

New Zealand's glaciers shrinking faster, scientist warns

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New Zealand's glaciers are shrinking as ice melts at an accelerating rate, a top government scientist warned Monday after concluding a monitoring expedition in the country's Southern Alps.

The country's climate institute conducts a yearly aerial "snowline survey", which helps to chart how much ice the nation's glaciers have lost.

"Overall, the snowline has been rising and in the most recent years we're seeing that rise accelerate, so we're experiencing a continued trend of glacial ice loss," said principal scientist Andrew Lorrey in a statement.

Lorrey, from the National Institute of Water and Atmospheric Research, said many once-grand glaciers now appeared "smashed and shattered".

Government scientists have been monitoring the health of the country's glaciers for almost 50 years.

They fly over dozens of so-called "index glaciers" and use them as a barometer for the thousands of glaciers in harder-to-reach parts of New Zealand's South Island.

"We flew to the southern-most glaciers, ones that we've not seen since 2018," said Lorrey on the back of this year's trip.

"One is now two thirds of the size it was on our last visit," he added.

The institute said that New Zealand had experienced seven of its hottest years on record over the past decade.

Even if this trend was to be reversed, Lorrey said that many glaciers were too far gone to be saved.

"Even if we got a few cooler seasons, they wouldn't be enough to undo the damage that's already been done," he said.

"That's how stark it is, and it's not just happening in New Zealand but all

over the world."

New Zealand's glaciers are unique in that many of them are accessible to tourists. Franz Josef Glacier and Fox Glacier are among New Zealand's most lucrative tourist drawcards.

"They hold tremendous value, but I worry that they won't be around for our children to enjoy," Lorrey said.

"The message remains the same: we must tackle the issue of rising [greenhouse gases](#) if we are to save our glaciers from melting away."

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