SOUNDS.IM

The Bloop

A strange, powerful sound in 1997, identified in 2005 as an icequake — not a sea monster.

Typographic only. No photographs inside. Official wording from NOAA pages re-opened 18 November 2026. Two official distances are kept apart.

Point	Official wording
The recording	In 1997, researchers listening for underwater volcanic activity in the southern Pacific recorded a strange, powerful, and extremely loud sound. NOAA also says, on the same Ocean Service page, that the sound was recorded "in the 90s."
Hydrophones	It was recorded on hydrophones placed more than 3,219 kilometres apart across the Pacific, in numerous instances of the noise, which had a unique characteristic that came to be known as "the Bloop."
Theories, not findings	Theories listed by NOAA included secret underwater military exercises, ship engines, fishing boat winches, giant squids, whales, or "a some sea creature unknown to science." The grammar is NOAA's. With about 95 percent of the ocean unexplored, theories abounded.
The 2005 identification	NOAA says scientists discovered the source of those thunderous rumbles from the deep in 2005. The Bloop was the sound of an icequake: an iceberg cracking and breaking away from an Antarctic glacier.
PMEL's summer and range	The broad spectrum sounds recorded in the summer of 1997 are consistent with icequakes generated by large icebergs as they crack and fracture. Icequakes are of sufficient amplitude to be detected on multiple sensors at a range of over 5,000 km. That range is not the same figure as the 3,219 kilometre hydrophone spacing, and the two are not averaged here.
A likely neighbourhood	Based on the arrival azimuth, the iceberg(s) generating "Bloop" most likely were between Bransfield Straits and the Ross Sea, or possibly at Cape Adare, a well know source of cryogenic signals. The spelling "know" is PMEL's. The published audio is recorded signal sped up 16 times.
A later, similar story	Hydrophones in the Scotia Sea detected icequakes with spectrograms very similar to "Bloop," used to track iceberg A53a as it disintegrated near South Georgia Island in early 2008. A53a is not named here as the 1997 source.

A short quiz

1. In which year did NOAA say the source was identified, and as what?
2. Which two official distances should not be averaged?
3. What later iceberg did PMEL track with similar icequakes, and when?

Answers. In 2005, as an icequake. More than 3,219 km between hydrophones, and a detection range of over 5,000 km. Iceberg A53a, near South Georgia, in early 2008.

Wording from NOAA Ocean Service, "What is the Bloop?", and NOAA PMEL, "Icequakes (Bloop)," re-opened 18 November 2026. sounds.im is independent of NOAA. Typographic sheet: no photographs inside.