

Austrian glaciers shrink dramatically

October 2 2011



The Khumbu Glacier is seen here in Kathmandu in 2009. Austria's glaciers shrank dramatically this summer, the most since a record hot period in 2003, principally because of low amounts of snow the preceding winter, scientists said.

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The Goldbergkees glacier in the Alps, for instance, is on average two metres (6.5 feet) thinner than in 2010, losing around seven percent of its mass, the ZAMG national meteorological institute said.

[Glaciers](#) generally shrink in the summer months and grow again in the winter, and in recent years more has generally melted than has been replaced. This year however the loss has been particularly marked, the ZAMG said.

"Although 2011's summer wasn't particularly hot, the losses are as extreme as during the 2003 summer of the century," climatologist Berhard Hynek said.

Snow levels were much lower than normal in the eastern Alps after an unusually warm and dry winter. On the 3,000-metre (10,000-feet) Hoher Sonnblick, for example, the level was only two-thirds of the 80-year average on May 1.

[Mountain glaciers](#) and [snow cover](#) in both hemispheres have retreated in the past few decades because of changes to the Earth's climate blamed by the vast majority of scientists on the rise in [greenhouse gas emissions](#).

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Citation: Austrian glaciers shrink dramatically (2011, October 2) retrieved 9 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2011-10-austrian-glaciers.html>

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