

Record March warmth showing no sign of letting-up through Tuesday; **there's been nothing like it here in over 141-years of weather observations**

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*By Meteorologist Tom Skilling*

Think what's been happening with our weather in the past week has been a bit unusual? You're right on--and more than a "bit" unusual! In 141 years of official Chicago weather observations, **there's never been a March warm spell that comes even close to this one. It's literally "off the charts".**

**Up until this year, only ten of March's 4,371 high temperatures dating back to 1871 had reached or exceeded 80-degrees. And, of those ten 80s, just two had occurred by St. Patrick's Day (March 17).**

The breadth and scope of the current warm spell is quite remarkable. A preliminary survey of Friday highs across the Lower 48 indicates **at least 157 cities scattered across 22 states exceeded their high-temperature records for the date. One estimate is that more than 1,600 high-temperature records have been broken across the country over the past week.**

Friday's 82-degree afternoon high, the Chicago area's warmest reading ever to occur so early in the year and a reading which equals the normal high for June 24, shattered the previous record of 78-degrees set 67-years ago in 1945. It marked the third consecutive record high to occur in the past three days here and is part of an unprecedented round of warm weather which has launched the 2012 allergy season a month early, pushed Lake Michigan's shoreline water temperature 10-degrees warmer than a year ago and confounded area vegetation, as evidenced by the early emergence of plants and flowers.

**It's worth noting Chicago's 82-degree peak reading was warmer than the 79-degree highs observed Friday in Miami and West Palm Beach and Los Angeles' 59-degree high.**

A chill settling over the western third of the nation is likely to allow Chicago's record 80-degree highs the next 5 days to surge past highs which by Sunday will struggle to 60 in Phoenix, 55 in Las Vegas and 63 in Los Angeles.

Date	Max Temperature	Min Temperature	Precipitation	Snowfall	Snow Depth
2012-03-01	40	35	T	0.0	0
2012-03-02	40	34	0.19	T	0
2012-03-03	35	30	T	T	0
2012-03-04	32	26	T	0.3	0
2012-03-05	37	21	0.00	0.0	0
2012-03-06	68	31	0.00	0.0	0
2012-03-07	68	54	0.00	0.0	0
2012-03-08	63	37	0.28	0.0	0
2012-03-09	40	28	0.00	0.0	0
2012-03-10	60	27	0.00	0.0	0
2012-03-11	69	41	T	0.0	0
2012-03-12	65	52	0.19	0.0	0
2012-03-13 Tuesday	70	48	0.00	0.0	0
<b>2012-03-14 Wednesday</b>	<b>81</b>	46	0.00	0.0	0
<b>2012-03-15 Thursday</b>	<b>81</b>	48	0.00	0.0	0
<b>2012-03-16 Friday</b>	<b>82</b>	46	0.00	0.0	0
<b>2012-03-17 Saturday</b>	<b>82</b>	58	0.00	0.0	0
<b>2012-03-18 Sunday</b>	<b>81</b>	57	0.00	0.0	0

The past 141 Marches had produced only ten 80s--until now...

Not only has the current warm spell produced 5 consecutive record breaking 80-degree and higher readings, 2 more may be on the way. That's remarkable when you consider March is a month which hadn't even managed a string of five consecutive 70-degree or higher temperatures over the past 141 years.

Don't get too comfortable with the warmth; 7 of the eight years with March 80s have seen a trace or more of snow beyond the warmth

The chill of winter may not be completely behind us. Seven of the 8 years on the books here since 1871 with 80-degree March temperatures have also recorded at least a trace of snow before more permanent warmth has taken

hold.

Saturday became Chicago's warmest St. Patrick's Day on record; the day's 82 °F degree high blasted the current record of 74-degrees.

Saturday was Chicago's warmest St. Patrick's day on record. The previous high for the date was 74-degrees recorded just 3 years ago in 2009.

The normal high for March 17 is 47-degrees--which places Saturday's high 35-degrees above normal and equivalent to the "normal high" on June 21. So, we're effectively experiencing the sort of weather more common three months from now!

Record streak intact---another 80-degree day Sunday

March 17, 2012 8:53 PM

*By Meteorologist Paul Dailey*

Saturday's high temperature at Chicago's official O'Hare International Airport observing site hit 82 degrees---the unprecedented fourth consecutive day in the 80s. Sunday's 81 °F high made it a record 5 straight 80-degree days. Weather records dating back to 1871 should continue to fall as Chicagoans experience a stretch of warm temperatures never before observed in March. Sunday marked the 6th straight day of 70-degrees or higher, eclipsing the previous record 5-day run on March 12-16, 1995.

The end is in sight, but it looks to be a few more days out with a cool-down projected to begin about Thursday - following showers and thunderstorms Wednesday night - but even then highs look to be in the 60s. Between now and then, it's possible the string of 80-degree days could reach 7 on Tuesday, and the streak of daily record-breaking high temperatures could reach 8 Wednesday.