

*Geophysical Institute scientists:*

# Was this winter warmer than usual? Yes!

FAIRBANKS — If you thought this winter was warmer than normal, you were right, according to University of Alaska-Fairbanks Geophysical Institute scientists.

They said this winter and breakup season were the latest in the series of warm winters and springs Alaska has been enjoying for the last decade.

November temperatures were below normal at Fairbanks and Juneau, though no new records were set, and a very brief spell of severe weather hit Fairbanks and Anchorage around Jan. 12.

At Juneau, this "cold" spell

merely produced the only normal temperatures of the month.

Low temperatures returned statewide in late February and the first week of March, but the remainder of March was unusually balmy, with daily daily high temperature records being set in Fairbanks and Juneau.

As a pleasant change from the last two winters, the above-normal temperatures persisted through April, giving early-to-normal snow melt.

The average temperature for December and January combined was more than 10 degrees above

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normal in all three cities, and November was the only month since last August in which all three did not have above-normal temperatures.

In Fairbanks, where a normal winter would bring around four days with average temperatures below 40 below, the coldest temperature recorded this winter

barely brushed that mark.

In Juneau, thawing temperatures day and night were the rule for large parts of the winter, which made the few periods when daily high temperatures were below freezing all the more striking.

Even Anchorage had some December nights with above-freezing temperatures, and thawing on winter days was almost as likely as not.

Scientists at the institute believe it is impossible to say whether Alaskans are seeing the start of a trend toward warmer winters or the end of a fluctuation.