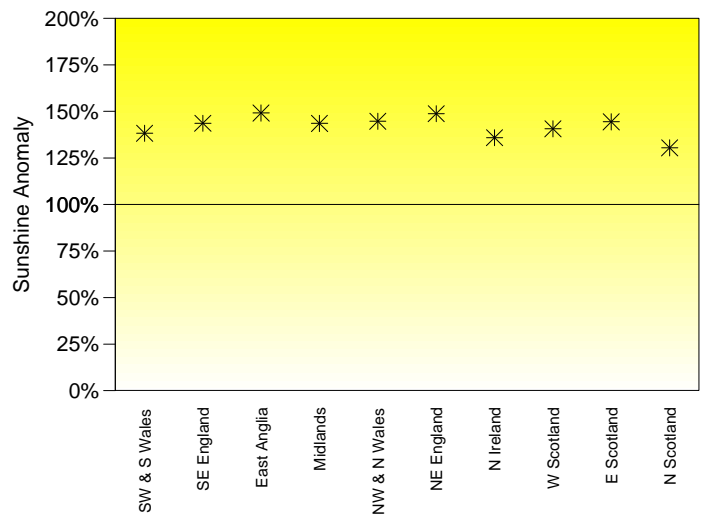
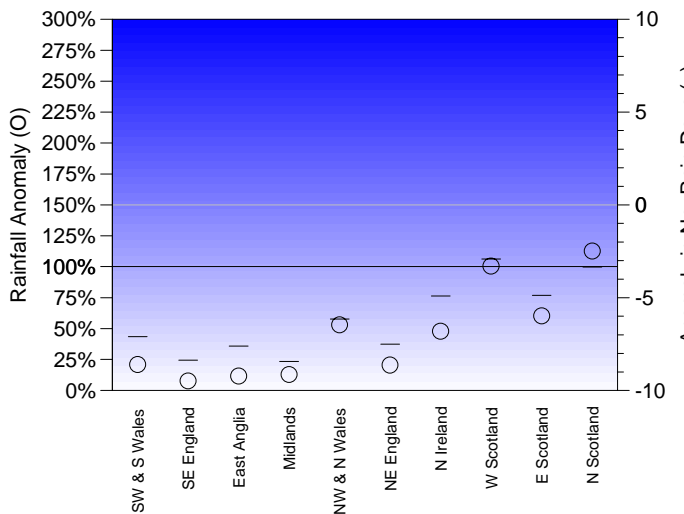


Extremes for April 2011	
Hottest:	28.2°C Pulham St. Mary, Norfolk, 23rd
Coldest:	-5.4°C Tulloch Bridge SAWS, Highland, 26th
Most Rain:	63.6mm Tyndrum No 3, Perthshire, 6th
Most Sun:	14.9hrs Dunstaffnage, Strathclyde, 30th
Windiest:	65mph Capel Curig SAWS, Gwynedd, 4th
Warmest:	14.6°C St James Park, Greater London
Coolest:	8.2°C Lerwick, Shetland
Wettest:	216.4mm Tyndrum No 3, Perthshire
Driest:	0.0mm Fyvie Castle, Grampian
Sunniest:	287.1hrs Radstock, Somerset
Dullest:	130.1hrs Kinlochewe, Highland



Beautiful blossoms abound, trees spring into leaf and lawnmowers whirl into action as April chases away winter's gloom, though night frosts and snow may still occur. Despite its reputation for showers, April is frequently dry, and this year was an outstanding example of both warmth and aridity.

The month started unsettled and showers or longer spells of rain affected many parts over the first three days. Mild, moist south-westerly air then invaded and brought copious rainfall over west-facing hills on the 4th and 5th but by the 6th, high pressure over the near-Continent had begun to assert its dominance. Rain became confined to the far north and elsewhere the sun broke through and temperatures soared - with 23.6°C (75°F) recorded in St James' Park, London. It became a little cooler on the 7th, but the dry and fine weather continued over the next few days. A cold front brought wind and a little rain on the 11th and subsequent showers turned wintry over the Scottish mountains. The 12th was a bright, fresh day everywhere but a weakening frontal system pushed cloud and a little rain eastward the following day. Thereafter, it became steadily warmer - with increasing amounts of sunshine from the 16th. Maxima exceeding 21°C (70°F) were common from the 19th and temperatures continued to build into the Easter weekend - reaching their highest on the 23rd (Easter Saturday) RHS Wisley recorded 27.8°C (82°F) - remarkable for this early in the year and the warmest April day in over 60 years for the UK. Elsewhere, the exceptional heat was triggering thunderstorms. Streets in Hillsborough, near Sheffield, were left white with hail, and at Santon Downham, Norfolk 20mm rain fell in just one hour. Easter Sunday was a little less hot as winds turned north-easterly and it became a good deal cooler with more cloud in the east over the next week. Apprehension grew for a wet Royal Wedding as showers threatened from troughs over the near-Continent, but on the day itself, the rain stayed away and there were even a few gleams of sun to cheer the couple on their way. The 30th saw plenty of sunshine but with a stiff easterly breeze, and scattered storms broke out in south-west England.

For the UK as a whole, it was the warmest April in 100 years with mean temperatures 3.7°C above normal - more typical of June. Away from western Scotland, it was also exceptionally dry with less than 10% of normal rainfall recorded for much of central and eastern England. This second successive very dry month has left river and reservoir levels low and a rising fear of drought. It was a very sunny month for all of England and Wales with amounts generally 150% of the normal.

Many European countries shared the exceptional April warmth. In Ireland, Malin Head and Valentia Observatory both recorded their warmest April in over a century. Murcia, Spain, hit a sizzling 37.4°C (99.3°F) as early as the 9th. Kleine Brogel in Belgium recorded 29.5°C (85.1°F) on Easter Saturday (23rd), and De Bilt, Holland, 25°C (77°F) the following day. Traditional Easter fairs in the east and north of Holland were cancelled because of the risk of fires posed by the extraordinarily dry spell. In the Swiss canton of Zurich, officials began moving trout from the river Toess before their habitat dried up. In North America, two historic tornadoic storm episodes occurred during April. The first wave on the 4th swept rapidly across the south-eastern United States from Texas to Pennsylvania travelling more than 800 miles within 24 hours. There were 68 tornado reports, 90 severe hail reports, and 1,318 damaging wind reports. At least nine people were reported to have been killed. In Augusta, Georgia, a practice round of the Master's golf tournament was delayed due to many of the famed magnolia trees along the course being felled. Strong winds tore the roof from a school gymnasium in Tennessee and across Georgia and Tennessee, over 270,000 homes lost power. On 27th-28th more devastating storms and tornadoes roared across the south states of the USA flattening houses, flipping cars and uprooting trees. In Alabama, a massive tornado slammed into the college town of Tuscaloosa, killing 15 people. Deaths also occurred in Arkansas, Louisiana, Georgia and Tennessee. This second wave had at least 178 confirmed tornadoes, breaking a record for 24 hour periods set in 1974. The death toll of 344 was the largest for a single episode since 1925.

In South America, heavy rains on the 25th caused floods, blackouts, landslides and at least one death in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. In Asia, on the 13th, a strong dust storm formed over Turkey and Syria and was driven by a strong cold front to affect the Persian Gulf states of Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and Iraq. Visibility dropped to as little as 50m and many schools and universities were caused to close. Kuwait was particularly hard hit, prompting the country to halt all oil exports for a time.