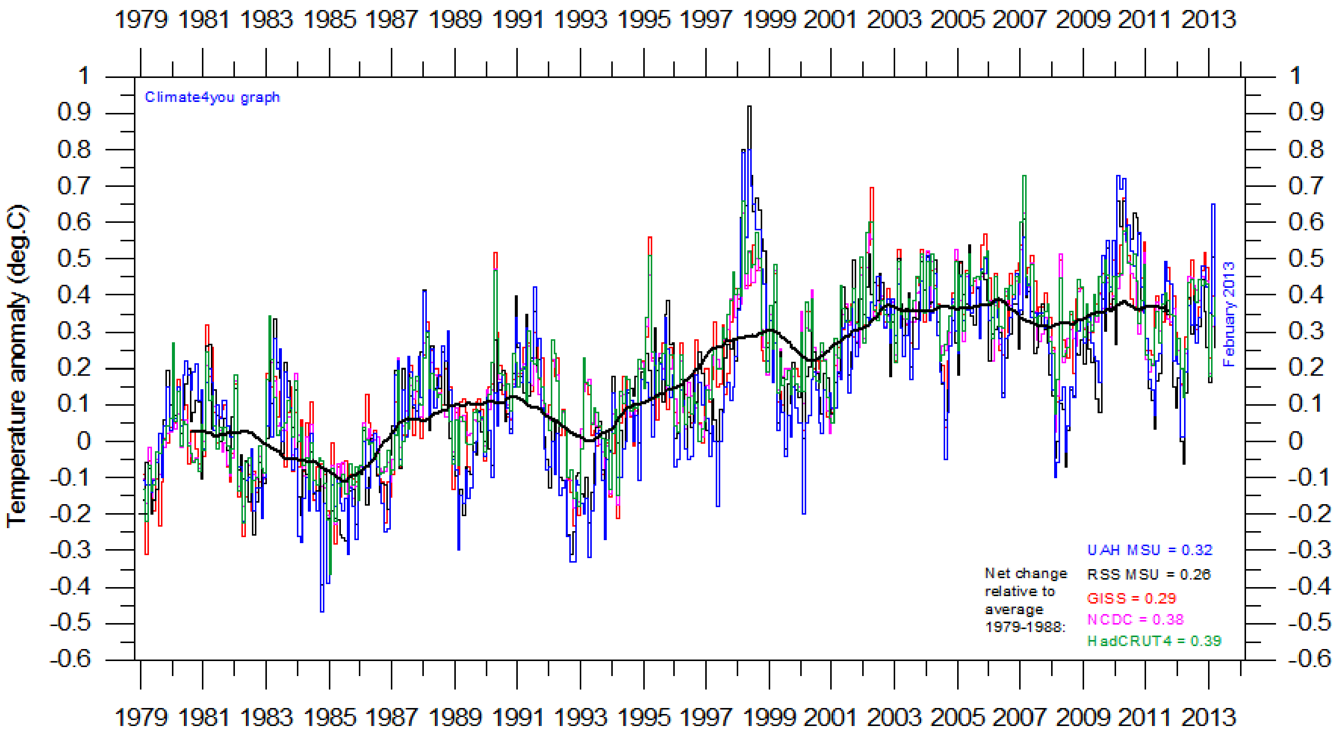


Diagram showing the adjustment made since May 2008 by the [National Climatic Data Center](#) (NCDC) in the anomaly values for the two months January 1915 and January 2000.

All in one, updated to February 2012

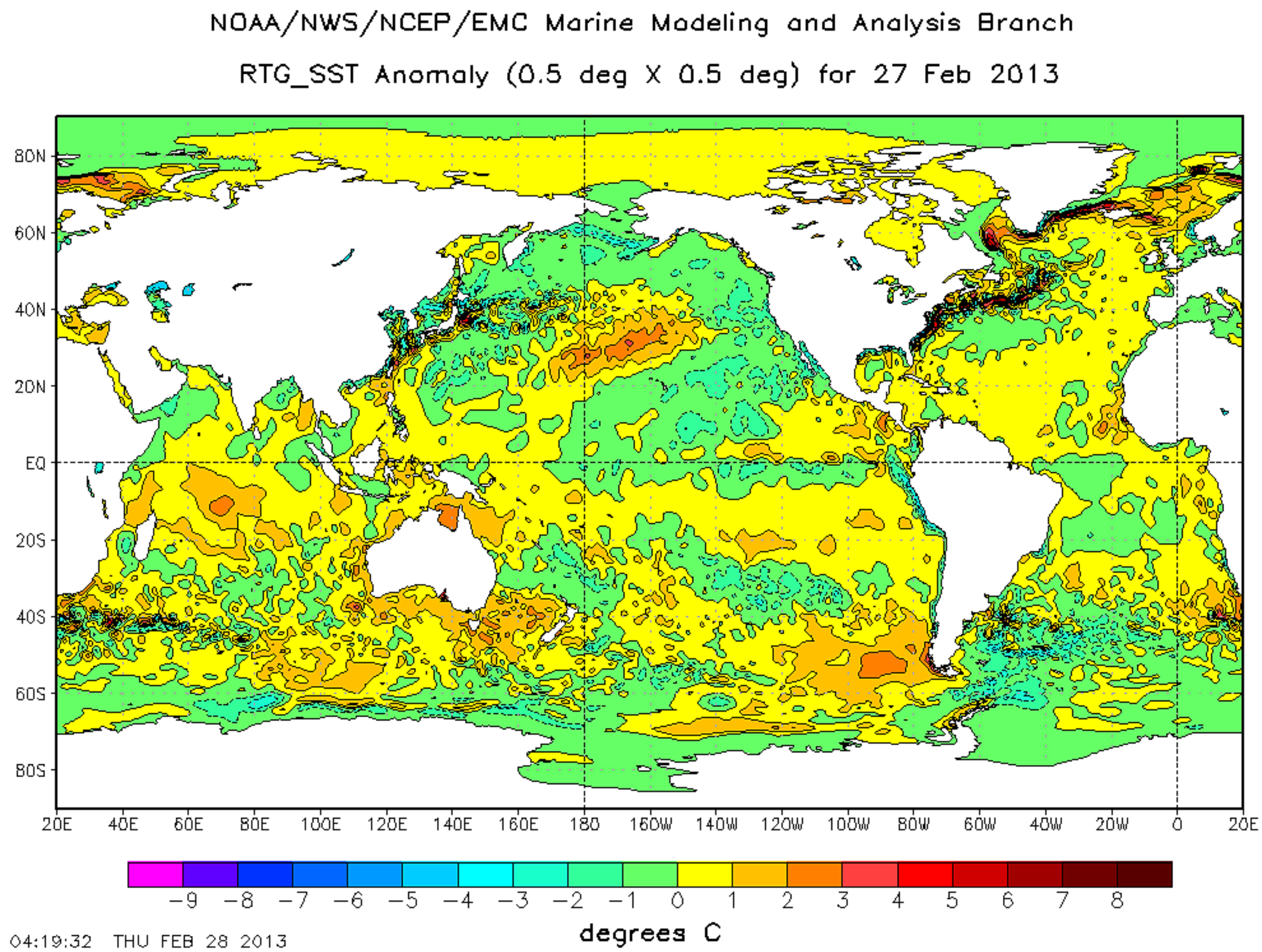


Superimposed plot of all five global monthly temperature estimates. As the base period differs for the individual temperature estimates, they have all been normalised by comparing with the average value of the initial 120 months (10 years) from January 1979 to December 1988. The heavy black line represents the simple running 37 month (c. 3 year) mean of the average of all five temperature records. The numbers shown in the lower right corner represent the temperature anomaly relative to the individual 1979-1988 averages.

It should be kept in mind that satellite- and surface-based temperature estimates are derived from different types of measurements, and that comparing them directly as done in the diagram above therefore in principle may be problematical. However, as both types of estimate often are discussed together, the above diagram may nevertheless be of some interest. In fact, the different types of temperature estimates appear to agree quite well as to the overall temperature variations on a 2-3 year scale, although on a shorter time scale there are often considerable differences between the individual records.

All five global temperature estimates presently show an overall stagnation, at least since 2002. There has been no increase in global air temperature since 1998, which however was affected by the oceanographic El Niño event. This stagnation does not exclude the possibility that global temperatures will begin to increase again later. On the other hand, it also remain a possibility that Earth just now is passing a temperature peak, and that global temperatures will begin to decrease within the coming years. Time will show which of these two possibilities is correct.

Global sea surface temperature, updated to late February 2013



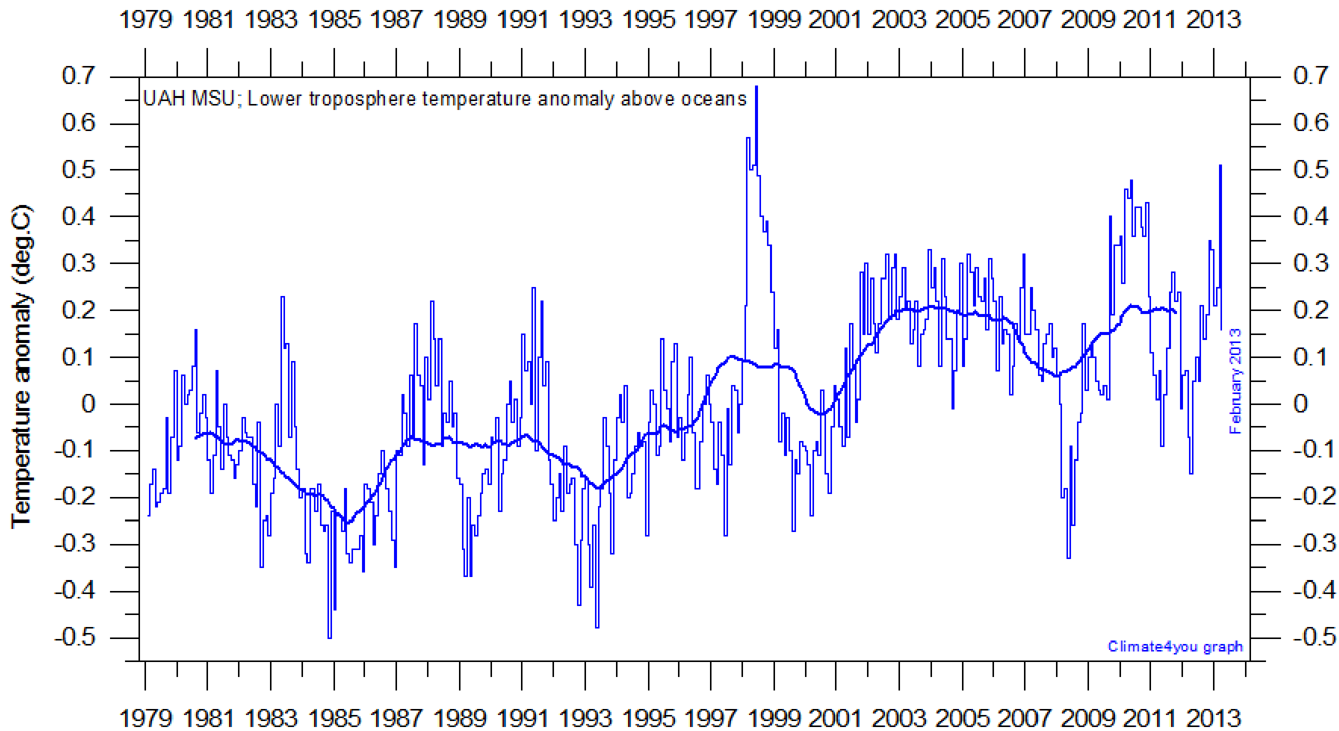
Sea surface temperature anomaly at 27 February 2013. Map source: National Centers for Environmental Prediction (NOAA).

A clear ocean surface temperature asymmetry is apparent between the two hemispheres, with relatively warm conditions in the northern hemisphere, and relatively cold conditions in the southern hemisphere, but with large regional differences.

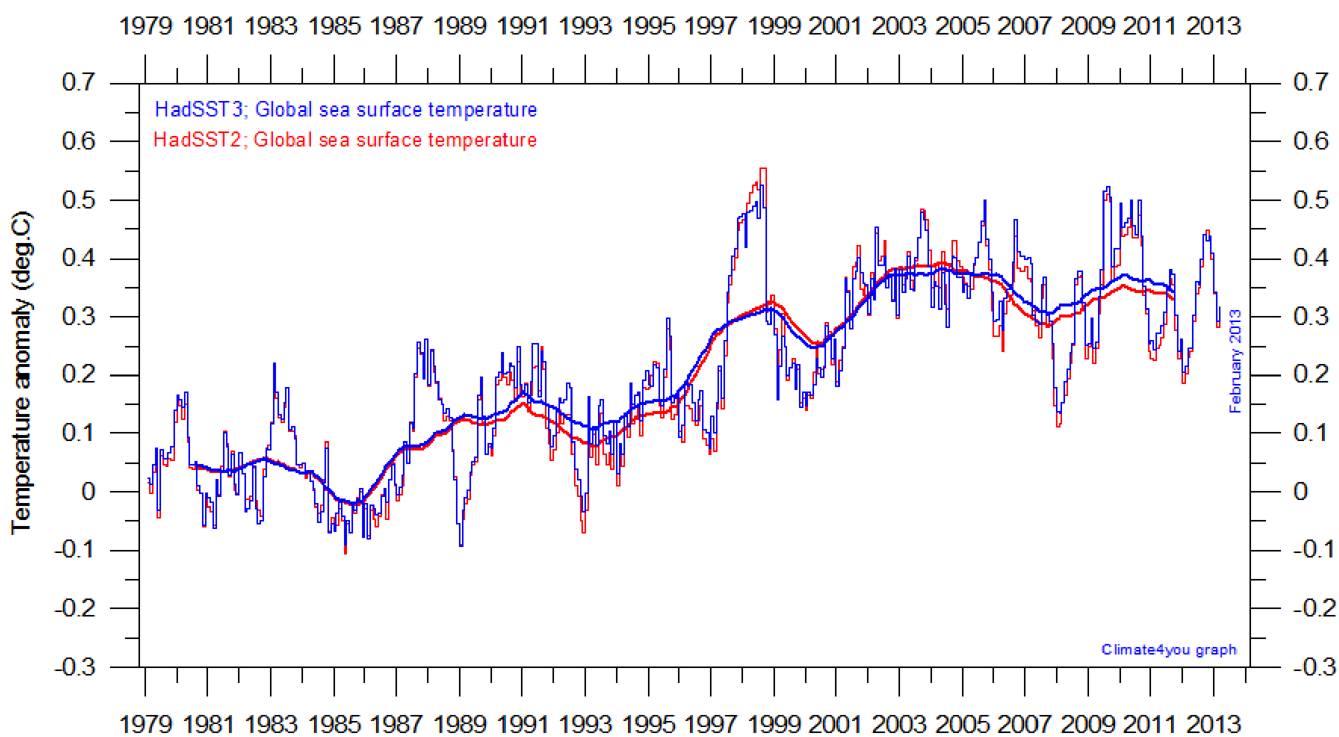
Because of the large surface areas involved especially near Equator, the temperature of the surface water in these regions clearly affects the global atmospheric temperature (p.3-5).

The significance of any such short-term warming or cooling seen in air temperatures should not be over stated. Whenever Earth experiences cold La Niña or warm El Niño episodes (Pacific Ocean) major heat exchanges takes place between the Pacific Ocean and the atmosphere above, eventually showing up in estimates of the global air temperature.

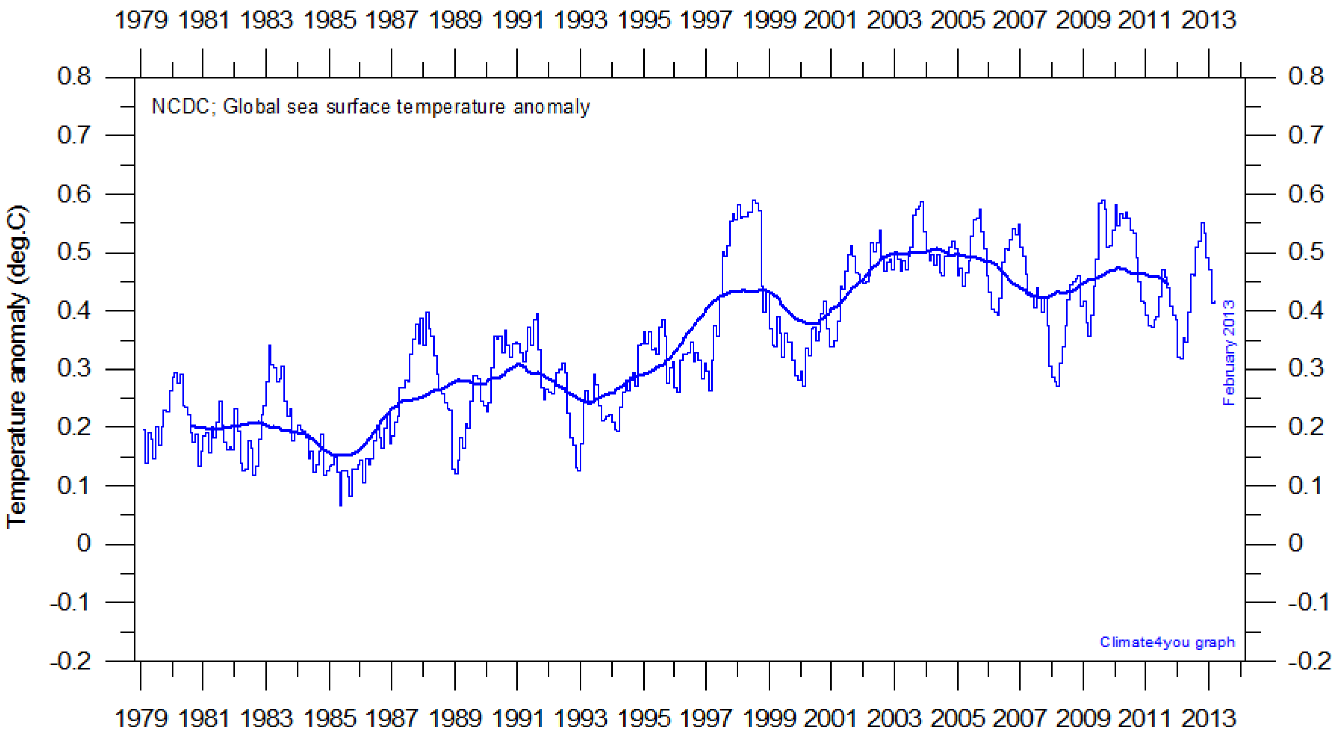
However, this does not reflect similar changes in the total heat content of the atmosphere-ocean system. In fact, net changes may be small, as heat exchanges as the above mainly reflect redistribution of energy between ocean and atmosphere. What matters is the overall temperature development when seen over a number of years.



Global monthly average lower troposphere temperature over oceans (thin line) since 1979 according to [University of Alabama](#) at Huntsville, USA. The thick line is the simple running 37 month average.



Global monthly average sea surface temperature since 1979 according to University of East Anglia's [Climatic Research Unit](#) ([CRU](#)), UK. Base period: 1961-1990. The thick line is the simple running 37 month average.



Global monthly average sea surface temperature since 1979 according to the [National Climatic Data Center](#) (NCDC), USA. Base period: 1901-2000. The thick line is the simple running 37 month average.

What causes the large variations in global satellite temperature compared to global surface air temperature? A good explanation was provided by [Roy Spencer](#) in March 2012:

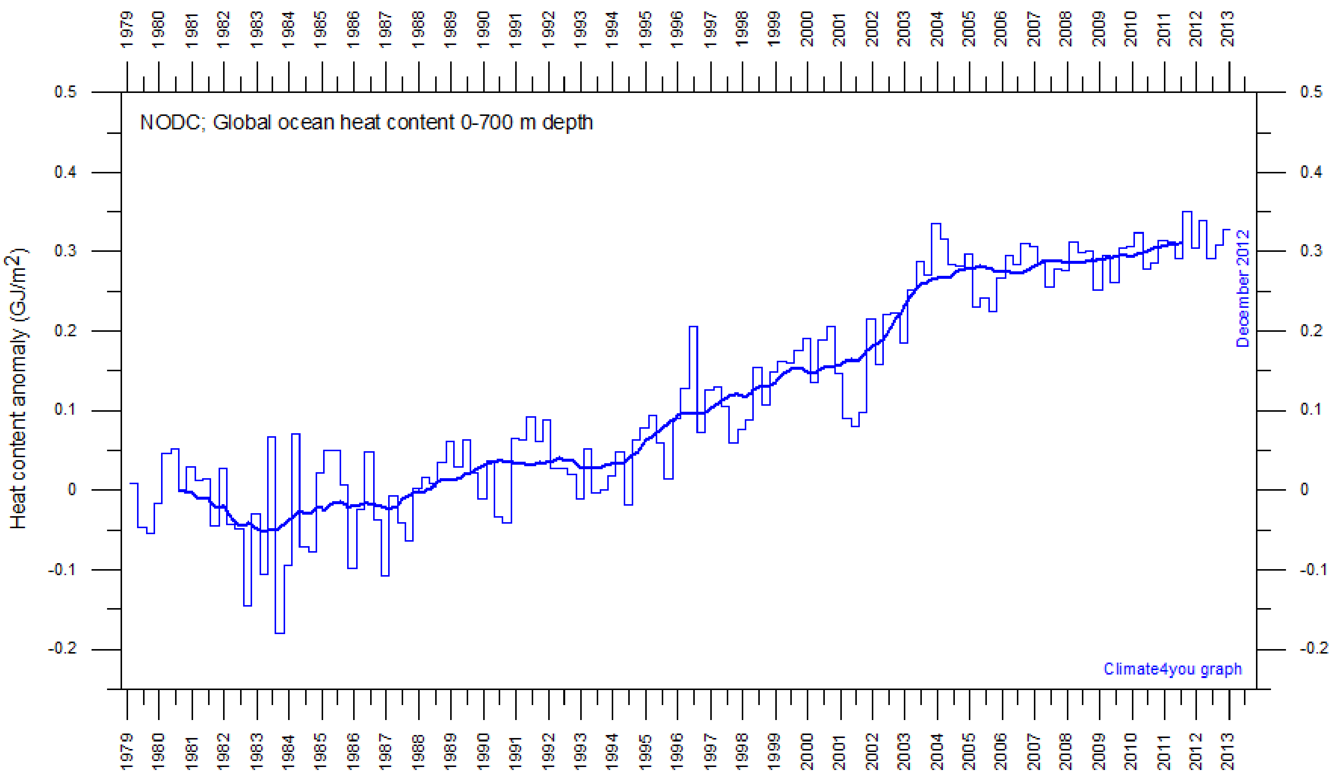
"These temperature swings are mostly the result of variations in rainfall activity. Precipitation systems, which are constantly occurring around the world, release the latent heat of condensation of water vapor which was absorbed during the process of evaporation from the Earth's surface.

While this process is continuously occurring, there are periods when such activity is somewhat more intense or widespread. These events, called Intra-Seasonal Oscillations (ISOs) are most evident over the tropical Pacific Ocean.

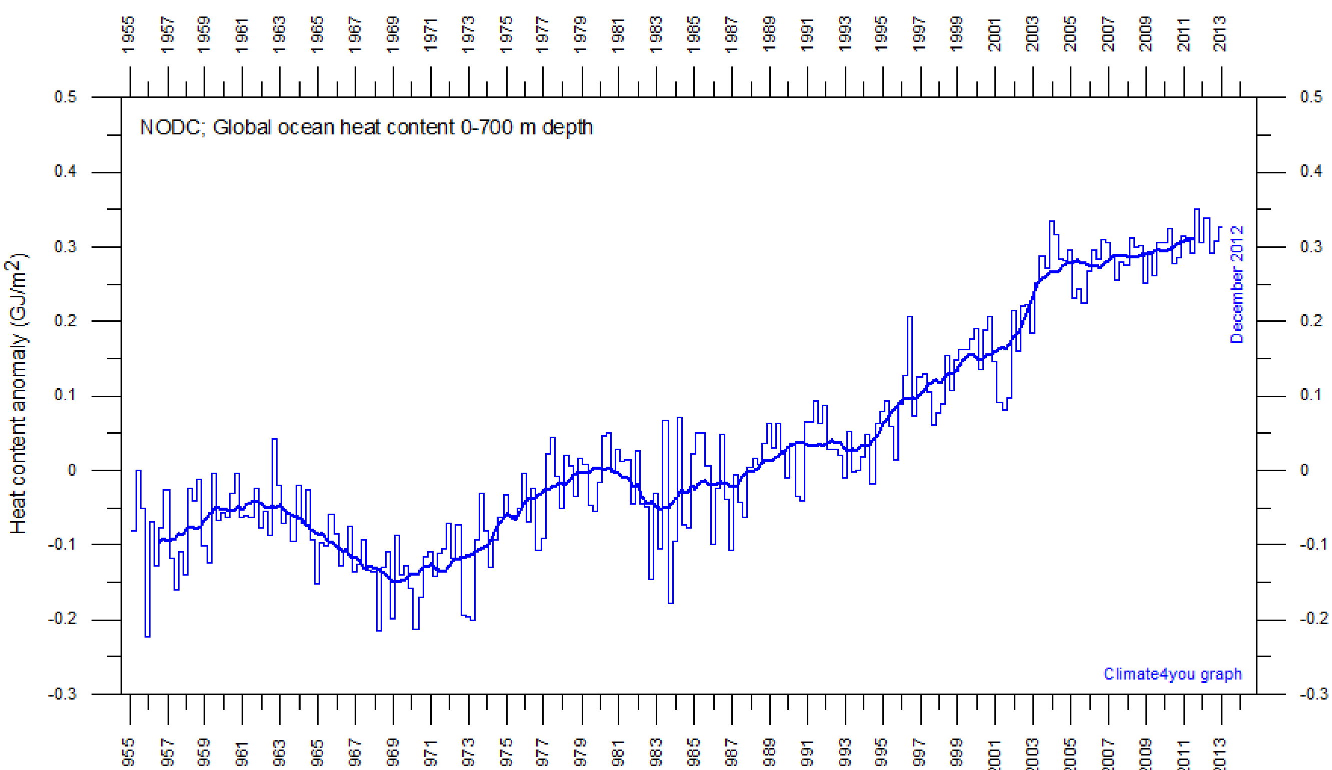
During the convectively active phase of the ISO, there are increased surface winds of up to 1 to 2 knots averaged over the tropical oceans, which causes faster surface evaporation, more water vapor in the troposphere, and more convective rainfall activity. This above-average release of latent heat exceeds the rate at which the atmosphere emits infrared radiation to space, and so the resulting energy imbalance causes a temperature increase.

During the convectively inactive phase, the opposite happens: a decrease in surface wind, evaporation, rainfall, and temperature, as the atmosphere radiatively cools more rapidly than latent heating can replenish the energy."

Global ocean heat content uppermost 700 m, updated to December 2012

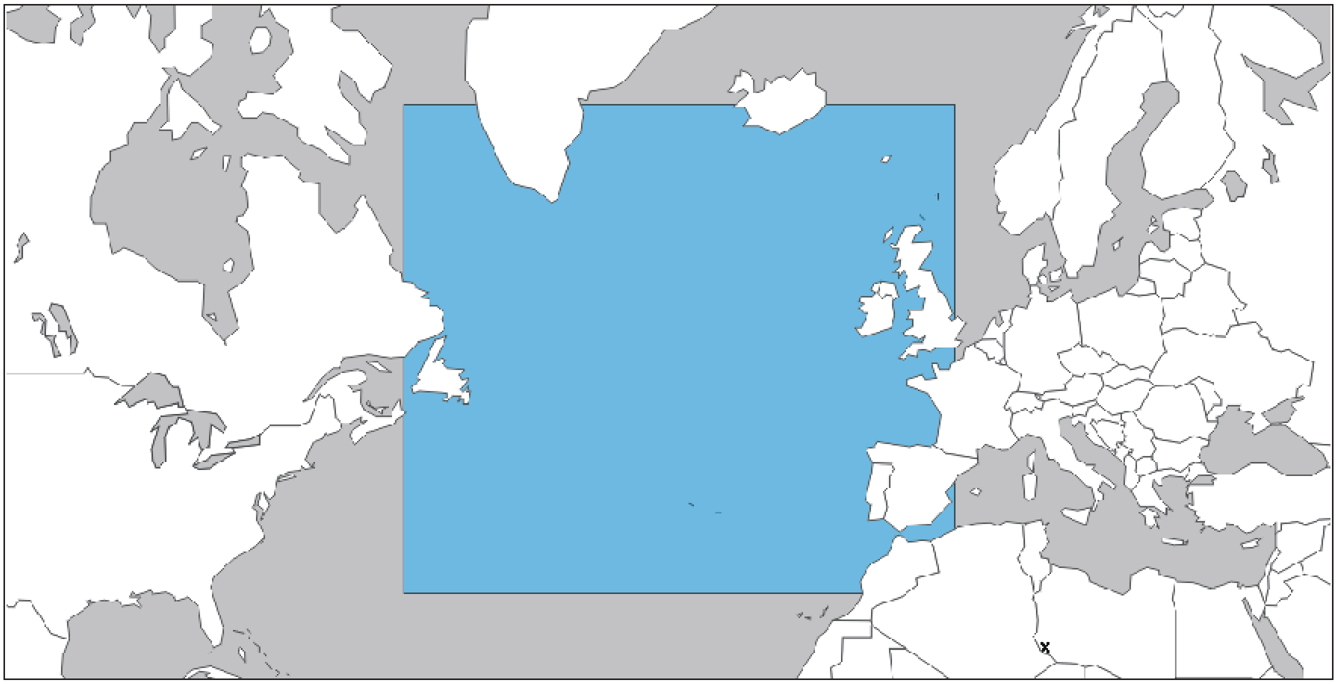


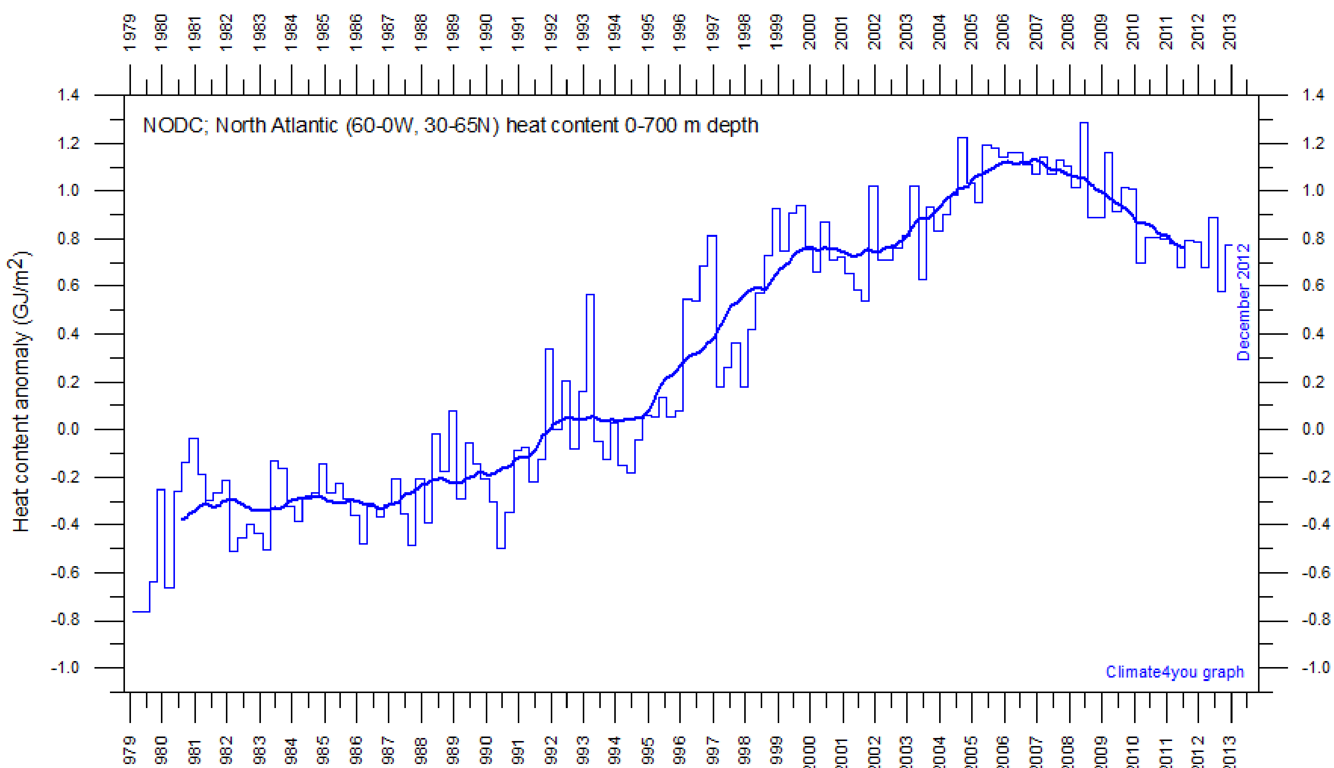
Global monthly heat content anomaly (GJ/m2) in the uppermost 700 m of the oceans since January 1979. Data source: National Oceanographic Data Center(NODC).



Global monthly heat content anomaly (GJ/m2) in the uppermost 700 m of the oceans since January 1955. Data source: National Oceanographic Data Center(NODC).

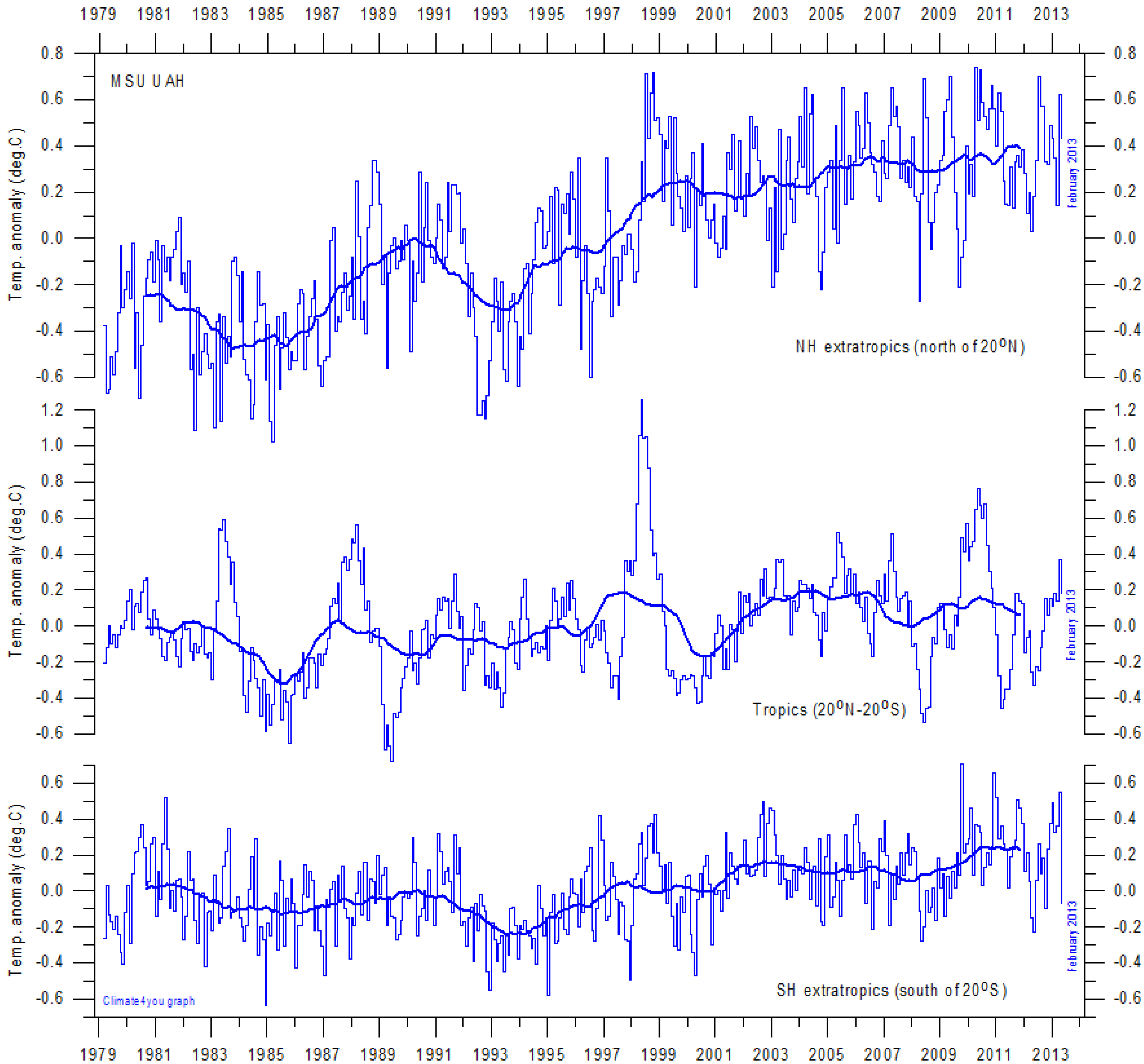
North Atlantic heat content uppermost 700 m, updated to December 2012





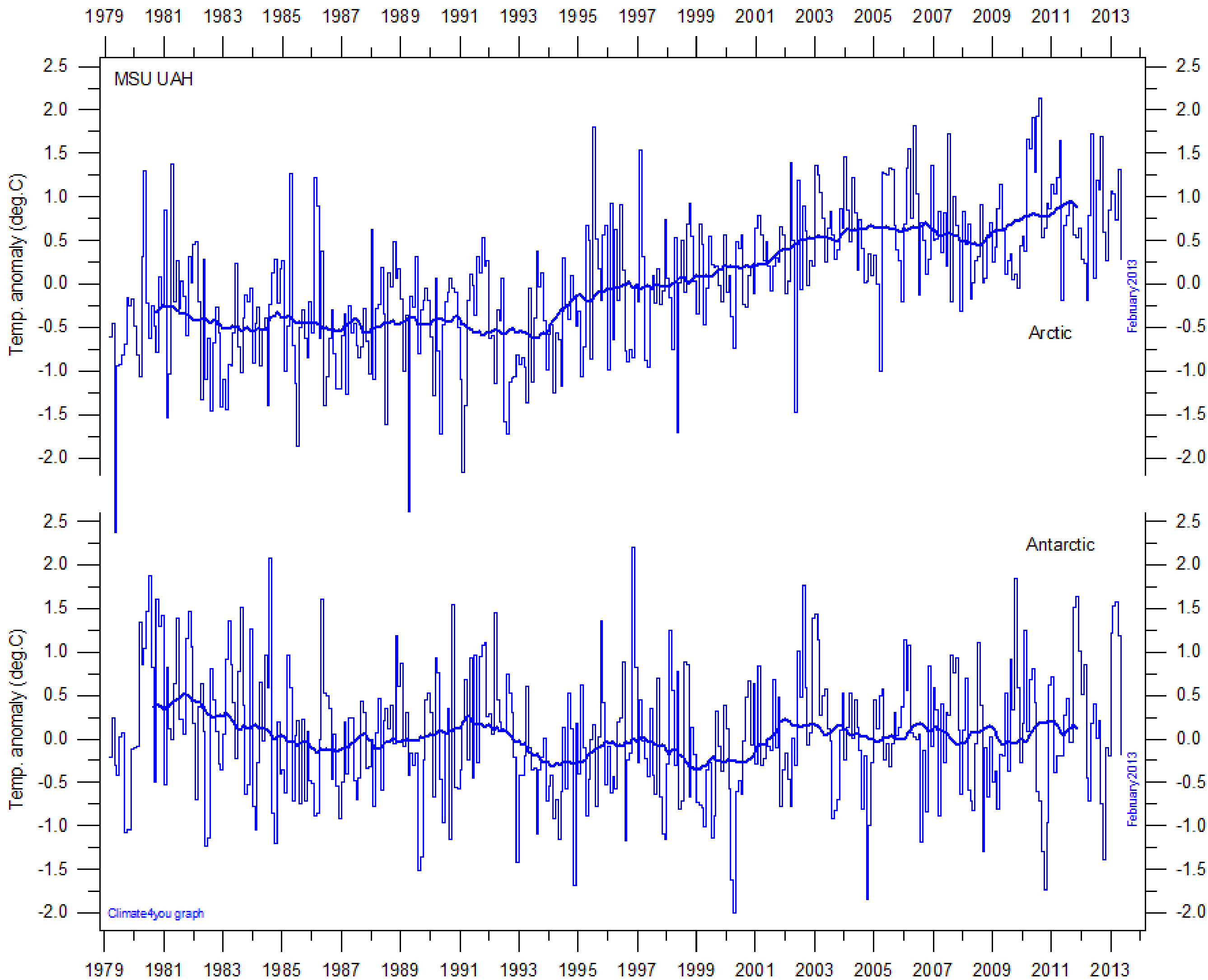
Global monthly heat content anomaly (GJ/m2) in the uppermost 700 m of the North Atlantic (60-0W, 30-65N; see map above) *ocean since January 1979. The thin line indicates monthly values, and the thick line represents the simple running 37 month (c. 3 year) average. Data source: [National Oceanographic Data Center](#) (NODC). Last month shown: December 2012.*

Zonal lower troposphere temperatures from satellites, updated to February 2013



Global monthly average lower troposphere temperature since 1979 for the tropics and the northern and southern extratropics, according to [University of Alabama] at Huntsville, USA. Thin lines show the monthly temperature. Thick lines represent the simple running 37 month average, nearly corresponding to a running 3 yr average. Reference period 1981-2010.

Arctic and Antarctic lower troposphere temperature, updated to February 2013



Global monthly average lower troposphere temperature since 1979 for the North Pole and South Pole regions, based on satellite observations ([University of Alabama]() at Huntsville, USA). Thin lines show the monthly temperature. The thick line is the simple running 37 month average, nearly corresponding to a running 3 yr average.

Arctic and Antarctic surface air temperature, updated to February 2013

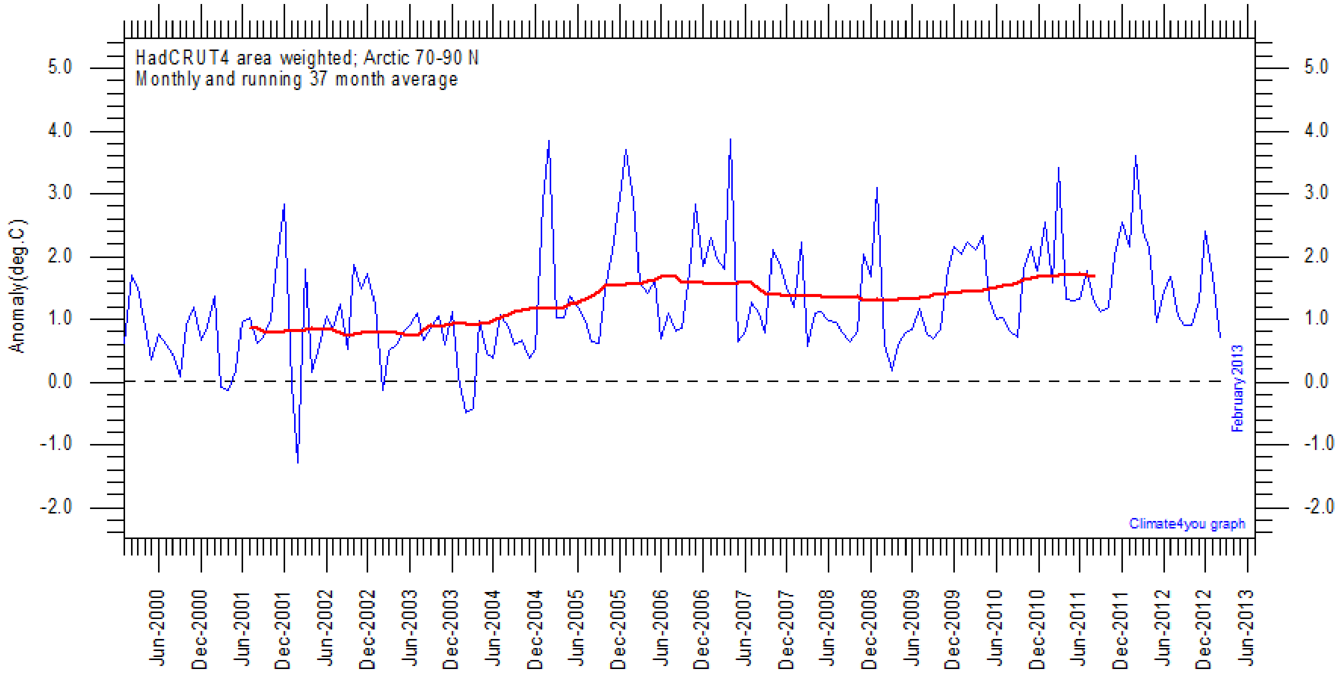


Diagram showing area weighted Arctic (70-90°N) monthly surface air temperature anomalies ([HadCRUT4]) since January 2000, in relation to the WMO [normal period] 1961-1990. The thin blue line shows the monthly temperature anomaly, while the thicker red line shows the running 37 month (c.3 yr) average.

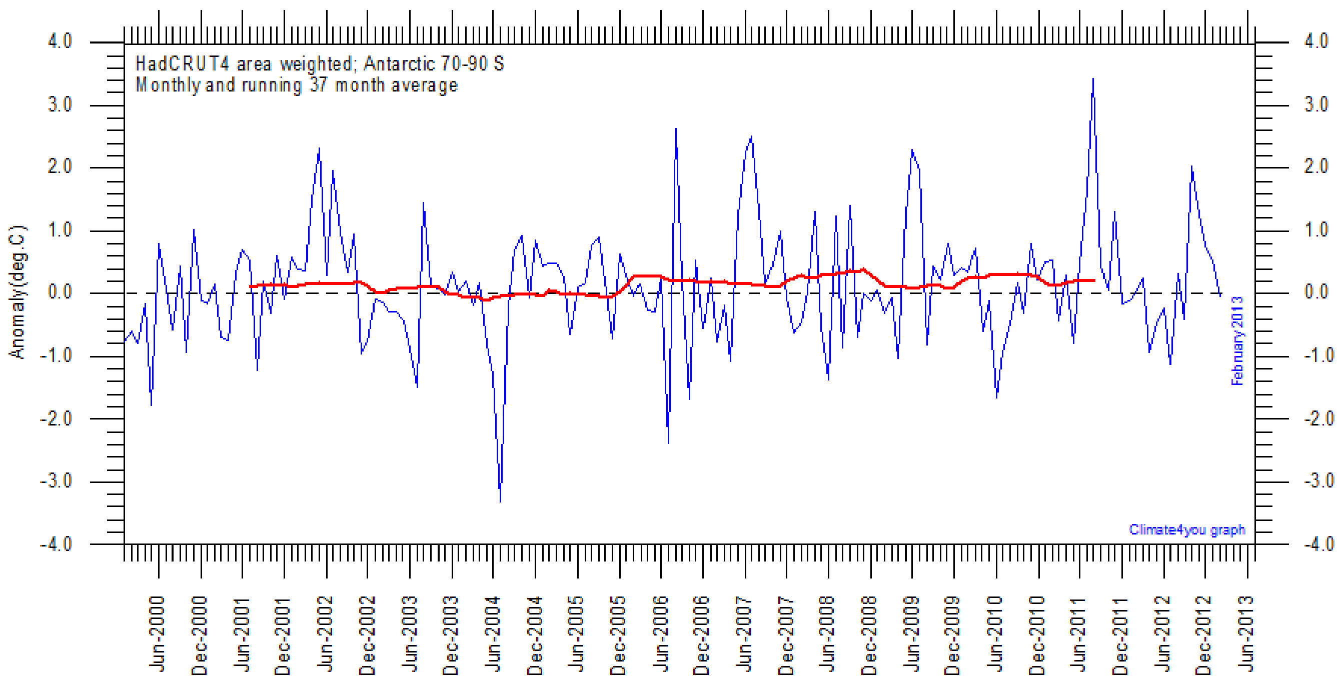


Diagram showing area weighted Antarctic (70-90°S) monthly surface air temperature anomalies ([HadCRUT4]) since January 2000, in relation to the WMO [normal period] 1961-1990. The thin blue line shows the monthly temperature anomaly, while the thicker red line shows the running 37 month (c.3 yr) average.

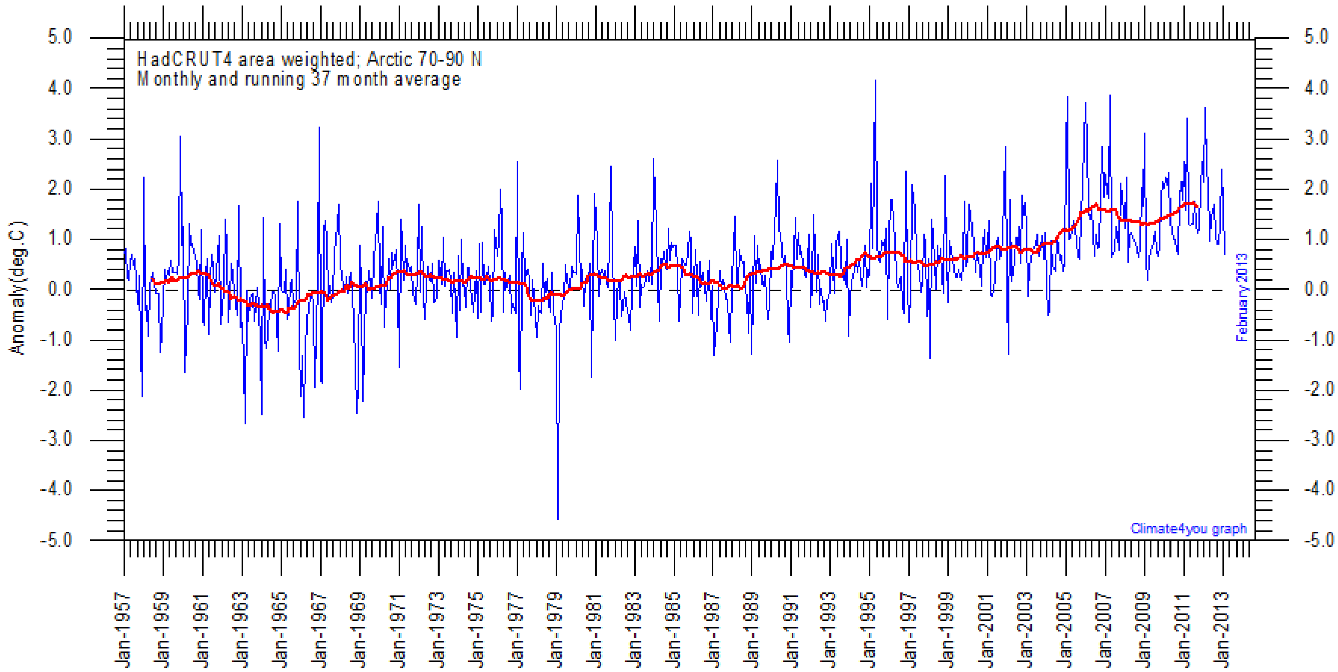


Diagram showing area weighted Arctic (70-90°N) monthly surface air temperature anomalies (HadCRUT4) since January 1957, in relation to the WMO normal period 1961-1990. The thin blue line shows the monthly temperature anomaly, while the thicker red line shows the running 37 month (c.3 yr) average.

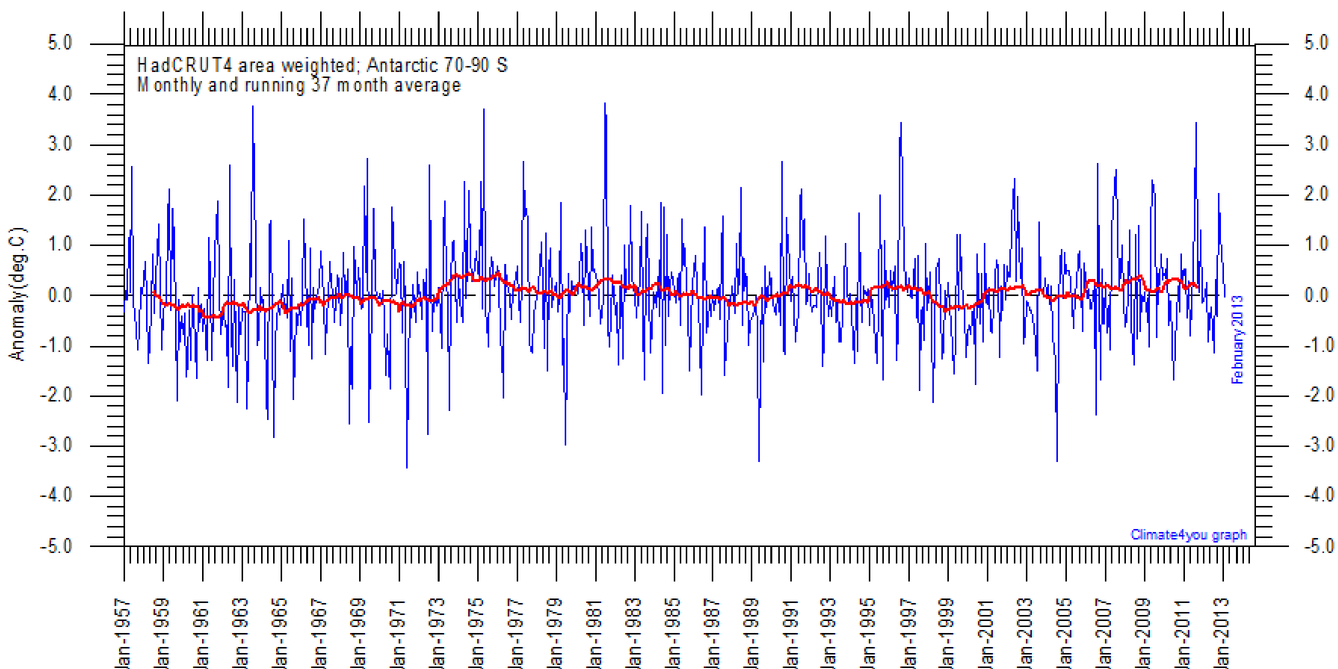


Diagram showing area weighted Antarctic (70-90°S) monthly surface air temperature anomalies (HadCRUT4) since January 1957, in relation to the WMO normal period 1961-1990. The thin blue line shows the monthly temperature anomaly, while the thicker red line shows the running 37 month (c.3 yr) average.

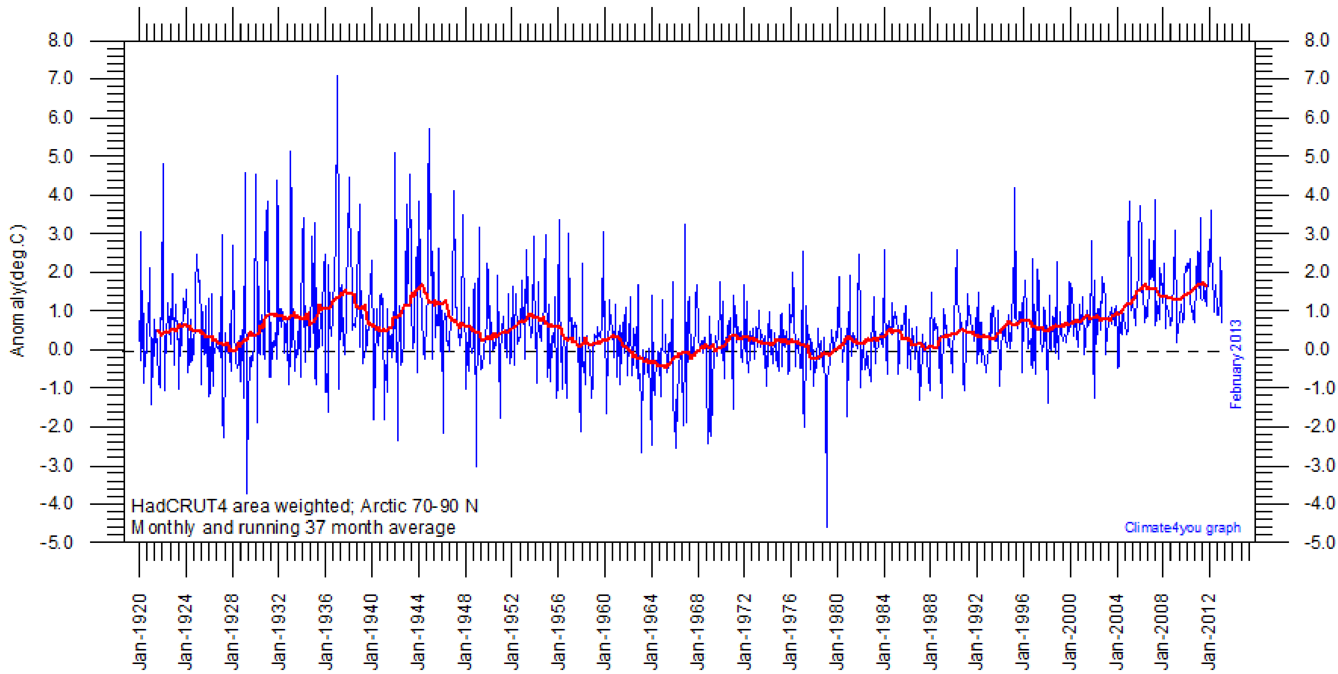


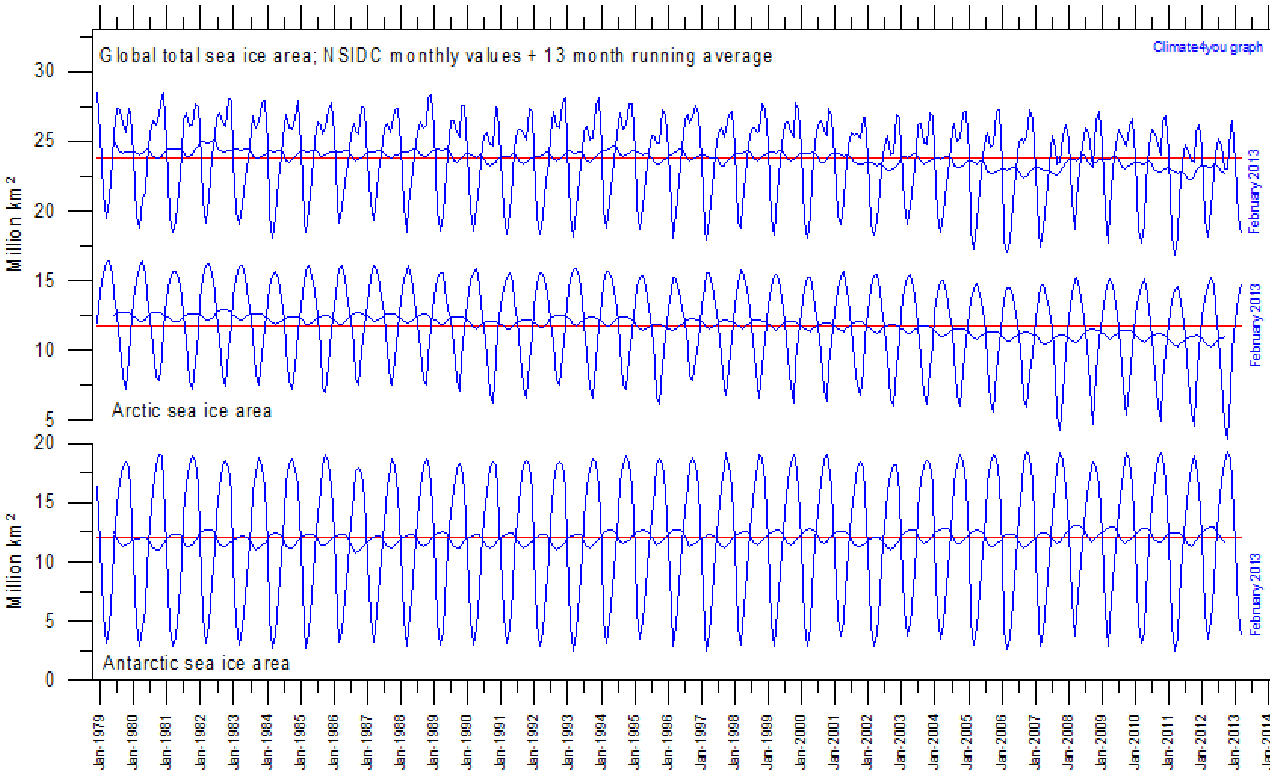
Diagram showing area weighted Arctic (70-90°N) monthly surface air temperature anomalies ([HadCRUT4]) since January 1920, in relation to the WMO [normal period] 1961-1990. The thin blue line shows the monthly temperature anomaly, while the thicker red line shows the running 37 month (c.3 yr) average. Because of the relatively small number of Arctic stations before 1930, month-to-month variations in the early part of the temperature record are larger than later. The period from about 1930 saw the establishment of many new Arctic meteorological stations, first [in Russia and Siberia], and following the 2nd World War, also in North America. The period since 2000 is warm, about as warm as the period 1930-1940.

As the HadCRUT4 data series has improved high latitude coverage data coverage (compared to the HadCRUT3 series) the individual 5°x5° grid cells has been weighted according to their surface area. This is in contrast to Gillet et al. 2008 which calculated a simple average, with no consideration to the surface area represented by the individual 5°x5° grid cells.

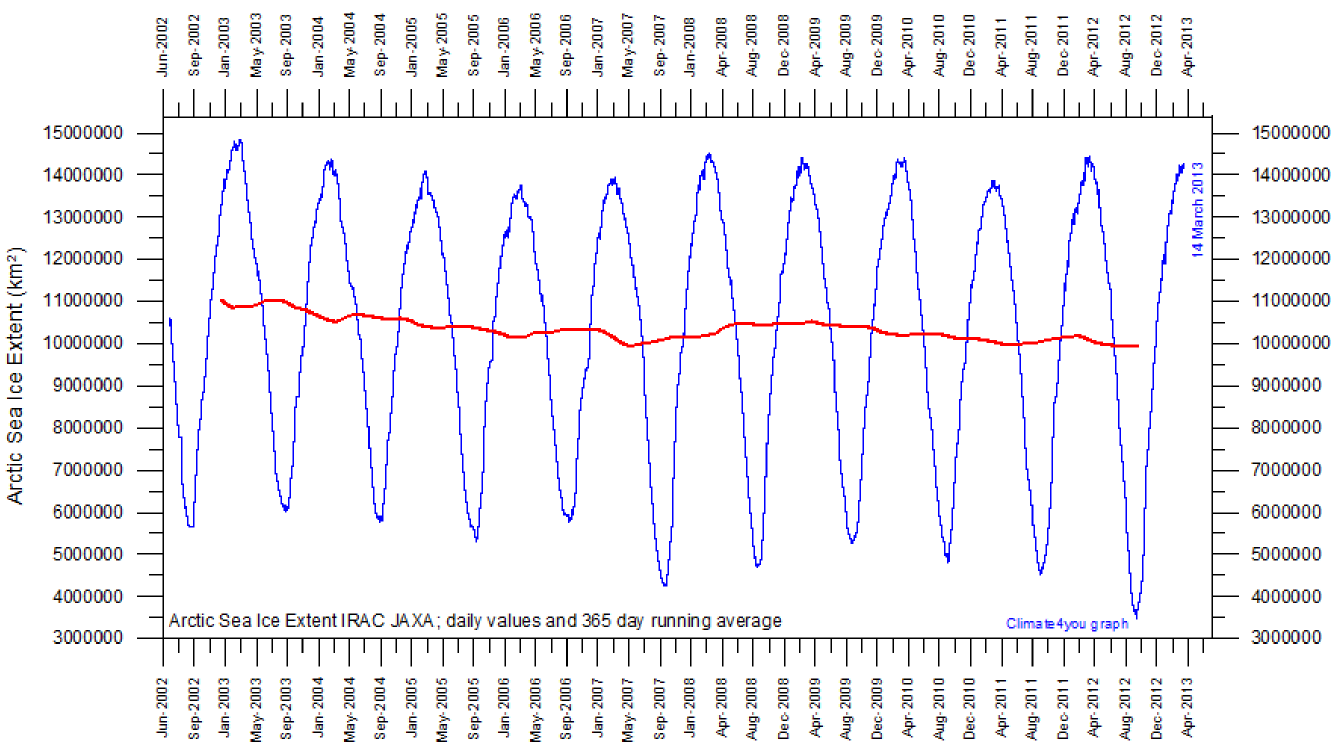
Literature:

Gillett, N.P., Stone, D.A., Stott, P.A., Nozawa, T., Karpechko, A.Y.U., Hegerl, G.C., Wehner, M.F. and Jones, P.D. 2008. Attribution of polar warming to human influence. *Nature Geoscience* 1, 750-754.

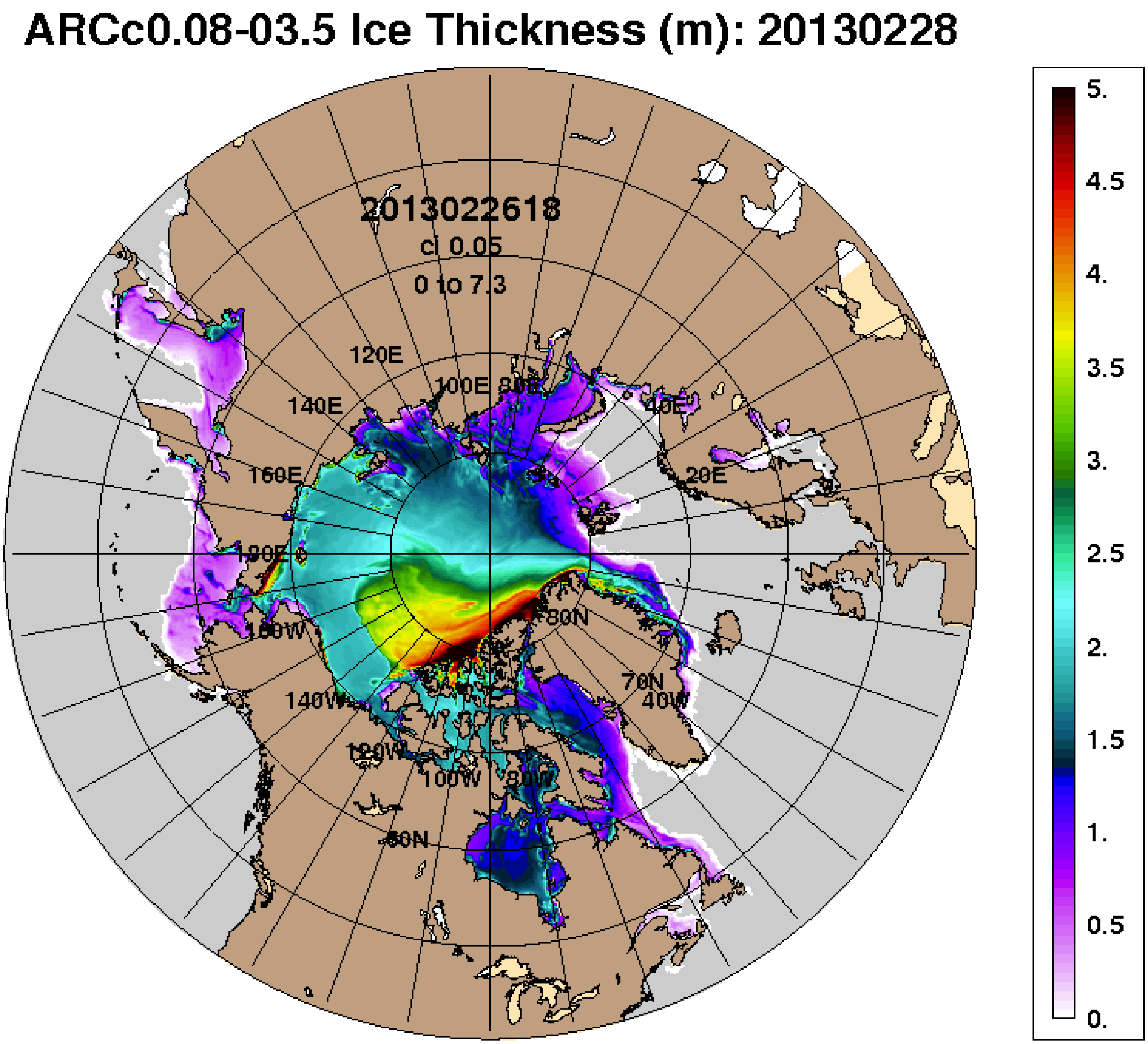
Arctic and Antarctic sea ice, updated to February 2013



Graphs showing monthly Antarctic, Arctic and global sea ice extent since November 1978, according to the National Snow and Ice data Center (NSIDC).

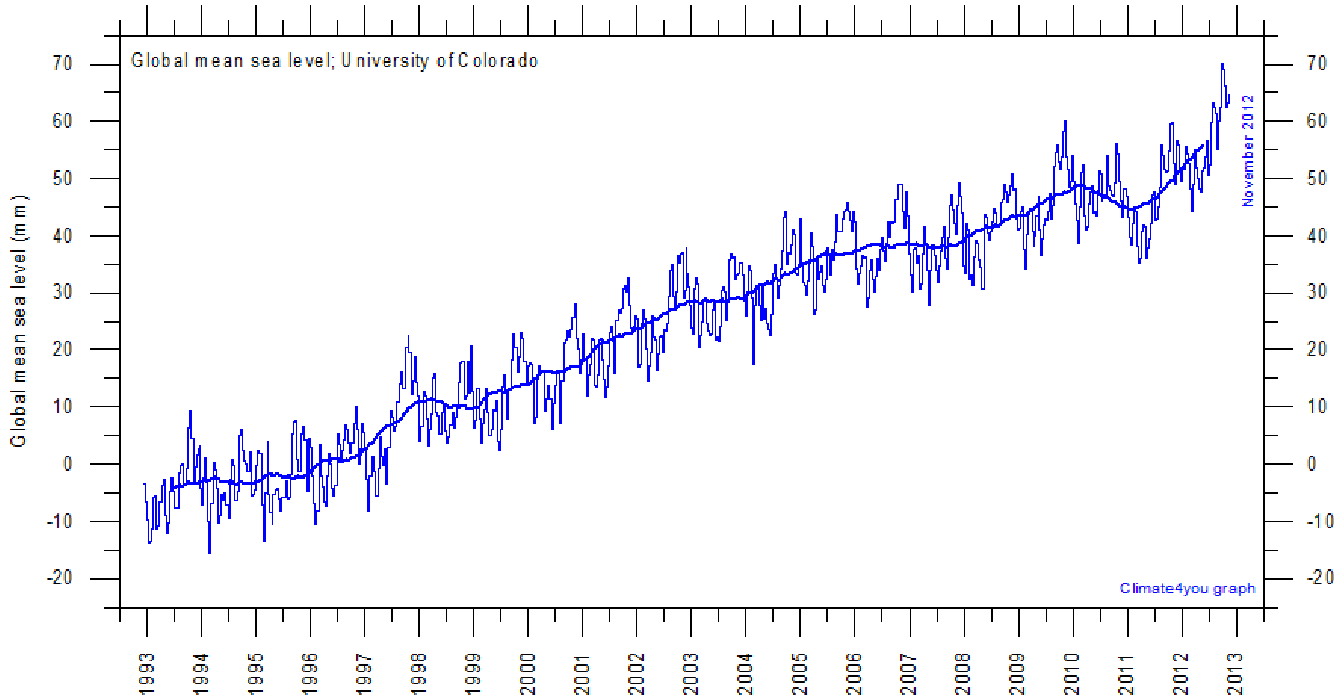


Graph showing daily Arctic sea ice extent since June 2002, to February 14, 2013, by courtesy of Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency (JAXA).

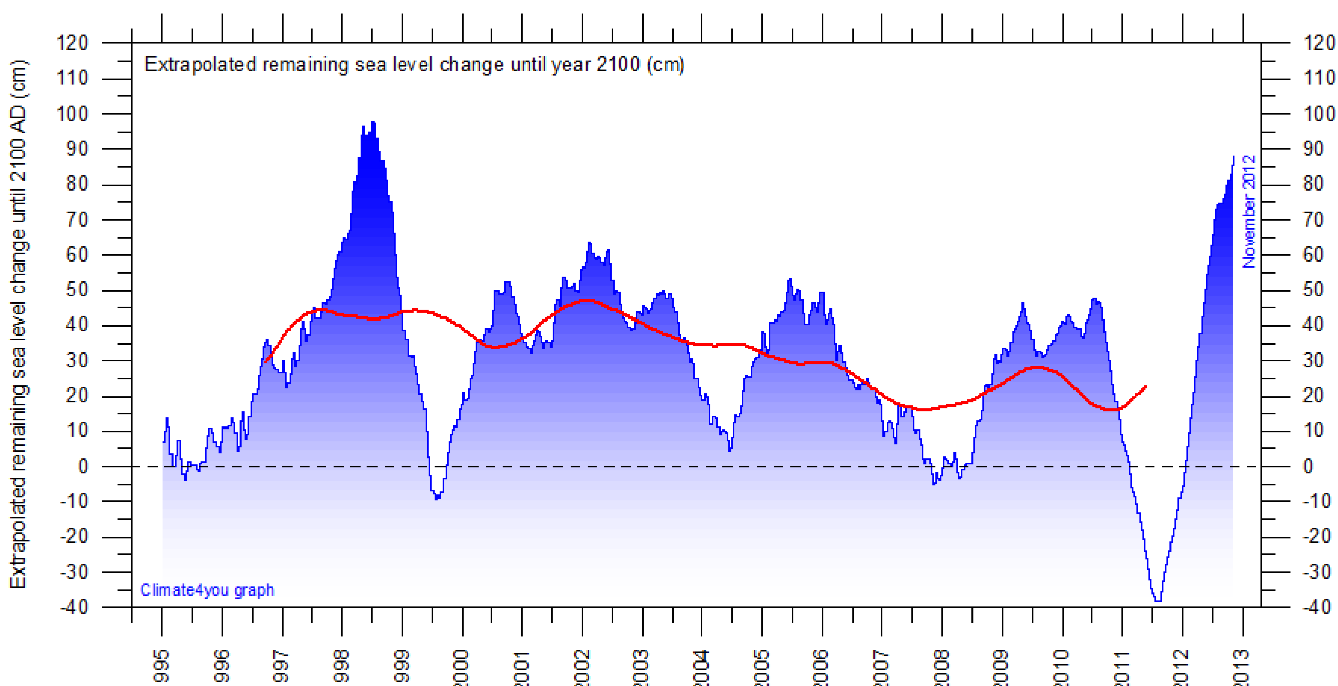


Northern hemisphere sea ice extension and thickness on 28 February 2013 according to the [Arctic Cap Nowcast/Forecast System](#) (ACNFS), US Naval Research Laboratory. Thickness scale (m) is shown to the right.

Global sea level, updated to November 2012

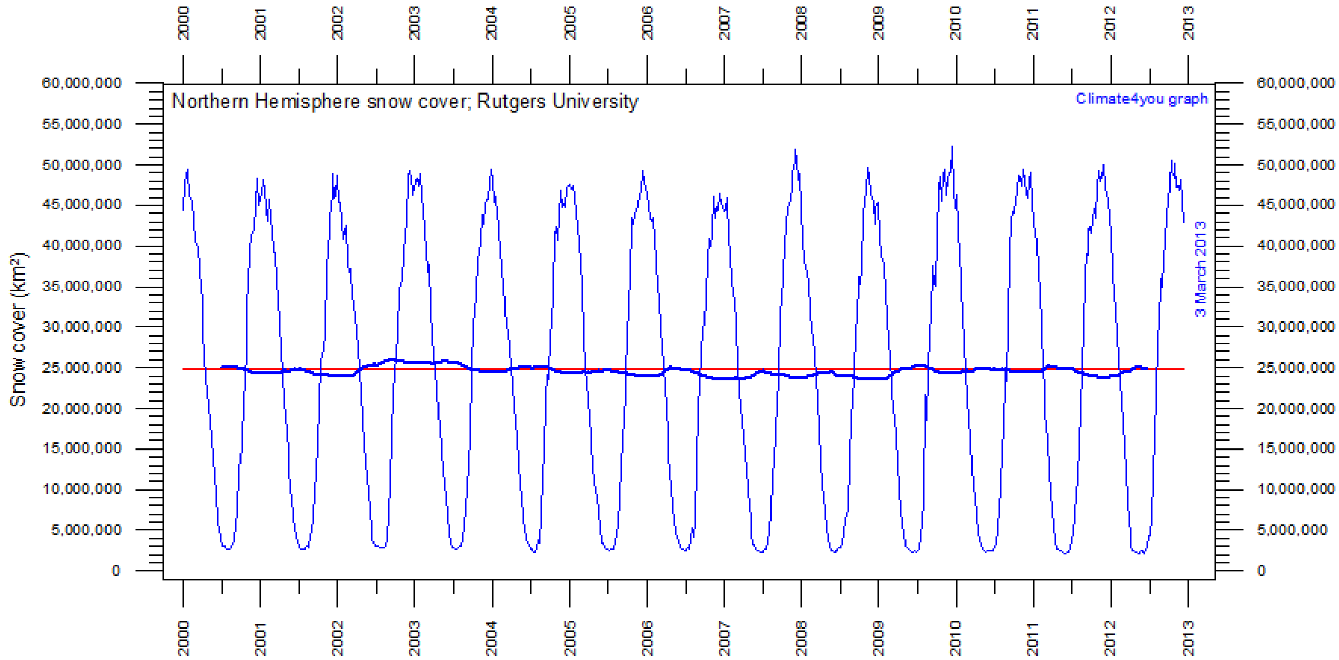


Globa lmonthly sea level since late 1992 according to the Colorado Center for Astrodynamics Research at [University of Colorado at Boulder](), USA. The thick line is the simple running 37 observation average, nearly corresponding to a running 3 yr average.

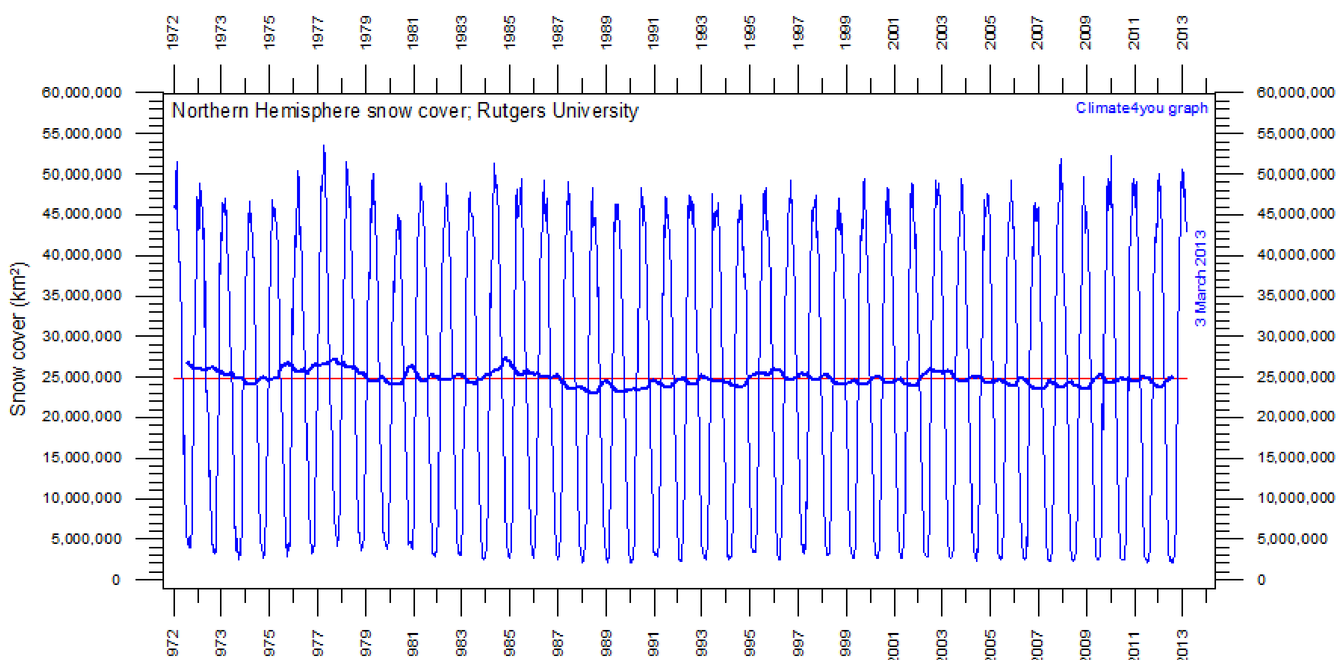


Forecasted change of global sea level until year 2100, based on simple extrapolation of measurements done by the Colorado Center for Astrodynamics Research at [University of Colorado at Boulder](), USA. The thick line is the simple running 3 yr average forecast for sea level change until year 2100. Based on this (thick line), the present simple empirical forecast of sea level change until 2100 is about +17 cm.

Northern Hemisphere weekly snow cover, updated to early March 2013

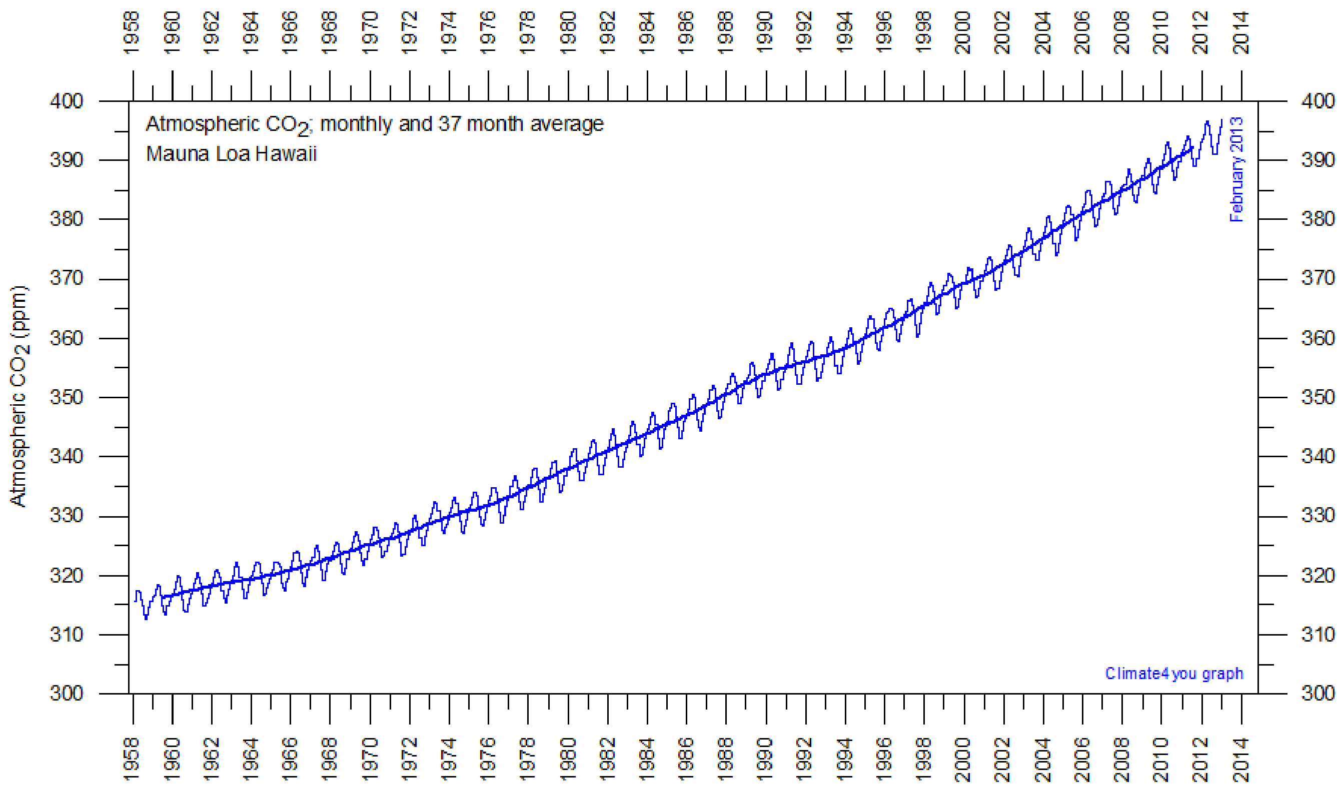


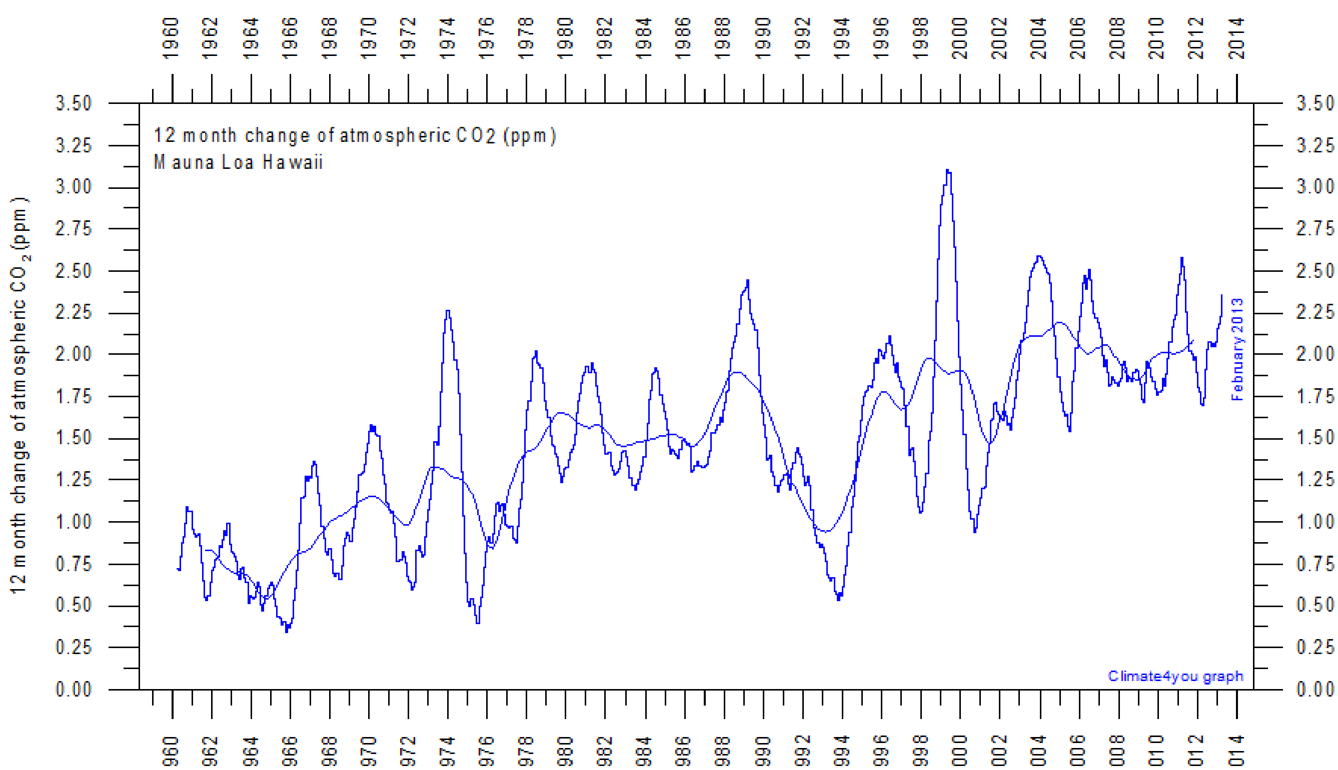
Northern hemisphere weekly snow cover since January 2000 according to Rutgers University Global Snow Laboratory. The thin blue line is the weekly data, and the thick blue line is the running 53 week average (approximately 1 year). The horizontal red line is the 1972-2012 average.



Northern hemisphere weekly snow cover since January 1972 according to Rutgers University Global Snow Laboratory. The thin blue line is the weekly data, and the thick blue line is the running 53 week average (approximately 1 year). The horizontal red line is the 1972-2012 average.

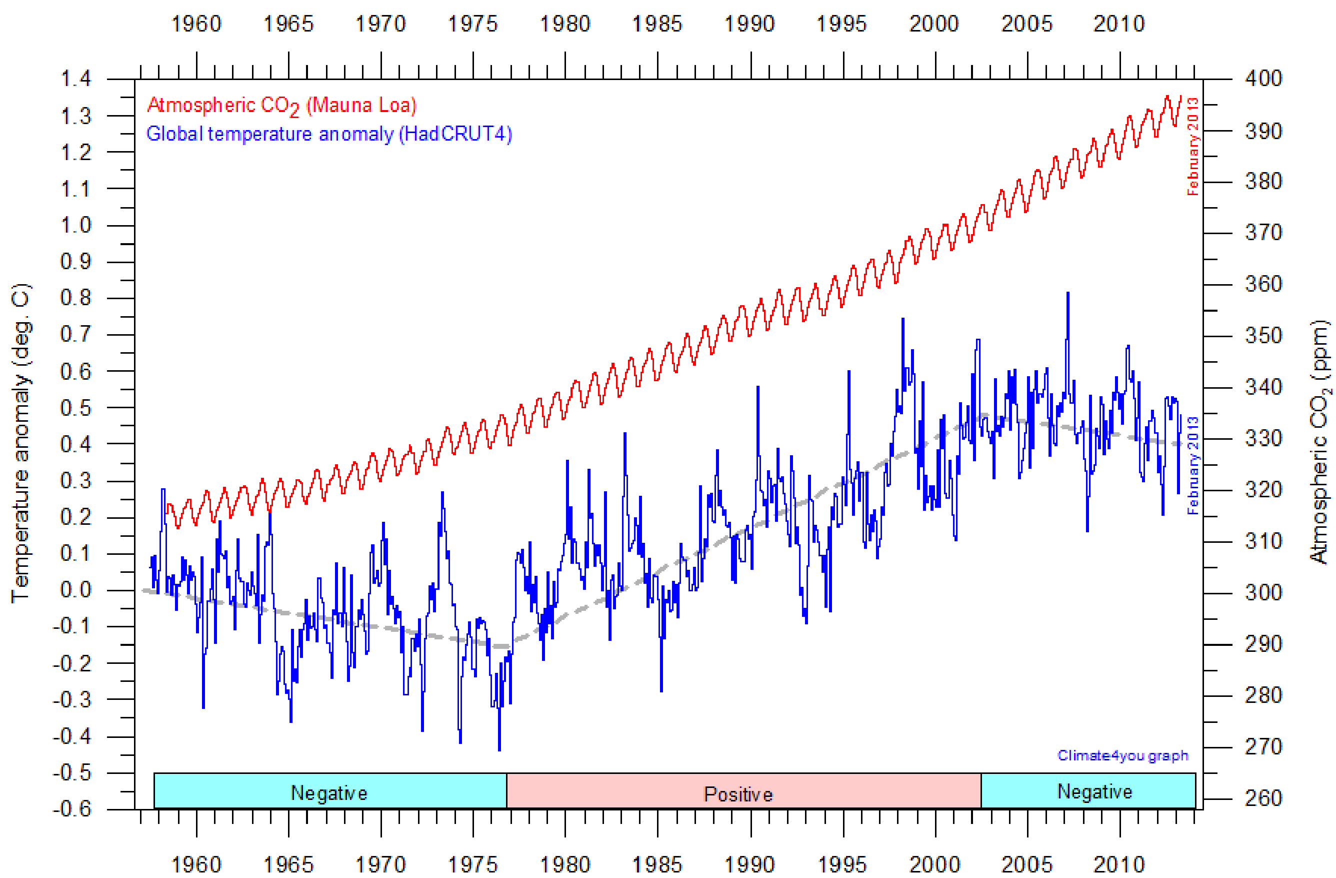
Atmospheric CO_2, updated to February 2013

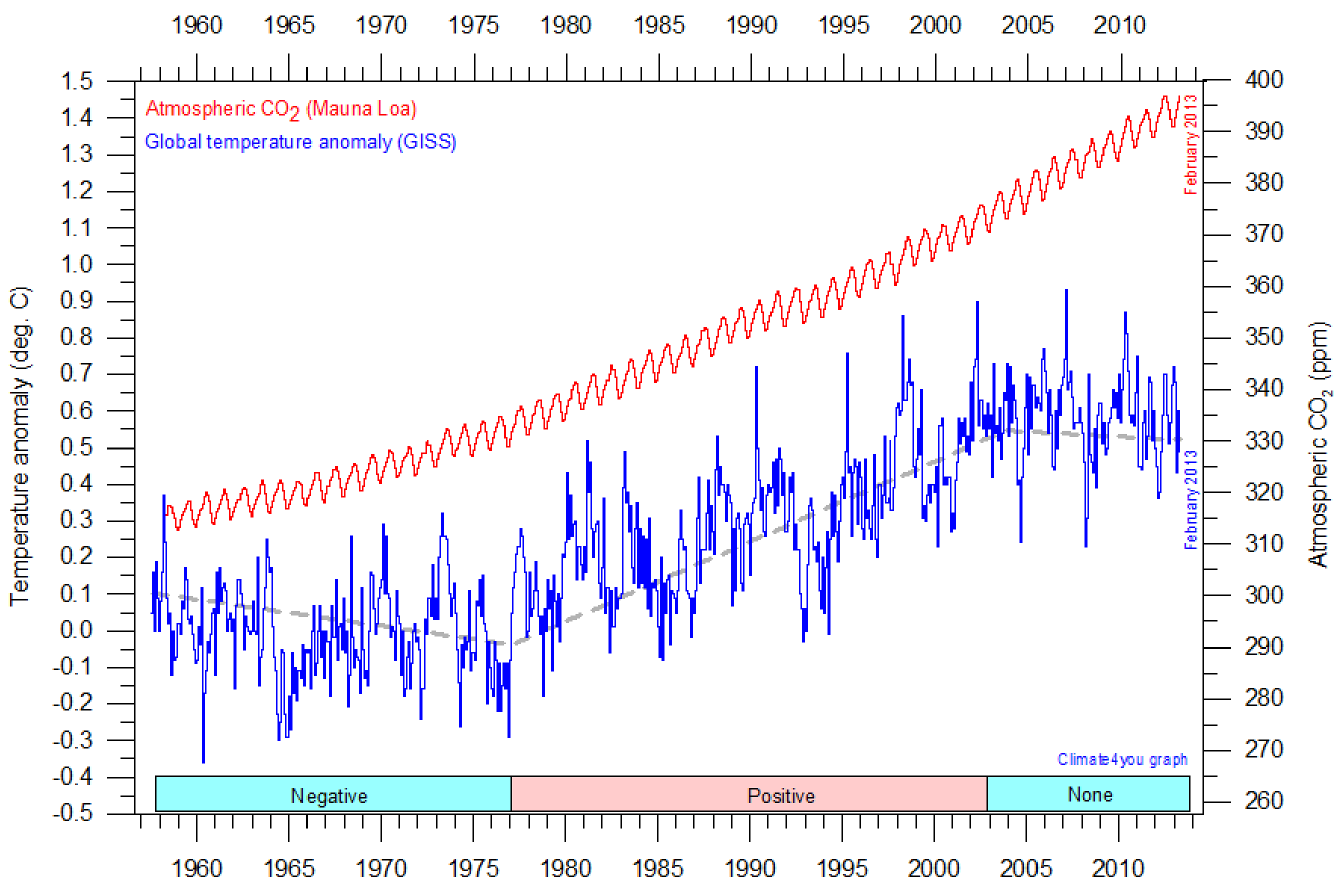


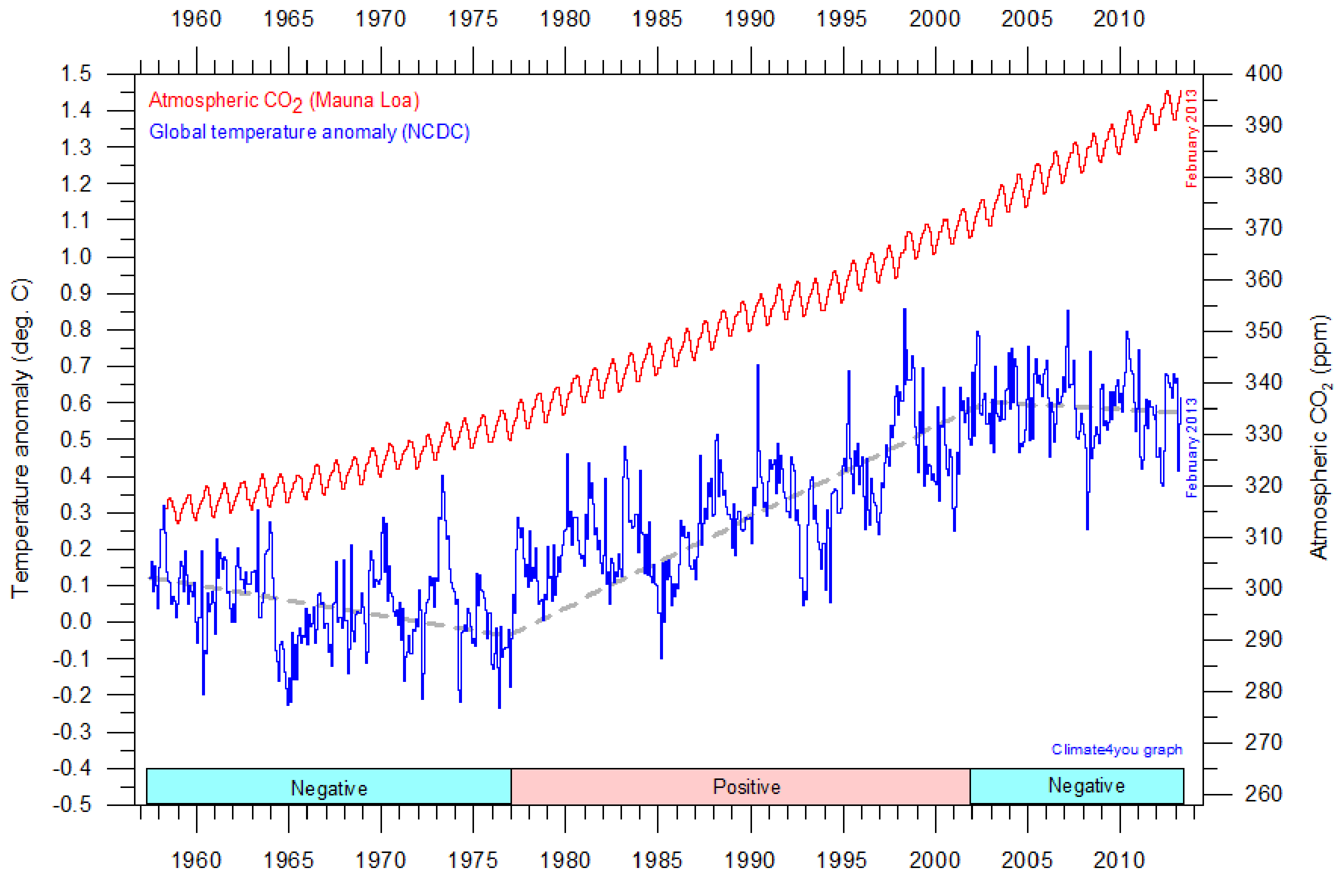


Monthly amount of atmospheric CO_2 (above) and annual growth rate (below; average last 12 months minus average preceding 12 months) of atmospheric CO_2 since 1959, according to data provided by the Mauna Loa Observatory, Hawaii, USA. The thick line is the simple running 37 observation average, nearly corresponding to a running 3 yr average.

Global surface air temperature and atmospheric CO_2, updated to February 2013







Diagrams showing HadCRUT3, GISS, and NCDC monthly global surface air temperature estimates (blue) and the monthly atmospheric CO_2 content (red) according to the Mauna Loa Observatory, Hawaii. The Mauna Loa data series begins in March 1958, and 1958 has therefore been chosen as starting year for the diagrams. Reconstructions of past atmospheric CO_2 concentrations (before 1958) are not incorporated in this diagram, as such past CO_2 values are derived by other means (ice cores, stomata, or older measurements using different methodology, and therefore are not directly comparable with direct atmospheric measurements. The dotted grey line indicates the approximate linear temperature trend, and the boxes in the lower part of the diagram indicate the relation between atmospheric CO_2 and global surface air temperature, negative or positive.

Most climate models assume the greenhouse gas carbon dioxide CO_2 to influence significantly upon global temperature. It is therefore relevant to compare different temperature records with measurements of atmospheric CO_2, as shown in the diagrams above. Any comparison, however, should not be made on a monthly or annual basis, but for a longer time period, as other effects (oceanographic, etc.) may well override the potential influence of CO_2 on short time scales such as just a few years. It is of cause equally inappropriate to present new meteorological record values, whether daily, monthly or annual, as support for the hypothesis ascribing high importance of atmospheric CO_2 for global temperatures. Any such short-period meteorological record value may well be the result of other phenomena.

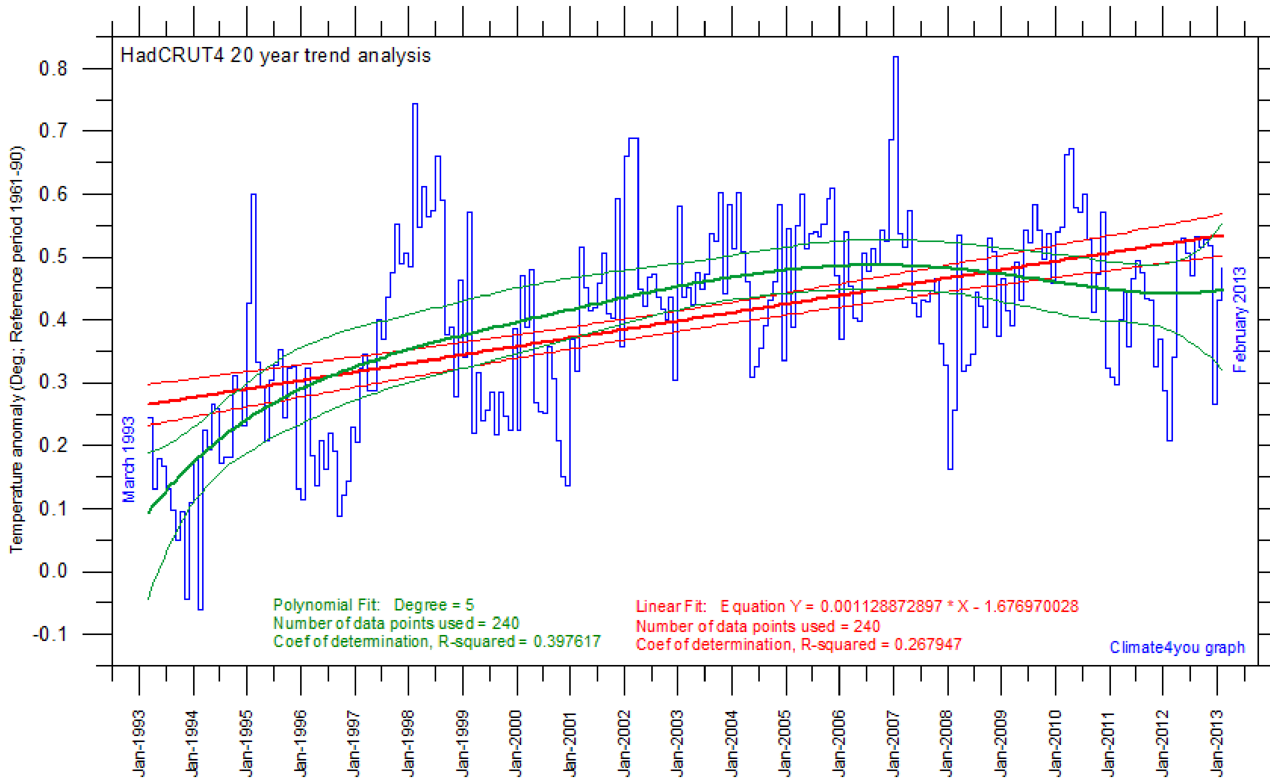
What exactly defines the critical length of a relevant time period to consider for evaluating the alleged importance of CO_2 remains elusive, and is still a topic for discussion. However, the critical period length must be inversely proportional to the temperature sensitivity of CO_2, including feedback effects. If the net temperature effect of atmospheric CO_2 is strong, the critical time period will be short, and vice versa.

However, past climate research history provides some clues as to what has traditionally been considered the relevant length of period over which to compare temperature and atmospheric CO_2. After about 10 years of concurrent global temperature- and CO_2-increase, IPCC was established in 1988. For obtaining public and political support for the CO_2-hyphotesis the 10 year warming period leading up to 1988 in all likelihood was important. Had the global temperature instead been decreasing, politic support for the hypothesis would have been difficult to obtain.

Based on the previous 10 years of concurrent temperature- and CO_2-increase, many climate scientists in 1988 presumably felt that their understanding of climate dynamics was sufficient to conclude about the importance of CO_2 for global temperature changes. From this it may safely be concluded that 10 years was considered a period long enough to demonstrate the effect of increasing atmospheric CO_2 on global temperatures.

Adopting this approach as to critical time length (at least 10 years), the varying relation (positive or negative) between global temperature and atmospheric CO2 has been indicated in the lower panels of the diagrams above.

Last 20 year monthly surface air temperature changes, updated to February 2012



27 *Last 20 years global monthly average surface air temperature according to Hadley CRUT, a cooperative effort between the Hadley Centre for Climate Prediction and Research and the University of East Anglia's Climatic Research Unit (CRU), UK. The thin blue line represents the monthly values. The thick red line is the linear fit, with 95% confidence intervals indicated by the two thin red lines. The thick green line represents a 5-degree polynomial fit, with 95% confidence intervals indicated by the two thin green lines. A few key statistics is given in the lower part of the diagram (note that the linear trend is the monthly trend).*

From time to time it is debated if the global surface temperature is increasing, or if the temperature has levelled out during the last 10-15 years. The above diagram may be useful in this context, and it clearly demonstrates the differences between two often used statistical approaches to determine recent temperature trends. Please also note that such fits only attempt to describe the past, and usually have limited predictive power.

1692: The Glencoe massacre

Glencoe in western Scotland, a valley overdeepened by glaciers during the Quaternary ice ages (left). Massacre of Glencoe February 13, 1692, painted by James Hamilton. As the painting suggests the massacre was incompetententły carried out with many of the potential victims escaping from their homes, hidden by a sudden snowstorm (right).

The turbulent history of Glencoe in western Scotland reaches back to Devonian times, about 420 million years ago, when Glencoe was a super volcano. Today, Glencoe is famous worldwide for three reasons. 1) Glencoe is a prominent example of a cauldron subsidence; a volcano that has collapsed in itself. It was one of the first such features to be described, so its historical importance is of considerable geological significance (McKirdy et al. 2007). The size of the block that collapsed about 1,400 m downwards is immense: around 8 kilometers in length. The seismic shock waves generated when these events took place must have reverberated around the world, not to speak about the global climatic importance of the eruption. 2) Glencoe is a classic example of a glacially eroded U-shaped valley, arguably the finest example to be found in Scotland. 3) Glencoe is the place for the infamous Glencoe massacre in 1692.

The late 15th century was difficult times for Scotland. In the year 1688, the Catholic king James VII was ousted from the throne at the request of the English Parliament, by William of Orange, who was supporting Protestantism cause against the Catholic. James accepted his exile, but others in Scotland did not. One was Graham of Claverhouse Viscount Dundee, who decided to raise an army of liberation (Hanley 1995). Hard fighting followed, and for many years Scotland did not settle down to peaceful times. Especially among the highlanders, who were largely cut off from Lowland society in Scotland, loyalty towards the deposed King James still was high.

Some sort of religious peace was, however, established, and along with that came the need for political peace as well. The English King William was not very interested in Scotland, which was considered a cold and damp place in the high north, inhabited by people with a strong and independent mind. His principal minister for Scotland, John Dalrymple, took charge of the royal ordinance that every chief of the Highland clans must abandon their old loyalty towards the Catolic King James and instead swear loyalty to King William.

In general, the Scottish clan chiefs did what was asked. One minor chieftain MacIan of the Clan MacDonald unfortunately got it all wrong. He took his oath to Fort Williams 20 km's travel north of Glencoe in good time, but there he was told that the proper place was Inveraray 80 km's travel south of Fort Williams. In the deep winter in what might been the coldest spell of the Little Ice Age, he got to Inveraray days late, but before the Sheriff who was to accept his declaration had arrived. When the Sheriff finally arrived he of cause accepted the oath without any problem. John Dalrymple, however, who had some personal hatred of the MacDonalds, took the legalistic view that the late oath was invalid, and ordered the MacDonalds extirpated. A Campbell Chieftain, Campbell of Glenlyon (a valley in central Scotland), was ordered to take care of this. Every MacDonald under the age of seventy was to be executed.

The MacDonalds were living in the impressive glacial valley Glencoe (see picture above). The Campbell of Glenlyon with his troops with were arriving in early February 1692, and were received hospitably by the MacDonalds. The following social arrangements with associated drinking took almost two weeks. Then, in the early morning of 13 February 1692 the guests arose and set about murdering their hosts, including women and children.

Because of a sudden snowstorm, many of the MacDonalds managed to escape from the murdering (picture above), while the chieftain himself and his family perished. Especially the treachery of this event has for ever since made Glencoe a fearful word in Scotland, and given every Campbell a burden of accusation to bear. Even today people in Scotland are writing songs about the Massacre of Glencoe, the injustice, the treachery, and the Little Ice Age blizzard which spared the lives of many members of the MacDonald clan.

References:

McKirdy, A., Gordon, J. and Crofts, R. 2007. *Land of mountain and flood*. The geology and landforms of Scotland. Birlinn Limited, Edinburgh, Scotland, 324 pp.

Hanley, C. 1995. *History of Scotland*. Lomond Books, Greenwich, 192 pp.

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All the above diagrams with supplementary information, including links to data sources and previous issues of this newsletter, are available on www.climate4you.com

Yours sincerely,

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March 29, 2013.