

May 2023 Northern Michigan Climate Summary

Alpena

Avg Temp	Avg Temp Departure	Precip	Precip Departure	Snowfall	Snowfall Departure
53.1°F	-0.3°F	0.92"	-1.86"	T	-0.2"

Houghton Lake

Avg Temp	Avg Temp Departure	Precip	Precip Departure	Snowfall	Snowfall Departure
54.8°F	+0.1°F	1.07"	-2.08"	T	-0.1"

Sault Ste. Marie

Avg Temp	Avg Temp Departure	Precip	Precip Departure	Snowfall	Snowfall Departure
54.5°F	+2.4°F	2.07"	-0.57"	T	-0.4"

Gaylord

Avg Temp	Avg Temp Departure	Precip	Precip Departure	Snowfall	Snowfall Departure
55.7°F	+3.6°F	2.05"	-1.17"	5.2"	+4.7"

Traverse City

Avg Temp	Avg Temp Departure	Precip	Precip Departure	Snowfall	Snowfall Departure
56.5°F	+1.2°F	2.00"	-1.45"	0.8"	+0.8"

Records and Notes from May 2023

Alpena (Records 1916 - Present)

- 5th driest May on record

Houghton Lake (Records 1919 - Present)

- 8th driest May on record

Gaylord (Records 1951 - Present)

- 4th largest May snowstorm on record (May 1-2): 5.2"
- 4th snowiest May on record
- Record Highs
 - May 30th: 90°F (tied daily record from 2022)
 - May 31st: 93°F (set all-time monthly maximum)

Traverse City (Temperature Records 1897 - Present)

- Record Highs
 - May 30th: 92°F (tied daily records from 1937 and 2022)

May 2023 started off with a continuation of winter deep into springtime across parts of northern Michigan, as an anomalously strong area of low pressure stalled out near Sudbury, Ontario (setting several low pressure records for the month of May across the northeastern US and Ontario). The result was the interior elevations of northern lower seeing areas of significant accumulating snow (from a May standpoint) from the evening of May 1st through the day on May 2nd. The highest total across the area was 10" near Kalkaska. The 5.2" of snowfall observed at Gaylord was good enough for the 4th largest May snowstorm since reliable weather records began in the Gaylord area in 1951. The wet and dense nature of the snowfall allowed for localized power outages due to falling trees and limbs from the weight of the snow. Outside of northern Michigan, this same system produced crippling effects in the western U.P, where several instances of 30"+ of snowfall were observed.

Despite the cold and wet start to the month, conditions quickly turned more seasonable as high pressure returned to the upper Great Lakes. Unfortunately, this feature was quite persistent, leading to an elongated period featuring little to no rainfall through much of the rest of May. In addition, the dry nature of the airmass allowed for large temperature swings between night and day, and brought about several frost/freeze events from mid-month through Memorial Day weekend.

While the dry airmass basically remained in place to close the month, temperatures also increased substantially, with several places registering their first high temperatures in the 90s across northern lower Michigan. In some cases, this was record breaking, with Gaylord setting a new monthly record high temperature on May 31st with a high of 93°F. This particular day was also accompanied with just enough moisture to set off a round of showers and storms along the lake breezes near Lakes Michigan and Huron, though these storms were rather isolated in nature.

As far as temperatures go, the warmth at the end of the month propelled most sites to near or slightly above normal. The initial period of snow at the start of the month led to snowfall being well above normal in places that saw snow. An overwhelming majority of the precipitation observed in the month of May occurred with the large system on the first two days of the month. Because of this, precipitation trended below to well-below normal across northern lower and eastern upper Michigan.