

2021 the Weather in review

The Eastern Cape has had some interesting weather during 2021. I have been advocating that the Bay and my holiday destination this year, the Baviaans, has experienced unseasonably low temperatures for this time of the year.

What do the records say, am I correct or not. Well in the Bay, as far as maximum temperatures are concerned, the 23.8C measured in December is the coldest since 2017 (23.6C). The average for November and December of 23.1C is the coldest since 2014 (22.7C).

What does the rest of the region look like in this regard? Well, Graaf Reinet and George (Garden Route) stands out as the record cities for the year.

In Graaf Reinet the average maximum for December of 28.0C was the coldest since 1995 (28.1C). The figures of 27.5C for November and December is the coldest since 1996 (27.0C). The last quarter of the year's (October to December) average maximum temperature of 27.3C was the coldest since 1996 (26.6C). Now add to that mix a modern record (since 1998) December rainfall of 132 mm (previous record 106 mm in 1999) and one can understand the reason for the record low end of year temperatures.

George lived up to its reputation of cold and wet, with some flooding towards the end of the year. Although the good rains were not records, they did contribute to record low maximum temperatures. December's average maximum of 21.6C was the coldest since 1992, as was the average for November and December of 21.2C. The 21.1C average maximum for October to December was the coldest since 2010 (20.9C).

Fort Beaufort also had a particularly wet year with the 92 mm measured in December being the wettest since 2004 (114 mm). The 197 mm measured for November and December as well as the 253 mm measured in the last quarter (October to December) was the highest on record (since 1998).

Grahamstown had a low average maximum temperature of 22.4C for November and December, coldest since 2014 (22.3C). The average maximum for the last quarter (October to December) of 22.5C was the coldest since 2014 (21.7C). The December rainfall of 104 mm was also the wettest since 1998 when 118 mm was measured.

East London measured 187 mm during December which is the highest figure since 1993 when 243 mm was measured.

Unfortunately, there was a lot of disaster over the former Transkei with many losing their lives trying to cross flooded rivers, during severe storms. These storms were also the cause of lots of damage to property over the area as previously reported.

Over the catchment area of the NMBMM area, Port Elizabeth recorded only 532 mm (well below the average of 593 mm). What is worse, the last 6 years average rainfall (2016 to 2021) was a mere 480 mm, which is more than 110 mm average below norm each year.

Joubertina recorded normal rainfall at 402 mm (average 400 mm), while Kareedouw was well below normal at 570 mm (average 670 mm).

The reason for the rise in the Kouga Dam's level can only be attributed to some good rains in Baviaans catchment, where we do not have any official rain gauges.

This all tied in well with the SAWS seasonal forecast predictions. According to this forecast, the rest of the summer season looks promising over the interior and the Eastern Half of the region.

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