



Dueling Blooms Barents Sea

As the seasons pass on Earth, different species tend to dominate the landscape at different times. Such was the case in July 2014 in the surface waters of the Barents Sea, north of Norway and Russia. The Aqua satellite captured a transitional moment between one form of microscopic, plant-like organisms (phytoplankton) and another.

Several currents merge in this area, and intersecting waters combine with stiff winds to promote mixing of waters and nutrients from the deep. Note the green swirls on the center and left, as well as the milky, blue-white swirls on the upper right. (The fluffy white area is cloud cover.) It is likely that the green plankton were diatoms and the white ones were coccolithophores. Research has suggested that diatoms start to bloom in the well-mixed, cooler waters of spring and dominate the early summer. As the water warms and becomes more stratified or layered, coccolithophores bloom more abundantly.