



Looking Up

El Niño Is A Part Of Global Warming

by George S. Nammack

As this latest article in our ongoing "Looking Up" marine weather series is being written in early January, 2007, the writer's overcoat has not as yet left its hanger, nor his snow shovel its corner of the garage. These facts do not sadden, rather they amaze. Nary a snowflake? Outdoor temperatures in the upper 60's? Passersby wearing Bermuda shorts? Oceans warming and melting both bergs and massive ice shelves, threatening to make, in the future, polar bears, penguins and other creatures of cold climes homeless? Has Mother Nature lost it altogether? The answer on many lips increasingly alludes to a long-term trend she has apparently *gained*.

It is called global warming and combined with its natural contributor, the El Niño weather system, is set to make 2007 the warmest year on record with far-reaching consequences for the planet according to Professor Phil Jones, one of Britain's leading climate experts, stationed at the University of East Anglia. Jones has

said that global warming, already blamed for bringing drought to the Horn of Africa and melting the Arctic ices shelf, is set to be exacerbated by the arrival of El Niño, the phenomenon caused by above-average sea temperatures in the Pacific. He added that this year will likely exceed 1998 as the hottest year on record and that this year's temps will probably top 2006, which was declared the hottest in Britain since 1659!

El Niño is stated by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), which provides weather forecasts to the nation's populace, including us boaters and anglers, to be "an oscillation or disruption of the ocean-atmosphere system in the tropical Pacific

having important consequences for weather and climate *around the globe.*" It was originally recognized by fishermen off the South American coast as the appearance of unusually warm water in the Pacific Ocean, happening near the beginning of the year. Because it occurs around Christmastime, El Niño means The Little Boy or The Christ Child in Spanish.

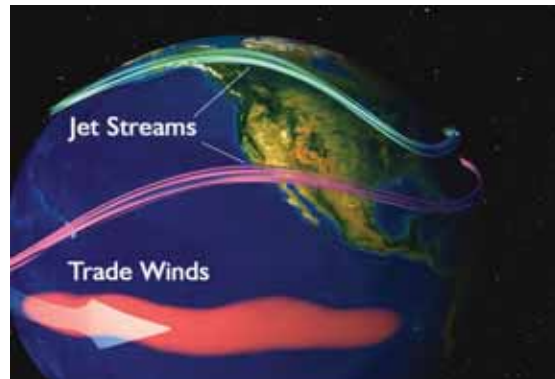
Consequences include increased rainfall along the southern tier of the United States and in Peru...causing destructive flooding, drought in the West Pacific and, on occasion, terrible brush fires in Australia. Conditions in the tropical Pacific must be observed in order to predict short-term (a few months to one year) climate variations. To provide these data, NOAA runs a buoy network that measures temperature, cur-

rents and winds in the equatorial band. The buoys transmit data daily that is available to researchers and forecasters worldwide in real time.

In normal, non-El Niño conditions, trade winds blow toward the west across the tropical Pacific. These winds "pile up"

warm surface water in the western Pacific, so the sea surface measures about a half-meter higher at Indonesia than at Ecuador.

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