



Where Are the Hurricanes?

Posted by [Dave Cohen](#) on August 24, 2006 - 2:40pm

Topic: [Miscellaneous](#)

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[Update by Dave Cohen on 08/24/06 at 12:06 PM EDT] You can read the latest on the hurricanes and climate debate at realclimate.org—[Fact, Fiction, and Friction in the Hurricane Debate](#). The story is by two distinguished climate scientists, Gavin Schmidt and Michael Mann.

What a difference a year makes. Last year at this time, Katrina was bearing down on the Gulf of Mexico and Rita was still in the future. The Oil Drum's traffic was way up as our editors and commentors provided up to the minute coverage.

Today, the [National Hurricane Center](#) is tracking Debbie, the 4th named storm of 2006. When Katrina hit, it was "the eleventh named storm, fifth hurricane, third major hurricane, and second Category 5 hurricane of the 2005 Atlantic season."

Where are the hurricanes?

As it turns out, they are in the Pacific Ocean this year where they are called [typhoons](#). Reuters reported [Typhoon kills at least 83 in China](#) on August 10th.

Typhoon Saomai tore into Cangnan County in eastern China's Zhejiang province Thursday after authorities relocated 1 million people in the densely populated commercial province, Xinhua said....

Saomai, Vietnamese for "morning star," capsized boats and collapsed houses as it carved a swath of destruction through southern China, following in the path of seven previous typhoons this season.

On August 18th, Bloomberg reported [Tropical Storm Wukong Hits Japan's Kyushu; Flights Cancelled](#). Wikipedia summarizes the [2006 Pacific typhoon season](#).

In addition, the NHC is now tracking Ileana in the Eastern Pacific where there has been more activity than in the Atlantic.

The forecast team at Colorado State's [The Tropical Meteorology Project](#), led by Dr. William Gray, predicted in [April of 2006](#) that there would be 17 named storms, 9 hurricanes and 5 intense hurricanes during 2006. The latest [revision](#) for activity after August 1st indicates 13 named storms, 7 hurricanes and 3 intense hurricanes.

Similarly, NOAA's Climate Prediction Center [2006 forecast](#) called for

NOAA continues to predict a high likelihood (75% chance) of an above-normal 2006 Atlantic hurricane season and a 20% chance of a near-normal season, according to a consensus of scientists at National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's (NOAA) Climate Prediction Center (CPC), National Hurricane Center (NHC), and Hurricane Research Division (HRD). Therefore, 2006 is forecast to be the tenth above-normal season in the last twelve years. See NOAA's definitions of above-, near-, and below-normal seasons.

This updated outlook calls for a seasonal total of 12-15 named storms, with 7-9 becoming hurricanes, and 3-4 becoming major hurricanes (categories 3-5 on the Saffir-Simpson hurricane intensity scale). The likely range of NOAA's Accumulated Cyclone Energy (ACE) index (Bell and Halpert, 2000) is 110%-170% of the median. These totals include the three tropical storms (Alberto, Beryl, and Chris) that have already occurred. Therefore, for the remainder of the season, we expect an additional 9-12 named storms, 7-9 hurricanes, and 3-4 major hurricanes.

Both the NOAA and Colorado State predictions still forecast more hurricanes to come. Sea surface temperatures have been reported as below 2005 levels but now there are signs that the [Atlantic hurricane factory is primed](#).

The latest space-based measurements of Atlantic Ocean surface temperatures have revealed a wide swath of hot water ready to supercharge any storms that form there -- if a few other things line up as well.

In recent weeks the water temperatures have risen significantly from the Cape Verde Islands off northern Africa, all the way west to the Gulf of Mexico.

A broad expanse of surface waters have hit the magic 82 degrees Fahrenheit (28 C) mark, which hurricane experts say is prerequisite for the hurricane factory to kick on.

"We're a little bit cooler than this time last year, but it's still warm enough," said NASA oceanographer David Adamec.

Are we still in hot water? Or have we made a miraculous escape from the ravages of Atlantic tropical storms in 2006? Discuss.



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