

# Pics of Greenland glacier melt shocks expert

September 6 2011, By Sunanda Creagh

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Aerial oblique view of the Petermann glacier front on 5 August, 2009 Jason Box Byrd Polar Research Center. Credit: Ohio State University.

Breathtaking before-and-after pictures showing how fast a Greenland ice sheet has melted in just two years have shocked a climate change expert familiar with the glacier.



Aerial oblique view of the Petermann glacier front on 24 July, 2011 Alun Hubbard of Aberystwyth University, Wales.

The melting of glaciers is seen as a yardstick by which the warming of the planet is measured. [Climate change](#) experts have warned that sea-level rises caused as the planet warms and the glaciers melt could devastate coastal and island communities.

A British [glaciologist](#) who has been studying the [Petermann Glacier](#) in north-west Greenland, which is over 300km long and makes up 6% of the [Greenland ice sheet](#), described pictures showing how fast it had melted as “gob-smacking.”



Oblique view of the Petermann glacier front on 24 July, 2009 Jason Box Byrd Polar Research Center, Ohio State University



Oblique view of the Petermann fjord, former location of the Petermann glacier front on 24 July, 2011 Alun Hubbard of Aberystwyth University, Wales

“Although I knew what to expect in terms of ice loss from satellite imagery, I was still completely unprepared for the gob-smacking scale of the breakup, which rendered me speechless,” said Dr. Alun Hubbard from the Institute of Geography and Earth Sciences at Aberystwyth University said in a statement released by the Welsh university.

Dr. Hubbard visited the site in July 2009 and again in July this year to observe the change.

“It was incredible to see. This glacier is huge, 20km wide and over 600m thick and hemmed in by sheer cliffs that rise to 1000m on either side. It’s like looking into the Grand Canyon full of ice and coming back two years later to find it’s full of water.”



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Polar Research Center, Ohio State University



Oblique view of the Petermann fjord, former location of the Petermann glacier  
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“What the breakup means in terms of inland ice acceleration and draw-down of the [ice sheet](#) remains to be seen, but will be revealed by the GPS data recovered, which we are now processing at Aberystwyth,” he said.

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