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# Times Atlas 'wrong' on Greenland ice

By Richard Black Environment correspondent, BBC News



Scientists say the Times Atlas map (left) does not follow the ice extent line as viewed from space (right)

Leading UK polar scientists say [the Times Atlas of the World](#) was wrong to assert that it has had to re-draw its map of Greenland due to climate change.

Publicity for the latest edition of the atlas, launched last week, said warming had turned 15% of Greenland's former ice-covered land "green and ice-free".

But scientists from the Scott Polar Research Institute say the figures are wrong; the ice has not shrunk so much.

The Atlas costs £150 (\$237) and claims to be the world's "most authoritative".

"It is... crucial to report climate change and its impact accurately and to back bold statements with concrete and correct evidence"

Scott Polar Research Institute staff

The 13th edition of the "comprehensive" version of the atlas included a number of revisions made for reasons of environmental change since the previous one, published in 2007.

The break-up of some Antarctic ice shelves due to climate change, the shrinking of inland waters such as the Dead and Aral Seas, and the drying up of rivers such as the Colorado River are all documented.

But the glossy publicity sheets begin with the contention that "for the first time, the new edition of the (atlas) has had to erase 15% of Greenland's once permanent ice cover - turning an area the size of the United Kingdom and Ireland 'green' and ice-free.

"This is concrete evidence of how climate change is altering the face of the planet forever - and doing so at an alarming and accelerating rate."

The Scott Polar group, which includes director Julian Dowdeswell, says the claim of a 15% loss in just 12 years is wrong.



The Scott Polar team says treatment of eastern Greenland is of particular concern

"Recent satellite images of Greenland make it clear that there are in fact still numerous glaciers and permanent ice cover where the new Times Atlas shows ice-free conditions and the emergence of new lands," they say in a letter that has been sent to the Times.

"We do not know why this error has occurred, but it is regrettable that the claimed drastic reduction in the extent of ice in Greenland has created headline news around the world.

"There is to our knowledge no support for this claim in the published scientific literature."

Many of the institute's staff are intimately involved in research that documents and analyses the impacts of climate change across the Arctic.

As such, they back the contention that rising temperatures are cutting ice cover across the region, including along the fringes of Greenland; but not anything like as fast as the Times Atlas claimed.

"It is... crucial to report climate change and its impact accurately and to back bold statements with concrete and correct evidence," they say.

The Times Atlas is not owned by The Times newspaper. It is published by Times Books, an imprint of HarperCollins, which is in turn owned by Rupert Murdoch's News Corporation.

A spokesperson for HarperCollins said its new map was based on information provided by the US National Snow and Ice Data Center (NSIDC).

"While global warming has played a role in this reduction, it is also as a result of the much more accurate data and in-depth research that is now available," she said.

"Read as a whole, both the press release and the 13th edition of the Atlas make this clear."

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