

From the President

A Question of Priorities



Winter is always a good time for reflection, for considering the world from a introspective point of view. It looks like this winter will bring more southwest wind than the last few, and that in itself puts us in a sterner mood.



What I have been contemplating recently is the amount of priority given by the world's makers and shakers to the environment we live in. It looks like the perils of global warming are being replaced on the main stage of human discussion by the new peril of genetic engineering.

I remember a wise young person (they do exist) telling me that maths was tops in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Physics in the 20<sup>th</sup>, and it will be biology in the 21<sup>st</sup>.

The BBC Reith lectures recently covered by National Radio seemed to seal this. You can still catch all the details in full audio or video (or just text) from the web at [http://news.bbc.co.uk/hi/english/static/events/reith\\_2000/](http://news.bbc.co.uk/hi/english/static/events/reith_2000/). Their theme this year is "respect for the Earth", or, as it gets summarised in the last lecture "The living world as one". This statement seems to mirror Meteorological Society's own considered pearl "One earth, one atmosphere" which was given substance more than a century ago through the action of the then International Meteorological Organization (IMO) in establishing a system of free and unrestricted exchange of meteorological data and information between nations under a regime of international cooperation in meteorology. Like many around me, I have always considered globalisation as to a positive thing, and "togetherness" as a good corollary of modern communication. Well ever since I heard lecture 5 in the series by Vandana Shiva of Delhi on "Globalisation and Poverty", I have been re-evaluating my views. Sadly, as we gear up to "Join together" for the Sydney Olympics, the theme around the Pacific at present seems to be more that of "separatism".

The participants to this year's Reith Lecture debate seemed to agree that the main threat to the new generation is the lack of biodiversity, with climate change having the status of an "also running" problem. The new call is for "sustainability" and the main areas that are now considered top priority are health (especially of species facing extinction) and education. I suppose

that the general reaction to these new priorities may be much the same as our reaction so far to Global warming, summarised at the IPCC workshop back in February by Sir John Houghton as "Nothing will happen unless we are all willing to do our bit"...definitely on the side of togetherness.

Anyway, your committee has taken on the priority this year to catch up with our backlog of journals (Weather and Climate). The basic problem has been that not enough papers are being submitted for us to maintain two editions per year. So this year we have decided to make our Journal an annual. At this November's AGM we will propose a new subscription to cover this change. You should have by now received the journal due in February 1999 and we are working on the one due in February 2000.

Another priority which your committee has been examining is the credentials of those who are quoted in the media with comments on weather and climate. These people are now being encouraged, where appropriate, to mention their qualifications of professionalism in meteorology (such as Doctor of Meteorology, or MRSNZ ...member of the Royal Society of NZ).

In this edition of the newsletter we have an account of the first ten years of the Wairarapa Weather Watchers (thanks to Alex Neale). This account also includes an historic account of the Wellington Weather Watchers (thanks to Phil Dickson). The Wairarapa Weather Watchers have grown in free association with the Meteorological Society, and are an admirable group showing the real value of togetherness and just what can be done when we are all willing to our bit!.



Bob McDavitt, President. 12 June 2000



From the Committee

2000 Symposium - Meteorological/Hydrological/Limnological conference, Christchurch 20-24 Nov 2000



The registration will be \$225 (incl. GST, i.e. \$200 plus GST), with a late registration fee of \$45 (incl. GST);

(b) Student rates will be \$112.50 (incl. GST), with a late registration fee of \$45, (incl. GST);

(c) Daily registration of \$112.50 (incl. GST) will be available, and will include a copy of the abstracts;

(d) Monday workshop fees will be \$36, including tea/coffee but not lunch;

(e) field trips will be \$45 (incl. GST) .

Go to <http://www.ucar.canterbury.ac.nz/fresh/home.htm> for more details...and there should be a "Second Circular" with this newsletter.

#### New acting Canterbury Vice President.



Dr. Don Grainger, our Christchurch V.P, is taking up an offer of a Lectureship at the University of Oxford (England) for the forthcoming Northern Hemisphere academic year. As a result he will be resigning as VP (Canterbury) of the NZ Met Soc and leaving New Zealand about late August. He has thoroughly enjoyed helping with the society and hopes to continue being of use until he leaves. The V.P. is an elected office but anyone can - upon approval by the committee - be appointed to the position as acting V.P. until the next AGM . Fortunately Dr Meinolf Kossmann of the Canterbury Geography Department has agreed to take on the position and to run of the monthly Canterbury Branch meetings (from July) .

#### Regional Vice President's reports.

##### *Auckland*

Next meeting is being held at Auckland Regional Council "Auckland's Runoff for the past year" on the evening of 21 June by Council Hydrologist Royd Cumming. This is a talk of the ARC rain gauge and river flow network, and an account of measurements taken during the last 12 months.

### *Wairarapa*

Held a meeting in early June. They celebrated 10 years as a group. Alex's short history of the Wairarapa Weather Watchers (which includes a piece about the Wellington Weather Watchers) is included in this newsletter.

### *Wellington*

Meeting was held on Thursday 8 June at MetService in which Erick Brenstrum gave his impressions of the recent Southern Hemisphere Meteorology conference in Chile.

### *Christchurch*

4th May: Dr Bob Crowder presented his views on the current state of forecasting in New Zealand and Canterbury in particular. Bob's opinions stimulated much discussion among the audience of 14.

1st June: Dr Meinolf Kossman spoke on 'Observations of the Wind and Temperature Fields at Lake Tekapo'. This was a joint meeting with the University of Canterbury Centre for Atmospheric Science and attracted an audience of 20.



## WAIRARAPA WEATHER WATCHERS

Now Ten Years Old

On the evening of Monday 21 May 1990, nine people attended a meeting to find out whether there was likely to be enough interest for us to form a group which would meet, from time to time, to discuss and exchange ideas about the weather. Two additional people, who had been invited, sent apologies for their being unable to attend, but indicated that they would be in favour of the formation of such a group. With these eleven in favour, it was agreed that the "Wairarapa Weather Watchers" be established. Looking back, the decision must have been a good one. The group is still in existence ten years later, and membership has grown from 11 to 38; seven foundation members remain with the group.

To fully trace the beginnings of Wairarapa Weather Watchers, we must backtrack nearly two decades to a similar group, the Wellington Weather Watchers. In August 1982 a group of enthusiasts sent out an invitation to known weather observers in the Wellington area. Their list of respondents came mainly from a list of folk who at that time voluntarily made and sent weather records to the Geography Department of Victoria University. Keen observers began to compare notes, and a list of aims was drawn up. These included keeping a directory of observers, improving understanding

of weather forecasts, and examining local knowledge and folklore. The group also provided a 'window' for the Meteorological Service of the views of the general population. Wellington Weather Watchers (WWW) soon numbered about sixty members.

The Weather Watchers staged their first social event on 24th of November 1982 in Stokes Valley. Several speakers informally addressed the gathering, including the then Television New Zealand Weather presenter, Veronica Allum. From then on regular meetings were held, frequently at members homes, and a number in combination with the Meteorological Society.

From the outset a newsletter became the main means of communication with members, many of whom contributed interesting articles from their own experiences together with weather recordings comparing places in and around the district.

Meetings often took the form of evening gatherings with invited guests. Others were visits and picnics. These included 'Do it yourself weather forecasting' where members gathered at the National Weather Forecasting Centre in Kelburn, and with some professional help, drew their own weather maps. One Saturday afternoon was spent at Wellington Airport studying flying weather and watching aircraft within the local controlled air space, including a visit to the control tower. Another Saturday, in April 1986, was spent at Seatoun, near the fateful capsizing of the inter-island ferry Wahine, learning graphically how the Harbour Tug Tapuhi tried getting a line onto the ill-fated ship at the height of Wellington's worst storm on 10 April 1968. This was followed by a visit to the Signal Hill Station which commands a panoramic view of Wellington Harbour entrance. Enjoyable rural days included visits to Bob Gyton's farm on the Paekakariki Hill Road in April 1985, and Ian Campbell's farm in Wairarapa in March 1990. During the height of WWW activity, Met Instruments Ltd. in Wellington received correspondence from an amateur weather organisation in the USA, the Association of American Weather Observers (AAWO). Met Instruments passed it on to WWW and as a result, for some time after, the AAWO's tabloid monthly paper, the American Weather Observer, was received by mail. Some of WWW's own writings were published in their newspaper.

Since the Meteorological Society aims to cater for both professional meteorologists and amateurs alike, why did the WWW form? It is true that some keen amateurs were already Met Society members anyway, but it is also true that not all of the observers making records for the University at the time would ever have joined the Society, but they certainly enjoyed the social events. Eventually, the union of both occurred, probably to the detriment of social, more informal meetings. Indeed, by late 1985, the WWW Newsletter was being mailed out with the Met Society Newsletter to Wellington regional Society members.

The last recorded committee meeting of the WWW occurred in March 1993.

When is a northerly not a northerly?



*When it's a bent westerly*

When is a southerly not a southerly?



*When it's a bent easterly*

*Taken From "Wellington Wind Lore"  
By Phil Dickson of Wellington Weather Watchers*

However, it was the WWW picnic on Ian Campbell's farm in the northern Wairarapa plains in early March 1990 that led directly to the formation of Wairarapa Weather Watchers. Since, at that time, I was living in Masterton, I agreed to look after local picnic arrangements in conjunction with Ian, and to be one of those present who would provide some weather-related 'light entertainment'. Electing to say something about the clouds we would see during the picnic, the weather version of Parkinson's Law took over - the sky during the picnic was cloudless! I have tried to do this cloud thing on other occasions and it seldom comes off, either there are no clouds, or it is raining steadily from a dismal, featureless grey blanket.

More importantly for this story, a photographer from the Wairarapa Times-Age newspaper was invited along. He took my picture - it was printed in the issue of 5 March 1990 - together with a short description of the event. Shortly thereafter, I received a phone call from Merv Wilson of Masterton who explained his lifelong interest in the weather, and would I be willing to meet him and talk about 'weather'. I was willing and, during our chat about 'weather', told of my idea of trying to start a local Wairarapa amateur group similar to that in Wellington. Merv was enthusiastic, and a little over two months later the meeting of 21

May 1990 took place, resulting in the formation of Wairarapa Weather Watchers.

The inaugural meeting took the following decisions.

a) Up to six meetings to be held annually, on Monday evenings, this day of the week being less likely to clash with meetings of other organisations;

b) A picnic-style "field day" to be held in January;

c) A Newsletter to be distributed to members six times annually; and

d) Alex Neale be 'group leader', assisted by Merv Wilson.

In each of our ten successful years, there have been six meetings and six *Newsletters*; both group leader and assistant have remained unchanged throughout. Only with regard to the January "field day" have intensions not been met, and for this under-achievement the weather must take some blame. Unless the venue has undercover accommodation in which participants can take shelter in the event of adverse weather, such events become difficult to handle effectively, and can involve considerable problems of advising of postponement or cancellation.

Nevertheless, a number of successful and enjoyable "field days" have taken place - usually in March rather than January. A small group of us travelled to Wellington to participate in a programme for enthusiastic amateurs arranged by the Meteorological Society on Saturday 7 March 1992. That afternoon Augie Auer explained satellite pictures which he 'called up' on a computer screen. Later, at the Tawa home of Carla and Jim Salinger, there were talks on the effect which the recent eruption of Mt Pinatubo, in the Philippines, has had on New Zealand's summer temperatures, and on the state of the current El Niño. A delicious supper followed.

On Saturday 1 March 1997, Susan and Augie Auer joined twenty of us for a Bar-BQ at the home of Dora and Glyn Saunders, east of Masterton. Augie told us of the activity within MetService during the then recent visits made to New Zealand by ex-tropical cyclones *Fergus* and *Drena*.

The Jury Hill Gliding Club invited the Weather Watchers to have a picnic at their launch site east of Greytown on Saturday 14 March 1998. About twenty attended, nine coming from Wellington - mostly from the Wellington Weather Watchers, and this was the last time their members have gathered together. Peter Knudson, President of the Gliding Club, explained gliding weather, after which club members demonstrated winch launches, which take the gliders up to a height of about 1500 feet before winch cable release lets the glider carry on to ride the thermals. Some of us opted to take rides.

Occasionally, at our evening meetings, we have had speakers from outside the Weather Watchers group. These included Tony

Bromley of NIWA (National Institute of Water and Atmosphere) speaking about his experiences in Antarctica; Cameron Coutts of MetService talking about his time spent on the Kermadec Islands. Early in 1995 some members of the local gliding fraternity were invited to our meeting to tell us of their experiences at the World Gliding Championships which they had recently attended at Omarama. Then, early in 1999 we held one of our meetings in Civil Defence Headquarters in Masterton and were shown over their facilities; this followed a meeting some months earlier at which three Civil Defence controllers participated in a discussion of the impact which weather has on their activities. Augie Auer of MetService has twice been our evening's speaker. On the first occasion he spoke about 'Seekers after weather knowledge' through the ages; on a later visit he regaled us with some of his experiences while engaged in weather research aboard a number of different aircraft.

Some of our own members have entertained us too. Harry McArthur spoke about his fascinating weather observing while a climate observer at Wairongomai Station on the western side of Lake Wairarapa - 'How do you code up the four quite different types of weather which may be visible simultaneously from the site?' - Graeme Elliott told of his early indoctrination into the mysteries of the weather when recruited and dispatched to Gisborne during the war, and of later experiences in Espiritu Santo, and on Norfolk Island - 'Impressing on staff that it is not wise to light up a cigarette while filling a weather balloon with hydrogen'; Fred Jolly's talk entitled *Weather Reflections* told of his memories of flying, the weather, and the war - 'If you must fly over the ocean, make sure it is in a De Havilland'.

Of the many topics that have been explored at our evening meetings, and within the *Newsletters*, some have cropped up a number of times, either because of their topicality or because they are of particular interest. Global warming and climate change have featured eight times, initially in conjunction with the ozone hole because the latter tended to be confused with global warming. Tropical cyclones have been just as popular. El Niño has returned five times. Following the spectacular 1992 snowfall in Christchurch, one *Newsletter* contained several articles offered by members who recalled memorable snowfalls from their earlier years.

Beginning in 1994, short items have appeared regularly in the *Newsletters* commenting on interesting weather events which have affected Wairarapa. Over seventy items of this sort have appeared in the six years since then.

[Acknowledgement: Phil Dickson, a Wellington Weather Watcher, provided the information about that organisation]

Alex Neale.



**NATIONAL CLIMATE SUMMARY - AUTUMN 2000****LA NINA'S FINAL STAGES COMPARATIVELY BENIGN****WARM IN MANY AREAS, AND WET IN THE NORTH EAST AND WESTLAND**

La Nina moved into its final stage of influence over the New Zealand climate with a comparatively benign autumn. It featured none of the extremes that characterised its presence during the post-summer period last year. The national average temperature for the season was 13.7°C, up 0.4°C on the 1961 to 1990 average but down by the same extent on autumn temperatures of 1998 and 1999. It was warmer than normal over much of the North Island, especially Bay of Plenty, as well as the north and south-west of the South Island. Most other regions experienced slightly above-average temperatures.

Much heavier rainfall than normal characterised the season in eastern Bay of Plenty and Westland and it was much wetter than usual in Gisborne and the far south-west of the South Island. More settled conditions prevailed in the central North Island and inland Southland. Sunny conditions featured in coastal Southland and Nelson but sunshine totals were below average in eastern Bay of Plenty and Gisborne. Extremes did occur though, with five heavy rainfall events, two snow-producing cold snaps and two days with storm force winds.

The climatic conditions for the autumn (March-May) were produced by more frequent highs (anticyclones) east of the Chatham Islands, extending towards central New Zealand. There were more easterly winds than normal to the north of New Zealand and north-westerly winds across southern New Zealand.

**NATIONAL CLIMATE SUMMARY - AUTUMN 2000**

VERY WET IN BAY OF PLENTY AND WESTLAND

Autumn rainfall was about double normal (200 percent) in parts of eastern Bay of Plenty, and up to one and a half (150 percent) times normal in parts of Westland, south Taranaki, Canterbury, and Central Otago. Other above-average areas were western Bay of Plenty, Gisborne, northern Hawke's Bay, and the far south-west of the South Island, with rainfall totals at least 120 percent of normal.

Rainfall was below average in inland Southland, with totals as low as 60 percent of normal. It was drier than normal in the central North Island, and close to normal in other areas.

Extremely high rainfall was recorded at:

Location	Rain fall (mm)	Percent age of normal	Year records began	Comments
Hokitika Airport	1014	145	1964	2nd highest, 1066 mm in 1996



WARM OVER MUCH OF THE NORTH ISLAND, NELSON, AND SOUTH-WEST OF THE SOUTH ISLAND

It was very warm in the Bay of Plenty and the central North Island volcanic plateau, where mean temperatures were 1.0°C above normal. Other warmer-than-average regions, with mean temperatures at least 0.5°C above normal, were Auckland, Coromandel, Waikato, Gisborne, Manawatu, Nelson, Southern Lakes, and coastal Southland. Mean temperatures were slightly above average over the much of the remainder of the country, but near normal in parts of Northland, Taranaki, Wairarapa, and Canterbury.

**NATIONAL CLIMATE SUMMARY - AUTUMN 2000****SUNNY IN THE NORTH AND SOUTH OF THE SOUTH ISLAND**

Sunshine totals were well above average in coastal Southland, with totals about 120 percent of normal. It was also sunny in Nelson with 110 percent of normal hours. Lower than normal sunshine totals occurred in the eastern Bay of Plenty and Gisborne, with about 90 percent of normal hours. Sunshine was near-average over the remainder of the country.

**EXTREMES**

- The highest autumn temperature was 35.0°C, recorded at both Darfield and Culverden on the 4th of March. These are new records for autumn at both sites. The highest autumn temperature for New Zealand is 36.0°C, recorded at both Ashburton in 1956 and Clyde in 1976.
- There were 5 heavy rainfall events: these occurred on 1st and 13th March, 9th April, 11th and 13th May. Two of these caused flooding impacts.
- Two cold snaps occurred: that on March 13th produced snow on the mountains around Queenstown; and the other on 24th/25th April caused snow in the central North Island.
- High winds affected parts of Otago and the West Coast on 14th March, and storm-force south-westerlies with gusts up to 153km/h battered coastal Otago on 26th April, toppling power lines.
- The lowest air temperature for autumn was -6.2°C recorded at Lumsden during the morning of 15th May. The lowest autumn air temperature on record for Lumsden is -7.0°C.

This report is also available at

[http://www.niwa.cri.nz/climsum\\_autumn00.html](http://www.niwa.cri.nz/climsum_autumn00.html)

Colour graphics giving seasonal and monthly maps of temperature and rainfall variations are available from

<http://www.niwa.cri.nz/ncc/current.html> as a pdf file.

These colour maps do not convert well enough to "shades of gray" for us to bring them here, so instead we are bringing you the **MONTHLY HIGHLIGHTS**.

For further information, please contact:

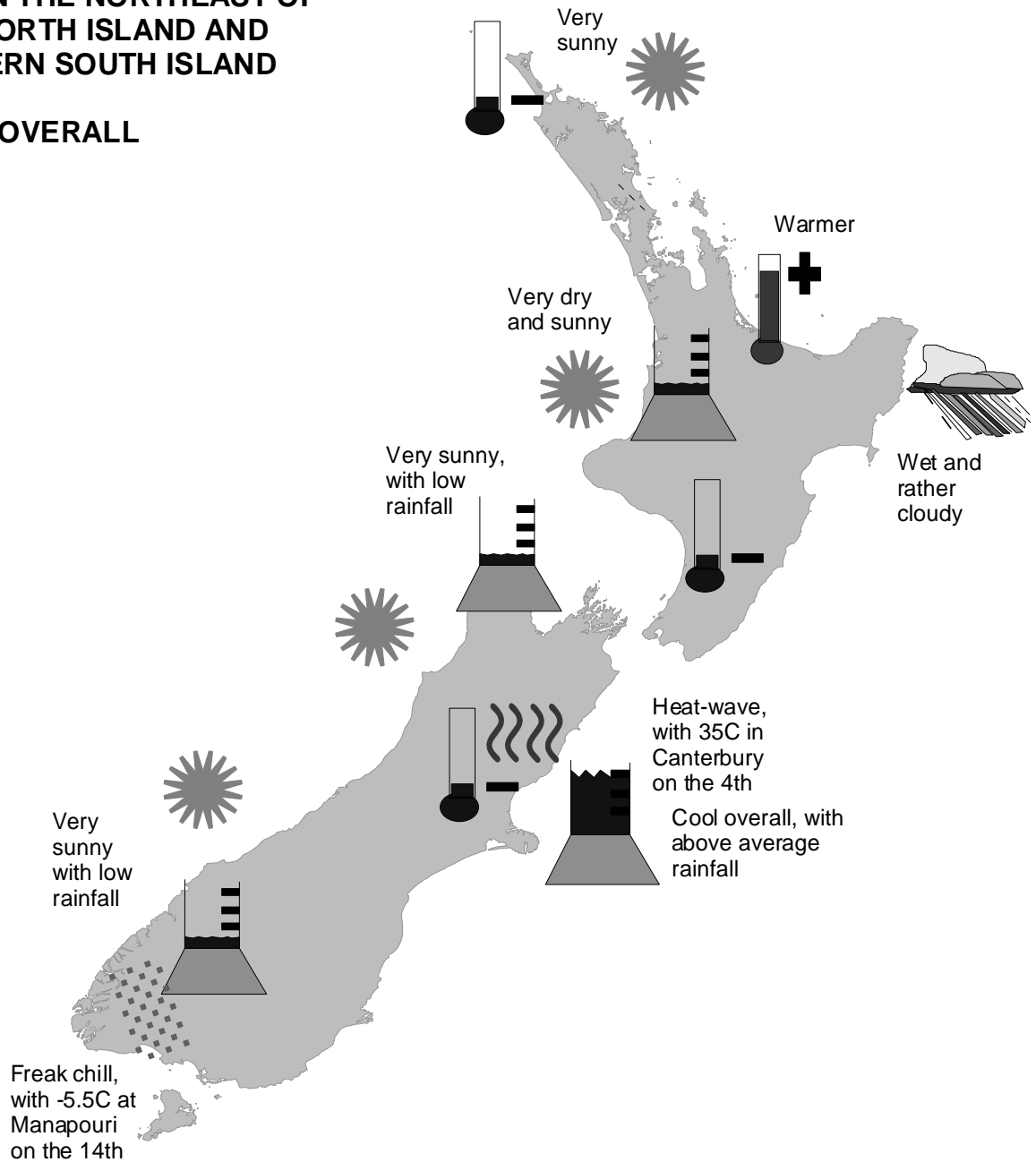
Dr Jim Salinger [j.salinger@niwa.cri.nz](mailto:j.salinger@niwa.cri.nz)

# NIWA MARCH 2000 CLIMATE HIGHLIGHTS

**VERY DRY AND SUNNY  
IN THE NORTH AND WEST**

**WET IN THE NORTHEAST OF  
THE NORTH ISLAND AND  
EASTERN SOUTH ISLAND**

**COOL OVERALL**



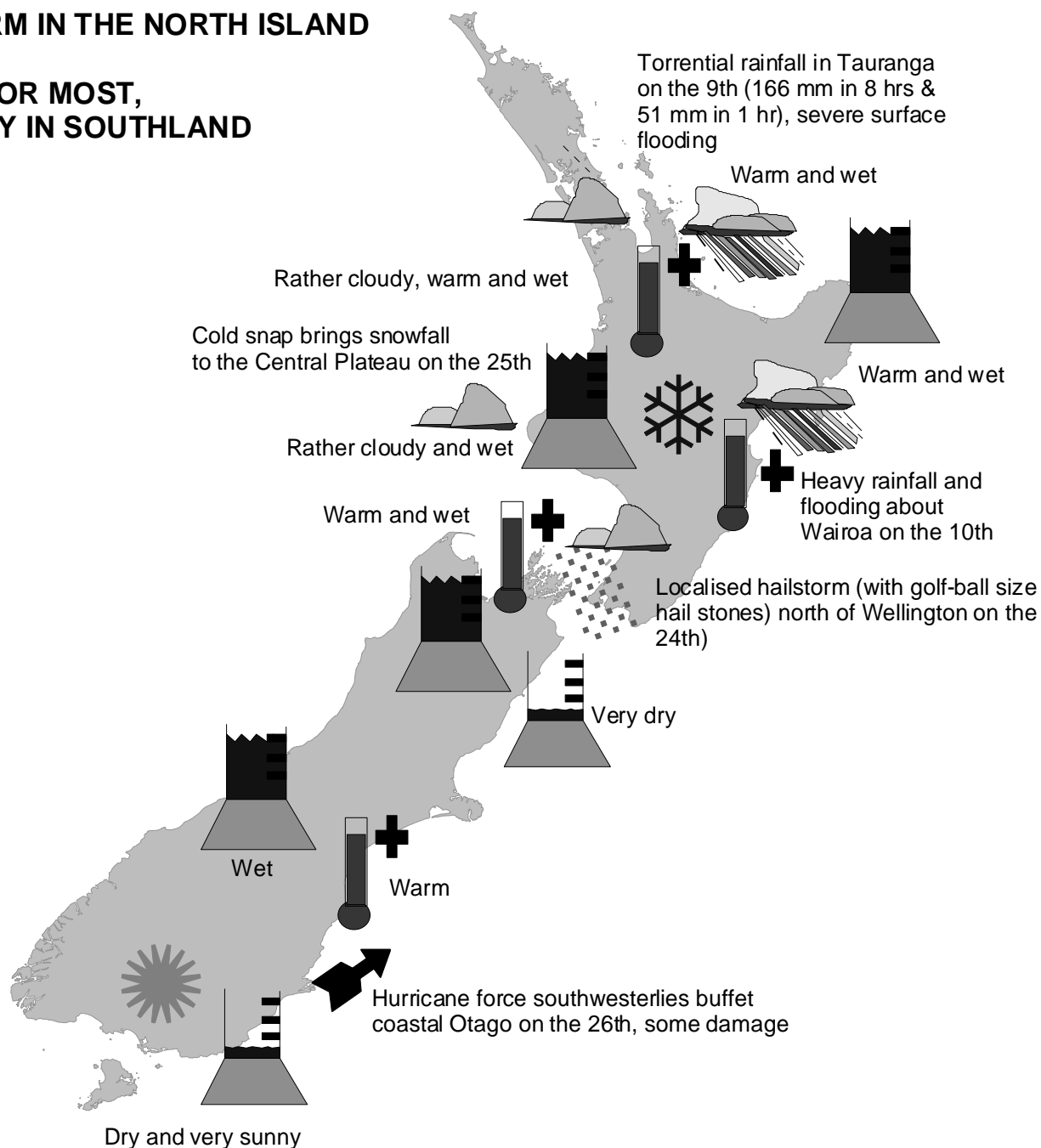
# NIWA APRIL 2000 CLIMATE HIGHLIGHTS

**VERY WET IN BAY OF PLENTY AND HAWKE'S BAY**

**DRY ON THE KAIKOURA COAST  
AND IN SOUTHLAND**

**VERY WARM IN THE NORTH ISLAND**

**CLOUDY FOR MOST,  
BUT SUNNY IN SOUTHLAND**



# NIWA MAY 2000 CLIMATE HIGHLIGHTS

**VERY WARM IN MOST AREAS**

**DRY AND SUNNY OVER MUCH  
OF THE NORTH ISLAND AND  
NORTHERN SOUTH ISLAND**

**WET AND CLOUDY IN THE  
SOUTHWEST OF THE SOUTH ISLAND**

