

A YEAR IN WEATHER

# 2008 was so cool

Bookended by snowy winters, 2008 was a cold blast of history. Five consecutive months of below-normal temperatures statewide, the first such streak since 1979, set a cool tone for the year.

April snows were heavy — depressing, some would say — and many northern lakes were still covered with ice instead of anglers for the walleye fishing opener in May. Some migrating birds starved because the bugs they like to eat when they arrive hadn’t been born yet. A Penn State University analysis showed that while the country as a whole had a 2008 average temperature slightly above normal, Minnesota was not only below normal, but also was further below normal than most of the rest of the country.

The worst calamities occurred in late spring: a fatal tornado in Hugo and floods in the Austin area. As the year ended, heavy autumn rains and snow in the Red River Valley had people thinking ahead to spring flooding. Statewide, a deep snow cover held the promise of another traditional winter stretching into 2009.

January

After record daily high temperatures across the state Jan. 5-7, skaters in the U.S. Pond Hockey championships in Minneapolis Jan. 18-20 battled the lowest temps of the winter. More than 200 runners in the Freeze Yer Gizzard Blizzard event in International Falls that weekend enjoyed windchills of minus-40. On Jan. 29, the mercury in Duluth dropped 60 degrees in less than 24 hours, from 41 above to 19 below.

February

Within a week after being trademarked “Icebox of the Nation,” International Falls hit 40 below and twice this month was the nation’s coldest city. Minnesota cities took that honor nine times in February. In the end, it was the coldest meteorological winter (December through February) in Minnesota since 2000-01.

March

Easter was about as early as it can get, and in the Twin Cities it was the coldest holiday in 33 years. The Twins opened their season March 31 at the Metrodome, and the line score read: Twin Cities: 3 runs, 5.9 inches of snow. Anaheim, 2 runs, 0 snow.

April

Winter stomped back into northern Minnesota the first weekend in April, dropping 32 inches of wet snow on Virginia. On April 15, southern Minnesota cities recorded their first temperatures in the 70s in 179 days. Up north, another heavy snow on the 26th meant state April monthly records for Zerkel (49 inches) and nearby Itasca State Park (43.5).

May

The fourth month in a row with a below-normal overall temperatures meant some northern lakes were still ice-covered for the May 10 walleye fishing season opener. Tornado season opened with tragedy: 2-year-old Nathaniel Prindle was killed when a twister destroyed 50 homes in Hugo on May 25.



Nathaniel Prindle

June

Heavy early June rains in southern Minnesota led to massive flooding in Austin and the surrounding area, where one man was killed and damage was estimated at \$580,000. Statewide it was the fifth consecutive cooler-than-normal month, the first such streak in 29 years (though the monthly average for the Twin Cities was slightly above normal). An EF3 tornado tore up lakeside settlements near Park Rapids June 6.

July

Heavy rains, wind and hail July 10 wiped out truck farm crops at mid-season and brought local flooding across the southern metro suburbs. An EF3 tornado, Minnesota’s third and last of the year, struck near Willmar July 11.

August

Record daily rains Aug. 11 in Breckenridge (4.3 inches) and Fargo (3.33 inches) ushered in a wet cycle in the Red River Valley while other parts of Minnesota began drying up. The August monthly statewide high of 93 degrees at Worthington was one of the three lowest since 1891.

September

Autumn seemed to begin over the lunch hour on Sept. 2, as the temperature in the Twin Cities dropped from 80 at 11 a.m. to 66 at 1 p.m. On Sept. 16, the water level of White Bear Lake was the lowest in nearly 17 years.

October

Bad timing: After training in five consecutive months with below-normal rainfall, runners in the Oct. 5 Twin Cities Marathon slogged 26.2 miles through heavy rain. The Twin Cities recorded their first sub-freezing reading on Oct. 21, nearly two weeks later than the median date.

November

Election Day saw a high of 71 in the Twin Cities. Snow three days later ended the snowfall-free season in the Twin Cities after only six months and 10 days. Several locations in the Red



DENNIS ANDERSON • Star Tribune

Despite weather that bordered on insufferable, anglers turned out in droves for the walleye fishing opener in May on Upper Red Lake. It had been the fourth consecutive month of below-normal temperatures in the state.

River Valley had their wettest September-October-November seasons ever while southeastern Minnesota coped with drought. The first subzero readings of the season came Nov. 21 at Wadena (-2) and Embarrass (-8).

December

Snowfall set monthly records in many cities from north to south. Two Harbors received 51.4 inches, and the 33.5 inches in Fargo-Moorhead was a record for any month. The Twin Cities had its coldest December day since 2000, and state and Twin Cities monthly temperatures dropped back below normal, signaling winter like it used to be, only more so.

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TWIN CITIES MONTHLY DATA FOR 2008

	High temp.	Low temp.	Avg. temp.	Diff. from normal	Precip. (inches)	Diff. from normal	Snow* (inches)	Diff. from normal
Jan.	43	-15	13.2	0.1	0.15	-0.89	2.0	-11.5
Feb.	38	-14	15.2	-4.9	0.40	-0.39	4.8	3.4
Mar.	52	-6	28.3	-3.8	1.97	0.11	18.0	7.6
April	77	24	44.0	-2.6	3.12	0.81	1.6	-1.5
May	84	37	56.3	-3.0	2.53	-0.71	0	-0.1
June	90	52	68.7	0.3	2.70	-1.64	0	0
July	94	55	75.5	2.3	2.13	-1.91	0	0
Aug.	89	54	72.4	1.8	3.35	-0.70	0	0
Sept.	88	42	63.3	2.6	1.78	-0.91	0	0
Oct.	78	27	50.4	1.7	1.96	-0.15	Trace	-0.6
Nov.	74	9	34.7	2.2	1.14	-0.80	4.3	-5.7
Dec.	41	-13	13.5	-5.2	1.15	0.15	17.4	7.4
2008	94	-15	44.7	-0.6	22.38	-7.03	48.1	-7.8

\*Snow, ice pellets, hail

