

## THE WEATHER IN NEW ZEALAND FOR MARCH 1985

*General*—March was cool but mostly dry and sunny.

Over northern districts of the North Island the frequency of south-easterly winds was exceptional being three times the average for March. Strong winds were a little more frequent than usual. Over the South Island; the north-westerly winds were less frequent than normal, but south-westerlies were considerably above average.

Mean sea level pressures were well above average to the south of the country with Macquarie Island being nearly 8 hectopascals higher than normal. Pressures in the far north were below average.

With dry conditions prevailing over much of the country, farming areas experiencing severest conditions were South Canterbury, North and Central Otago. In these areas there have been near record days of soil moisture deficiency. Farmers report negligible grass growth, but stock condition was variable.

Cool southerlies over the South Island during the 13th brought fresh snow to alpine regions.

*Rainfall*—Rainfall was below average over much of New Zealand. Over the South Island, very dry conditions prevailed with rainfalls of between 20 and 50 percent of normal being recorded in parts of Canterbury, Otago, Fiordland and Westland. Oamaru had 23 percent of normal rainfall, Duntroon 8 percent, Garthmyl, Middlemarch 18 percent, Glendale, South Canterbury 19 percent, The Hermitage, Mount Cook 26 percent, Queenstown 38 percent, Hokitika 40 percent, Timaru 47 percent and Milford Sound 47 percent.

Northland, Auckland, Western Bay of Plenty, Gisborne and Hawkes Bay were the only areas to have above normal rainfall. In some areas of Gisborne and Hawkes Bay, there was over 150 percent of normal rainfall with East Cape recording 279 percent, Onepoto, Lake Waikaremoana 197 percent and Napier Airport 165 percent.

Heavy rains in Gisborne and Hawkes Bay from the 13th to 15th resulted in massive land slips along the Napier to Taupo Highway trapping several motorists for a time. Te Wairere recorded 370 mm on the 14th and 546 mm for the period. Other rainfall sites recording high totals on the 14th include Glenfalls 372 mm, Valley Range 206 mm, Te Hau 188 mm, Sherenden 184 mm and Tangoio 180 mm.

*Temperatures*—Over the country mean temperatures were near or below average. Night-time minimum temperatures were in many North Island regions between 0.5°C and 1.0°C lower than usual. In the South Island minimum temperatures were between one and two degrees lower. While South Island daytime maximum temperatures were near normal for March, they were up to 1°C lower over the North Island.

This month was notable in that in the first 13 days generally warm conditions prevailed over the country. Christchurch Airport recorded a maximum temperature of 31.5°C on the 6th and Napier 30.0°C. In the second half of the month, temperatures remained mostly below the monthly average.

*Sunshine*—Apart from the Poverty Bay area and some Bay of Plenty - Taupo districts, sunshine was above average over New Zealand. The dry conditions over the South Island meant that there were large departures from normal. Among those South Island stations with greatest departures during March were: Hokitika (+66 hours, the second sunniest March on record), Nelson (+48 hours, the largest departure since 1969), Christchurch (+43 hours), Timaru (+55 hours, the greatest since 1948) and Invercargill (+35 hours, the largest since 1967).

Gisborne, on the other hand with only 149 hours of sunshine gave March the second lowest total since records began in 1935.

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