

## Global warming not to blame for 2011 droughts

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ADD one more to the list: after the driest spring in more than 20 years, parts of eastern England are officially in a state of drought, according to the UK's Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs. This comes hard on the heels of some of the worst droughts on record across the globe, from Texas to China.

While [global warming is an obvious suspect](#), there's no evidence that it is to blame. Though climate change models predict extended droughts and periods of intense rainfall for the end of the 21st century, they don't explain the current droughts, says [Martin Hoerling](#) at the US National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. "A lot of these extreme conditions are natural variations of the climate. Extremes happen, heat waves happen, heavy rains happen," he says.



Gasping for rain (Image: Oli Scarff/Getty Images)

Drought across the southern US - and heavy rains across the north of the country - are a result of La Niña, says Michael Hayes, director of the National Drought Mitigation Center at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. An extended holding pattern in the jet stream, the same type of "blocking event" that [caused last summer's heat wave in Russia](#), is responsible for this year's European droughts, says Michael Blackburn of the University of Reading, UK.

As for the apparent convergence of droughts worldwide, Mark Saunders of University College London says current conditions aren't that unusual. News media may simply be more tuned in to reporting extreme weather events.

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