

# Smart Stuff

with Twig Walkingstick

## Q. Dear Twig: Did you hear that the North Pole is melting?

A.: Yes. Yes, I did. The news, as I've read it, is this: Scientists say that the **polar ice cap**, the frozen **Arctic Ocean** water, that normally covers the North Pole is melting. The ice is getting thinner. It's covering less and less area. It's like, in that way, my Uncle Bark's hair. Ha! ("And your readership. Ha!"— U.B.)

The Arctic ice cap normally grows in winter and shrinks in summer. But starting in the 1950s, the smallest size the cap gets in summer has gotten even smaller. (The minimum has gotten ... minimumer.)

And starting in the 1970s, the biggest size the cap gets in winter has likewise gotten smaller, too.

The **shrinkage** has continued.

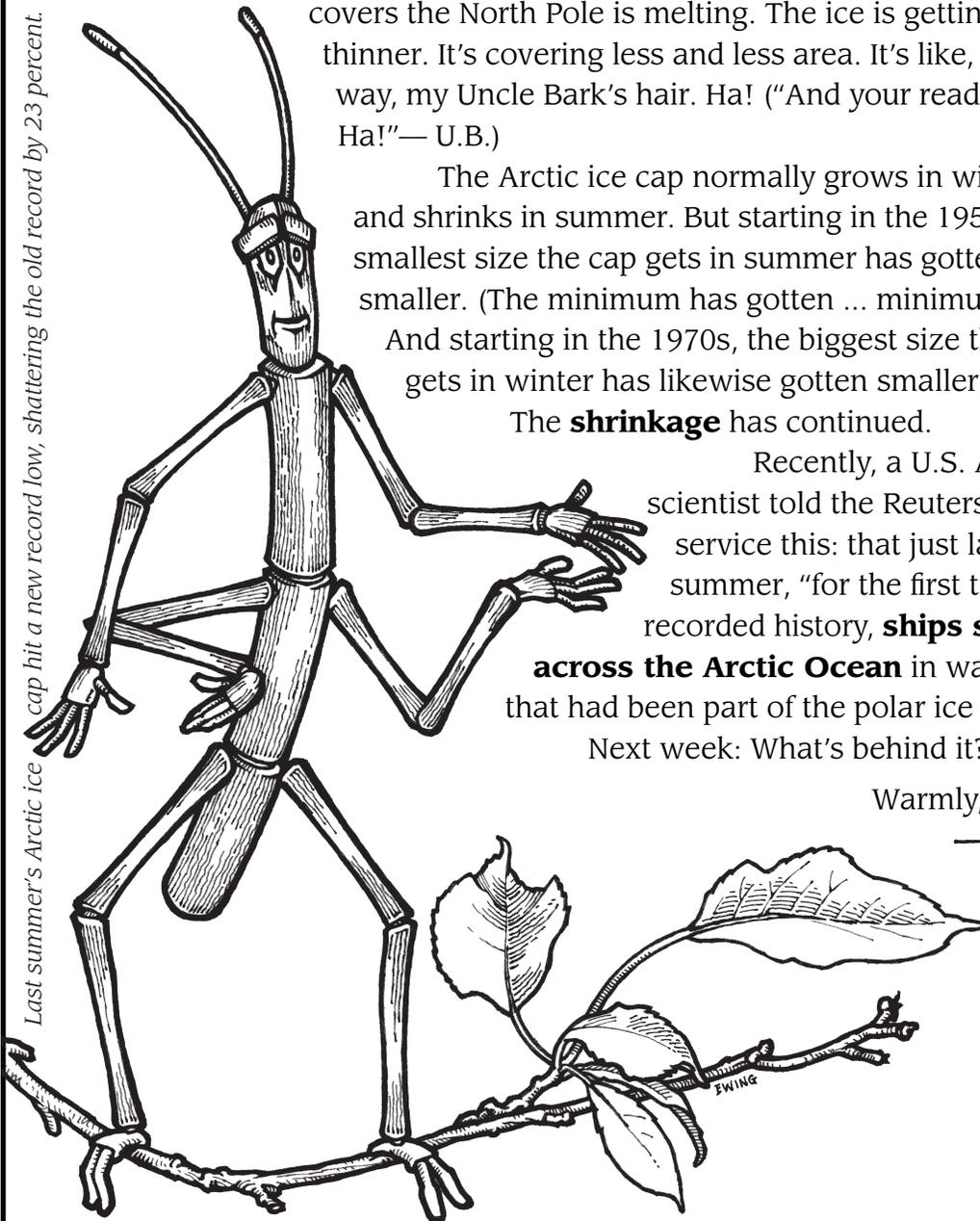
Recently, a U.S. Army scientist told the Reuters news service this: that just last summer, "for the first time in recorded history, **ships sailed across the Arctic Ocean** in water that had been part of the polar ice cap."

Next week: What's behind it?

Warmly,

Twig

Last summer's Arctic ice cap hit a new record low, shattering the old record by 23 percent.



From your scientific friends at The Ohio State University — specifically, the Ohio Agricultural Research and Development Center ([www.oardc.ohio-state.edu](http://www.oardc.ohio-state.edu)) and OSU Extension ([extension.osu.edu](http://extension.osu.edu)).



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**Notes:** Sources included the U.S. National Snow and Ice Data Center, [http://nsidc.org/news/press/2007\\_seaiceminimum/20071001\\_pressrelease.html](http://nsidc.org/news/press/2007_seaiceminimum/20071001_pressrelease.html); the Geophysical Fluid Dynamics Laboratory of the U.S. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), <http://www.gfdl.noaa.gov/research/climate/highlights/index.html#seaic>; the Pew Center on Global Climate Change, <http://www.pewclimate.org/impacts/icecap>; and "In 2007, Polar Ice Cap Vanished at Record Clip" by Amanda Beck, Reuters, Dec. 13, 2007, <http://uk.reuters.com/article/lifestyleMolt/idUKWRI31236820071213>.

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