2018 Year in Review for Central and Southeast Illinois

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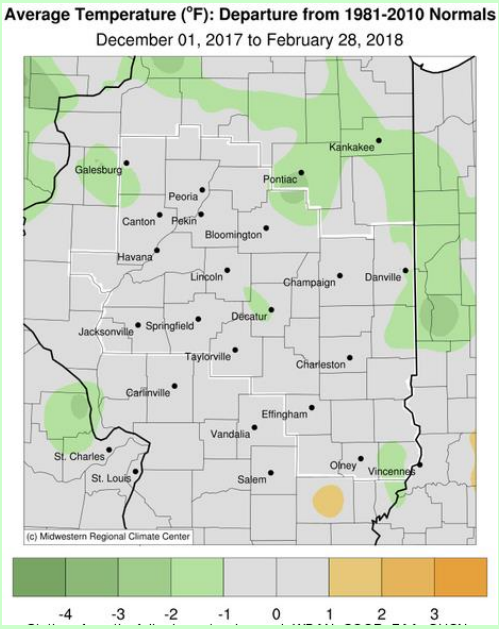
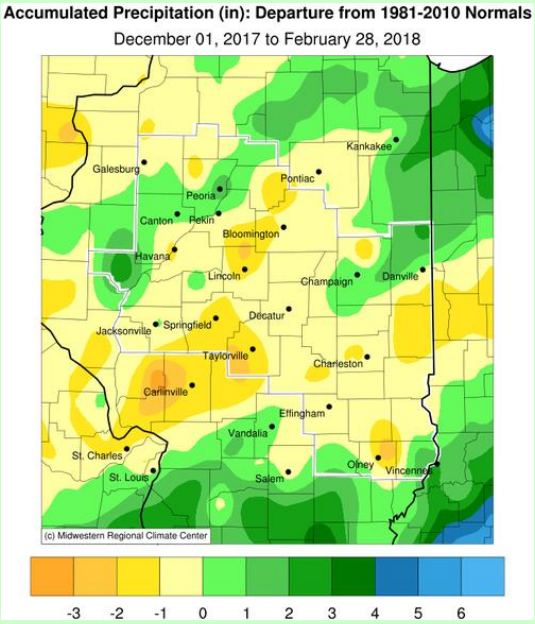
While 2018 featured some significant out-of-season weather, including below zero temperatures in April and 90-degree highs in early October, temperatures overall were near normal across the course of the year. The first half of the year trended drier than normal, but a wet summer helped to boost precipitation above normal for 2018. The biggest severe weather outbreak ended up toward the end of the year, as 29 tornadoes touched down across central Illinois on December 1st.

Winter Season (December 1, 2017 to February 28, 2018)

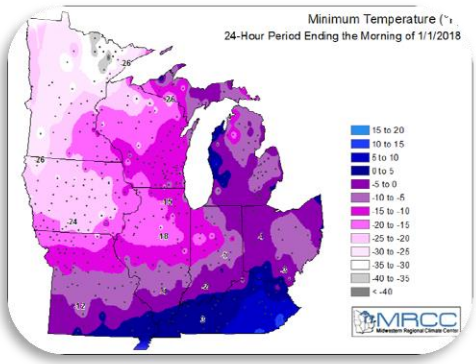
Temperatures: Near normal



Precipitation: Below normal



Images courtesy Midwestern Regional Climate Center



The new year started off with some of the coldest weather in several years. Besides low temperatures of 15 to 20 below zero, wind chills were as cold as 40 below zero in a few areas.

Temperature Review:

While meteorological winter (which started December 1, 2017) was off to a mild start, the weather pattern

took a significant shift colder around Christmas. Temperatures fell below zero as early as the 26th, and on January 1st, highs struggled to reach zero. A low temperature of 21 below zero was reported at Minonk that day, and wind chills in many areas north of I-72 were colder than 35 below zero. While highs briefly returned to the 50s on the 10-11th, it wasn't until a week later that a more sustained warming trend began. February featured colder weather for the first half of the month, before warming up again for the second half.

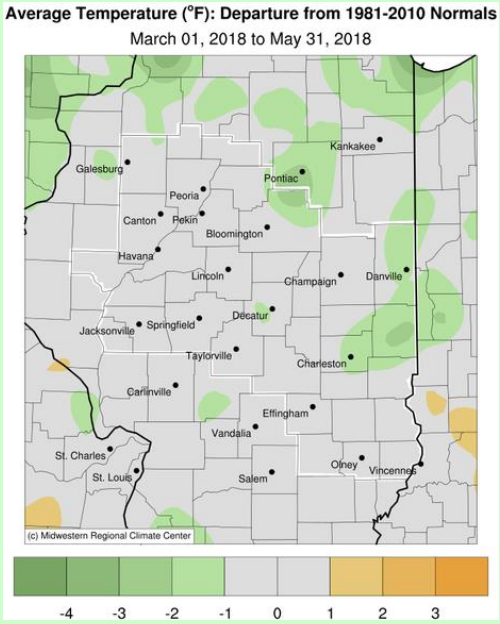
Weather Review:

While no significant snowstorms were observed during January, a few systems collectively resulted in totals of 3 to 6 inches along and north of I-74. On February 5th, a storm in northern Illinois brought 6 to 8 inches of snow as far south as a Galesburg to Watseka line, and 3 to 5 inches from Canton to Bloomington.

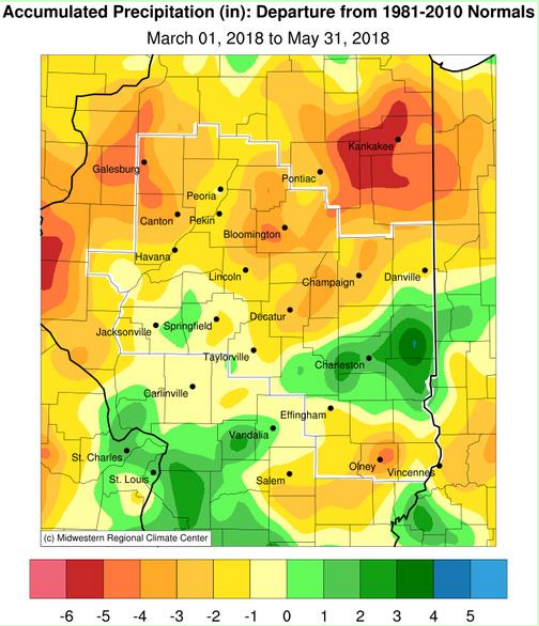
By the second half of February, a significant pattern change resulted in active weather. Heavy rains of 3 to 6 inches occurred on the 19-21st, resulting in flash flooding and river flooding. This event allowed several locations to rank in the top 10 wettest Februaries on record, with Urbana observing their wettest one at 6.12 inches.

Spring Season (March 1 through May 31)

Temperatures: Near normal



Precipitation: Below normal



Images courtesy Midwestern Regional Climate Center

A narrow corridor of 4 to 6 inches of snow fell across central Illinois on Easter Sunday, April 1. In this same area, temperatures fell into the single digits the next morning.

Temperature Review:

While March saw below normal temperatures prevail, April stood out with an unusually cold weather pattern. Many locations fell within their top 10 coldest Aprils on record. Clear skies and a fresh snow cover resulted in rare April single digit low temperatures on the 2nd, in areas from Rushville east to around Rantoul. In Lincoln, the low temperature fell to 1 below zero, the latest subzero temperature on record for the area, and one degree off the state record for April.

An abrupt change to summer like heat occurred in May, and average temperatures during the month ranged from 8 to 10 degrees above normal. Many days saw highs in the 80s and 90s, including 99 degrees at Rantoul on the 28th.

Weather Review:

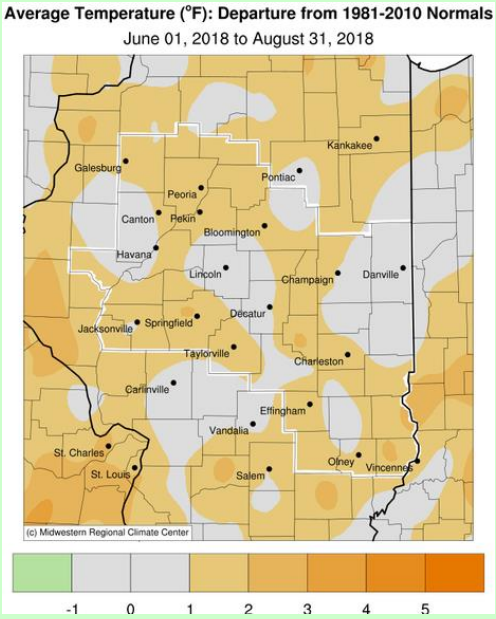
Winter refused to give up, with significant snow occurring in March and even April. One storm system on the 23-24th brought 6 to 10 inches of snow along and north of I-74. On Easter Sunday (April 1st), a narrow band of 4-6 inches of snow fell across central Illinois, with an inch as far south as I-70. And on April 8-9th, areas from Macomb to Decatur received 2.5 to 3.5 inches of snow.

Two days after the Easter snowfall, severe weather impacted the I-70 area, and a tornado which touched down in Fayette County moved into southwest Effingham County on the 3rd. This particular system also resulted in 3 to 4 inches of rain in Charleston.

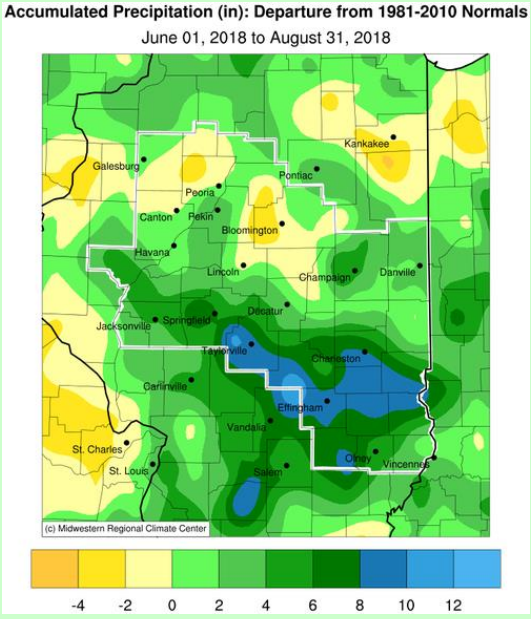
A dry weather pattern set up in April, and lasted into May. A wetter trend set up toward the end of May, and included 1.5 to 2 inches of rain from the remnants of Tropical Storm Alberto on the 30th, which moved along the Illinois/Indiana border. On that same day, heavier rains, not directly associated with Alberto, resulted in 2 to 5 inches falling from near Springfield north to Henry.

Summer Season (June 1 through August 31)

Temperatures: Above normal



Precipitation: Above normal



Images courtesy Midwestern Regional Climate Center

A tornado lofts debris shortly after it touches down southeast of Rantoul on June 26. Photo by Ryan Ideus.

Temperature Review:

Temperatures during the summer were overall near normal, but trended toward a cooler period in August. That month saw averages of 2 to 4 degrees below normal, with only a few days reaching 90 degrees. A notable hot stretch of weather occurred from July 18-23rd. Many days in this period saw highs in the mid 90s, with dew point temperatures of 75 to 80 degrees. This resulted in heat index values peaking at 105 to 110 degrees.

Weather Review:

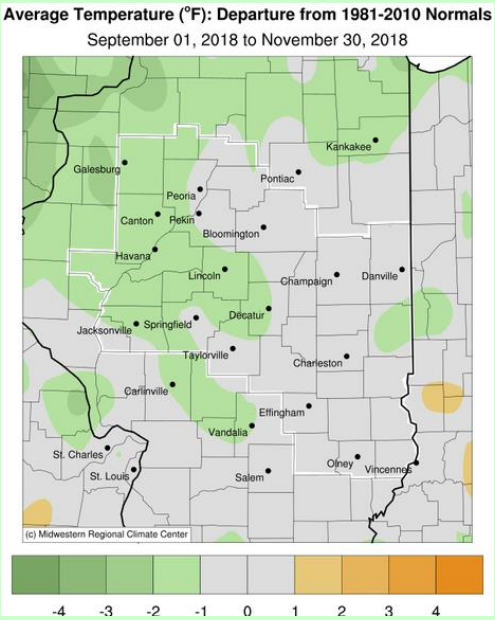
A wide range in rainfall occurred during June. Areas west of Peoria and Springfield were an inch or two below normal, while multiple heavy rains east of there resulted in rainfall of 3 to 7 inches above normal. Charleston observed 11.15 inches for the month, including 7.17 inches from the 10-11th. In July, only an area from

Jacksonville to Newton trended above normal, with much of this occurring during the last couple days of the month. The wet trend shifted into west central Illinois for August.

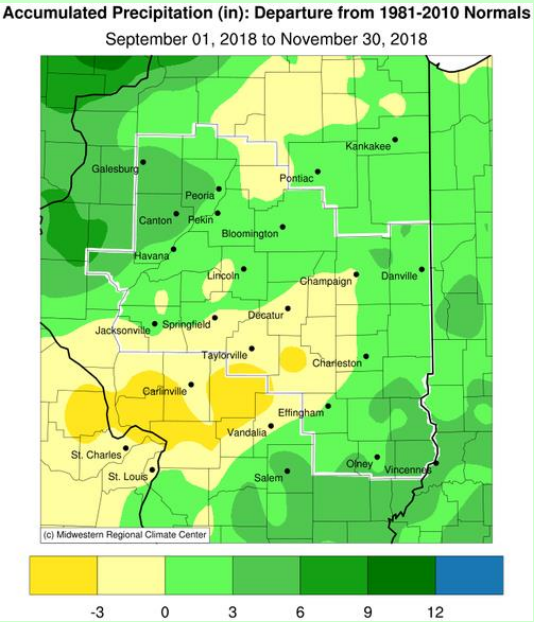
Two different tornado events affected Champaign County in June. Two weak tornadoes occurred on the southwest edge of Champaign on the 10th, as part of an area of thunderstorms producing wind damage from Bloomington to Paris and Danville. Another tornado touched down southeast of Rantoul on the 26th and traveled nearly 4 miles to northwest of Gifford.

Autumn Season (September 1 through November 30)

Temperatures: Near normal



Precipitation: Near normal



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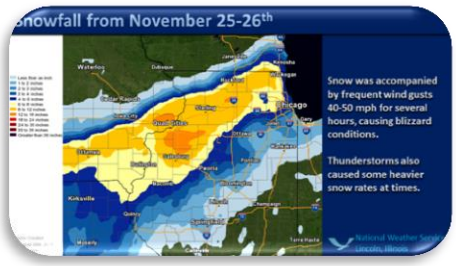


A blizzard struck during the end of the Thanksgiving holiday weekend. A broad area received 8 to 15 inches of snow, and wind gusts over 45 mph resulted in whiteout conditions.

Temperature Review:

September averaged 3 to 6 degrees above normal in September. Notable stretches of highs in the 90s occurred on the 1-5th, and 14-20th. The warmer trend continued through the first 10 days of October, including highs near 90 on October 3rd. However, the remainder of the month shifted to a much colder pattern,

including highs only around 40 degrees on the 12th. The first freezes of the season were observed on the 16th and 18th. While highs returned to the 70s for the 30th, Halloween temperatures were much more typical for the season. November was much colder than normal as well; the coldest air was on the 28th, when lows around 10 degrees were observed west of I-55.

Weather Review:

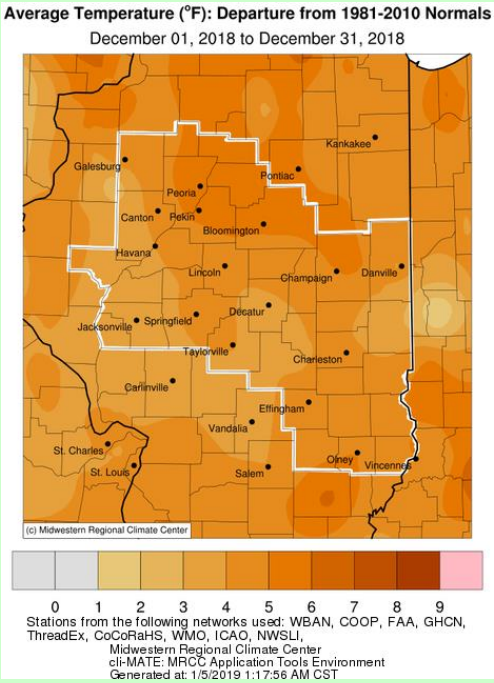
The remnants of Tropical Storm Gordon brought heavy rain on the 6-8th, with 8 to 10 inches in far southeast Illinois during this event. By October, rain averaged above normal north of I-72, and Lincoln and Peoria both were within the top 10 wettest Octobers on record. However, dry and windy conditions later in the month resulted in some field fires during the harvest.

Strong wind gusts of 45 to 60 mph were observed on October 20th and 28th, resulting in some downed trees and power lines.

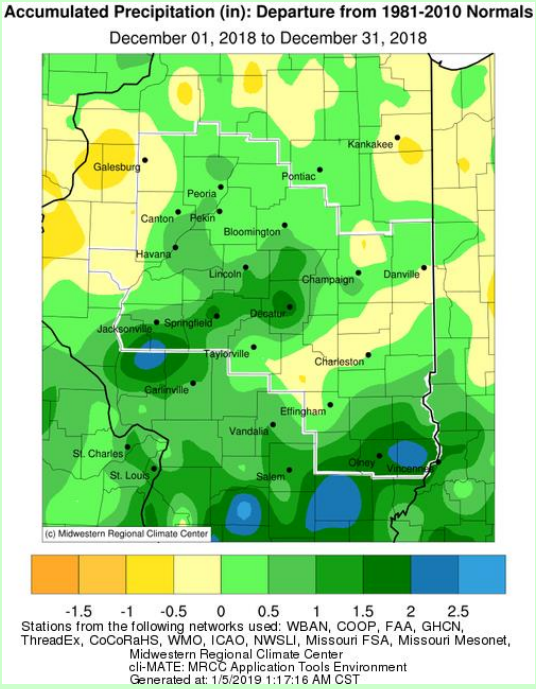
Winter got off to a fast start. The first flakes of the season occurred on October 12th, and several days in November saw measurable snow. Springfield saw its snowiest November on record with 11.4 inches of snow, which nearly matched its entire total for the previous winter, while Peoria saw 9.8 inches in its 2nd snowiest November. A blizzard struck during the end of the Thanksgiving holiday weekend. Extending from the central Plains to the Chicago area, a broad area received 8 to 15 inches of snow, and wind gusts over 45 mph resulted in whiteout conditions in open areas due to blowing snow. The snow was accompanied by thunder at times. As the main low pressure area moved over the middle of the state, locations just south of it also observed thunderstorms with strong winds. A funnel cloud was even reported near the St. Louis area, resulting in the rare occurrence of a Tornado Warning and a Blizzard Warning in very close proximity to each other.

Winter Season to date (December 1-31)

Temperatures: Above normal



Precipitation: Above normal



The biggest December tornado outbreak in Illinois since 1957 occurred on the 1st. A total of 29 tornadoes occurred across the state, including this one in southeast Fulton County. Photo by Shae Cohan.

Temperature Review:

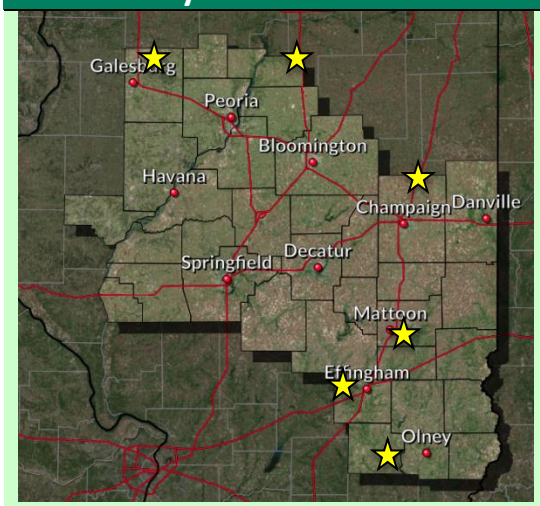
After the cold end to the fall season, winter started off on a milder note. The month of December started with highs near 60 in some cases. A cooler than normal period prevailed from the 3-10th, but a more significant milder pattern arrived for the middle of the month. Overall, temperatures averaged 4 to 5 degrees above normal for the month.

Weather Review:

Meteorological winter started with the largest severe weather outbreak of the season on the 1st. On that date, 29 tornadoes occurred across central Illinois, including an EF-3 which caused severe damage in Taylorville. On the 6th, 1 to 2 inches of snow fell in areas generally centered along I-72, then south to I-70. However, this was

basically the only significant snowfall during the first 3 weeks of the month. Most areas saw less than an inch for the entire month, including only a trace at Galesburg (tying its December record for least snowfall).

Preliminary Statistics for the Lincoln NWS Coverage Area:



Highest Temperature	99°F at Rantoul (May 28) and Flora (July 5)
Lowest Temperature	-21°F at Minonk (January 1)
Most Rain in 24 Hours	6.02” at Charleston 5SSW (June 11)
Most Snow in 24 Hours	13.2” at Altona (November 26)
Most Rain in 1 Month	13.31” at Beecher City (June)
Most Snow in 1 Month	23.9” at Altona (February)
Reported Tornadoes	28 *By EF Strength:* EF0=14, EF1=11, EF2=2, EF3=1. *By County:* McLean 5, Christian 4, Champaign 3, Fulton 3, Macon 3, Cass 2, Mason 2, Schuyler 2. One each in Cumberland, Effingham, Morgan, Sangamon, and Tazewell Counties. (Total is greater than 28 due to border crossers.)