

There's a weird area of warm water, which has come to be known as the Blob, sitting offshore of the West Coast. That doesn't sound too significant, except perhaps in terms of making things more pleasant for swimmers. But actually, it's causing a whole cascade of impacts on wildlife and humans.

As the [Chronicle](#) explains:

*"The waters off the West Coast are hovering at as much as 6 degrees warmer than normal. The anomaly began a couple of years ago when the wall of atmospheric pressure over the Pacific that blocked storms from hitting California — and kicked off the drought — also kept cold, stormy air from stirring the ocean and moderating water temperatures."*

Warm water, so what? It's not the warmth of the water but the effect on wildlife that's notable. The warmer water is causing big blooms of algae that produce a dangerous neurotoxin. The neurotoxin then works its way up the food chain, harming fish and then killing the sea lions that eat the fish. For example, in May, eighty sea lions washed on shore vomiting and having seizures. The toxin is also absorbed by crabs. As a result, California has halted the crab season indefinitely. No "Crab Feed" this year at the church around the corner from us, I guess.

The warmer water is also attracting whales that don't normally come up this far north, and even some poisonous sea snakes that are normally found by Mexico. It's hard to know what the ripple effects of all this will be. All of this is pretty much unprecedented:

*"It's like looking out your office window and watching a flamingo walk by," said Bill Peterson, a senior scientist with the National Marine Fisheries Service in Newport, Ore. "We're seeing stuff we never would have guessed we'd see."*

Is this due to climate change? Nobody really knows. It is, however, similar to the kinds of disruptions in established patterns that we can expect climate change to produce. We're on the path to an uncharted world, both in the ocean and on land. There's no way of being sure of exactly what's next as the atmosphere, the oceans, and the biosphere are impacted by a warming world..