

# An Italian glacier is turning pink. And that's not good news

Jack Guy, CNN • Updated 6th July 2020



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**(CNN)** — A glacier in Italy is turning pink because of algae -- a development that will make the ice melt faster, a scientist studying the phenomenon says.

Pink snow has appeared at the Presena glacier in northern Italy, researcher Biagio Di Mauro, of the Institute of Polar Sciences at Italy's National Research Council, told CNN Monday.

While "watermelon snow," as it is sometimes known, is fairly common in the Alps in spring and summer, it has been more marked this year.



A man is seen walking on pink snow on the glacier.

Miguel Medina/AFP/Getty Images

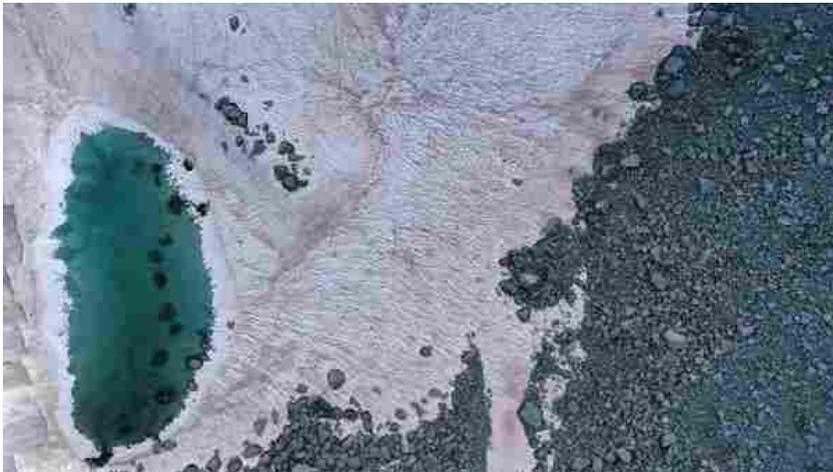
When Di Mauro went to the glacier on Saturday to investigate, "there was quite an impressive bloom of snow algae," he said.

He told CNN he believes an alga named *Chlamydomonas nivalis* is responsible for the change in color.

This spring and summer have seen low snowfall and high atmospheric temperatures,

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Di Mauro said, adding: "This creates the perfect environment for the algae to grow."



Di Mauro believes the snow has turned pink due to the presence of algae.

Miguel Medina/AFP/Getty Images

Algal blooms are bad news for the health of the glacier as darker snow absorbs more energy, meaning it melts faster.

"It is for sure bad for the glacier," Di Mauro said.

The phenomenon has been particularly common this year, said Di Mauro, who plans to study it in more detail to work out the concentration of the algae and map the blooms using satellite data.

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Di Mauro has previously studied the Morteratsch glacier in Switzerland, where an alga called *Ancylonema nordenskiöldii* has turned the ice purple.

This alga has also been found in southwestern Greenland as well in as the Andes and Himalayas.

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In Antarctica, the giant Denman Glacier has retreated almost three miles in the past 22 years, according to research published in March.

If it melts completely, sea levels will rise almost five feet, the researchers said.



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