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Tracking Fire Trends from Space

By [ANDREW C. REVKIN](#)

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As I wrote [the other day](#), the technological ingenuity that has made humanity a planet-scale influence in a handful of generations is also explosively increasing our ability to [track and study environmental conditions](#) and events at planetary scale. A prime example is the ability to monitor fires from space day by day. [**12:21 p.m. | Updated** Click here for a reality check on [risks from fires around the Chernobyl disaster zone](#).] [NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory has released an animation showing [the hemisphere-wide spread of pollution](#) released by the Russian fires.]

Here, thanks to [the European Space Agency](#), you can see why Russian wildfires have become such [an enormous story in the last couple of weeks](#). The image above shows the blossoming of fires around Moscow and the relatively populous western part of the country in the last 10 days. The image below shows wildfires through the month of June. There were plenty burning in Russia, but mainly in sparsely inhabited eastern expanses. Click on the images to enlarge them. Once you register, you can sift through years of data. Another great resource is the [Global Fire Monitoring Center](#).

Here's a [North American closeup of fires](#), via the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's Satellite and Information Service. If you like how the view of the home planet from space helps track problems like fires, drought, weather and the like, make sure your elected representatives in Congress provide the Obama administration [what it has requested for such programs](#).

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