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## Groundhog Day

Every February 2, thousands gather at Gobbler's Knob in Punxsutawney, Pennsylvania, to await the spring forecast from a special groundhog. Known as [Punxsutawney Phil](#), this groundhog will emerge from his simulated tree trunk home and look for his shadow, which will help him make his much-anticipated forecast. According to legend, if Phil sees his shadow the United States is in store for six more weeks of winter weather. But, if Phil doesn't see his shadow, the country should expect warmer temperatures and the arrival of an early spring.



### History of Groundhog Day

Groundhog Day originates from an ancient celebration of the midway point between the winter solstice and the spring equinox—the day right in the middle of astronomical winter. According to superstition, sunny skies that day signify a stormy and cold second half of winter while cloudy skies indicate the arrival of warm weather.

The trail of Phil's history leads back to Clymer H. Freas, city editor of the *Punxsutawney Spirit* newspaper. Inspired by a group of local groundhog hunters—whom he would dub the Punxsutawney Groundhog Club—Freas declared Phil as America's official forecasting groundhog in 1887. As he continued to embellish the groundhog's story year after year, other newspapers picked it up, and soon everyone looked to Punxsutawney Phil for the prediction of when spring would return to the country.

#### Historical Track Record of Punxsutawney Phil, 1887–2016, [courtesy of Punxsutawney Groundhog Club](#)

	Saw Shadow	No Shadow	No Record
102	18	10	
More Winter	End of Winter	---	

#### Punxsutawney Phil Versus the U.S. National Temperature 1988–2016

The table below gives a snapshot, by year since 1988, of whether Phil saw his shadow or not along with the corresponding monthly national average temperature departures for both February and March. The table shows no predictive skill for the groundhog during the most recent years of this analysis. Since 1993, the [U.S. national temperature](#) has been above normal 12 times in February and 15 times in March, below normal 6 times in February and 2 times in March, and near normal 6 times in February and 7 times in March.

Year	Shadow	February Temperature Departure	March Temperature Departure
2016	No	Above	Above
2015	Yes	Slightly Below	Above
2014	Yes	Below	Slightly Below

2013	No	Slightly Above	Slightly Below
2012	Yes	Above	Above
2011	No	Slightly Below	Above
2010	Yes	Below	Above
2009	Yes	Above	Above
2008	Yes	Slightly Above	Slightly Above
2007	No	Below	Above
2006	Yes	Above	Above
2005	Yes	Above	Slightly Above
2004	Yes	Slightly Below	Above
2003	Yes	Below	Above
2002	Yes	Above	Below
2001	Yes	Slightly Above	Slightly Below
2000	Yes	Above	Above
1999	No	Above	Above
1998	Yes	Above	Slightly Below
1997	No	Above	Above
1996	Yes	Above	Below
1995	No	Above	Above
1994	Yes	Below	Above
1993	Yes	Below	Slightly Above
1992	Yes	Above	Above
1991	Yes	Above	Above
1990	No	Above	Above
1989	Yes	Below	Above
1988	No	Slightly Below	Slightly Above

## U.S. Climate Conditions in February and March 2016



In 2016, the contiguous United States (CONUS) average temperature was 54.9°F, 2.9°F above the 20th century average. This was the second warmest year for the CONUS, behind 2012 when the annual average temperature was 55.3°F. This marks the 20th consecutive year that the annual average temperature for the CONUS was above the 20th century average. The last year with a below-average temperature was 1996. Since 1895, the CONUS has observed an average temperature increase of 0.15°F per decade.

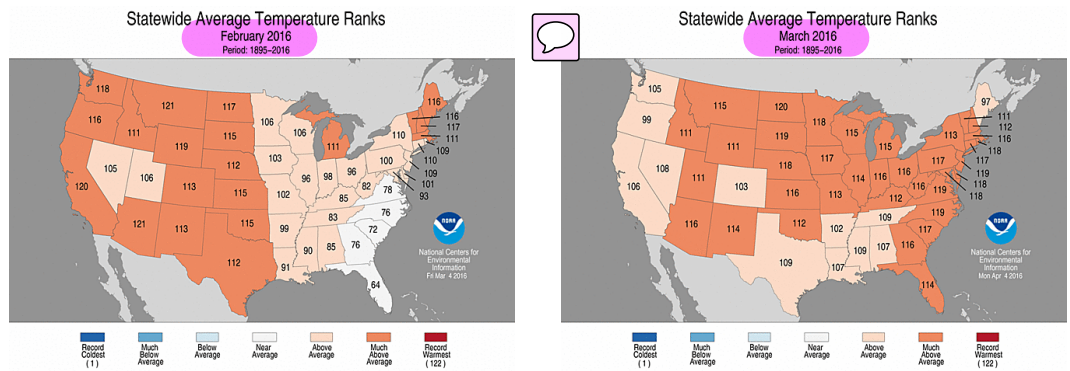
The February temperature for the contiguous U.S. was 39.5°F, 5.7°F above the 20th century average, ranking as the seventh warmest on record and warmest since 2000.

Above-average February temperatures were widespread across Alaska and the western half of the contiguous U.S. as well as parts of the Midwest and Northeast, where 21 states were much warmer than average. Alaska had its warmest February on record with a statewide temperature of 17.2°F, 12.4°F above average. Near-average February temperatures were observed across the Southeast.

The March temperature for the contiguous U.S. was 47.5°F, or 6.0°F above the 20th century average. This was the fourth warmest March in the 122-year period of record for the Lower 48 and warmest since 2012.

Every state in the contiguous U.S. had an above-average March temperature. Temperatures were much warmer than average across parts of the Rocky Mountains, Central and Northern Plains, Midwest, and along the East Coast. No state had a record warm March.

Take a look at the February and March 2016 statewide temperature ranks maps, which give a pretty good idea of the distribution of temperatures across the United States.



Interested in doing your own analysis? Check out our [Climate at a Glance](#) tool to access historical U.S. monthly temperature data, and [Phil's past predictions](#), which are available from the Punxsutawney Groundhog Club. More temperature rankings maps, like the ones above, are available on the [National Temperature and Precipitation Maps](#) page.

## Other Groundhogs Around the United States

While Punxsutawney Phil claims to be the nation's official forecasting groundhog, he's not the only furry forecaster in the United States. Some other notable contenders include [General Beauregard Lee of Atlanta, Georgia](#); [Sir Walter Wally of Raleigh, North Carolina](#); and [Jimmy of Sun Prairie, Wisconsin](#).

There are even more groundhog forecasters in the running such as Octorara Orphie of Quarryville, Pennsylvania—competition right next door to Phil—Staten Island Chuck from the Staten Island Zoo, Unadilla who hails from Nebraska, Buckeye Chuck from Ohio, French Creek from West Virginia, and the Cajun Groundhog from Louisiana. Ridge Lea Larry is a "stuffed groundhog" from Western New York, and the Tennessee Groundhog of Silver Point, Tennessee, is actually someone dressed up like a groundhog on a motorcycle.

While Groundhog Day is a way to have a little fun at mid-winter, climate records and statistics tell us that winter probably isn't over. Climatologically speaking, the three coldest months of the year are December, January, and February, so winter typically still has a bit to go when the groundhog comes out in search of his shadow on February 2.

## Additional Resources

- [U.S. Monthly, Seasonal, and Annual Climate Reports](#)  
See our monthly, seasonal, and annual climate reports on the Nation's recent climate conditions, their unusualness, as well as the long-term trends for many aspects of the climate system.
- [U.S. Climate Normals](#)  
The 1981–2010 U.S. Climate Normals are the latest 30-year averages of climatological variables including temperature and precipitation.

- [Climate Prediction Center](#)

For forecasts of short-term climate fluctuations and information on the effects of climate patterns on the nation, visit the Climate Prediction Center.

- [National Weather Service](#)

For the weather forecast in your area, check out your local National Weather Service forecast office.



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