

Director's Media Briefing and Observatory Open Day

Editorial Board



Director of the Hong Kong Observatory, Mr Shun Chi-ming (centre), together with the four Assistant Directors, introducing the latest developments of the Hong Kong Observatory at the press briefing.

Echoing the theme of the Open Day, a seminar on "Understanding Clouds" and photo exhibition on "Beautiful Clouds" were held at Tsim Sha Tsui District Kai Fong Welfare Association on 25 March.



During the annual media briefing on World Meteorological Day, 23 March, Director of the Hong Kong Observatory, Mr Shun Chi-ming, elaborated on the weather outlook for Hong Kong this year, and highlighted the Observatory's upcoming initiatives, including the 100th anniversary of numbered typhoon signals, with planned activities that would help to foster public understanding of typhoon-related hazards and enhance disaster prevention awareness.

The Observatory Open Day 2017, echoing this year's World Meteorological Day theme of "Understanding Clouds" to promote public appreciation and understanding of the fascinating and ever-changing clouds, was successfully held on 25 and 26 March with nearly 14,000 visitors attending the event.



The Open Day event was held with support from Observatory staff and volunteers from "Friends of the Observatory".

New International Cloud Atlas, with Contributions from Hong Kong

To promote the theme of the World Meteorological Day "Understanding Clouds", a new web-based version of the International Cloud Atlas (ICA) (www.wmocloudatlas.org), developed by the Hong Kong Observatory on behalf of the World Meteorological Organization, was officially launched on 23 March 2017. The new version of the ICA features enriched content, with the inclusion of more than 600 attractive new photos and short video clips.

In particular, nearly 60 photos taken by members of the public in Hong Kong and the Observatory's staff have been selected for incorporation into the new version of the ICA, including four photos of new cloud types.

Chan Ying-wa



Cool Met Staff



International Cloud Atlas



Since the launch of the new version of ICA, the World Meteorological Organization and the Observatory have received enquiries regarding the website information from meteorological authorities, media and members of the public worldwide – including scientists working in Antarctica. The ICA provides useful information for meteorological education, and has been well received by experts for its comprehensive content.

Four photos of new cloud types submitted by Hong Kong and incorporated into the new version of the International Cloud Atlas.



Features

Editorial Board

100th Anniversary of Numbered Typhoon Signals

Typhoon signals were originally hoisted for the marine community, and were subsequently widely adopted for general use. The numbered signals were first introduced in Hong Kong in 1917, to indicate wind directions and strengths associated with tropical cyclones. The system had been revised several times over the years, and the current version was adopted in 1973.

As 2017 marks the 100th anniversary of the introduction of numbered typhoon signals in Hong Kong, the Observatory produces a special series of "Cool Met Stuff" public education videos on tropical cyclones, with topics including the evolution of tropical cyclone signals, historical tropical cyclone disasters, tropical cyclone-related hazards, naming of tropical cyclones and debunking of myths relating to tropical cyclones.



Cool Met Stuff on tropical cyclones

In the first episode, Mr Shun Chi-ming, Director of the Observatory, talks about the evolution of tropical cyclone warning signals over the past 100 years.



The Hong Kong Observatory and Radio Television Hong Kong (RTHK) have jointly launched a campaign to collect historical tropical cyclone material from the public including articles, historical photos, audio recordings and videos, especially those showing damages caused by tropical cyclones in Hong Kong. The information collected will be presented in the RTHK Radio 1 programme "Climate Watcher".



Collection of historical typhoon information

Secretary for the Civil Service Visiting the Observatory

Editorial Board



Mr Clement Cheung, Secretary for the Civil Service (fourth from left) and Mr Thomas Chow (third from left), with Mr Shun Chi-ming, Director of the Hong Kong Observatory (fourth from right) and other senior Observatory staff.

Secretary for the Civil Service, Mr Clement Cheung, accompanied by Permanent Secretary for the Civil Service, Mr Thomas Chow, visited the Hong Kong Observatory on 7 April, to learn more about its work and to meet staff of the department. He toured the facilities including TV Studio, Monitoring and Assessment Centre and Central Forecasting Office. During a tea gathering before concluding his visit, Mr Cheung talked to staff representatives of various grades. He praised them for their effort, and encouraged them to continue striving for excellence and enhancing the services provided.



Milestones

Observatory's Weather Forecasting and Warning Services Receiving ISO 9001:2015 Certification

Lee Kwok-lun

Earlier this year, the Observatory's weather forecasting and warning services received ISO (International Organization for Standardization) 9001:2015 Quality Management Systems certification. This makes the Observatory one of the first meteorological centres in the world to receive this certification. The Observatory will continue providing high-quality weather services to the public, through enhanced communication with clients, improved design of weather products and efficient workflow in weather forecasting.

Observatory staff at the ceremony to celebrate the ISO 9001:2015 certification.



HKO and GFS Joining Forces to Launch Dropsonde System

Cheung Ping

On 3 March, the Observatory and the Government Flying Service (GFS) held a joint press conference to launch the new dropsonde system, collecting extra meteorological data for the monitoring of tropical cyclones. A video about the dropsonde system can be viewed on the Observatory's YouTube channel.



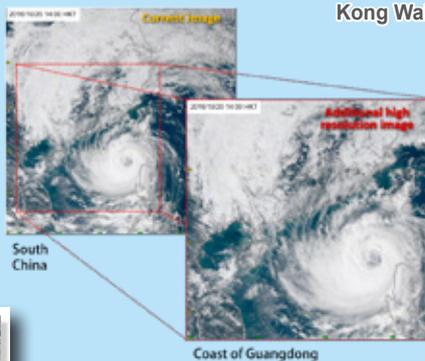
Captain Michael Chan (right), Controller of the GFS, and Ms Sharon Lau, Assistant Director of the Observatory, introducing the dropsonde system during the joint press conference.



New Version of Satellite Imagery Webpage

Kong Wai

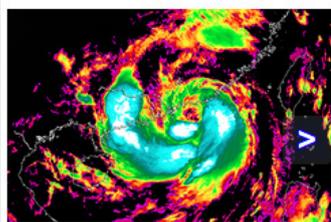
On 21 March, the Observatory enhanced its internet satellite imagery services, with additional high resolution images covering the coast of Guangdong. This enables viewers to better appreciate the weather conditions over Hong Kong and its vicinity.



Additional high resolution images covering the coast of Guangdong



2017-02-22 Cold Front



2016-08-01 Typhoon Nida

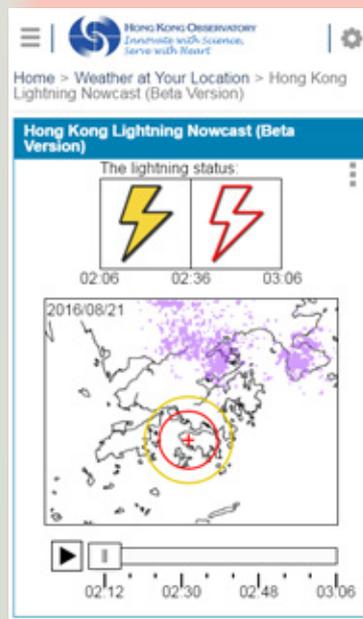
The "satellite imagery of interest" page has also been revamped and enhanced with an animation feature that improves the display of interesting weather phenomena.

The new satellite imagery of interest page

Lightning Nowcast

Woo Wang-chun

The Observatory has launched a "Hong Kong lightning nowcast" service, providing lightning nowcasts (one-hour forecasts) at users' current or designated locations. Members of the public can access the lightning nowcasts via the mobile web page or the "Automatic Regional Weather Forecast" web page. The lightning nowcasts are depicted as icons and presented as an animation on a map showing the future movement of storm areas where lightning is occurring.





Li Kin-wai

A Record-breaking WINTER

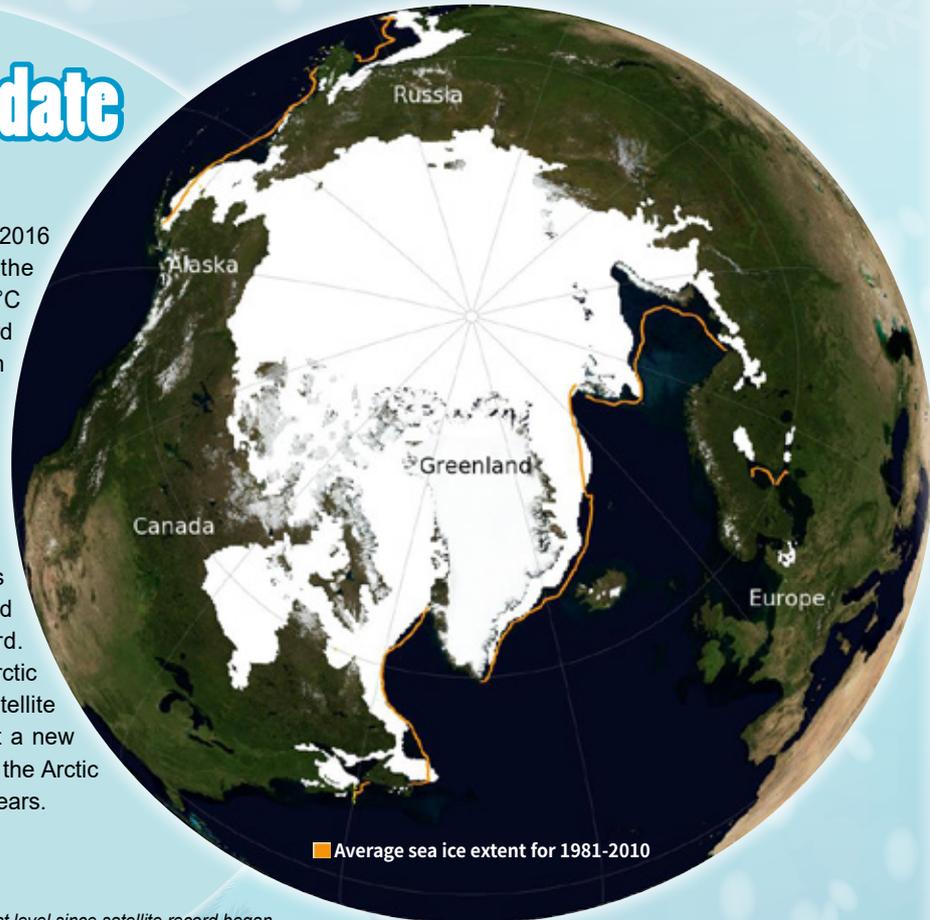
The winter (December to February) of 2016/17 was one of Hong Kong's warmest winters since records began in 1884. There were only seven cold days (with minimum temperature of 12.0°C or below) during the period. The quarterly mean temperature was 18.4°C and the mean minimum temperature was 16.5°C - equalling the previous record highs set in the winter of 1998/99. The mean temperature of 18.5°C and the mean minimum temperature of 17.0°C in January 2017 were also record highs. The abnormally warm weather was mainly attributable to the weaker-than-normal northeast monsoon affecting southern China.

Global Climate Update

Sham Fu-cheung

The World Meteorological Organization ranked 2016 as the hottest year globally on record, with the average global annual temperature about 1.1°C above pre-industrial levels, breaking the record for the third consecutive year together with several other climate records. The global sea surface temperature was also a record high while the average sea ice extents in the Arctic and the Antarctic were the lowest and second lowest, respectively, on satellite record.

The record-breaking trend in 2016 has continued into this year: January, February and March were all the second warmest on record. The sea ice extents in the Arctic and the Antarctic reached the lowest for the same period on satellite record. The sea ice extent in the Antarctica hit a new record low, and the maximum sea ice extent in the Arctic broke the lowest record for three consecutive years.



Maximum sea ice extent in the Arctic this year was the lowest level since satellite record began



Mr Shun Chi-ming, Director of the Hong Kong Observatory (second from left) and Mr Lee Sai-ming, Senior Scientific Officer (second from right), with Mr Tony Woo (first from left) and Ms Icy Wong (first from right), the programme hosts.



RTHK Radio 1 "Climate Watcher"

Editorial Board

To promote public understanding of climate change and enhance preparedness to meet climate change challenges, the Observatory collaborated with RTHK to produce the radio programme "Climate Watcher". The 13-episode programme will be broadcast on RTHK Radio 1 every Saturday starting from 1 April. Guest speakers include Observatory staff, experts and stakeholders from various sectors. As one of the guest speakers in episodes 1 and 2, Mr Shun Chi-ming, Director of the Hong Kong Observatory, briefly reviewed the damages caused by historical typhoons and rainstorms in Hong Kong. He also warned that extreme weather would be more likely to occur under the influence of climate change.

Ask Dr Tin



To encourage more young people to appreciate and understand clouds, the Hong Kong Observatory joined hands with the the School of Communication of Hang Seng Management College to create the first-ever weather-themed micro movie – Silver Lining. Footage from Silver Lining was also used in the episode “Cloud Lovers” of “Cool Met Stuff” on new cloud types and the new version of International Cloud Atlas.

New Cloud Types



Silver Lining

Cloud Lovers



HKO Sidelights

Observatory Staff Commended by the Public

Observatory staff who received words of thanks and commendation from the public or organizations during January to March 2017:

Mr Lee Kwok-lun
(Scientific Officer)

**Ms Chan Yuk-hing, Mr Wong Chau-ping,
Mr Wong Tak-kan, Mr Yung Chung-hoi,
Mr Chan Wing-hang**
(Experimental Officers)

Ms Yu Mei-fung
(Chief Scientific Assistant)

Ms Chan Siu-yung, Ms Mak Man-yi
(Senior Scientific Assistants)

**Ms Lam Mei-sim, Mr Lau Ying-hong,
Mr Chee Shiu-chung, Mr Lo Chin-ming,
Ms Lu Fung-wan, Ms Lai Sau-king**
(Scientific Assistants)

Staff Promotions



Mr Wong To (left) and Mr Fung Kwok-chu (right) were promoted to Senior Experimental Officer and Chief Scientific Assistant on 15 February and 3 April, respectively.

HKO Sidelights

ACRE China Workshop

Lui Wing-hong

The second ACRE China workshop was held on 2 March at the Hong Kong Observatory. It was jointly organised by ACRE (the Atmospheric Circulation Reconstructions over the Earth; initiated by the UK Met Office), the National Climate Center of the China Meteorological Administration, China University of Geosciences, and Hong Kong Observatory. There were 29 experts from China, USA, UK, Japan, Portugal and Hong Kong attending the workshop on the reconstruction of early data of land- and sea-based weather observations for regions including China, Hong Kong, Macau, Taiwan and Japan, that would facilitate the analysis of historical weather conditions in China and East Asia.



SOA and HKO Celebrating the 10th Anniversary of Co-operation in Oceanography

Hui Tai-wai

On 17 February, a six-member State Oceanic Administration (SOA) delegation led by Ms Chan Yue, Deputy Director-General of the Office of Hong Kong, Macao and Taiwan Affairs of SOA, attended the 4th bilateral meeting for reviewing progress and planning further collaboration with the Observatory. The opportunity was also taken to celebrate the 10th anniversary of co-operation in oceanography between SOA and the Observatory after the signing of a collaboration agreement in early 2007.



Notable achievement has been made in various aspects over the past ten years of cooperation, such as storm surge warnings for the Pearl River Delta region, tsunami warning and mitigation systems, marine meteorological observations over the South China Sea, as well as data transmission and information sharing.

It is expected that ties between the two organisations will be further strengthened through ongoing collaborative efforts to enhance the service levels of forecasts and warnings on maritime hazards, development of observation and monitoring systems over the South China Sea, mutual technical support for voluntary observing ships, and study of long-term sea level rise associated with climate change.

Job Shadow Day

Terence Kung

In February, more than ten Form 5 students from the Job Shadowing Programme organised by the Junior Achievement Hong Kong experienced different aspects of work at the Observatory. They were particularly impressed by the rigorous scientific spirit and dedicated working attitude of Observatory staff, and learned the importance of time management and agile responses in their future work.



ICT Award for MyObservatory App

Ben Or

The Hong Kong Observatory won the Certificate of Merit (Consumer Solutions) prize in the Best Mobile Apps Award in the Hong Kong Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Award 2017, for its MyObservatory mobile app.

(From right to left) Chairman of the Hong Kong Wireless Technology Industry Association, Mr Kenny Yiu, presented the award to the Observatory staff: Dr Cheng Cho-ming, Assistant Director, Mr Armstrong Cheng, Senior Scientific Officer, Mr Ben Or, Scientific Officer, and Mr Alex Lau, Analyst/Programmer.

BEST MOBILE APPS AWARD



Ever-changing Sky and Lifelong Fascination with Weather

Mok Hing-yim



A weather photo taken by the author, in Hawaii in 2016, has been incorporated into the new 2017 version of International Cloud Atlas of the World Meteorological Organization (<https://www.wmocloudatlas.org/search-image-gallery.html>).

"Whenever you go outside, you should take a look at the sky." I was given this unforgettable advice by my instructor during my training at the UK Met Office in 1983. I always have a strong awareness of the changeable weather throughout my career of more than 30 years at the Observatory. Besides looking at the sky, the first thing I did when I came to the office was to browse the weather observations and forecast data to predict possible future changes in the weather.

As they said: "Rome was not built in a day." As I kept doing this, I became familiar with the changes in the weather patterns and grew increasingly confident at weather conferences. And now, even though my work is well and truly done, such occupational habits shall stay with me forever, with an eye always open to keep track of the ever-changing weather.



Mr Mok Hing-yim, Senior Scientific Officer, started his pre-retirement leave on 14 April. At a farewell gathering, he shared wine and memories with colleagues.



Mr Tsang Yok-sing, former President of the Legislative Council, visited the Observatory on 16 January, and delivered a talk to Observatory staff on how to communicate with the public and the media.



A delegation from Sha Tin District Council visited the Observatory on 9 February.



A six-member delegation of the Census and Statistics Department, led by Mr Leslie Tang Wai-kong, the Commissioner (centre in the front row), visited the Observatory on 18 January for operational exchange.



For details of the activities, please visit:
<http://www.hko.gov.hk/wisnew.htm>
<http://www.hko.gov.hk/hkonevs/indexe.htm>