

Giant Antarctic iceberg A68a splits into three

29th December, 2020



An enormous iceberg that is heading toward the island of South Georgia in the southern Atlantic Ocean has broken up into three large chunks. Scientists from NASA have been tracking the berg - dubbed A68a - for several weeks. It

actually calved from the Larsen C ice shelf in 2017 and has been floating northwards ever since. In recent weeks, a fast-moving stream of water known as the Southern Antarctic Circumpolar Current Front has put the chunks on a trajectory that means they could run aground off the coast of South Georgia. Scientists say the three fragments are roughly 2,600 square kilometres in size. The submerged part of one chunk is 106 metres at its thickest point.

The sheer bulk of the three iceberg chunks poses a serious threat to the wildlife of South Georgia. There could be an environmental catastrophe waiting to happen. If the three mini icebergs collide with the seabed, they could obstruct penguins and seals from foraging for fish. They could also block the route between penguin colonies and their feeding grounds during the breeding season. Scientists worry the underside of the fragments could grind the seabed near South Georgia and disrupt delicate underwater ecosystems. This could be exacerbated by the introduction of a mass of fresh water to the ecosystems as the stationary fragments melt over the summer months.

Sources: bbc.com / newatlas.com / nbcnews.com

Writing

There is no way to repair the damage global warming is doing. Discuss.

Chat

Talk about these words from the article.

enormous / iceberg / chunks / scientists / tracking / stream / trajectory / fragment / bulk / threat / wildlife / environmental / catastrophe / penguins / seals / fish / melt

True / False

- a) The article says the biggest iceberg ever is floating in the Atlantic Ocean. T / F
- b) Scientists from NASA are following the course of the iceberg. T / F
- c) The iceberg broke away from an ice shelf in 2017. T / F
- d) The iceberg is 2,600 metres deep. T / F
- e) The iceberg poses no threat to wildlife. T / F
- f) The article says an environmental catastrophe is waiting to happen. T / F
- g) The iceberg will help penguins get to their breeding grounds. T / F
- h) Melting water from the iceberg could damage ecosystems. T / F

Synonym Match

(The words in **bold** are from the news article.)

- | | |
|-----------------------|------------------|
| 1. enormous | a. course |
| 2. broken up | b. underwater |
| 3. floating | c. static |
| 4. trajectory | d. disintegrated |
| 5. submerged | e. searching |
| 6. bulk | f. gigantic |
| 7. catastrophe | g. size |
| 8. foraging | h. made worse |
| 9. exacerbated | i. drifting |
| 10. stationary | j. calamity |

Discussion – Student A

- a) What do you know about icebergs?
- b) How important are icebergs?
- c) What do you know about Antarctica?
- d) Would you like to visit Antarctica?
- e) How much damage could an enormous floating iceberg do?
- f) How much of a threat is global warming to Antarctica?
- g) What does "just the tip of the iceberg" mean?
- h) What wildlife is dependent on icebergs?

Phrase Match

- | | |
|---|---------------------------|
| 1. An enormous iceberg that is heading | a. catastrophe |
| 2. broken up into | b. stream of water |
| 3. It actually calved from | c. foraging for fish |
| 4. a fast-moving | d. three large chunks |
| 5. run aground | e. serious threat |
| 6. poses a | f. of fresh water |
| 7. an environmental | g. toward the island |
| 8. obstruct penguins and seals from | h. season |
| 9. during the breeding | i. off the coast |
| 10. exacerbated by the introduction of a mass | j. the Larsen C ice shelf |

Discussion – Student B

- What do you think about what you read?
- What do you know about the wildlife in Antarctica?
- How big an environmental catastrophe could the Iceberg A68a cause?
- What are the ecosystems like?
- Why might fresh water harm the ecosystem?
- What would you like to know about icebergs?
- What three adjectives best describe this story?
- What questions would you like to ask the scientists?

Spelling

- An oosermnu iceberg
- It actually ecalvd from the Larsen C ice shelf
- put the chunks on a rtcjoteayr
- run anrudog off the coast
- the three fartnmseg
- The ermeugsdb part of one chunk
- an environmental phrcateoats
- gornifga for fish
- penguin osnieoc
- during the giebrned season
- disrupt tialedc underwater ecosystems
- This could be eraebtdcxae

Answers – Synonym Match

1. f	2. d	3. i	4. a	5. b
6. g	7. j	8. e	9. h	10. c

Role Play

Role A – Penguins

You think penguins are the most interesting Antarctic creatures. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them why their creatures aren't as interesting. Also, tell the others which is the least interesting of these (and why): tardigrades, blue whales or krill.

Role B – Tardigrades

You think tardigrades are the most interesting Antarctic creatures. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them why their creatures aren't as interesting. Also, tell the others which is the least interesting of these (and why): penguins, blue whales or krill.

Role C – Blue Whales

You think blue whales are the most interesting Antarctic creatures. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them why their creatures aren't as interesting. Also, tell the others which is the least interesting of these (and why): tardigrades, penguins or krill.

Role D – Krill

You think krill are the most interesting Antarctic creatures. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them why their creatures aren't as interesting. Also, tell the others which is the least interesting of these (and why): tardigrades, blue whales or penguins.

Speaking – Wildlife

Rank these with your partner. Put the best at the top. Change partners often and share your rankings.

- | | |
|---------------|------------------|
| • Tardigrades | • Nematode worms |
| • Polar bears | • Penguins |
| • Mites | • Seals |
| • Krill | • Albatross |

Answers – True False

a	F	b	T	c	T	d	F	e	F	f	T	g	F	h	T
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Answers to Phrase Match and Spelling are in the text.