

WSE Glossary of key terms

Antarctic Bottom Water	A dense mass of water found at the bottom of the Weddell Sea, and other parts of the Southern Ocean.
AUVs	Automated Underwater Vehicle.
Benthic organisms	Communities that live in or on the bottom of the ocean floor.
Buttressing	Ice shelves play a very important role in “buttressing” their tributary glaciers. Glaciers that feed into ice shelves are held back by the ice shelf in front of them. When an ice shelf breaks up, it allows the flow of the glacier behind to speed up.
Calving	The process by which ice breaks off a glacier's terminus (sometimes called the snout or end), where it meets water.
Corers	Equipment used to sample organisms or sediment below the sea floor
Drumlins	Drumlins are elongated, teardrop-shaped hills of till (rock, sand, and gravel) that form under moving glacier ice.
Glacial plough lines	Elongated furrows formed by the keels of grounded icebergs dragged across the soft sea-floor.
Glacial retreat	Glaciers retreat when their ice melts (ablation) faster than snowfall can accumulate and form new glacial ice.
Grounding zone wedge	<i>Grounding zone wedges</i> are areas of sedimentary deposits that form at the transition from <i>grounded</i> to floating ice.
Holocene	The geological period covering the last 10,000 years.
Ice sheet	An ice sheet is a mass of glacial land ice extending more than 50,000 square kilometres (20,000 square miles).
Ice shelf	An ice shelf is a thick slab of ice, attached to a coastline which extends out over the ocean. Ice shelves range in thickness from about 50 to 600 meters, and some shelves persist for thousands of years. They fringe the continent of Antarctica.
Moraine ridges	Moraines are accumulations of dirt and rocks that have fallen onto the glacier surface or have been pushed along and eroded by the glacier as it moves. A receding glacier will deposit moraines that are visible long after the glacier retreats.
Multi beam echo sounding	A sonar used to map the seabed. The amount of time it takes for the sound waves to bounce off the seabed and return to a receiver is used to determine water depth.
Plankton	Organisms that exist in a drifting state because they are too weak to swim against currents.
ROV's	Remotely Operated Vehicles.
Scavengers	An animal that feeds on dead plant material, or waste.
Species diversity	The number of different species that are represented in a given community.
Suspension feeders	Species that feed by straining suspended matter and food particles from water.
Sympagic communities	Communities that exist in environments where water is present in solid form e.g. the polar biomes
Sea Ice	Frozen ocean water.
Ten tenths sea ice	Full sea ice cover.
Thermohaline circulation	A large-scale ocean circulation that is created by surface heat and freshwater fluxes. The salt content determines water density.