

Unusually' Thin And Fractured Arctic Ice Hints At Yet Another Record Melt

Could we even be facing an ice-free Arctic summer?

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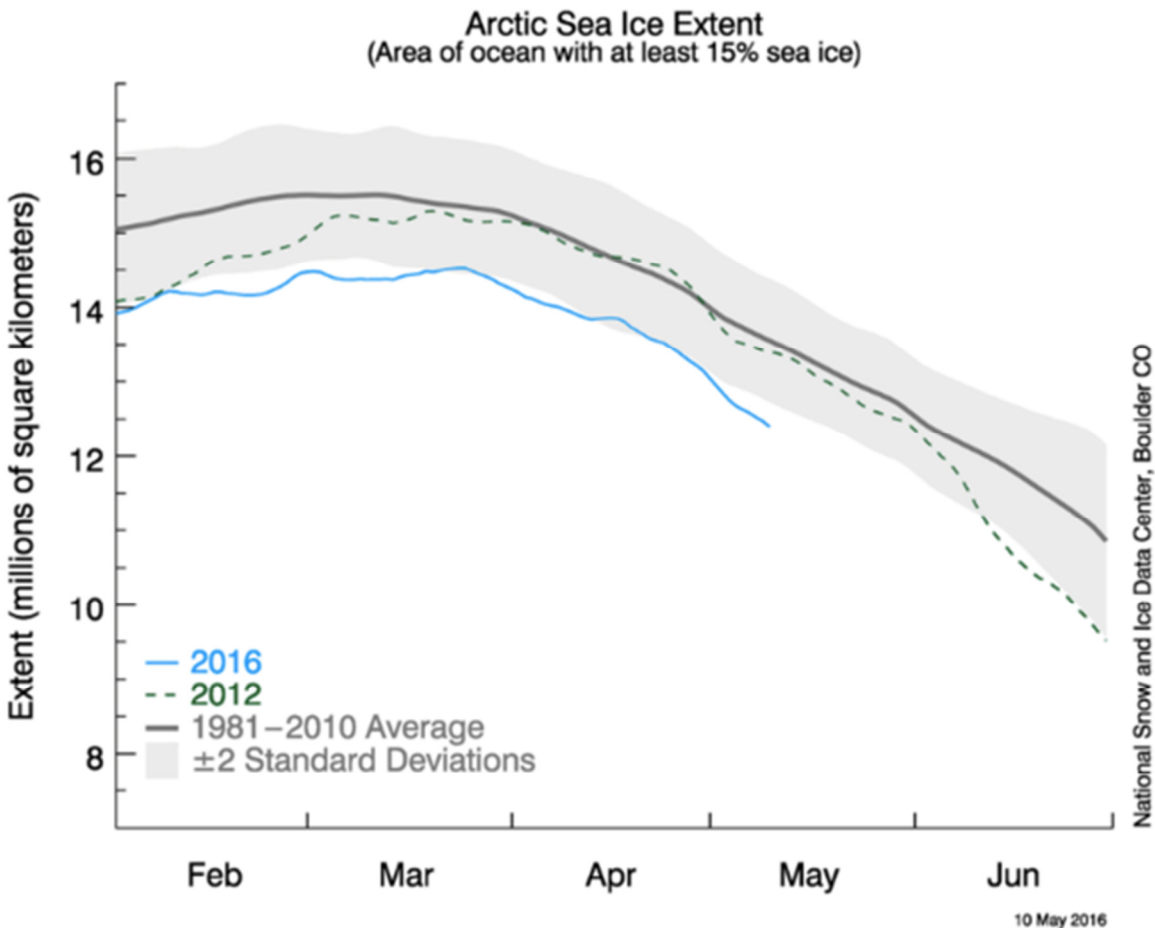
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A polar bear on the pack ice north of Svalbard, Norway.

The National Snow and Ice Data Center (NSIDC) hadn't updated its near-real time daily chart of Arctic sea ice levels in more than a month. A satellite that monitors the ice malfunctioned, forcing the center to suspend the service.

Researchers missed a lot during those dark weeks.

Using information from a different satellite, the NSIDC [provisionally updated its Arctic sea ice data](#) on May 6 — and the findings were alarming.



NSIDC

According to the data, the Arctic sea ice melt season is running as much as one month earlier than average. Unless weather patterns change dramatically, that could mean [a record year for summer melting of Arctic ice](#).

The ice already appears to be disappearing at a pace far faster than in 2012, when [Arctic ice extent hit a record low](#).

Mark Serreze, the director of the NSIDC, told Mashable that there is evidence of fractures in the ice cover north of Greenland, [which is “quite unusual” for this time of year](#).

“To me, it suggests a thinner, weaker ice cover,” he said.

In 2013, the U.S. Navy predicted an [ice-free Arctic](#) this summer. Now some reports show [this prediction may indeed be realized](#).

This spring, the [European Space Agency’s CryoSat 2 satellite](#) revealed that ice cover across the Arctic Ocean was, on average, [15 percent thinner](#) than it was at the same time last year.



Associated Press

This 2015 photo shows ice floes floating on a lake in front of Iceland's Solheimajokull glacier, where the ice has retreated by more than 1 kilometer (0.6 miles) since annual measurements began in 1931.

In March, the NSIDC announced that Arctic sea ice had [reached a record minimum for winter maximum extent](#). If Arctic sea ice levels plummet below 2012 levels this summer, [it will be the second historic low of the year](#).

"I've never seen such a warm, crazy winter in the Arctic," Serreze said in a statement earlier this year. "The heat was relentless."