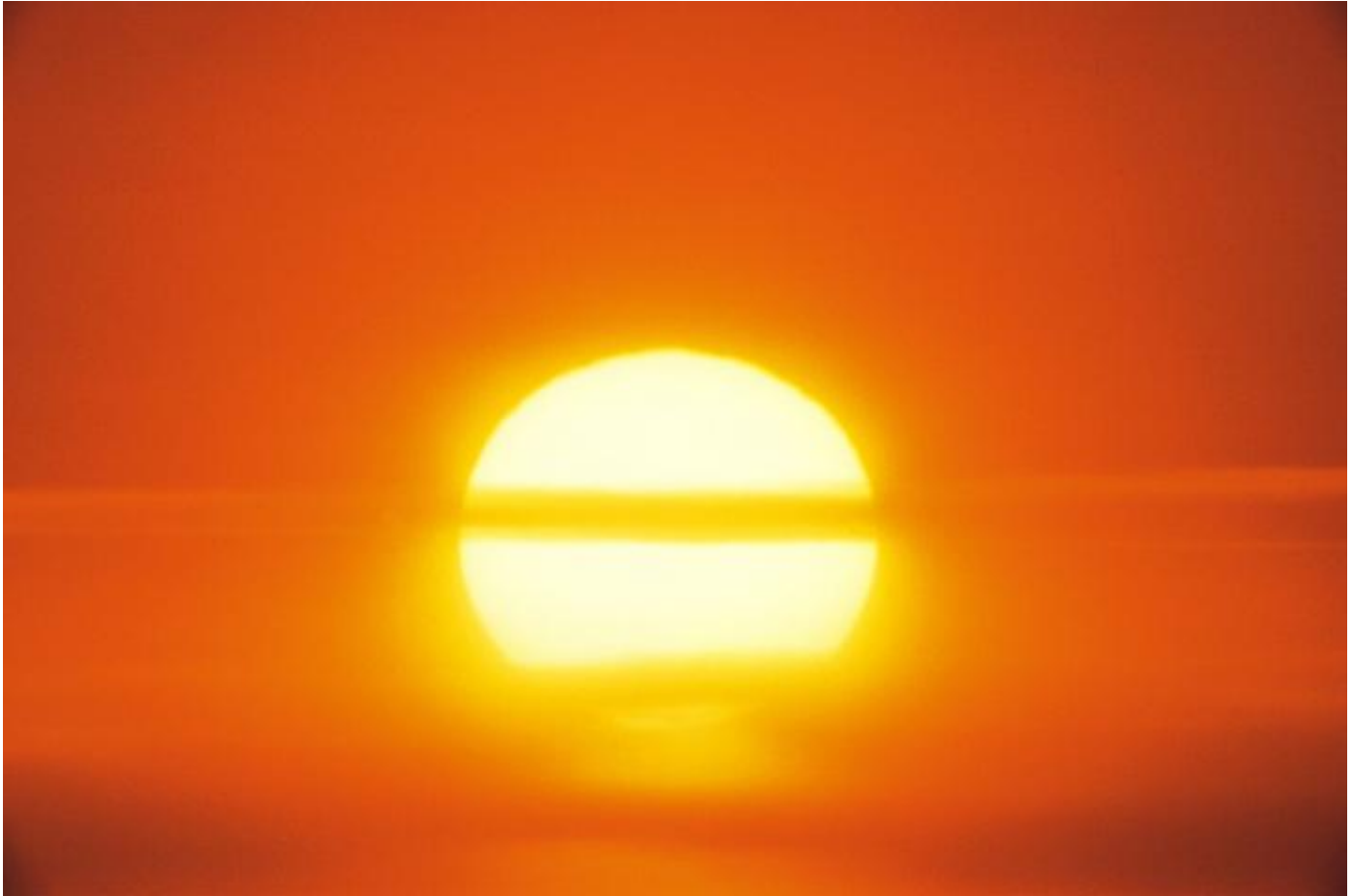


## SUMMER HEAT WAVE OF 1936

### WILD WEATHER ANNIVERSARY: RECORD-BREAKING SUMMER

By Martha White

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The heat wave of July 1936 was record-setting and dangerous—so hopefully this summer is much cooler.

*Thinkstock*

Eighty years ago as of July 2016, a blistering heat wave hit the eastern seaboard. We may complain of the heat now, but the record-breaking summer of 1936 certainly puts the weather into perspective!

### THE 1936 HEAT WAVE

Even on the “cool” eastern seaboard in July of 1936, it was the heat wave that made the news. In midcoast Maine, where only the hardiest swim, all-wool bathing trunks were advertised for a dollar (or 3 dollars for those with detachable tops). In Boston, the price of cream skyrocketed as the combination of the drought in the Midwest and the hot weather in the East made for a “very short cream market.” Wholesale prices rose from \$11 for a 40-quart can of cream in 1935 to \$17.28

Support 36.

Central Park in New York City hit 106°F on July 9. The next day, Waterbury, Connecticut, saw 103°F, while many other New England towns hit over 100°F. Those who could left the steaming asphalt of the cities. Others stood under sprinklers or slept on roofs.

In New York City, Mayor Fiorello LaGuardia declared public beaches open all night for the duration, promising not to arrest anyone. City swimming pools lengthened their hours.

Nearly 1,000 deaths nationwide—76 in New York City—were attributed to the 10-day heat wave, some from heat stroke or lung ailments, others from accidental drownings as nonswimmers desperately attempted to cool off.

Canadian towns and cities also felt the severity of the sun. Ontario alone marked over 500 deaths from the heat.

## DUST BOWL HEAT

In the vast Dust Bowl region that spread from North Dakota southward into Texas, with its heart over Kansas and Oklahoma, black-dust blizzards had been common since about 1932. The heat wave of 1936 that broke all records in 15 states during July and August was the final blow to many midwestern farmers who had fought against economic hardship and unparalleled heat and drought.

The 1936 heat gave new energy to the smothering dust storms that blackened skies. Trains missed their scheduled stops because they couldn't see the towns as they passed through them. Doors and windows had to be sealed with adhesive tape to keep out the dust. Dishes had to be washed after a meal and again before the next one because dust had sifted into cupboards. Ceilings collapsed from the weight of dust that had collected in attics. Seeded crops blew out of the soil, and white chickens were dyed the color of dust. [Dust storms like these](#) still occur in different parts of the world today.

The chief of the Iowa Weather and Crop Bureau called July 1936 the hottest July in 117 years (although the single-day high had been reached in July 1934, at 118°F). On July 14, 1936, Iowa reported readings of more than 108°F at 113 separate weather stations.

Kansas City, Missouri, saw temperatures of over 100°F on 53 days that summer. Parts of Kansas and North Dakota soared to 121°F; South Dakota, Arkansas, Texas, and Oklahoma saw 120°F. Indiana, Louisiana, Maryland, Michigan, Minnesota, Nebraska, New Jersey, West Virginia, and Wisconsin also hit their record highs in July or August of 1936.

## GRINNING IN THE SUN

Fortunately, humor increased with the heat and drought.

According to *The Dust Bowl* (Brookfield, CT: Millbrook Press, 1993), one tall tale described a midwestern man so overwhelmed by a single drop of rain that he had to be revived by dumping a pail of dust over his head.

The New York Times reported that a Syracuse housewife successfully fried an egg on the sidewalk.

And in New York, a man left his dentures on the windowsill, only to return an hour later to find them melted. Now, that's hot.

To read about more wild weather in your own area, look up your region's [weather history](#). Curious about whether this summer will be as bad as the summer of 1936? Check out our [long](#)



[range weather forecasts](#) to see whether your summer will be cooler or warmer than usual.



## 3 Foods That Fight Memory Loss

Eat these 3 foods daily and watch happens.

Boston Brain Science

**SOURCE:** The 1996 Old Farmer's Almanac.