

# Antarctic subglacial rivers are found

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British scientists say plans are to drill beneath the frozen wastes of the Antarctic, to investigate subglacial lakes, are being reviewed.

A team led by University College London scientists has made a discovery that's stalling the research.

In a letter to the journal Nature, they report rivers the size of the Thames have been discovered moving water hundreds of miles under the ice. That finding challenges the widely held assumption the lakes evolved in isolated conditions over several million years and might support microbial life that evolved "independently."

UCL Professor Duncan Wingham, who led the team, said: "Previously, it was thought water moves underneath the ice by very slow seepage. But this new data shows that, every so often, the lakes beneath the ice pop off like champagne corks, releasing floods that travel very long distances.

"A major concern has been that by drilling down to the lakes new microbes would be introduced." he added. "Our data shows any contamination will not be limited to one lake, but will, over time, extend down the length of the network of rivers.

"We had thought of these lakes as isolated biological laboratories. Now we are going to have to think again."

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