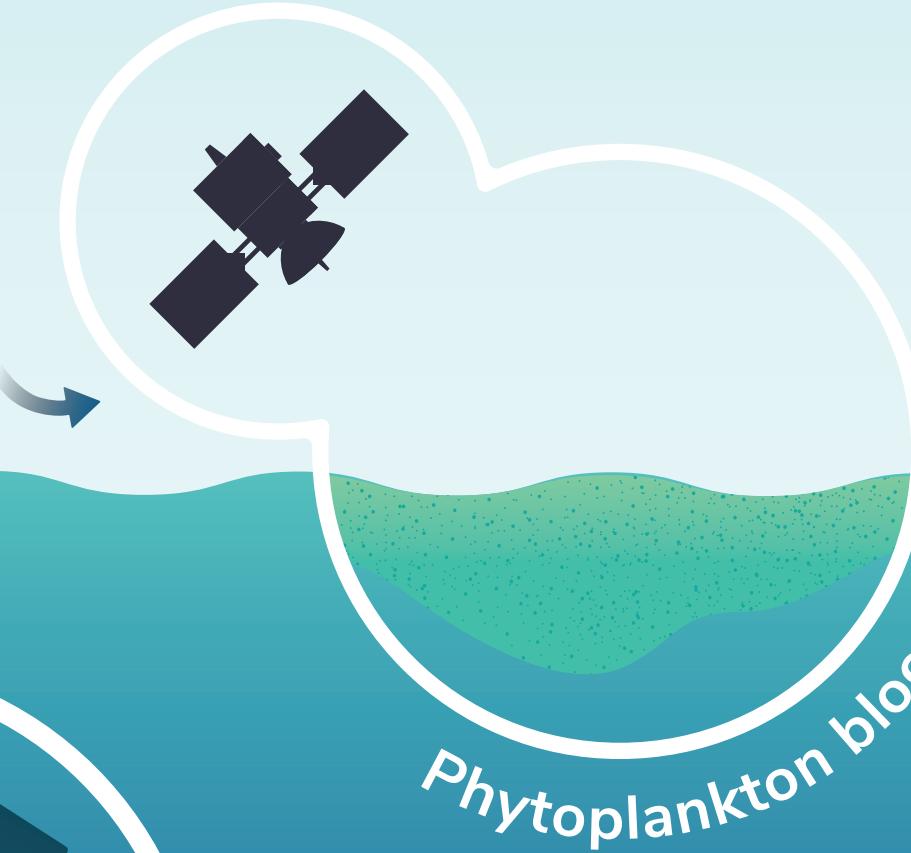




# What's happening in the ocean during springtime?

[noaa.gov/ocean-spring](http://noaa.gov/ocean-spring)

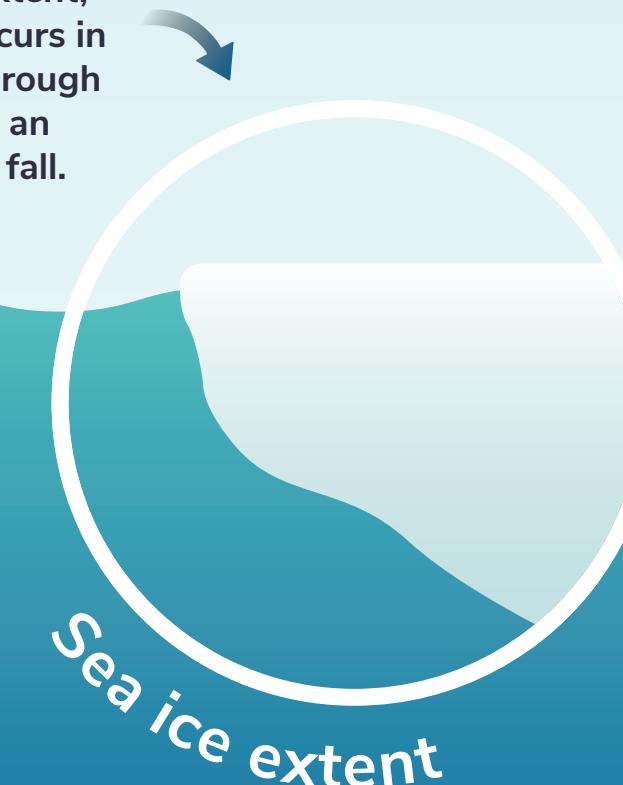
Phytoplankton, which are tiny microscopic plants, grow quickly and in large quantities as more sunlight is available and surface waters get warmer. The annual spring bloom is an ecologically important occurrence that fuels many ocean ecosystems and can even be seen by satellites in space.



Sea ice forms, grows, and melts in the ocean as sunlight availability and temperatures change throughout the seasons. The annual maximum extent, when there is the most sea ice, occurs in early spring. Sea ice decreases through spring and summer to come to an annual minimum extent in early fall.



As weather patterns change in the spring, surface waters in some regions are pushed offshore by wind and replaced by cold, nutrient-rich water that "wells up" from below. In these regions, the nutrient-rich water encourages the growth of marine life, leading to high productivity during the springtime.



Humpback whales travel great distances during their seasonal migration between cold, productive summer feeding habitats and warm, shallow winter mating and calving waters. During springtime, they migrate back to colder waters, bringing their new calves with them.