# A23a iceberg grounded near South Georgia could impact local marine life



Researchers have confirmed that A23a, the largest and oldest iceberg globally, has become firmly grounded near the island of South Georgia, situated in the South Atlantic Ocean. The iceberg, weighing nearly one trillion tonnes and measuring roughly twice the size of Greater London, has come to rest on the continental shelf of this British overseas territory. South Georgia is known for its rich wildlife, including elephant and fur seals, king penguins, and various unique bird species.

The iceberg was formed from Antarctica's Filchner ice shelf in 1986 and remained adrift on the floor of the Weddell Sea for over three decades until it began moving towards South Georgia around 2020. The British Antarctic Survey (BAS) has meticulously tracked A23a's journey, particularly noting its transition into the South Atlantic earlier this year. Since March 1, A23a has been static, positioned around 56 miles (90 km) off South Georgia, with its nearest point approximately 45 miles (73 km) from land.

Dr Andrew Meijers, an oceanographer with the BAS, addressed concerns regarding the iceberg’s impact on local wildlife, stating, “If the iceberg stays grounded, we don’t expect it to significantly affect the local wildlife of South Georgia.” However, he acknowledged that the iceberg could pose challenges for commercial fishing operations in the region. Historically, icebergs that drift through the Southern Ocean tend to break up and melt, but A23a appears to be maintaining its structure, as confirmed by satellite tracking data.

Prof. Nadine Johnston from the BAS described the event as potentially beneficial for the ecosystem. As A23a melts, it is anticipated to release significant quantities of nutrients into the surrounding waters. “It’s like dropping a nutrient bomb into the middle of an empty desert,” she remarked, highlighting the potential for increased biological activity in the vicinity.

Concerns have also been raised regarding the effects on the local penguin population, particularly macaroni penguins, as they depend on the region for feeding. Mark Belchier, an ecologist advising the South Georgia government, noted that if the iceberg breaks apart, the resultant smaller icebergs could hinder access for fishing vessels and create challenges for the animals foraging in the affected areas.

Since the iceberg’s arrival, fishing vessels operating in the region have been alerted to the challenges that may arise from navigating around A23a and its remnants. Andrew Newman from Argos Froyanes remarked, “We will have to do battle with A23a for sure,” anticipating logistical complications as the fishing season approaches in April.

The iceberg, which has shown signs of decay, was once 3,900 square kilometres in size but is now estimated to be around 3,234 square kilometres. As it rests on the continental shelf, its constant movement may cause erosion of the underlying rock and ice, further impacting local marine life.

The grounding of A23a marks a significant chapter in its nearly 40-year history and is being closely observed by scientists as they seek to understand the effects on both the local ecosystem and human activity in the region.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## References

* <https://www.bbc.com/news/science-environment-64855176> - This article provides information on A23a's journey and its impact on the South Georgia ecosystem, corroborating details about the iceberg's size and its grounding near the island.
* <https://www.cnn.com/2025/02/06/world/largest-iceberg-south-georgia-intl/index.html> - This CNN article discusses A23a's movement towards South Georgia and its potential effects on local wildlife, aligning with the article's claims about the iceberg's path and ecological implications.
* <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/largest-iceberg-south-georgia-ecosystem/> - CBS News reports on the iceberg's grounding and its potential benefits to the ecosystem through nutrient release, supporting the article's statements about the iceberg's ecological impact.
* <https://phys.org/news/2025-02-mega-iceberg-antarctica-south-georgia.html> - This Phys.org article details the scientific monitoring of A23a as it approaches South Georgia, highlighting concerns for local wildlife and the potential for nutrient release, which aligns with the article's claims.
* <https://www.dogonews.com/2025/2/6/the-worlds-largest-iceberg-is-on-the-move-again> - Dogonews provides an overview of A23a's history and its recent movement towards South Georgia, corroborating the article's details about the iceberg's origin and size.
* <https://www.britishantarcticsurvey.org/> - The British Antarctic Survey website is a primary source for tracking A23a and understanding its journey and impact on the South Georgia ecosystem, supporting the article's claims about scientific monitoring.
* <https://www.irishnews.com/news/uk/iceberg-twice-the-size-of-greater-london-runs-aground-near-south-georgia-CB3FPZK2ENKIZF3GO6QMSRKZ2Q/> - Please view link - unable to able to access data