

Then and now: How glaciers around the world are melting

April 3 2017, by Seth Borenstein



In this photo provided by James Balog/Extreme Ice Survey and Matthew Kennedy, the Stein glacier in Switzerland in 2015. Over the past decade or so scientists and photographers keep returning to the world's glaciers, watching them shrink with each visit. Now they want other people to see what haunts them in a series of before and after photos. (Matthew Kennedy/Earth Vision Institute via AP)

Over the past decade, scientists and photographers keep returning to the

world's glaciers, watching them shrink with each visit. Now they want others to see how a warming planet is melting masses of ice in a series of before-and-after photos.

In the Geological Society of America's GSA Today journal , a group of ice researchers and a photographer-filmmaker published pictures showing how much five of the world's glaciers have thinned.

"There is something fundamentally compelling about the approach they take. For all our emphasis on models and math, seeing is still believing," said University of Colorado ice scientist Ted Scambos, who wasn't part of the team.

Under natural conditions, glaciers at times melt and retreat while others grow and advance. But measurements from Earth's 5,200 glaciers show warming temperatures have increased the number of melting glaciers and the speed of glacial retreat, according to the study. Scientists primarily blame man-made global warming from the burning of coal, oil and natural gas.

"There is something that touches the heart more profoundly when you see it in pictures than when you see it in maps or reports or graphs," said photographer James Balog, who founded the nonprofit Earth Vision Institute . "It certainly brings it alive."



In this photo provided by James Balog/Extreme Ice Survey, the Mendenhall glacier outside of Juneau, Alaska in 2015. Over the past decade or so scientists and photographers keep returning to the world's glaciers, watching them shrink with each visit. Now they want other people to see what haunts them in a series of before and after photos. (James Balog/Extreme Ice Survey via AP)

ICELAND

The Solheimajokull glacier has shriveled by about 2,050 feet (625 meters) between 2007 and 2015.

ALASKA



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The forward edge of the Mendenhall glacier outside of Juneau has receded about 1,800 feet (550 meters) between 2007 and 2015.

SWITZERLAND

The Stein glacier has shrunk about 1,800 feet (550 meters) between 2006 and 2015.



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SWITZERLAND

The Trift glacier has retreated nearly three quarters of a mile (1.17 kilometers) between 2006 and 2015.

PERU

Ohio State ice scientist Lonnie Thompson has visited the Qori Kalis glacier since 1974. Between 1978 and 2016, it has shriveled 3,740 feet (1.14 kilometers). Thompson described his regular expeditions to the

Peruvian glacier "like visiting a terminally ill family member."



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In this photo provided by James Balog/Extreme Ice Survey, the Trift glacier in Switzerland in 2006. Over the past decade or so scientists and photographers keep returning to the world's glaciers, watching them shrink with each visit. Now they want other people to see what haunts them in a series of before and after photos. (James Balog/Extreme Ice Survey via AP)



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