

Arctic air temps highest since 1900, global report says

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The Canadian ice-breaker CCGS Amundsen, pictured September 27, 2015, navigates near Devon Island, in the Canadian High Arctic, where warming temperatures have opened the famed Northwest Passage to navigation several months of the year

The Arctic is heating up, with air temperatures the hottest in 115 years, and the melting ice destroying walrus habitat and forcing some fish northward, a global scientific report said Tuesday.

Air temperature anomalies over land were 2.3 degrees Fahrenheit (1.3 Celsius) above average, "the highest since records began in 1900," said the 2015 Arctic Report Card, an annual peer-reviewed study issued by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

Meanwhile, the annual sea ice maximum occurred February 25, about two weeks earlier than average, and was "the lowest extent recorded since records began in 1979."

"Warming is happening more than twice as fast in the Arctic than anywhere else in the world. We know this is due to climate change and its impacts are creating major challenges for Arctic communities," said NOAA chief scientist Rick Spinrad at the annual American Geophysical Union fall meeting in San Francisco.

"We also know what happens in the Arctic doesn't stay in the Arctic," he said.

The report includes 70 authors from 10 countries, and is guided by an editorial team from the Office of Naval Research, the US Army Corps of Engineers' Cold Regions Research and Engineering Laboratory, and NOAA.

The average annual air temperature was measured over land between October 2014 and September 2015.

Arctic ice loss

Arctic sea ice shrank in summer 2015 to its fourth lowest level, covering nearly 30% less than the average for 1981-2010. The ice cap is now shrinking by 13.4% per decade



Map of the Arctic showing the minimum summer ice cover in 2015 compared to the average for the period 1981-2010. 9à x 107 mm

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