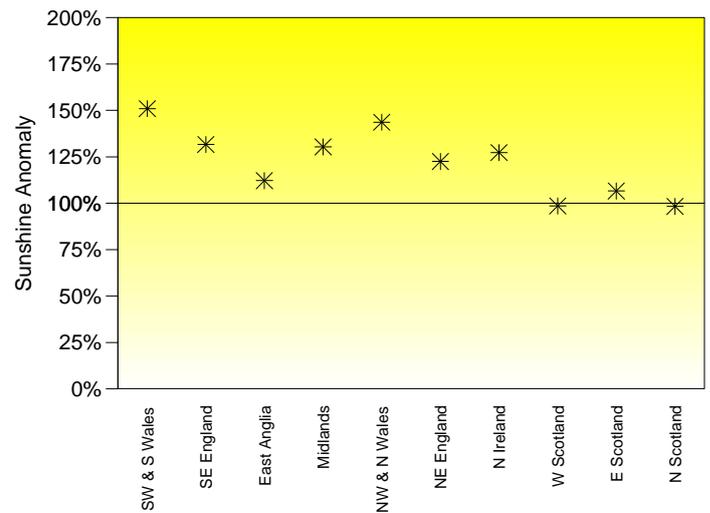
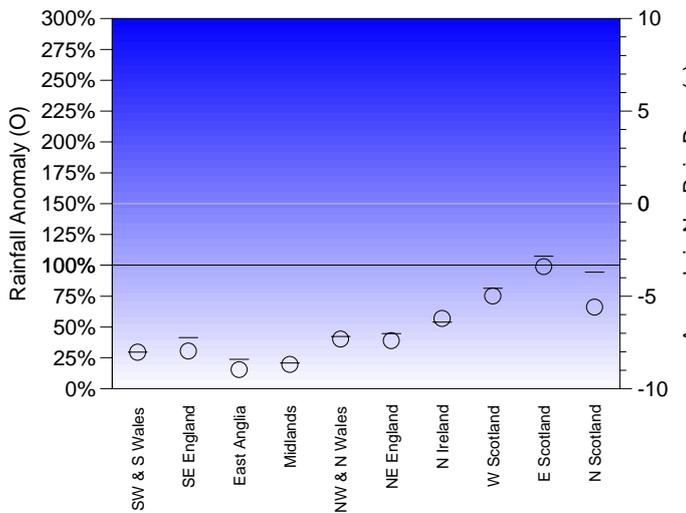


Extremes for March 2011	
Hottest:	20.6°C Ebbw Vale, Gwent, 25th
Coldest:	-7.5°C Braemar No 2, Avon, 18th
Most Rain:	39.2mm Kinlochewe, Highland, 8th
Most Sun:	12.2hrs Swaffham, Norfolk, 19th
Windiest:	81mph Benbecula, Western Isles, 10th
Warmest:	8.8°C Carrefour-au-Clercq, Channel Islands
Coolest:	3.5°C Braemar No 2, Avon
Wettest:	181.2mm Kinlochewe, Highland
Driest:	1.8mm Cambridge, Niab, Cambridgeshire
Sunniest:	226.4hrs Radstock, Somerset
Dullest:	61.2hrs Kirkwall, Orkney



March supposedly starts stormy and ends calm: "in like a lion and out like a lamb" - although in fact, the converse is equally likely. If there is a settled spell, afternoons can become quite warm under the increasing strength of the sun, although early morning frosts remain common. The equinox falls around the 20th and soon after the clocks spring forward marking the return to lighter evenings.

The month began chilly with night frosts and maxima no higher than 3-5°C (37-41°F) on the 1st in southern England. Most of the first week was dry however under a ridge of high pressure. The frost on the morning of the 8th was especially sharp with -7.2°C (19°F) at South Newington, Oxfordshire. By this time pressure was falling and a stronger westerly flow dominated the next few days with rain or blustery showers which were wintry in the north. Snow closed Inverness airport for a time on the 9th. On the 12th, a warm front moving north introduced a very mild southerly airstream to England and Wales but Scotland and Northern Ireland still fell under the influence of the colder air. There were outbreaks of sleet and snow away from coasts between the 12th and 14th: 29cm fell at Aviemore and up 100cm in the Cairngorms - to the delight of skiers. A more sluggish pattern then developed as an anticyclone over Scandinavia slowed the eastward progress of Atlantic fronts. There was some sunshine, but temperatures in eastern areas were limited by mist and fog. By the 20th, the dominant high pressure was over southern Britain and the near Continent, and temperatures began to rise steadily. On the 21st parts of NE England hit 17°C (63°F) and the spell of fine spring weather which followed lasted all the way through to the 28th. Night frost became less widespread and daytime temperatures were often in the mid to high teens Celsius. Fontmell Magna, Dorset recorded 19.8°C (68°F) at on the 25th and Dyce, Aberdeen 16.5°C (63°F) on the 23rd. Some coastal areas were plagued by sea fog and consequently much cooler. Temperatures fell slightly on the 26th and more unsettled conditions then prevailed until month end - although amounts of rain were small in the south as fronts weakened. It was still relatively mild and for most of SE England minimum stayed well above 10°C (50°F) on the 31st owing to a combination of wind, cloud and tropical maritime air.

March 2011 was a very settled month notable for a substantial lack of rainfall especially over central and eastern England. Provisionally, East Anglia had its second driest March in 100 years with some stations totalling less than 5mm for the entire month. It was also a sunny month away from Scotland. Wales had its fifth sunniest March since 1929. The clear skies meant that minimum temperatures were close to normal but maxima were well above average.

In Greece during March, a winter storm 7th & 8th brought several inches of snow and 80mph gusts to Athens. Power supplies to many of the Greek islands were cut and there was severe disruption to transport and communications. Coastal flooding was widespread, driven by the strong winds piling up water in harbours. A late-season snow storm also hit the north-eastern U.S. and south-eastern Canada 5th-7th. Locations in upstate New York and Vermont received up to 76cm of snow, topping off a very snowy winter. Further east, precipitation fell as heavy rain, which combined with melting snow to cause major flooding. Mudslides were reported in Connecticut, and ice jams in rivers across New England caused many rivers to breach their banks. Up to 51 cm of snow was reported in Quebec province, Canada and 1,000 snow ploughs, trucks and other snow removal equipment were dispatched to clear the city. Between the 19th and 21st a strong storm slammed into the California coast, bringing heavy rain and snow to the state. Up to 250mm of rainfall was reported in the San Fernando and San Joaquin Valleys. Burbank, California received 98mm of rain, breaking a 38-year old daily rainfall record. Mammoth Mountain in the Sierra Nevada Mountain range received over 152cm of snow from the storm, trapping campers and hikers. On the 23rd a tornado destroyed 30 homes, and badly damaged 60 others, in western Pennsylvania, about 25 miles east of Pittsburgh.

Rains battered Brazil's southern coast in the second week of March and left 8,000 people homeless and vast areas without electricity or water. In the state of Parana mudslides caused by the downpours blocked several national highways. Heavy rains and floods persisting from late January in the African nations of Angola and Namibia left at least 25 people dead when rivers burst their banks during the first week of March. The water level in the Okavanga River, which runs along the border of the two nations, was reported to be 8m above flood stage. In Australia, monsoonal rains from the 10th caused renewed flooding across Queensland - still reeling from deluges earlier in the year and damage inflicted by February's Cyclone Yasi. Up to 254mm of rain was reported in the town of Cardwell. Highways were inundated with water, cutting off the towns of Tully and Ingham. Euroamo, near Tully, received 500mm of rain in just a few days and one woman was killed after her car was swept away by floodwaters north of Cairns.