

# Past year hits global temperature high

2010 was the warmest year since global temperature records began in 1850 — although margins of uncertainty make it a statistical tie with 1998 and 2005

The World Meteorological Organisation (WMO) concludes 2010 was 0.53C warmer than the average for the period 1961-1990 — a period commonly used as a baseline. The 10 warmest years have all occurred since 1998. The WMO analysis combines data from three leading research agencies, and is regarded as the most authoritative. The three records are maintained by the US-based National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) and National Climatic Data Centre (NCDC), and jointly in the UK by the Hadley Centre and the University of East Anglia's Climatic Research Unit (CRU).

They use broadly the same data from weather stations, ocean buoys and satellites across the world; but each analyses that data in different ways, leading to slight differences in their conclusions. The University of Alabama at Huntsville team, which runs the satellite temperature record, has already called 2010 as the second warmest year in its 41 year series, just behind 1998. "The 2010 data confirm the Earth's significant long-term warming trend," said WMO Secretary-General Michel Jarraud. "The 10 warmest



**Firefighters evacuate a resident and his cat from his home on a flooded street in Le Plessis-Brion**

years on record have all occurred since 1998."

Other indications of 2010 warmth flagged up by the WMO include the lowest extent of sea-ice cover in the Arctic since the satellite record began. Regions of the world experiencing particularly warm conditions during 2010 included Africa, southern and western Asia,

and the northern extremities of North America, including Greenland. The possibility that 2010 would emerge as the warmest year on record was raised by scientists after the year began with a period of El Niño conditions — unusually warm waters in the eastern Pacific Ocean, which transfer heat from the ocean to the atmosphere. How-

ever, a switch to the opposing La Niña conditions halfway through the year cast doubt on whether the record would be broken. Although December was exceptionally cold in some places — the coldest for 100 years across the UK — other regions, such as Greenland and eastern Canada, saw unseasonably warm weather.



**Intel demonstrator Eric Stevens (R) creates digital art**

## 'Tablet wars' break out at Las Vegas gadget show

**It is hi-tech heaven with gadgets galore!**

At the Consumer Electronics Show, all manner of gismos are competing to catch the eye at the sprawling Las Vegas Convention Centre. The star of the show is undoubtedly the touchscreen tablet computer. 'Tablet wars' have broken out with dozens of models on display, trying to emulate Apple's success with its revolutionary iPad.

And then, there are the latest trends in television. "Before, the idea of a connected TV meant that you

could get a little widget that gave you the weather on your TV," said Molly Wood, CNET Executive Editor. "Now, you can do social networking, you have all kinds of different apps that let you do different things and you can actually search for and watch Web video at the same time that you are watching regular TV." For many people it is all about having fun. But the trends at the show are not simply a futuristic fantasy. Instead they reflect the way in which our daily lives are changing.

## Planck in search of the first light of the universe

**Planck satellite, launched in search of signals from the first light that arose in the universe after the Big Bang, also collected data on the coldest objects in the sky**

"Launched in 2009, the Planck satellite is 'ideally designed' to detect very cold objects," explains Jan Tauber, of the European Space Agency. A catalogue of 15,000 very cold compact sources could be established from the sky map made by Planck since mid-2009. Unlike other observation that scrutinise a narrow re-

gion of the sky, several times Planck swept the whole sky, and must remain for another year, which should make it possible complete maps. To understand how they formed the stars and galaxies after the Big Bang, astronomers try to find in the fossil radiation traces of the first germs of matter that allowed its creation.

About 380,000 years after the Big Bang, the universe cooled sufficiently to be formed the first atoms of neutral hydrogen. The light first appeared in the universe became transparent.

## Record of thefts established by sales

**While European shops count their New Year sales profits, the scope of stolen goods becomes apparent**

This year, an 'anti-record' has been set for European shops, with 5.5 billion Euros of goods stolen over Christmas week, much as a result of shoplifting. "Half of this amount is due to shoplifting by the public, while 30 percent is down to staff taking stock. Around 18 percent of goods are lost as a result of errors in shop work while the remainder is taken by suppliers and delivery staff. Most theft is impulsive," notes a spokesperson from Checkpoint Systems, Dominik Rijumers. The most commonly stolen items are alcohol and expensive clothes.

With the crisis coming to a close, sales figures were up. However, the increased sales figures were echoed by increased shoplifting. It's not uncommon for this



to happen during the holiday period, with people sometimes being tempted to steal when they would never otherwise do so. Even though luxurious goods are marked down to encourage sales, there are always some people who would rather have an item without parting with any money at all. Despite shops being fitted with CCTV cameras and security staff, it's not difficult to quickly slip something into a pocket.

## Pioneering EDSAC computer to be built at Bletchley Park

**First recognisably modern computer to be rebuilt at the UK's former code-cracking centre Bletchley Park**

The Electronic Delay Storage Automatic Calculator (EDSAC) was a room-sized behemoth built at Cambridge University that first ran in 1949. Creation of the replica has been commissioned by the UK's Computer Conservation Society (CCS). The 3 year re-build will be carried out before visitors to the National Museum of Computing at Bletchley. EDSAC was one of several early British computers that pioneered the practical use of such machines.

It was conceived and created by Sir Maurice Wilkes as a machine that could carry out many different kinds of calculation for Cambridge researchers and scientists. "EDSAC was the first to go into regular service to help the people Sir Maurice saw in Cambridge, researchers struggling with computation using desk calculators," said Dr. David Hartley, Chairman of the CCS.

## Cross-eyed opossum Heidi becomes German star

**A cross-eyed opossum called Heidi, who is being housed in Leipzig Zoo, has become a media sensation in Germany**

The creature has already inspired a YouTube hit song and a toy, attracting over 65,000 fans on Facebook. Heidi, who is thought to be about 2.5 years old, was left outside an animal shelter in North Carolina in the USA, along with her sister, Naira, and moved to Germany in May. She became known after reporters from the German tabloid *Bild* went to photograph animals that will be part of Gondwanaland, a newly themed area at the zoo. After they became public, photos of the creature became a sensation.

The zoo officials say they believe the creature's eye problem could be related to the diet she had before being abandoned, or because she is overweight, which can lead to fat deposits around the eyes. "Apart from aesthetically, this situation is not a problem," the zoo says. "As animals that are active at night, opossums find their way around using their noses."

The zoo says it does not plan to undertake any 'active marketing' of Heidi, and that any revenue from third parties will be diverted to a project supporting rhinos in Borneo.