
November 2007 - Sea-ice decline due to more than warming alone

Letter published in Nature journal: Sea-ice decline due to more than warming alone (07/11/07)

Reference: Nature 450, 27 (1 November 2007) | doi:10.1038/450027a; Published online 31 October 2007

A letter written to the journal Nature regarding the cause of loss in sea-ice cover observed this year, has been published this week. Professor Julia Slingo (Director of the NCAS-Climate research programme) and Dr Rowan Sutton (senior NCAS-Climate scientist) have written that, whilst the gradual decline in sea-ice extent observed over the last four decades is indeed in line with global warming, the loss of sea-ice cover observed this year - including the opening up of the Northwest passage - is unlikely to be down to temperature change alone. They explain that the observed migration of sea-ice northwards and eastwards (away from the Northwest passage) into the Arctic Basin from the Siberian and Beaufort Seas, is also in line with the expected response from exceptional wind patterns that persisted over the Arctic Ocean throughout summer 2007. They add that these unusual wind patterns were part of highly anomolous circulation observed on a global-scale this summer. Whether or not this is due to the growing La Nina in the East Pacific this year is still unclear and a question being researched.

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