

Bergs

Icebergs are occasionally found off Alaska, but the principal sources are in the East, Baffin Island and Greenland, where the receding glacier calves some 7,500 new ones each year. Only one-eighth of an iceberg shows above the sea surface, but the big ones rise 300 feet above the waterline, measure 1,500 feet in diameter and weigh 1.5 million tons. In 1957 a U.S. Coast Guard cutter spotted one 550 feet high. They are monitored by the planes and cutters of the International Ice Patrol.

The Ice Patrol was instituted after the pride of the White Star Line, the unsinkable 46,328-ton *Titanic*, smashed into an iceberg off the Newfoundland Banks on its maiden voyage, in April 1912. The ship went down after two hours and forty minutes with a loss of more than 1,500 lives. The dangers of collision have since been significantly reduced.

Reconnaissance aircraft out of St. John's, Newfoundland, now skim 500 feet above the choppy waters from March through July, using eyesight and radar to spot and measure the icebergs. The lookouts who sit beside the pilot are still necessary because the radar often misses the "growlers," which rise not more than 20 feet above the sea.

The bergs move south, travelling at a rate of ten to seventy miles a day, some drifting 3,000 miles in two years. They melt quickly, in about two weeks, when they hit 60°F. water. Only a few make it to the 49th parallel, although in 1972 one reached the 40th, offshore from Philadelphia. It would take more than 1,900 tons of TNT to break up the average berg, and Coast Guard attempts to bomb them into splinters have met with little success. Icebergs have, however, been nudged away from oil rigs by pairs of oil ships using a taut cable. John Isaacs, head of the University of California's Institute for Marine Resources, has suggested that some large icebergs could be towed to coastal cities and tapped for drinking or irrigation water.

