

Zeitschrift: Helvetia : magazine of the Swiss Society of New Zealand
Herausgeber: Swiss Society of New Zealand
Band: 75 (2009)
Heft: [10]

Artikel: Environmentalists target noisy heliskiers
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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-944553>

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Glaciers in poor regions need closer watch

Not enough attention is being paid to glacier melt in developing countries, which could eventually put at risk water supplies for hundreds of millions of people.

That was the warning issued by Swiss scientists from Zurich University in a report co-authored by the United Nations Environment Programme (Unep).

The scientists said monitoring of glaciers and ice caps in central Asia, tropical zones and polar regions needs to be stepped up urgently; ice fields in these parts of the world have been largely overlooked. They called for more investment in high-tech monitoring tools for central Asia, South America and East Africa.

International glacier monitoring has to make use of the rapidly developing new technologies such as remote sensing and geoinformatics and relate them to the more traditional field observations, in order to face the challenges of the 21st century.

The average annual melting rate of mountain glaciers has doubled after the turn of the millennium in comparison with the already accelerated melting rates observed in the two decades before, and the global average annual mass loss of more than half a metre was over four times the rate of the decade from 1976 to 1985.

If the trend continues and governments fail to agree on deep and decisive emission reductions it is possible that glaciers may completely disappear from many mountain ranges in the 21st century.

from swissinfo

Environmentalists target noisy heliskiers

Some 100 people scaled the 3,200-metre Petersgrat peak near the Aletsch glacier to protest against heliskiing.

The Unesco-protected Aletsch glacier region and other high mountain areas are increasingly plagued by noise pollution caused by heliskiing. The Civil Aviation Office is presently carrying out a review of helicopter landing pads in the Swiss mountains.

The environmental group Mountain Wilderness and local sections of the Swiss Alpine Club say that since the Jungfrau-Aletsch-Bietschhorn glacier region won Unesco World Heritage status in 2001, heliskiing and tourist flights in the area have increased.



Aletschgletscher

Of the 7,500 tourist helicopter flights each year in Switzerland, transporting 20,000 people in search of knee-deep powder and pristine scenery, around 3,000 flights land in the Aletsch glacier region, and on a clear spring day there is one flight every five minutes over the spectacular, slow-melting 23-kilometre glacier - Europe's longest.

Mountain Wilderness says there is growing resistance to noisy heliskiers and tourist flights. The group was joined by five local sections of the Swiss Alpine Club and another mountain club from Germany. They are calling on the Swiss authorities to close the mountain airfields in the Jungfrau-Aletsch-Bietschhorn glacier region.

The noise occurs not only where the helicopters land, but throughout their flight over the terrain. This creates a threat to wild animals, particularly in winter, when animals are already in a weakened state because of the shortage of food.

Within Europe, heliskiing is banned in Germany, France, Austria and Liechtenstein. It is permitted in certain regions in Italy.

from swissinfo

Chocolate balls Myrta

(Betty Bossi)

- 3 Eggs
- 300g Castor sugar
- 200g Chocolate drink powder (Cadbury works)

Whisk together until frothy

- 300g ground almonds
- 2-3 Tbs Cornflour

Add to the mixture, refrigerate overnight to firm up

Form small balls in the palm of your hands, put them on a flat baking tray on baking paper and let dry out over night.

Bake: 3-5 minutes in a very hot preheated oven (250°C)
The balls should only just be getting a crack.

They are a delicious treat and a valued addition to the traditional Swiss Weihnachtsguetzli.

En guete und a schöni Wiehnacht!