

El Niño Adventures



In 1998, El Niño may have caused many floods as well as the major winter ice storm in New England.

Some things in nature happen very fast. A honeybee can fly quickly from flower to flower. Thousands of gallons of water can stream over a waterfall every second. In the same way, some climate changes happen faster than others. For example, El Niño (Ehl NEE nyoh) affects climate from season to season.

What is El Niño?

Years ago, fishermen in Peru and Ecuador (EHK wah door) in South America noticed that during some winters, the ocean became warmer than usual. The fishermen gave the warmer water a name. They named it “El Niño.” In Spanish, El Niño means “the little boy.”

When the ocean became warmer, the fishermen noticed that they could not catch as many fish. The fishermen also noticed that the amount of rain increased.

What is La Niña?

La Niña happens when ocean waters off Peru and Ecuador become colder than usual. La Niña means “the little girl.”

What Happens During El Niño or La Niña?

During an El Niño or La Niña year, parts of the Pacific Ocean warm and make changes in weather around the world. The effects of El Niño or La Niña cause changes in rainfall and temperature as far away as the United States and Australia. Usually, El Niño comes every 3 to 5 years, and La Niña less frequently.

