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# A Recent Decline in Available Moisture in Northern Victoria Land, Antarctica

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## SHORT NOTE

### A RECENT DECLINE IN AVAILABLE MOISTURE IN NORTHERN VICTORIA LAND, ANTARCTICA

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**ABSTRACT.** Evidence from two areas in northern Victoria Land, Antarctica demonstrate that available moisture has been declining since at least 1265 B.P. The cause is not known.

**RÉSUMÉ.** Une baisse récente des ressources en eau disponibles dans le Nord du Victoria Land, Antarctique. Des indices sont rassemblés, recueillis depuis deux sites dans le Nord du Victoria Land en Antarctique, pour démontrer que des baisses dans l'alimentation en eau sont survenues depuis au moins 1265 ans avant nos jours. La cause n'est pas connue.

**ZUSAMMENFASSUNG.** Neuzeitliche Abnahme der verfügbaren Feuchtigkeit in Nord-Victoria-Land, Antarktika. Beobachtungen aus zwei Gebieten in Nord-Victoria-Land, Antarktika, weisen darauf hin, dass zumindest in den letzten 1265 Jahren die verfügbare Feuchtigkeit abgenommen hat. Die bekannt Ursache ist nicht.

RENNICK Glacier (center point lat.  $71^{\circ} 15' S$ , long.  $162^{\circ} 30' E$ .) and its tributaries are currently receding. The grounding line is migrating inland (Mayewski and others, in press), and the area of local lakes and snow patches has decreased.

Skinner and Ricker (1968) observed that many small lakes in the Reeves Glacier area (center point lat.  $74^{\circ} 45' S$ , long.  $162^{\circ} 00' W$ .) were formerly as much as 0.3 m deeper. In the Rennick Glacier area lacustrine strandlines and algal peats show that the lakes were formerly more extensive.  $^{14}C$  dates from two samples of algal peats from 4 m and 2 m above current lake level are of  $1265 \pm 130$  B.P. (6x-4069) and  $1085 \pm 105$  B.P. (6x-4068), respectively.

Skinner and Ricker (1968) mention apparent decreases in the area of snowdrifts over the past century in the Reeves Glacier area. In the Rennick Glacier area, undated pro-talus ramparts stranded meters to tens of meters in front of snow-patches and snow ramps suggest similar decreases. Air photographs taken in 1962 and 1974 (Fig. 1) also show the decrease in snow cover on the walls of an easterly-facing bedrock embayment, west of Rennick Glacier. Similar examples exist elsewhere in the Rennick Glacier region.

The cause of this decrease in available moisture is unknown. However, monitoring of lakes and snow-patches may yield data on short-term climatic changes which will be of particular value when used in conjunction with other climatic data, such as the Holocene glacial record and ocean-bottom data.

#### ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

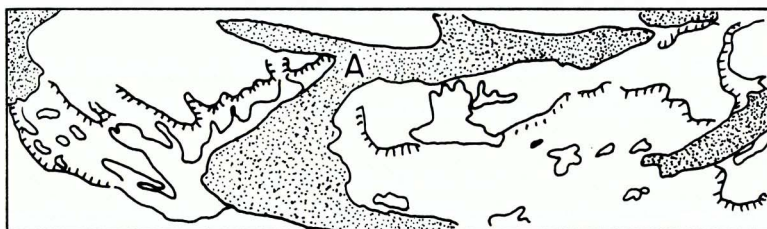
This information was collected as part of a field program in northern Victoria Land (1974-75) supported by U.S. National Science Foundation grant DPP 74-15210.

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- Skinner, D. N. B., and Ricker, J. 1968. The geology of the region between the Mawson and Priestley glaciers, north Victoria Land, Antarctica. Part I—basement meta-sedimentary and igneous rocks. *New Zealand Journal of Geology and Geophysics*, Vol. 11, No. 4, p. 1009-40.

(Figure 1 overleaf)






-  1974 GLACIER COVER ——— (FROM AIR PHOTO XAM 50  
1904, NOVEMBER 1974, U.S.  
NAVAL SUPPORT FORCE ANT-  
ARCTICA)
-  1974 LIMITS OF SNOW PATCHES
-  1962 LIMITS OF SNOW PATCHES, HACHURES DIRECTED IN TO-  
WARD SNOW PATCH (FROM AIR PHOTO 093 F32 TMA 1035,  
DECEMBER 1962, U.S. NAVAL SUPPORT FORCE ANTARCTICA)



Fig. 1. Example of changes in snow-patch distribution 1962-74 on the east-central side of the Morozumi Range, west side of Rennick Glacier. Photographic insert appears above photograph diagrammatically displayed. Photograph XAM 501904, November 1974, courtesy of U.S. Naval Support Force, Antarctica.