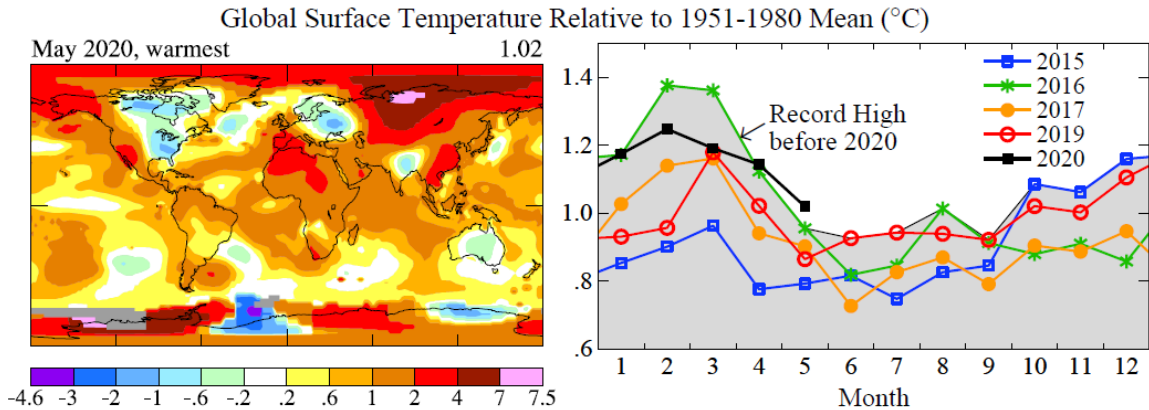


May 2020 Global Temperature Update



May 2020 was the warmest May since adequate global data began in 1880, exceeding the next warmest May (2016) by 0.06°C. Global surface temperature was 1.02°C relative to the 1951-1980 base period and 1.29°C relative to 1880-1920.

Siberia continued to be unusually warm, with a large area more than 4°C warmer than during the 1951-1980 base period (see map above). However, large portions of the United States, Canada, Europe and Australia were cooler than they were in the 1951-1980 average.

The first five months of 2020 are the 2nd warmest January-May in the record at 1.16°C relative to 1951-1980 (1.44°C relative to 1880-1920). January-May in 2016 was warmest, 1.20°C relative to 1951-1980.

The last seven months of 2016 were relatively cool, aided by a shift from El Niño to La Niña conditions in the tropical Pacific, so 2020 has a chance to be the warmest year. Thus, there were widespread media reports that 2020 likely would be the warmest year, based mainly on a NOAA prediction.

Our [update last month](#) suggested caution with that prediction, because of strong evidence that 2020 is also headed into a La Niña. The research group predicting El Niño and La Niña has become notoriously conservative, almost waiting until one is in place before “predicting” it, but the NCEP model for several weeks has been consistently predicting a rather strong La Niña (graph on lower left).

In a companion [Communication](#) we discuss what might be learned at the end of the year from comparison of 2016 and 2020 in their race for the title of the warmest year.

