

Sierra Nevada snowpack at a 500-year low

By Cheryl Katz, National Geographic

From frustrated snowboarders to migrating birds arriving at shriveled wetlands to wildfires raging through national parks, the Sierra Nevada's lack of snow has transformed just about every aspect of life in California. Farmers, fish, forests, gardeners, hikers, boaters, and more depend on Sierra snow for water.

But now it's clear that the "snow fail" in the 400-mile long mountain range has reached epic proportions: This year's snowpack is the driest it's been in at least 500 years, according to new research published Monday.

This stark finding comes from an analysis of more than 1,500 California blue oak tree rings dating back to the early 1500s, when Spanish explorers were just beginning their conquest of the state.

[Read the whole story](#)