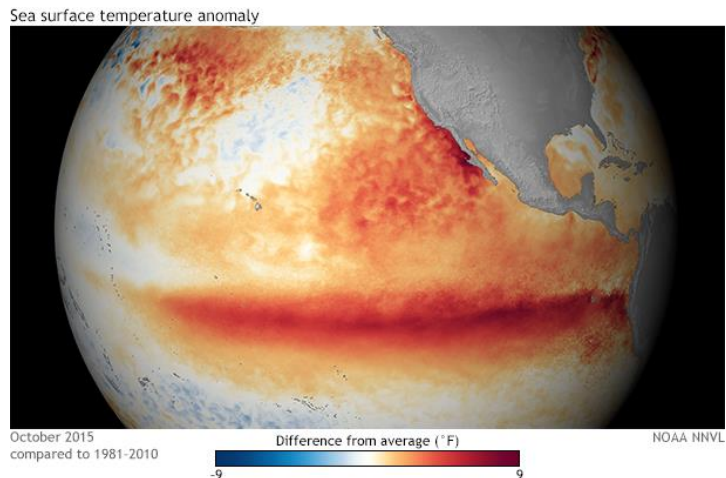


EL NINO UPDATE from the Galapagos Conservation Trust

Pacific ocean temperatures were recorded to be 3.1°C above average on 18 November 2015, and the latest reports from the Galapagos Islands are now suggesting that surface temperatures there are now closer to 4° above average, confirming that the 2015-16 El Nino has well and truly begun.



For historical purposes, El Nino's are ranked according to a three-month running mean sea surface temperature (SST) anomaly, known as the Oceanic Nino Index (ONI).

Based on the latest three-month (August-October) ONI, the 2015 El Nino is pacing ahead of the 1982-1983 event, but still behind the pace of the strongest El Nino of record in 1997-1998.

Year	Aug-Oct ONI (degrees C)
1) 1997	+2.0
2) 2015	+1.7
3) 1982	+1.5

The 1997-1998 El Nino led to a 65% crash in the population of the Galapagos penguins, and 1982-1983 El Nino led to a crash of 77% so we can only expect the after effects of the current El Nino to be similar. The 2015-2016 El Nino is expected to hit its peak during December and January, however it is unlikely that we will see the impacts on the penguins and other Galapagos wildlife until at least 2017.

There is nothing we can do to prevent El Nino, however it is important that we increase our efforts to tackle the other threats the penguins and other wildlife already face, like diseases, so we can ensure they have the best chance of surviving this difficult period.