

Celebrate New England sports with The Globies Presented by Mercedes-Benz. Help us pick the winners - click here to vote now.

TEXT SIZE | MANAGE ACCOUNT | LOG OUT

The Boston Globe

NEWS	▶	METRO	
LOTTERY	▶	OBITUARIES	▶
GLOBE NORTH	▶	GLOBE SOUTH	▶
GLOBE WEST	▶	DATA DESK	▶
MAGAZINE	▶	TODAY'S PAPER	▶

E-MAIL FACEBOOK TWITTER  LINKEDIN

  15



JESSICA RINALDI/GLOBE STAFF

When this storm blew in on Plum Island on Jan. 27, there was still something beautiful about the winter that would turn terrible.

By **Matt Rocheleau**

GLOBE STAFF AUGUST 12, 2015

Whew! The coming winter won't be as bad as last winter.

That, at least, is the word from meteorologists looking at long-range forecasts. They say that Massachusetts can expect this winter to be stormier than last year, but temperatures will be milder, and the amount of snowfall should fall within historical averages.

It's great news for Massachusetts residents, some of whom are fleeing the state because of last winter's woeful weather.

"We don't see it being as snowy and as cold in Boston as it was last year," said Bob Smerbeck, a senior meteorologist on the long-range forecast team at the weather prediction company AccuWeather.com.

Smerbeck attributed the increased storm activity expected to a strong El Niño, a weather pattern driven by unusually warm sea surface temperatures in the equatorial Pacific Ocean.



Sunny Wednesday in forecast

It will be slightly muggy, however, and there's a small chance for thunderstorms later in the afternoon.

Winter still haunts region's psyche

Seeing white: A historic winter

Normally, a strong El Niño would generate enough consistently above-average temperatures for our region to receive mostly rain and below average snowfall during the winter months.

But Smerbeck said he and other experts at AccuWeather.com predict — based on sea surface temperatures tracked elsewhere in the Pacific — other factors will counteract some of El Niño's warmth, sending periodic blasts of cold air into our region this winter.

"If you get one of these big bowling ball storms that comes up the East Coast ... with a lot of moisture, and at the same time you get some cold air, you could get a significant snowstorm," said Smerbeck.

"The question is always: Is the cold there when the moisture arrives?" said Paul Pastelok, another long-range forecaster at AccuWeather.com. "In the Northeast, we've seen a couple of really nasty winters and lots of big storms. And that was without El Nino. El Nino can bring lots of moisture."

However, Smerbeck said he does not expect a persistent parade of major snowstorms will march through the area as it did last winter, nor does he expect any significantly long stretch of relentless cold that would prevent snow cover from melting.

Overall, Smerbeck expects that Boston will see roughly average snowfall. The city's average per winter is about 43 inches of snow.

Last year, 110.6 inches of snow — including 64.8 inches in the month of February alone — fell on the city, according to the National Weather Service. The snow left residents traumatized by ice dam problems, endless commutes, backbreaking shoveling, and cabin fever. Some have even vowed to move, the Globe [reported this week](#).

"The likelihood of us seeing that again this year is pretty slim," said Rebecca Gould, a meteorologist with the National Weather Service.

She said officials at the service's Climate Prediction Center are also expecting a normal winter in terms of snowfall.

Smerbeck said that the above-average temperatures will mean some would-be snow will fall only as rain, though there's a chance the region could also see ice storms.

He said areas of New England north and west of Boston could see snowfall amounts somewhat above normal, but he did not expect any areas of the region to be buried deeper than they were last year.

AccuWeather.com forecasters predict the most likely time for significant cold and snowfall will be February.

In the more immediate future, Smerbeck said, the region can expect to see above average-temperatures this fall with slightly below-average amounts of precipitation.

Officials at AccuWeather.com said the weather this fall would be conducive to leaf-peepers.

Smerbeck said that the ability for forecasters to provide such seasonal outlooks has improved over the years. Meteorologists rely on a host of data, including solar activity as well as sea surface temperatures and current and historical weather patterns around the world, to make such predictions, he said.

“There are a lot of signals out there,” said Smerbeck.

But he also sounded a note that could stir uneasiness in the hearts of winter-weary Massachusetts residents. He acknowledged that, like other weather forecasting efforts, long-range predictions can sometimes be wrong.

“You have some victories and you have some defeats,” he said.

Matt Rocheleau can be reached at matthew.rocheleau@globe.com. Follow him on Twitter [@mrochele](https://twitter.com/mrochele)



Get **Today's Headlines** from the Globe in your inbox:

[Privacy Policy](#)

SHOW 15 COMMENTS



Top 10 Trending Articles

Most Viewed

Most Commented

Most Shared

An Auburn child lost amidst chaos and addiction

When did parents get so scared?

Donald Trump was brash, even at Wharton business school

Sexism in science leads to willful blindness

Four-year-old boy drowns at Dennis beach, half-hour after l...

Stephen Colbert's highly visible transition to 'The Late Show'

Learn more

Dan Shaughnessy: Tom Werner breaks his silence on Don O...

[SUBSCRIBE](#) [BOSTON GLOBE INSIDERS](#) [EPAPER EDITION](#) [NEWS IN EDUCATION](#)

Nick Cafardo | On Baseball: Red Sox not wasting time tryin...

[MY ACCOUNT](#)

[LOG IN](#)

Coffee or wine: which is better for you?

[MANAGE MY ACCOUNT](#)

[DOWNLOAD CUSTOMER SERVICE APP](#)

Nick Cafardo | Sunday Baseball Notes: As Red Sox GM sear...

[CONTACT](#)

[HELP](#)

[FAQS](#)

[GLOBE NEWSROOM](#)

[ADVERTISE](#)

SOCIAL

[FACEBOOK](#)

[TWITTER](#)

[GOOGLE+](#)

MORE

[ARCHIVES](#)

[PRIVACY POLICY](#)

[TERMS OF SERVICE](#)

[TERMS OF PURCHASE](#)

[YOUR AD CHOICES](#)

[WORK AT BOSTON GLOBE MEDIA](#)