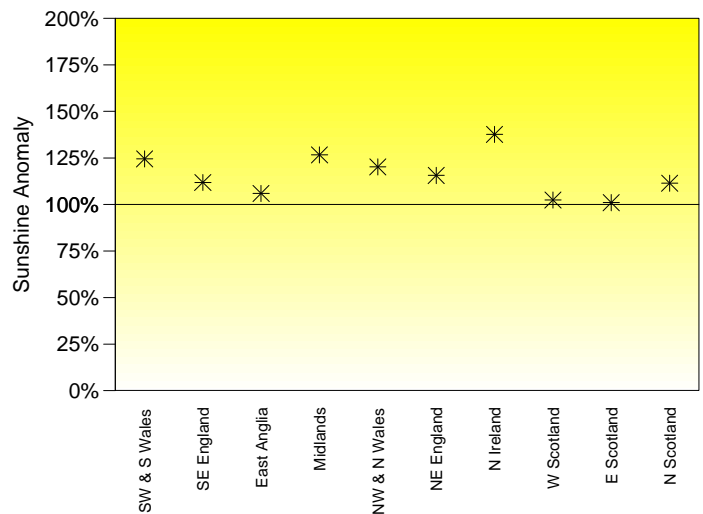
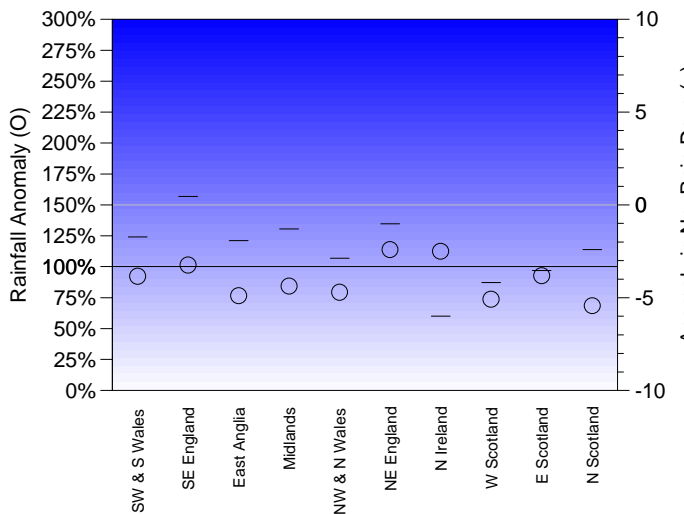


Extremes for March 2010	
Hottest:	18.0°C Weybourne, Norfolk, 18th
Coldest:	-18.6°C Braemar No 2, Avon, 4th
Most Rain:	65.0mm Helens Bay, County Down, 30th
Most Sun:	11.6hrs Newtownards, County Down, 21st
Windiest:	73mph Fair Isle, Shetland, 19th
Warmest:	8.1°C Scilly St. Mary's SAWS, Cornwall
Coolest:	1.8°C Dalwhinnie No 2, Tayside
Wettest:	283.4mm Cluanie Inn No 3, Ross & Cromarty
Driest:	5.4mm Cambridge University, Cambridgeshire
Sunniest:	215.2hrs Radstock, Somerset
Dullest:	72.6hrs Kinlochewe, Highland



March often marks the transition from winter to spring as daffodils appear and lambs begin to gambol in the fields. Winter weather is far from over however, and while the sun now has the strength to thaw lying snow quickly at low levels, it can still persist over higher ground. This year, March may have come in 'like a lamb' but it certainly went out 'like a lion'.

The storm that brought damaging gales to northern Spain and western France at the end of February was over the Baltic by the 1st of March and the month opened bright but chilly. Frost was widespread over the first week with -18.6°C (-2°F) at Braemar (Aberdeenshire) on the 4th but days were sunny and crisp. Still colder air infiltrated from the east on the 7th, and high pressure remained firmly in charge over the northern UK giving a raw NE wind in the south. The focus of high pressure transferred to the eastern Atlantic by the 12th, allowing weak fronts to slip southwards and giving rise to cloud and a little rain. Winds then turned north westerly and it became less cold over the next few days but cloud amounts were very variable. A major change began on the 17th as SSW winds freshened, and the 18th was the warmest day of the year so far with a maximum of 18°C (64°F) at Weybourne (Norfolk). An unsettled period followed with fronts giving spells of rain but there were brighter interludes and it remained mild; indeed, balmy southerly breezes on the 24th gave widespread maxima above 16°C (61°F). The illusion of Spring was short-lived however, and more fronts associated with a deep depression to the south-west brought heavy, thundery rain on the 25th and this was followed by a couple of showery, rather blustery days. The 28th started bright over England and Wales, but cloud increased and an ominous sea mist rolled onto Channel coasts heralding rain from a warm front. A very disturbed spell then saw the month out as the associated deepening depression moved across the UK. Heavy rain was widespread and as colder air from the Arctic became entrained in the low's circulation, snow developed over high ground in Scotland and N. Ireland. The snow was of the wet, clinging variety and its weight brought down numerous power lines. By midday on the 31st, it was estimated that some 20,000 homes were without power in Dumfries and Galloway and NE Scotland. Tragically, a coach overturned in treacherous driving conditions in Lanarkshire, causing serious injuries and one fatality. Meanwhile, in N. Ireland, 300 motorists were trapped in their vehicles in the Glen Shane pass as snowdrifts 4 feet deep piled up on the night of the 30th/31st.

The contrasting spells meant that overall mean temperatures were close to average. It was generally a sunny month with precipitation somewhat below normal except in parts of northern England, southern Scotland and Northern Ireland.

A severe cold wave swept across southern Europe in the first half of March. On the 7th, up to 40cm of snow fell in France's central southern region causing serious disruption to road, rail and flights. In Spain, nearly a quarter of a million people in the north-east were left without power after snowstorms on the 8th and 9th. 1m of snow fell in the Pyrenees leaving 6,000 travellers stranded and blocking up to 40 roads on the border between Spain and France. Barcelona recorded its heaviest snowfall since 1962 and thousands of workers were left stranded after leaving their offices at lunchtime to witness and photograph the rare scenes of the beach blanketed in snow. 50cm snow fell at Girona - leaving it effectively cut off from the rest of Spain and 10cm across the holiday island of Majorca where surprised holidaymakers were forced indoors! On 11th, blizzards struck northern Italy, depositing 36cm of snow in Modena and Bologna. The Bora wind also brought heavy seas to the north Adriatic. Beaches were damaged by waves up to 6m high and winds gusted to 101 mph near Venice. Further east, the Bulgarian capital Sofia was paralysed following heavy snowfalls. The northern towns of Razgrad, Shumen and Montana were even harder hit with cars, trucks and buses stranded in the snow. Across the Atlantic, a severe winter storm wreaked havoc along the east coast on the 13th. Rainfall of 150-240mm and strong winds killed at least 11 people and left approximately 500,000 people without electricity in Pennsylvania, New Jersey, New York, and Connecticut. New Jersey's largest utility company stated that the storm was the worst in its history, with 420,000 power outages to customers. In the Pacific, Tropical Cyclone Tomas, a category 4 storm at its peak, battered Fiji from 13th-16th with sustained winds of 132 mph and gusts up to 161 mph. A 7m storm surge was reported and more than 350 mm of rain was dumped over some areas.