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WEATHER DEBATE

Global warming? Well, it's sizzling here

Does October's heat portend a mild winter?

Tuesday, October 9, 2007 3:43 AM

BY **DAVID CONRAD**
THE COLUMBUS DISPATCH

After three days of record temperatures (including yesterday's 90 degrees), it's only natural for us to wonder why it's so hot and what it's going to mean for our winter.

And everyone from caterpillar keepers to weather watchers has an opinion.

Jeffrey Rogers, an Ohio State University climatologist, blames global warming.

He recently completed a study that shows nightly low temperatures during Ohio summers have risen 3 degrees Fahrenheit over the past 40 years.

"It's not definite, but evidence of global warming is certainly starting to be a little more suggestive," said Rogers, also the state climatologist.

He said that an increase in humidity and nightly cloud cover likely caused the spike. (Although he's not sure what's causing the increase.)

Mark Taylor, a meteorologist for the Ohio News Network, said ongoing drought caused a blistering start to October.

"The energy of the sun goes into heating the air, as opposed to the water content in the ground," he said.

Taylor said unless precipitation picks up, we will have a warmer-than-normal winter.

Andy Monaghan, a senior research associate at the OSU Byrd Polar Research Center, agreed, but he cited the La Nina effect. La Nina is an irregular cooling of surface temperatures in the Pacific Ocean near the equator.

The Old Farmer's Almanac is predicting a slightly warmer, snowier winter across the Ohio Valley. The 215-year-old almanac claims an 80 to 85 percent accuracy rate.

Then there's the woolly bear caterpillar. According to folklore, the longer the middle brown band



DORAL CHENOWETH III | DISPATCH

As October's record-high temperatures continue, Cora Wall plays with her aunt, Patricia Maloney, in the waters at Alum Creek State Park. Cora and her family live in Mount Gilead, and her aunt lives in New Albany.



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THE HOT ISSUE

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on the bug, the milder and shorter the coming winter. Barbara Bloetscher, an OSU insect diagnostician, said she saw six of them in late August, and all of them sported long bands.

"I don't believe in all this global warming business," Bloetscher said. "But I don't believe those caterpillars either. They hibernate all winter, so why would they care what the weather's like?"

The beekeeper instead looks at bees for signs. She said they started collecting nectar and pollen early this year. And that, she said, bodes a harsh winter.

"They were certainly off last winter, though, and most of them died," she acknowledged.

"But listen, insects don't really know what's going on and neither do the weather forecasters. Everyone's just guessing, in my opinion."

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