



Mertz Loses Part of Its Tongue Antarctica

The Mertz Glacier flows off East Antarctica and forms a long, narrow tongue pointing in the direction of Australia and New Zealand. That tongue routinely calves icebergs into the Southern Ocean, and the Earth Observing-1 satellite spotted it doing just that in January 2010.

Deep cracks, or crevasses, give the glacier tongue a rough and rugged texture, which carried over to this rippled iceberg. Such ice is often swept up by ocean currents circling Antarctica, and icebergs can remain relatively intact for months or years, so long as they remain in sufficiently cool conditions. Some icebergs, however, drift northward to warmer climates and disintegrate. By observing the response of an iceberg to warmer conditions, scientists can make predictions about how ice shelves—thick slabs of ice attached to coastlines—might respond to a warming climate.