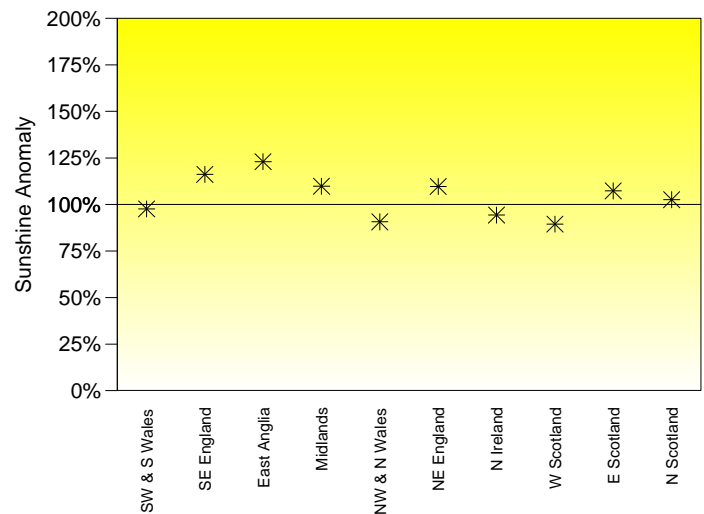
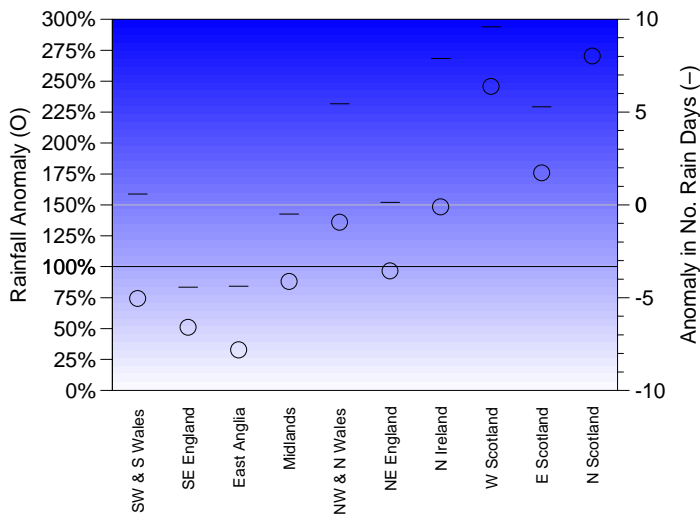


Extremes for May 2011	
Hottest:	25.4°C Weybourne, Norfolk, 7th
Coldest:	-6.3°C Altnaharra SAWS, Highland, 4th
Most Rain:	68.8mm Tyndrum No 3, Perthshire, 23rd
Most Sun:	15.0hrs Tiree, Strathclyde, 1st
Windiest:	82mph Inverbervie SAWS, Grampian, 23rd
Warmest:	15.0°C London Olympic Park South, Greater London
Coolest:	8.2°C Dalwhinnie No 2, Tayside
Wettest:	442.8mm Cluanie Inn No 3, Ross & Cromarty
Driest:	7.0mm Frittenden, Kent
Sunniest:	339.1hrs Radstock, Somerset
Dullest:	116.4hrs Tiree, Strathclyde



By the end of May, spring slowly turns into summer. The evenings become very light, but as renowned climatologist Gordon Manley pointed out, "the lengthening day is slow - and suffers many set-backs". Night frosts and chilly weather can still be expected, especially in a burst of northerly winds. May is often a dry and sunny month in NW Scotland. Not so this year....

The month began fine if rather breezy, with easterly winds blowing across the UK and showers in the south-west. Some calm and chilly nights followed and a local air frost early on the 4th saw temperatures fall to as low as -6.3°C (21°F) at Altnaharra, Highland. Southerly winds then ushered in warmer air (Weybourne, Norfolk, notched up 25.4°C (77°F) on the 7th), but it turned increasingly unsettled across western areas. A deep depression in the eastern Atlantic maintained the warm southerlies in the east, but heavy showers in the west and there were many reports of thunder and hail across Wales on the 9th. The wind veered to westerly by the 12th and showers or longer outbreaks of rain affected the west and north over the following three days but there was very little rain for the south and east. A warm front moved east across the UK late on the 15th, and the broad warm sector brought mist and drizzle to west-facing coasts and hills on the 16th and 17th, but much of the east remained warm and dry. The cold front weakened as it crossed England and Wales on the 18th and fine weather resumed for most of the UK. The 21st-27th was the most disturbed period of the month with northern and western areas bearing the brunt. The 22nd and 23rd saw wet and unseasonably windy conditions. Eskdalemuir, Dumfries and Galloway, recorded 35mm of rain on the morning of the 23rd before the rain gave way to blustery showers. There were widespread and severe gales. Most of northern England recorded winds of 55mph or more and Blackford Hill, Edinburgh, saw a gust of 84mph. Numerous trees were felled (exacerbated by trees being in leaf -unlike during a typical winter gale), there was considerable disruption to transport and power and at least 1 fatality. Heavy, thundery showers were widespread on the 26th, but subsequently, pressure became higher to the south of the UK with the most unsettled weather largely confined to the north. Arctic air made a few forays into Scotland and there were wintry showers over the Highlands. At noon on the 29th, the temperature on the top of Aonach Mor was 0°C (32°F) with snow showers and gale force winds. Even for such an exposed place, remarkably inclement for this late in the year!

The UK mean temperature was 1.0°C above the 1971-2000 average, but while it was a very wet month in the west and north of Scotland, it was the third successive very dry month across East Anglia and south-east England - where less than 30% of normal rainfall was recorded. Sunshine totals reflected this pattern; it was rather dull in the west but amounts were rather above normal in eastern areas.

The unseasonably deep Atlantic depression of 23rd brought Ireland a record May wind gust of 90mph at Belmullet (Co Mayo). Elsewhere in Europe drought problems intensified. France, the EU's top wheat producer, formed a 'national drought committee', limiting water consumption in many regions. Cracked earth and browned leaves were visible across the Ile-de-France region. Farmers in the south-west German region of Rhineland-Palatinate faced crop failure and mounting irrigation costs. In contrast, across the Atlantic a massive Mississippi flood event, which began with rapid snowmelt and heavy rains across the Upper Midwest of the United States during April, made its way remorselessly southwards during May. The floodwaters were exacerbated when the Ohio Valley states experienced a record wet April and by the 14th the Mississippi River had overflowed and widened to more than three miles. Memphis, Tenn and Tunica were among cities that experienced inundation of the river into farmland, residential and commercial areas. As the flood waters continued southwards, the U.S. Army opened the Morganza and Bonnet Carre Spillways in eastern Louisiana to protect the highly populated areas of Baton Rouge and New Orleans. The total cost of floodwater damage will run into billions of U.S. dollars. On the 23rd a monstrous tornado tore through Joplin, Missouri, reaching EF-5 (T9-10) with winds of more than 200mph. It appeared to be a rare 'multivortex' tornado, with two or more intense centres of rotation orbiting the larger funnel. At least 136 people were killed making it the deadliest single twister in 60 years. On 25th-26th another wave of vicious storms hit the South and East states with grapefruit sized hail in Georgia, where more than 100,000 lost power, and fierce winds toppling trees in upstate New York.

In northern Colombia 810 mm of rain fell during the first 14 days of May and caused floods that killed at least 425 people, left 482 people missing, and caused billions of dollars worth of damage. Between 12th and 16th, 116 large wildfires burned across the Canadian province of Alberta, leaving nearly 33,000 hectares ablaze. The fires shut down thousands of barrels of oil and gas output while all 10,000 residents of Slave Lake town had to be evacuated. Pakistan roasted in pre-monsoon temperatures of over 48°C (118°F) on the Indus River Plain with 50.5°C (123°F) registered at Turbat on the 20th. Tropical Storm Aere impacted the eastern Philippines May 7th - 9th. The rains and subsequent landslides killed 31 people and left at least 100,000 homeless. In Catarman, 377 mm of rain fell in 24 hours, resulting in flash flooding with up to \$8.4M worth of crop damage. Finally, as the southern